

THE NEPAL EARTHQUAKE – APRIL 2015

Introduction

On Saturday 26 April 2015, an earthquake of magnitude 7.8 on the Richter scale struck the poor, landlocked and mountainous Asian state of Nepal. The earthquake was felt in neighbouring China, India and Bangladesh, with dozens of people killed in these countries. Strong aftershocks shook Nepal, forcing residents of Kathmandu to sleep outdoors in poor weather. By Wednesday 6 May 2015 the death toll in Nepal had risen to approximately 7,600 with 16,400 injured. However much of the country remained cut off from rescuers and the Nepalese government expected the death toll to rise to 10,000. The damage to buildings and infrastructure in the capital city of Kathmandu alone was extensive.

Nepal fact file¹

Population – 31 million (UN 2012)

Capital City – Kathmandu (population, 1,003,285 – 2011 census)

Geography – a landlocked and mountainous country of 147,181 sq miles. 90 of Nepal's mountains are over 7,000 metres high, including Everest (8,848m), the world's highest peak.

GNI/capita - US \$730 (World Bank, 2013)

Human Development Index – 145th out of 166 countries (2014)

Exports - Carpets, clothing, leather goods, jute goods, grain



Homes were destroyed across Kathmandu. Photo: Shristi Rajbhandari

¹ <http://bbc.in/1bwue7v>

Nepal lies in an active earthquake zone and has experienced severe tremors in the past. Geologists expressed little surprise that a new earthquake struck and accurately predicted its devastating impact.² However the country was unprepared to cope with an earthquake of this magnitude.

As in virtually all disasters, the poorest have been hit the hardest. People who lack the resources to afford better housing live in poorly-constructed and crowded tenement buildings. These buildings were among the first to collapse in the earthquake, either trapping their inhabitants inside or depriving them of their homes if they survived. By contrast better off residents usually live in better constructed apartment buildings and were spared the worst effects of the earthquake.³

At the time of writing, contact still had not been made with Nepal's more remote rural areas where casualties are expected to be high and damage severe. Inequality isn't just social, it is also spatial. Nepal's countryside is much poorer than the capital city of Kathmandu, and subsequently much more vulnerable. On Tuesday 28 April the Nepalese government estimated the death toll would rise to 10,000.⁴



Devastation in Kathmandu. Photo: Shristi Rajbhandari

² <http://bit.ly/1PQgg6Z>

³ <http://bit.ly/1FsaTR0>

⁴ <http://bit.ly/1GAwQw5>

The Nepalese government has limited capacity to respond to a national disaster on this scale and is struggling to cope with the aftermath of the earthquake.⁵ The international response has been immediate, with India, China, Pakistan, the UK, Australia and New Zealand sending aid. On Tuesday 28 April the UK Disasters Emergency Committee (DEC) launched a public appeal for donations.⁶ Responding to this emergency and strengthening Nepal's resilience to future disasters are big challenges for the Nepalese government and the international community alike.

About this resource

This resource is designed to be delivered as an assembly and consists of a slideshow presentation and accompanying script. The script can be accessed on the 'notes' section of the slideshow. The assembly is written for KS3 pupils but may be adapted as required for older or younger pupils.

The resource is divided into five sections.

The sections are:

Section 1: Slides 1 – 6. What is a disaster?

Section 2: Slides 7 – 13. The Nepal Earthquake

Section 3: Slides 14 – 21. Why are some disasters worse than others?

Section 4: Slides 22 – 27. Responding to disasters

Section 5: Slides 28 – 30. Get involved

Sections 1, 2 and 5 provide an **assembly** about the impact of the earthquake on Nepal and how young people in the UK can respond to this event. The resource suggests that organising a fundraising event will demonstrate solidarity and help create a fairer and more just world for everyone.

Sections 3 and 4 provide greater detail about why some disasters have a greater human impact than others and how the international community responds to disasters. They provide the basis for a classroom lesson.

⁵ <http://bit.ly/1HLeqdz>

⁶ <http://bit.ly/1bz5agm>

Critical thinking

These questions are suggested to promote critical thinking and discussion.

Section 1. What is a disaster? (Slides 1-6)

- Why have the impacts of severe earthquakes in New Zealand and Nepal been different?

Section 2. The Nepal Earthquake (Slides 7-13)

- Has the earthquake affected all the people of Nepal equally? What are the reasons for any differences?

Section 3. What makes some disasters worse than others? (Slides 14-21)

- Which of these factors do you think were most important in influencing the impact of the Nepal earthquake? Why do you think this?

Section 4. Responding to disasters (Slides 22-27)

- To what extent do you agree with the sequencing of the responses to a disaster? Would you change the order of the responses? Are there responses you think are important but have been left out?

Section 5. Get involved

- Is fundraising the best way to get involved? Are there other ways for young people to demonstrate their support and solidarity with the people of Nepal?

Other resources

Dealing with Disasters online pack

The Dealing with Disasters online pack includes classroom activities about why disasters happen and what we can do to help. It is suitable for ages 11-14 and can be downloaded here: <http://www.oxfam.org.uk/education/resources/dealing-with-disasters>

Oxfam's Visitor Centre – the Logistics Warehouse

A visit to Oxfam's Logistics Warehouse in Bicester brings Oxfam's emergency work to life. The Visitors Centre displays the equipment Oxfam sends to the scenes of humanitarian emergencies. To find out more and book a free visit for your school or youth group email stockteam@oxfam.org.uk



The Visitor Centre at Oxfam's Logistics Warehouse
Photo Amy Christian/Oxfam

Stories from Haiti online packs

Oxfam's innovative curriculum resources for English teachers exploring the impacts of the 2010 Haiti earthquake through the Caribbean nation's 'multiple stories'.

KS2: <http://www.oxfam.org.uk/education/resources/stories-from-haiti-7-11>

KS3: <http://www.oxfam.org.uk/education/resources/stories-from-haiti-11-14>

SEN: <http://www.oxfam.org.uk/education/resources/stories-from-haiti-sen>

Educational Support for Fundraising

Active global citizenship is about young people doing something about the issues they care about. Raising money can be a meaningful and important form of action. The following downloads should help you ensure your pupils reap the most benefits and learn new skills from their fundraising.

<http://www.oxfam.org.uk/education/teacher-support/educational-support-for-fundraising>

Oxfam Youth Ambassadors for young people aged 11-18 in England

<http://www.oxfam.org.uk/education/global-citizenship/youth-ambassadors>

Curriculum making

The limited scope of this resource prevents a full exploration of a complex disaster, for example by examining its impact on women and girls or how it affects law and order. Instead, it focuses on a small number of key themes. For a fuller exploration of the theme see Dealing with Disasters (above). The following links provide background reading and further ideas for curriculum making.

- BBC Nepal country profile: <http://bbc.in/1bwue7v>
- Guardian articles tagged 'Nepal Earthquake 2015' <http://bit.ly/1HN0KyF>
- Nepal Earthquake: many thousands in need of help – blog by Oxfam's Shaheen Chughtai <http://bit.ly/1ziUxcG>
- Photographs of the Nepal Earthquake <http://bit.ly/1Aa6xrG>
These photographs were kindly donated to Oxfam by Shristi Rajbhandari who retains copyright for the images.
- A second collection of photographs <http://bit.ly/1PqGeVf>
These photographs were kindly donated to Oxfam by Aubrey Wade who retains copyright for these images.
- Inequality in Nepal <http://bit.ly/1OyDjyD>
- Sky News: Oxfam's Cecilia Keizer cuts an interview short due to an earthquake aftershock <http://bit.ly/1EyVcXF>
- BBC: Drone footage shows earthquake damage <http://bbc.in/1DtQ15T>
- UN Nepal Earthquake sitrep: provides regular updates of statistics and key facts <http://bit.ly/1JA5Ctc>
- ITV: news report from Kathmandu including an interview with Oxfam staff <http://bit.ly/1AvwqYJ>

Your resources

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