

Natural Disasters

This topic will explore natural disasters and how they relate to identity and rights. An introductory lesson plan is included, but the class can then explore the aspect of the topic that most suits their interest and needs.

Introduction – Natural Disasters and Identity

Objectives

- To introduce the topic of natural disasters and to outline how this relates to identity and rights.
- To test the students' reading and comprehension

Previous Preparation

- Classes working on this module should have completed core module 3.3 'Legal and Personal Identity: What is the Difference?'
- Students should have access to the case study on baby 81 and the UN convention on the rights of the child (module 5.1)

Introduction (40%)

Introduce the concept of natural disasters to the class. You can discuss some of the following points with the class:

What is a natural disaster? What are some examples of natural disasters? How are people affected by natural disasters?

Development (30%)

Ask the students to read the case study on Baby 81. The student can then be split into groups to answer the following questions:

- If you had been responsible for deciding what to do about Baby 81, would you have made the same decision as the Sri Lankan authorities? Why?
- How might a birth certificate have helped Jenita Jeyarajah?
- In the event of another tsunami, how can families like the Jeyarajahs protect the identity of their children?
- Can you think of other natural disasters which may have had similar consequences?

Conclusion (30%)

Ask the class to think about how children's lives can be rebuilt after the disaster, and how children's rights can be fulfilled in the rebuilding process. Students should refer to the UN convention on the rights of the child outlined in modules 5.1-5.3.

Case Study: Baby 81

A Sri Lankan baby rescued from the waves of the 2004 tsunami is claimed by nine different mothers

Photo: Rafiq Maqbool/AP

Nine hours after the tsunami hit the shores of Sri Lanka on 26th December, 2004, a baby boy was

discovered. Rescuers took him to the local hospital where doctors christened him Baby 81, as he was the 81st patient to be admitted that day. There was nothing to show his real identity.

As news of the unclaimed baby spread, nine mothers contacted the hospital claiming that Baby 81 was their child. Hospital staff had no immediate way of knowing which, if any, of the claimants were the real parents. Many families lost their children during the disaster, and the waves had left villages in towns all along the coast in chaos. Hospital authorities decided to hold on to the baby until a way of establishing his true identity could be found.

One of the claimants, Jenita Jeyarajah was convinced Baby 81 was her son Abilass, who had been swept from her arms and out to sea when the tidal waves hit. She and her husband lodged an official lawsuit claiming the child as their own – an action which none of the other claimants carried out.

Along with most of her other possessions, the birth certificate belonging to Abilass had been washed out to sea when the tidal wave hit Jenita's house. Without it, the authorities had only her word that the boy was her son.

A Happy Ending, but a long time coming

Baby 81 was kept by the Sri Lankan authorities until February 16th when the results of a DNA test proved that Jenita and Murugupillai Jeyarajah were his real parents. Baby 81 – or Abilass, as he is really called had been parted from his mum and dad for nearly two months. After the court hearing, the happy parents took their son back to the relief camp in eastern Sri Lanka where they and the rest of their family currently stay.

In march, 2005, the Jeyarajahs were invited to the United States by a big television network. On the trip, Abilass' father told reporters: "It just makes us feel that there's hope, and there's hope for everyone,"

Information for this article was found in the Guardian newspaper and ABC News website.

Teacher Evaluation:

Comments on the class:

In this module classes are free to explore any aspect of the topic they wish. Participants will be expected to produce an engaging media rich, informational website using Gemin-i Plus on what they have learned. A number of lesson plans on dealing with disaster can be found at <http://www.oxfam.org.uk/coolplanet/teachers/disaster/index.htm>

Some suggestions for topics which the class can look at include:

Citizenship

How natural disasters affect Children – the group could explore the impact of natural disasters on children and could use a particular natural disaster as an example. Resources include:

How deeply do disasters affect children?

<http://www.plan-international.org/action/disasters/effects/>

CBBC news article on the effect of Kashmir earthquake on children

http://news.bbc.co.uk/cbbcnews/hi/newsid_4320000/newsid_4322300/4322320.stm

Teaching resources on the Tsunami disaster in Asia

<http://www.ltscotland.org.uk/citizenship/practice/tsunami.asp>

<http://www.oxfam.org.uk/coolplanet/teachers/tsunami/>

Rebuilding the Right way – the group could explore how children's rights can be fulfilled in the rebuilding process. Some resources available are:

<http://www.plan-international.org/action/disasters/>

How Plan work to protect children in disasters <http://www.plan-international.org/wherewework/asia/tsunami04/protection/>

'After the Cameras have gone' Plan Report on looking after children in the aftermath of disasters

<http://www.plan-uk.org/pdfs/Children.pdf>

Involving children in the rebuilding process

<http://www.plan-international.org/action/disasters/involving/>

<http://www.plan-international.org/action/disasters/casestudy/>

Geography

Nature, causes and effects of natural disasters – the group could explore the physical processes involved in natural disasters. Some resources include:

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/americas/4197346.stm> provides an overview of the damage caused by hurricane Katrina and the challenges facing the US in the months ahead. What made Katrina special is explained in a news article at <http://www.guardian.co.uk/katrina/story/0,16441,1562378,00.html>

The guardian website has extensive resources about hurricanes and tropical storms at

<http://education.guardian.co.uk/schools/learn/story/0,,1308632,00.html>

and <http://www.guardian.co.uk/hurricanes2005>

An account of New Orleans exposed situation can be found in the 2004 edition of National Geographic <http://www9.nationalgeographic.com/ngm/0410/feature5/?fs=www7.nationalgeographic.com&fs=www3>.

nationalgeographic.com

Students could label blank maps of the Louisiana coast with details from their readings of the above pieces highlighting some of the man made interventions (levees, channel dredging and oil and gas exploitation) that undermined the coasts natural defenses. There is a cross section of New Orleans provided as part of an interactive resource at <http://www.guardian.co.uk/flash/0,5860,1559249,00.html>
There is also a mapping the destruction interactive website at <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/shared/spl/hi/americas/05/katrina/html/default.stm>

A clickable map of the South Asia earthquake can be found at http://news.bbc.co.uk/cbbcnews/hi/newsid_4320000/newsid_4327300/4327360.stm

http://youthink.worldbank.org/issues/environment/tsunami_270days.php - World Bank youth article on 270 days on from the tsunami

<http://www.geographyinthenews.rgs.org/news/article/?id=326> - Web site explaining the causes of the Asian Tsunami.

Satellite images of the area affected by the Asian Tsunami before and after the wave hit can be found at <http://www.digitalglobe.com/images/tsunami>

Oxfam fact file on Earthquakes
<http://www.oxfam.org.uk/coolplanet/teachers/disaster/backgrnd.htm>

Interactive map on the drought crisis in Malawi can be found at <http://www.guardian.co.uk/flash/0,5860,1594292,00.html>

Human responses to natural disasters – The class could explore social and political aspects of responses to humanitarian. Hurricane Katrina provides a good case study for this as students may be surprised at the scale of the humanitarian crisis in a developed country like the United States.

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/katrina/story/0,16441,1563533,00.html> outlines numbers of measures of poverty in New Orleans such as access to cars and the location of homes. What measures of poverty might be used in your city? The article also provides a practical application of percentage and median.

Why was the response so slow? You can look at the following articles to answer this question:
<http://www.guardian.co.uk/katrina/story/0,16441,1562520,00.html>
<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/americas/4216508.stm>

History

Significant events and developments – the class could look at how natural disasters have affected the development of some countries and how countries rebuild after a disaster. An article on the rebuilding of New Orleans can be found at <http://www.guardian.co.uk/katrina/story/0,16441,1561191,00.html>
A look at deadly disasters 1990-2000

Year	Location	Death toll	Disaster
1990	Iran	36,000	Earthquake
1991	Bangladesh	140,000	Cyclone
1995	Japan	6,300	Earthquake
1996	China	531	Landslide
1997	Montserrat	32	Volcano
1998	Central America	10,000	Hurricane
1999	Turkey	16,000	Earthquake
2000	Mozambique	650	Floods

English

An evaluation of how information on hurricane Katrina (or another natural disaster) has been presented. Invite the students to describe a post natural disaster scenario using creative writing. Image banks to inspire the student can be found at

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/gall/0,8542,1558667,00.html>

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/inpictures/0,12323,770631,00.html>

Student could also assess how disasters are presented in the media

<http://www.oxfam.org.uk/coolplanet/teachers/tsunami/media.htm>

ICT

Students can explore and evaluate a variety of information sources above on natural disasters and how technology is used to predict and measure the impact of natural disasters.

Whole School Activities

On the road to disaster Christian Aid assembly activities on natural disasters

<http://www.christianaid.org.uk/learn/schools/livedifferently/0406elsalvador/EI%20Salvador%20poster%20back.pdf>

Oxfam assembly activities on the tsunami in Asia

http://www.oxfam.org.uk/coolplanet/teachers/tsunami/assembly_secondary.htm

<http://www.worldvision.com.au/appeals/tsunami/schools.asp> - Worldvision suggestions for what schools can do to help in the aftermath of a disaster.

The class could conduct awareness raising activities on less well reported disasters such as the drought in Malawi and the floods in Guatemala and El Salvador

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/naturaldisasters/story/0,7369,1588679,00.html>

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/2027079.stm>

<http://www.plan-uk.org/wherewework/centralamerica/guatemala/floodsinguatemala/>

<http://www.plan-uk.org/wherewework/centralamerica/elsalvador/floodsinelsalvador/>

Activities could include articles for the local or school newspaper, posters, speeches in assembly and fund raising events.

Taking Action

The class and school could conduct fund raising activities to raise funds for victims of disasters. Activities include:

- Bake Sales
- Sponsored activities (swimming, running)
- School Fair
- A school party
- Casual dress day (for a fee)

These are just a few ideas, be creative and come up with some good fund raising activities for your school! Some of the humanitarian aid agencies working to relieve disaster areas can be found here:

<http://www.plan-uk.org/>

<http://www.plan-uk.org/involved/individuals/supportaproject/>

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/2122228.stm>

You can look at the 'Taking Action' module for more ideas.