

## Perspectives on World Disasters Survival in the 21st century

**The World Disasters Report 2001** edited by Jonathan Walter provides a graphic and challenging picture of the world in terms of the changing nature and frequency of disasters.

A **summary** of some of the key issues was presented in the Church Times newspaper on 6th July 2001; details are available from the newspaper's web site: [www.churchtimes.net](http://www.churchtimes.net)

**"God makes drought.  
Man makes famine."**

Didier Cherpitel, secretary general of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies.

### How the effects of a disaster can spread

- ⇒ Permanent **damage** to environment (e.g. 93 millions trees lost on Orissa);
- ⇒ **Political fall-out** (governments defeated after disasters in Nicaragua, Poland, India, Ethiopia etc);
- ⇒ **Damage to national economy** (Bangladesh incurred new debt of \$309m in 1998 – 00; foreign investors frightened away; development funds diverted to emergency relief);
- ⇒ **Loss** of economic markets;
- ⇒ **Dislocation** of population;
- ⇒ **Dependence** on aid.

### The most dangerous places on earth (% of population killed or affected by disaster)

<b>Solomon Islands</b>	41.01
<b>Malawi</b>	11.75
<b>Cambodia</b>	11.45
<b>Albania</b>	10.47
<b>Guyana</b>	9.97
<b>China</b>	8.95
<b>UK</b>	0.05

### Deaths in the 1990s

**Conflict:** 2.3 m

**Natural disasters:** 665,000

**Technological disasters:** 86,923

### Things to do:

1. **Research** recent newspapers (or their web sites) and **identify** an example of a recent disaster. **Check** the report against each of the information boxes on this page— **e.g.** is it a natural or a non - natural disaster?
2. **Identify** who it is that is offering support to the people suffering. What may be their chief **motivation**?
3. **Consider** the quote by Didier Cherpitel — what do you think would be **his response** to the disaster you have read about? Give your **reasons**.
4. **Compose an e-mail** to the International Federation of Red Cross & Red Crescent Societies outlining the help you think they could provide to the disaster you have studied. Show an understanding of their work.  
[www.ifrc.org](http://www.ifrc.org)

### What is a disaster?

One or more criterion has to be fulfilled:

- ⇒ 10 or more people reported killed;
- ⇒ 100 people reported affected;
- ⇒ Call for international assistance;
- ⇒ Declaration of a state of emergency.

### Affected:

People requiring immediate assistance during a period of emergency, i.e. needing basics for survival, such as food, water, shelter, sanitation and immediate medical care.

Includes people reported injured and reported homeless.

### Natural Disasters

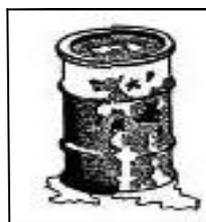
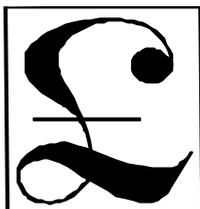
**Hydro-meteorological:** floods, droughts, famine, landslides, windstorms, forest fires.

**Geophysical:** earthquakes.

### Non-natural disasters

Industrial, such as pollution, explosion, fire; transport; miscellaneous.

**Unnatural Drainage**  
**How emergency relief can be made more effective**



**Things to do:**

1. **Choose** one of the 'Plugs' and **illustrate** it with a project operated by the charity you are studying e.g. Christian Aid, CAFOD, Tear Fund.
2. **Explain** why it is that Christians accept a responsibility for disaster victims.
3. "Charity Begins at home."  
**Do you agree** with this statement? Give **reasons** for your answer and make sure that you include **more than one** point of view.

'Leaks' from the local economy	'Plugs' to stop the leaks
Aid staff use foreign-owned hotels and services	Ensure staff localise spending on services
Payments to foreign consultants and contractors	Support local NGOs and businesses
Purchase of foreign reconstruction materials and agricultural/medical inputs	Localise purchase of recovery materials and inputs
Crop and business losses	Introduce disaster insurance against crop and business losses
Profiteering and corruption.	Work with governments, NGOs and communities to stop corruption
Economic markets lost to competitors during recovery	Provide small enterprises with flexible credit during recovery period
Long-term development aid redirected to disaster response	Ensure fresh funds for disaster recovery
Long term commodity-price decline	Commodity-price support for primary commodity-dependent regions.
Higher risk-related returns expected on investment	Ensure 'investment measures' are not undermined.
Post-disaster flight of capital	Introduce controls in high-risk areas to prevent destabilising capital flight
Costs of flying aid in rather than procuring locally	Establish targets for local procurement
Local initiative and ownership of recovery undermined by donor-driven aid	Rebuild social economy through community-designed reconstruction.