

CYCLONE IDAI

TEACHERS' OVERVIEW

Introduction

Cyclone Idai hit landfall in Mozambique on the night of 14–15 March 2019. This weather system caused extensive damage in Mozambique, Malawi and Zimbabwe. Strong winds above 150mph, a storm surge estimated at 2.5 metres in height, heavy rains, and widespread flooding have had devastating impacts on the lives of more than 2.6 million people. Homes, roads, bridges, schools and health facilities have been destroyed, with agricultural land completely wiped out in some areas. The UN Secretary General declared this “one of the worst-weather related catastrophes in the history of Africa”.¹

This resource has been created to raise awareness of the impacts of disasters such as Cyclone Idai and to support learners to think critically about what makes some people more vulnerable to disasters than others. It consists of a slideshow and accompanying script (provided in the slide notes). The resource could be delivered in an assembly or alternatively in tutor time, a circle time session or to support other classroom-based learning. The resource is designed for use with learners aged 9-14 but could be adapted to meet the needs of older or young learners.

The sections are:

- Section 1 (slides 2–6): What is a disaster?
- Section 2 (slides 7–15): Cyclone Idai
- Section 3 (slides 16–23): Why are some disasters worse than others?
- Section 4 (slides 24–29): Responding to disasters
- Section 5 (slides 30–31): Take action

Resource options:

- **Sections 1, 2 and 5** provide an **assembly** about the impact of the cyclone in Mozambique, Malawi and Zimbabwe and how young people in the UK could choose to respond to this event.
- **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 a useful basis for **classroom-based work**.

Suggested discussion questions to support critical thinking as well as country fact files and useful links and resources are provided below. Please note that 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* (details provided below).

¹ www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/press-encounter/2019-03-26/secretary-generals-press-encounter-cyclone-idai-full-transcript

Cyclone Idai

The impacts of Cyclone Idai have been devastating. More than 800 people have died across the three countries, with many more still missing and millions of people left homeless without food or basic services. However, the full impact of the cyclone is not yet known as many areas are still under water and inaccessible. It is predicted that the number of deaths will rise.

Although it is too early to draw specific conclusions about Cyclone Idai, its impacts are entirely consistent with scientific projections about the increasing destructive power of tropical cyclones due to climate change - increasing rainfall, as warmer air holds more water, and higher storm surges due to sea level rises.

Many people who lost their homes after the cyclone hit are now living in temporary camps in terrible conditions, without secure food supplies, safe drinking water or sanitation. The cyclone survivors face ongoing shortages of clean water and food and are at risk of waterborne diseases due to contaminated flood water. Health providers have seen an increase in cases of diarrhoea. In the coastal city of Beira in Mozambique, where the cyclone first made landfall, the first death from cholera has been confirmed and more than 500 cases of the disease have been reported. It is thought that malaria cases will also rise.

Numerous health facilities have been destroyed or severely damaged which means that many people are also unable to access healthcare. Health providers have seen an increase in cases of diarrhoea and there are also reported cases of cholera linked to the cyclone. It is thought that malaria cases will also rise. Heavy rain, flood waters and the destruction of roads, bridges, electricity and communications infrastructure mean it has been difficult to reach communities to assess their needs and deliver aid.

As some of the poorest countries in the world, the governments of Zimbabwe, Malawi and Mozambique have limited resources and capacity to respond to national disasters of this scale. The international response has been swift, with governments and aid agencies around the world providing support. In the UK, the Disasters Emergency Committee launched an appeal to help people affected by the cyclone on 21st March 2019, raising £8 million in the first 24 hours and a further £10 million in the next three days.² Responding to this emergency and strengthening the resilience of these countries to future disasters are big challenges for their governments and the international community alike.

Oxfam aims to reach more than half a million people across the three countries – working with others to provide clean water, toilets and handwashing facilities to help prevent the spread of deadly diseases, such as cholera and malaria, as well as providing shelter, clothing and food.

As in virtually all disasters, be they in both rich and poor countries - the poorest people are the most vulnerable and have been hit the hardest. For example, in Beira the poorest people live in flimsy tin shacks and in areas more susceptible to floods; richer people have houses of concrete walls, stronger roofs and on higher ground.

Disasters do not hit everyone equally. Poverty, as well as race, gender, ethnicity and disability, all make people more vulnerable. Inequality (the unequal distribution of wealth, resources and opportunities) between and within countries is increasing, affecting both the risk of being affected by disasters as well as people's resilience to respond and rebuild their lives after a catastrophe strikes.

The response to disasters can easily increase inequality. Often it is the poorest who get left behind to suffer, frequently because they can be the hardest to reach when a disaster strikes. This is why Oxfam and other agencies try to assess, prioritise and access those people who are poorest and most vulnerable in emergency

² www.dec.org.uk/press-release/amount-raised-for-dec-cyclone-idai-appeal-climbs-to-%C2%A318-million

responses. We prioritise helping women, not only because they are often in the most vulnerable position, but also because they usually have more responsibility for their children and for organising the communities they live in.

While Oxfam supports people caught up in Cyclone Idai by targeting the poorest most vulnerable people, we also continue to lobby governments – not only for more aid and resources, but also for good public policies like universal social protection, health coverage and quality education to help countries and communities build back better.

Critical thinking

This resource supports learners to think critically about the impacts of disasters such as Cyclone Idai and why some people are more vulnerable than others.

Possible questions to explore with learners include:

- Why have the impacts of severe tropical storms in the USA been so different to those in Mozambique, Malawi and Zimbabwe?
- Has Cyclone Idai affected all the people in Mozambique, Malawi and Zimbabwe equally? What are the reasons for any differences?
- What factors make some disasters worse than others?
- Which of these factors do you think were most important in influencing the impacts of Cyclone Idai? Why do you think this?

Useful resources and links

- Oxfam's *Dealing with Disasters* resource for ages 11–14 provides classroom activities exploring why disasters happen, whether they can be prevented and what can be done to help.
www.oxfam.org.uk/education/resources/dealing-with-disasters
- It is not possible to say that any one storm is caused by climate change. However, the best available climate science indicates that climate change is increasing the intensity and frequency of weather-related disasters such as typhoons and droughts. Oxfam's *Climate Challenge* resources focus on the human impact of climate change: how communities around the world are being affected by climate change and how people are responding and adapting to these challenges.
Ages 7–11: www.oxfam.org.uk/education/resources/climate-challenge-7-11
Ages 11–14: www.oxfam.org.uk/education/resources/climate-challenge-11-14
- Learners could use classroom tools such as a why-why-why chain or a consequences wheel to support critical thinking about the impacts of disasters and why some people are more vulnerable than others. For further details, see Oxfam's *Global Citizenship in the Classroom: A guide for teachers*.
www.oxfam.org.uk/education/resources/global-citizenship-in-the-classroom-a-guide-for-teachers
- Active global citizenship is about empowering young people to take self-directed action about the issues they care about. Raising money can be a meaningful and important form of action. The following tools can help support learners to make the most of any fundraising opportunities, helping to develop new skills and understanding.
www.oxfam.org.uk/education/resources/fundraising-guides-for-schools

- Learners aged 11–18 could start or join an Oxfam school group to find out more about the issues Oxfam works on, develop their leadership skills, take part in campaigns and speak out about global poverty.
www.oxfam.org.uk/education/get-involved/start-an-oxfam-school-group

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Country fact files

Mozambique, Malawi and Zimbabwe

Malawi

Capital: Lilongwe

Population: 18.6 million

Geography: Landlocked country bordered by Zambia, Tanzania and Mozambique. A third of Malawi's area is covered by Lake Malawi.

Average annual income per person: US\$320

Average life expectancy: 63 years

Percentage of population living in extreme poverty: 70.3%

People using at least basic drinking water services: 67%

Percentage of population with access to electricity: 11%

Human Development Index ranking: 174 out of 187 countries*

**Data sources:**

- data.worldbank.org
- hdr.undp.org/en/content/inequality-adjusted-hdi

Mozambique

Capital: Maputo

Population: 29.7 million

Geography: Bordered by Tanzania, Malawi, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Swaziland, South Africa and the Indian Ocean.

Average annual income per person: US\$420

Average life expectancy: 58 years

Percentage of population living in extreme poverty: 62.4%

People using at least basic drinking water services: 47%

Percentage of population with access to electricity: 24.2%

Human Development Index ranking: 178 out of 187 countries*

Zimbabwe

Capital: Harare

Population: 16.5 million

Geography: Landlocked country bordered by South Africa, Botswana, Zambia and Mozambique. Victoria Falls, one of the world's biggest and most spectacular waterfalls, is in the northwest of the country, at the border with Zambia.

Average annual income per person: US\$1,170

Average life expectancy: 61 years

Percentage of population living in extreme poverty: No recent data

People using at least basic drinking water services: 67%

Percentage of population with access to electricity: 38.1%

Human Development Index ranking: 156 out of 187 countries

*Figures provided are for the Inequality-Adjusted Human Development Index which looks at health, education and income indicators in combination with a country's level of inequality.

