

Establishing a rapid response mechanism for people displaced due to natural disasters

Background Information

Natural disasters have been a central problem in our life on earth since the very beginning of humanity. From strong earthquakes, due to the movement of tectonic plates, to aggressive heat waves, devastating hurricanes or tsunamis, natural disasters have been challenging the modern living mode of humans, which is nowadays sedentary and steady.

Since the 1980s, global warming has been worsening many types of disasters such as wildfires in California or the Amazon in 2019-2020, and floods in Australia in 2019. This is mainly due to climate change arriving a lot faster than it should. Because of climate change, sadly, the usual measures taken by our society are not efficient enough anymore, in being able to prevent the damages or to prevent their emergence.

Every catastrophe of this type has been accompanied by an almost total destruction of its surroundings, including entire homes, leaving many ruins impossible to remove. Torn down infrastructures such as hospitals, cultural places of worship or demolished highways are therefore blocking any type of help from outside countries. Due to those massive destruction, multiple populations have been obligated to move which creates an extensive migration wave directly related to a lack of food, water deprivation, electricity or gas cuts and an inevitable housing displacement.

Nowadays, natural catastrophes have been incorporated into our everyday life. However, the consequences and complications did not change and still affect millions of lives, mostly in emerging and developing countries creating shortages in numerous fields. Needing immediate help, the target centers are almost inaccessible and extremely difficult to attain by any route, whether maritime, aerial, or terrestrial. As an example, we can take the 2018 Sulawesi earthquake in Indonesia with at least 80 000 people were displaced.

Each and every year, an average of 14 million people are left homeless and exiled due to natural disasters, with an average of 2.3 million being from India and around 1.3 million from China.

This is why it is more than critical to establish a rapid response for those who cannot find shelter and have nowhere to go.

UN Involvement

The United Nations have two important offices directly linked to this issue. Its own office for natural catastrophe reduction is the “United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction” called the UNDRR, currently bringing governments, partners, and communities together in trying to accelerate global efforts in reducing natural disasters. UNDRR’s regional and liaison offices provide global outreach and ensure strategic engagement with Member States as well as regional, national and local authorities and institutions.

In addition to that, the UN has an affiliated office called the UN Disaster Assessment and Coordination office, the UNDAC, that has an emergency response system for sudden emergencies and can deploy at short notice (12-48 hours) anywhere in the world. To date, the UNDAC team has carried out 35 of these missions worldwide. In 2021, the UNDRR program received 43.8 million USD in contributions willing to provide support for the affected countries.

Questions to Consider

Is your country often a victim of natural disasters?

How does your country deal with migration waves and/or the relocation of victims due to these catastrophes?

Are the citizens of your country educated about natural disasters?

Does your country have big organizations/funds willing to help the victims?

Does your country have shelters when it comes to natural disasters?

What is the economic situation in your country? Does your country have a lack of financial aid?

Does your country have a great access to sea, oceans, or the air roads?

Has your country taken any precautions or measures regarding this issue?

Does your country have any regional or even international instruments to help minimize those issues?

Helpful Resources and Links

<https://www.undrr.org/about-undrr/our-work>

<https://www.undrr.org/about-undrr/history>

<https://news.un.org/en/story/2022/05/1119042>

https://www.preventionweb.net/files/49076_unplanofaction.pdf

<https://www.undrr.org/terminology/disaster-risk-management>