

## Dealing with disasters – assembly script

### Slide 1 – Dealing with Disasters

### Slide 2 – What is a disaster?

How often do you hear someone say ‘that was a complete disaster’? Maybe she or he burnt the dinner or their football team played badly at the weekend.

As with most things, calling something a disaster depends on a person’s point of view and their experiences.

Sometimes things happen that may be a disaster for an individual person, like losing a job or failing an exam. Other disasters are much larger and affect thousands or millions of people. This assembly is about these large-scale disasters

### Slide 3 – Drought in the UK. Who helps?

This photo was taken at the end of the long hot summer of 1989 in Abberton, Essex. There had been a succession of hot summers and dry winters. Abberton Reservoir was rapidly shrinking away.

When there is a shortage of rainfall in the UK, the Government and water companies work together to ensure that water is available to everyone in the country. We are all encouraged to use less water (i.e. for washing cars) but, we would always have enough water to drink.

Some areas of England are officially in drought this year, there have been decreased crop yields, and food prices here are rising partly due to this.

However the UK is a rich country with a government who can take steps to ensure that everyone has the food and water they need, meaning that it is highly unlikely that we’ll ever face a situation like the one currently happening in East Africa.

## **Slide 4 – Drought in East Africa. July 2011**

Contrast the impact and scale of drought in a wealthy country like the UK with drought in a poor and much hotter region like East Africa.

In July 2011, More than 12 million people in East Africa are facing desperate food shortages following the worst drought in 60 years.

When disaster like this hits a countries like Sudan, Ethiopia and Kenya, who can ordinary people turn to for help?

The truth is that people in these countries have very few people they can turn to for help. Their governments often have poor emergency services so it's difficult to get help to people who need it.

Few people have insurance or savings, so they don't have the resources to rebuild their lives after a disaster strikes.

Finally their governments lack the resources to invest in schools, healthcare and the infrastructure, and get the country back on its feet.

## **Slide 5 – The impact of a disaster depends on...**

So disasters can happen almost everywhere, but their impact can vary greatly.

In 1995 an earthquake hit the Japanese city of Kobe. 6,425 people lost their lives and 100,000 buildings were destroyed or damaged. So this was a serious disaster. But Kobe coped and was rebuilt without significant international aid. Japan's economy did not suffer long term damage.

Compare this with the Haiti earthquake of 2010. An earthquake of similar magnitude left 230,000 dead. 280,000 buildings were destroyed or damaged and 6 months later 98% of the rubble remained uncleared.

The impact of a disaster mainly depends on three things

- the vulnerability of the people living in the disaster area
- linked to this is the resilience of the people who are affected by a disaster
- finally is whether governments, ordinary people and other organisations are prepared for a disaster.

## **Slide 6 - Vulnerability**

Poor people usually do not choose where they live, whether their home is in a hillside slum or on the floodplain of a river.

This is the community of Carrefour-Feuille, just outside the Haiti's capital city Port-au-Prince.

Think about how vulnerable the people living on this hillside are to almost any type of disaster – for example earthquakes, hurricanes or mudslides.

The poor people who live here build their homes wherever they can and with whatever materials they can get their hands on. They're unlikely or unable to comply with safe building standards.

The community doesn't have roads to permit access to emergency vehicles. If there is electricity, it is likely to be pirated from the public supply with dangerous wiring. Any water supplies and sanitation will be rudimentary at best.

So the people living in Carrefour-Feuille are vulnerable to almost any hazard, never mind a major disaster.

## **Slide 7 - Resilience**

One way of helping people to overcome their vulnerability to disasters is to work with them to build their resilience or strength.

This is a new grain store in Tanzania built with Oxfam's support. It permits the community to store enough grain to last through the dry months of the year when crops don't grow.

People here have always lived with drought and have always had to be resilient. But in recent years the droughts have become longer and more severe. New strategies, like the grain store, are required to help people survive the hazards they face.

## **Slide 8 – Being prepared**

When a disaster strikes people expect their governments and other organisations to help. Getting emergency help to people quickly can mean the difference between life and death.

The governments of poor countries, like in East Africa, often don't have the resources to have well resourced emergency services in place.

When this is the case the international community - governments, the United Nations agencies and NGOs like Oxfam, work together to provide humanitarian assistance. This is

Oxfam's warehouse in Port-au-Prince, Haiti, with water and sanitation equipment ready for transport.

However the best response to the risk of disasters is for a government to have emergency, health and rebuilding services in place ready to come to people's aid before a disaster strikes.

## **Slide 9 – The impact of a disaster is influenced by...**

So there's a close relationship between the wealth and resources of a country and the impact of a disaster. Countries and people that are richer are usually better prepared to cope with a disaster when it strikes.

For example in June 2010 the UK went on drought warning after the driest start to the year for 46 years. However, unlike countries in West and East Africa, the UK has the resources to manage a dry spell. Apart from the hosepipe ban in the north west, most people in the UK won't have even noticed the summer 'drought'. Meanwhile in West Africa drought threatens the lives and livelihoods of millions

## **Slide 10 – There are many types of disaster**

The pictures show...

Flood – Pakistan 2010

Droughts – Somaliland 2009

Storms – Bangladesh 2009

Earthquakes – Haiti 2010

You've heard about quite a few disasters already.

Disasters come in many shapes and forms. Encyclopaedias list 13 different types of disaster but the following are among the most common – floods, droughts, tropical storms (variously called hurricanes, cyclones and typhoons) and earthquakes.

Some disasters are much more difficult than others to predict and guard against, although the monitoring of movements in the earth's crust and observing the development of weather systems has greatly improved in recent years.

Some disasters, like an earthquake, are sudden and quickly capture people's attention.

Others, like a drought, build up slowly over time and can go almost unnoticed despite many people being affected.

## **Slide 11 – Food Crisis in East Africa**

East Africa is the most recent place to experience disaster on a vast scale.

## **Slide 12 – July 2011 – Crisis hits East Africa**

More than 12 million people in Ethiopia, Somalia and Kenya are facing desperate food shortages following the worst drought in 60 years.

Rains have failed for successive seasons, and families across the region are struggling to find anything to eat or drink. Hundreds of thousands of livestock have already died. Food prices have rocketed.

## **Slide 13 – Shortage of water**

After nearly 11 months without a drop of rain, all of Waridaad village's traditional water sources dried up. Oxfam partners Havyoco have been trucking in clean water every day. The water is pumped into these community tanks, from where each family queues up to fill their jerrycans.

Ibrahim Harir Deria coordinates Havyoco's water trucking: "We are suffering from consecutive drought. Last year was ok, but before that there was a drought. It is getting more common. The lack of pasture is the father of many things – it causes disease and malnutrition.

"There are four trucking centres in the village, each serving 140 households – so 560 families in total. Each household gets 45 litres of water per day – about 7.5 litres per person."

## **Slide 14 – The rising cost of food**

Faadomo Hirsi and her grandson wheel their daily allowance of water back to their house. Faadomo's husband died a few years ago and she now looks after seven people – her children, grandchildren and her elderly mother.

"These two cans last us one day – we use the water for cooking, drinking, washing and the animals. I used to have 20 goats, but now there are only five left and even those are very weak. 15 died in the past month. I have to give some of the water to the goats to keep them alive – there is no other place they can get it.

"Now we eat less – we have two meals a day instead of three. We used to have pasta, dates, milk and meat – now we just have [the rice, sugar and flour]. The children used to drink lots of milk, but it is no longer available. You can feel the weight of the children getting less each month."

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## **Slide 15 -**

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The price of food is already rising around the world, including in the UK. The drought in East Africa has only made this problem worse for the people who live there.

Faadomo continues:

“Most days I buy 500g of rice, 250g of sugar and 250g of flour from the market in the village. With some maize and some tea, that is all we eat nowadays. The prices are always going up. Half a kilogramme of rice costs me \$0.80 – in January it cost \$0.50.”

## **Slide 16 – Responding to disasters**

So how do Oxfam and other NGOs respond to disasters like the Pakistan floods?

- the first response is to help meet people’s basic needs for clean water, latrines, safe shelter, health care and food
- Next a country has to get back on its feet, rebuild and develop. In the longer term countries affected by disasters need support to earn money, create jobs and provide basic services for their people
- Part of the development process involves building people’s resilience against disasters in the future – this is called ‘adaptation’
- Finally NGOs campaign to persuade governments to do more to support poor people at risk of disasters.

## **Slide 16 – Humanitarian response**

When disasters strike Oxfam specialises in providing water, sanitation and hygiene (called W.A.S.H) to affected people.

The photos show a ‘bladder’ water tank and latrines Oxfam installed in Haiti.

In East Africa, are already reaching families in Ethiopia, Somalia and Kenya with the food, water and basic sanitation they desperately need to stay alive. In total we aim to reach 3 million people with our emergency response.

## **Slide 17 - Development**

Once the immediate emergency is over, Oxfam, and other NGOs and donors, turn their attention to development - helping communities to get back on their feet and plan for a better future.

Following the Asian Tsunami of 2004 Oxfam rebuilt 8 schools in Sri Lanka. The photo, from 2006, shows students in temporary classrooms provided by UNICEF while the permanent classrooms were being re-constructed.

## **Slide 18 – Adaptation**

Part of the process of development involves working with communities to help them cope better with the increasing risk of disasters.

These raised seed beds, called ‘Camellones’ in Bolivia are helping communities to grow food, even when the area floods are there is too much water.

## **Slide 19 - Campaigning**

Finally, Oxfam campaigns with people to demand that the international community does all it can to reduce the risk of disasters and provide adequate support to the people affected by disasters.

The crisis in East Africa is a strong example of a global food system stretched to breaking point. Global leaders such as the UK government can work to together to fix this system, and it's vital that this is done now. Find out more about Oxfam's GROW campaign online at [www.oxfam.org.uk/grow](http://www.oxfam.org.uk/grow)

## **Slide 20 – Get Involved**

So what can you people do to get involved?

First of all you can organise a fundraising event – make sure it is creative and exciting, and provides you and your friends with the opportunity to learn new skills as you raise money.

Secondly you can campaign to create a fairer and more just world for everyone. A great many disasters are natural, but their impact on poor people is man made.

## **Slide 21 - Thankyou**

Thankyou