**Forum: United Nations Development Program (UNDP):**

**Issue #2:** Addressing ways to provide immediate international aid and humanitarian assistance in response to natural disasters

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**Introduction**

A study done by the World Bank in 2016 found that every year, the global consumption loss to natural disasters is equivalent to $520 billion. Additionally, every year natural disasters force 26 million people into poverty. Natural disasters leave areas destroyed, people with nowhere to go and all their belongings gone, and millions of people dead. They have been increasingly devastating in past years with the amount of high-cost disasters growing. This is due to a combination of factors, including increased assets at risk, how much damage a hazard may cause at a given location and the fact that climate change is contributing to the extremes in weather conditions. This means that the need for international aid and humanitarian assistance is on the rise as countries are less and less able to fully recover from natural disasters on their own. The greatest challenges that prevent countries from receiving immediate assistance include funding, current global issues, and preparedness.

While international aid and humanitarian assistance is generally seen as good, especially when it is provided to countries that lack the resources to recover on their own, it has been faced with many controversies and challenges that prevent aid from effectively being provided. One is the political aspect. Many critics view foreign aid as a way for developed countries to hold a debt over developing countries, using it to their advantage. Additionally, countries that are political rivals or have had political challenges in the past might not be open to giving or receiving aid. Individuals can also have misconceptions about what their needs are. For this reason, accepting humanitarian aid can quickly become a burden.

The mismanagement of aid can also put delay on already strained time. If countries are not prepared, miscommunication and coordination between countries can prevent people from getting relief as soon as possible. The destruction of property following disasters also means that some places are especially hard to get to. Additionally, most local volunteers, managers, and other relief staff who are in charge of distributing the aid don’t particularly have the knowledge to determine the needs or the needy people. Organizations are also generally not clear about how volunteers and staff should deliver aid and furthermore, victims are not informed on how to receive it.

**Definition of Key Terms**

**Immediate:** Acting or being without the intervention of another object, cause, or agency (Marriam Webster)

**Humanitarian Aid:** Delivering life-saving assistance to those in need, without any adverse distinction (Europa).

**Natural Disasters:** All types of severe weather, which have the potential to pose a significant threat to human health and safety, property, critical infrastructure, and homeland security (DHS).

**International Aid:** The international transfer of capital, goods, or services from a country or international organization for the benefit of the recipient country or its population (Britannica).

**Poverty:** Refers to the state or condition in which people or communities lack the financial resources and essentials for a minimum standard of living (Investopedia).

**Climate Change:** A long-term change in the average weather patterns that have come to define Earth's local, regional, and global climates. These changes have a broad range of observed effects that are synonymous with the term (NASA).

**General Overview**

**Economic Overview**

Natural disasters have devastating and lasting impacts on the economies of affected countries, something that can be attributed to the detriment they have on local infrastructure and the displacement of populations. As a result, this leads to significant financial burdens and negative long-term consequences.

a. Economic costs: The economic costs of natural disasters include direct costs, such as property damage and infrastructure repair, as well as indirect costs, like lost productivity and reduced trade. These economic consequences not only affect the immediate region but can also ripple through the global economy. For example, disruptions in supply chains can lead to higher prices and reduced availability of goods and services worldwide.

b. Funding and resource allocation: Providing immediate international aid and humanitarian assistance requires significant financial resources. Governments, international organizations, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) often face challenges in mobilizing adequate funding quickly, which can result in delays in the delivery of essential goods and services to disaster-stricken areas. Additionally, the allocation of resources can become a contentious issue, as competing priorities and interests come into play.

c. Economic resilience: The capacity of affected countries to recover from natural disasters is often determined by their economic resilience. The faster a nation can return to normalcy, the less severe the long-term economic impacts will be. Factors that contribute to economic resilience include a country's level of economic development, the availability of insurance, and the ability to adapt to changing circumstances.

**Political Overview**

Natural disasters also have notable political implications. Governments and international organizations must navigate complex challenges in order to effectively deliver aid and coordinate response efforts, something that is often unrealistic given the poverty of many countries affected.

a. Sovereignty and intervention: International aid efforts can be hindered by issues of sovereignty, as nations may be reluctant to accept foreign assistance or to allow international intervention within their borders. This can slow the delivery of aid and potentially exacerbate the crisis. Conversely, well-coordinated international assistance can foster goodwill and cooperation between nations.

b. Coordination and cooperation: Effective disaster response requires strong coordination and cooperation between governments, international organizations, and NGOs. In the aftermath of a disaster, competing interests and a lack of clear communication channels can lead to a disjointed response effort, reducing the effectiveness of aid delivery. In contrast, strong partnerships and cooperation can improve efficiency and save lives.

c. Climate change and disaster risk reduction: The increasing frequency and severity of natural disasters, as a result of climate change, necessitate a focus on disaster risk reduction and preparedness. This includes investing in early warning systems, resilient infrastructure, and better land-use planning. Addressing the root causes of climate change and promoting sustainable development practices can help reduce the risks posed by natural disasters and lessen the need for international aid and humanitarian assistance.

**Major Parties Involved and Their Views**

**United States of America:** The USA is the leading country giving out humanitarian aid, donating $51 billion dollars in 2020. However, 56% of US citizens believe that too much of the federal budget is spent on foreign aid. USAID’s Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance is the U.S. government's lead for international disaster assistance.

**Nepal:** Nepal is one of the most disaster-prone countries in the world. It also has an increasing population, making the effects of natural disasters much more hazardous. Many countries and organizations such as the EU and USAID provide assistance to Nepal. Japan has frequently been the largest donor in aid.

**Philippines:** the Philippines receives a large number of natural disasters each year, situated on the western typhoon front. Additionally, seismic activity is hazardous as the country has 20 volcanoes. In 2021, the total value of damages in the Philippines due to natural disasters was 60.24 Philippines pesos.

**Syria:** In 2023, Syria experienced a devastating earthquake with a confirmed death count of 8,476 people. It is already a war-stricken country which has left the poverty rate at 90%. Additionally, because of their politics, it was difficult for the country to receive aid due to its sanctions and division. These delays resulted in a greater amount of casualties.

**United Kingdom:** In 1970, as part of a foreign aid pact with the UN, the UK pledged to spend 0.7% of its budget on foreign aid. However, in 2020 it cut the budget to 0.5%. That being said, it is one of the largest donors in the world to foreign aid, donating £10 billion each year.

**North Korea:** North Korea suffers from recurrent natural disasters such as typhoons. However, due to international sanctions set against them in 2013. The European Union works to provide North Korea with aid, providing them with €500,000 to strengthen the capacities of local responders and institutions to respond to future hazards. North Korea has also criticized the US and South Korea for providing aid, calling it a “sinister political scheme”.

**Timeline of Events**

| **1970s** | The international community, through the UN, sets 0.7% of a country's income as the benchmark for foreign aid. |
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| **1976** | Great Tangshan Earthquake: earthquake of 7.5 magnitude, nearly destroyed the coal mining city of Tangshan, China. It was one of the deadliest and largest natural disasters ever recorded, with an official death count of 242,000 persons (it is believed to have been as high as 655,000) and over 700,000 people injured. The earthquake was met at first with chaos and many of the first responders were survivors themselves. All medical buildings were destroyed and there was a loss of clean drinking water. The Chinese government refused outside assistance. |
| **1989** | The International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction (IDNDR): A resolution adopted by the UN general assembly declaring the 1990s as a decade in which the international community will pay special attention to fostering international cooperation in reducing natural disasters. |
| **2001** | The European Union Civil Protection Mechanism: the mechanism aims to strengthen the cooperation between the EU countries in order to promote prevention, preparedness, and response to natural and man-made disasters |
| **2015** | The Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction: focuses on the substantial reduction of global disaster mortality, the number of people affected globally, direct economic loss in relation to GDP, and the disaster damage to critical infrastructure while increasing the number of countries with disaster risk reduction strategies, international cooperation, and the availability and access to disaster-warning systems. |
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**UN Involvement, Relevant Resolutions, Treaties and Events**

* United Nations Disaster Relief Office (UNDRO): Established in 1971, UNDRO was created to coordinate the international community's response to natural disasters. It later evolved into the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) in 1998.
* International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction (IDNDR): The UN General Assembly declared the 1990s as the IDNDR to promote international cooperation and increase awareness of the importance of disaster reduction. The IDNDR led to the development of the Yokohama Strategy and Plan of Action for a Safer World in 1994, which outlined guiding principles for disaster prevention, preparedness, and mitigation.
* United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA): Established in 1998, OCHA is responsible for coordinating humanitarian action in response to natural disasters and emergencies. The office ensures that aid reaches affected populations by mobilizing and coordinating humanitarian actors, negotiating access to disaster-stricken areas, and advocating for the rights of affected people.
* Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015: Adopted in 2005, the Hyogo Framework for Action aimed to build the resilience of nations and communities to disasters by emphasizing the importance of disaster risk reduction. The framework outlined five priorities: governance, risk identification, knowledge management, reducing underlying risk factors, and disaster preparedness.
* Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF): Established in 2006, CERF is a humanitarian fund managed by the UN that provides rapid and flexible funding to address the immediate needs of people affected by natural disasters and conflicts. The fund enables the UN and its partners to respond quickly to save lives and alleviate suffering.
* Adoption of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030: In 2015, the UN adopted the Sendai Framework, which focuses on understanding disaster risk, strengthening governance, investing in resilience, and enhancing preparedness for effective response and recovery. The framework aims to reduce disaster-related mortality, the number of affected people, and economic losses by 2030.
* United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UNISDR): Established in 2000, the UNISDR aims to promote a culture of disaster prevention and resilience at all levels of society. It works to integrate disaster risk reduction into sustainable development policies and planning.

**Evaluation of Previous Attempts to Resolve the Issue**

The issue, with natural disasters rising and becoming more severe, has increasingly become a bigger crisis. The effects of natural disasters have started costing more and the countries that get hit the hardest usually don't have the GDP to support it and are left in need of foreign aid. The UN has made a few attempts to solve this issue, implementing the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction to reduce the effects of disasters and holding the United Nations Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction conference every two years which focuses on disaster reduction. However, many countries, such as the UK, have decided to cut foreign funding. In the previous attempts to solve this issue, there are many problems still left unsolved, such as when it is necessary for international assistance if the country refuses it. Compared to the number of natural disasters worldwide and the rapid increase, there is an alarmingly small amount of international effort to discuss how to immediately provide aid. Additionally, most of the solutions and frameworks that have been done don’t provide much work on what should be done once the country actually receives the aid. That is one of the most important questions as many of the volunteers are citizens who have not had any experience with disasters like this. Different countries have made laws around the world concerning their own framework to respond to natural disasters or on how to spend their aid, but there is a need for more international cooperation and an agreed-upon framework for providing immediate response to disasters.

**Possible Solutions**

Strengthening early warning systems and preparedness:

Enhancing early warning systems at local, national, and international levels can enable more timely and effective responses to natural disasters. Collaborative efforts between governments, international organizations, and local communities can help to develop advanced technologies for monitoring and forecasting disaster risks. Additionally, regular disaster preparedness drills and public awareness campaigns can help communities understand the risks and take appropriate actions in case of a natural disaster. This would allow for quicker mobilization of resources and more efficient coordination of aid efforts.

Establishing a global emergency response fund and pre-approved agreements:

Creating a global emergency response fund, in addition to the existing Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF), could ensure that sufficient resources are available for immediate humanitarian assistance when a natural disaster strikes. This fund would be accessible by UN agencies and approved NGOs, enabling them to respond quickly and effectively. Furthermore, pre-approved agreements and partnerships between governments, UN agencies, NGOs, and private sector actors can help expedite the delivery of aid, reduce bureaucratic delays, and ensure that resources are allocated where they are needed most. These agreements should outline roles and responsibilities, information sharing protocols, and coordination mechanisms to be activated during a disaster response.

Promoting local capacity building and community resilience:

To ensure sustainable and effective humanitarian assistance, it is essential to invest in local capacity building and resilience. This can be achieved by training local communities in disaster risk reduction, response, and recovery strategies, as well as equipping them with the necessary resources and tools. Local actors, including community-based organizations and local governments, should be empowered to lead disaster response and recovery efforts, as they have a better understanding of local contexts and needs. Supporting and enhancing the capacity of local actors can also help to ensure that aid efforts are culturally appropriate and sustainable, and address the specific needs of affected communities. In addition, creating strong partnerships between local and international actors can facilitate the exchange of knowledge, skills, and resources, ultimately leading to more effective humanitarian assistance in the aftermath of natural disasters.

**Sustainable Development Goal (SDG)**

This issue falls under sustainable development goal number one, no poverty, as the goal of this issue is to provide aid to countries that have experienced a rise in poverty and damage due to natural disasters. By solving this issue, countries will experience a decrease in poverty in response to providing aid to countries in need. Additionally, a report by The World Bank in 2016 found that natural disasters force 26 million people into poverty every year, proving that natural disasters and poverty are directly related.

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**Appendix**

1. [United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA)](https://www.unocha.org/)
   1. OCHA is the primary United Nations entity responsible for coordinating humanitarian assistance worldwide. Their website provides comprehensive information on international aid, emergency response, and coordination efforts during natural disasters.
2. [International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC)](https://www.ifrc.org/) 
   1. The IFRC is a global humanitarian organization that works closely with national Red Cross and Red Crescent societies. Their website offers valuable insights into disaster response, emergency preparedness, and the provision of humanitarian aid.
3. [World Bank](https://www.worldbank.org/en/home)
   1. The World Bank is a major international financial institution that provides assistance to developing countries. Their website includes reports and publications on disaster risk management, financing mechanisms, and the role of international aid in responding to natural disasters.

IIII. [United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)](https://www.undp.org/)

1. The UNDP focuses on sustainable development and poverty reduction. Their website contains resources on disaster risk reduction, resilience-building, and international cooperation in the aftermath of natural disasters.

IV. International Organization for Migration (IOM)

1. - The IOM is a leading intergovernmental organization that deals with migration-related issues. They play a crucial role in providing assistance and protection to displaced populations during natural disasters. Their website offers insights into the challenges faced and the assistance provided in such situations.