

In the Wake of Disaster

Below Level Differentiation

■ Reading and Discussion Tips:

- Provide students with background information on Habitat for Humanity. Using an overhead projector, visit the Habitat for Humanity web site (<http://www.habitat.org>) and paraphrase some of the information from the “About Us” section. You may also visit the “Stories & Multimedia” link to share photos of Habitat’s work with students.
- If time allows, read the article “Hope and Houses” in class together.
- Review the definitions of vocabulary words that might pose comprehension problems. Such words include *testament*, *resilience*, *vulnerable*, *obliterated*, *unrelenting*, *calamity*, and *methodology*. You may also have students use the context of the sentence or paragraph to help them decode these and other unfamiliar words while reading.
- Allow students class time to answer the questions on the “Disaster Response” worksheet. Pair struggling students with on-level or above-level students to complete the worksheet together.

■ Activity Tips:

- Make sure to place students in mixed-ability groups. Ask the groups to designate specific roles and duties for each group member. For example, the leader of the group might assign certain questions from the “Researching the Recovery” worksheet to each group member. You can then assist below-level students with locating and interpreting information to answer their assigned questions.
- While students are working on their presentations, take a few moments to hold individual conferences with students. Help students find logical ways to present their information, or have them practice their delivery and provide constructive feedback regarding their presentation style.

■ Assessment Tips:

- Do not penalize students for using notes during their presentations.

Above Level Differentiation

■ Reading and Discussion Tips:

- Have students read the article “Hope and Houses” as well as the supplementary articles under the heading “Further Reading” on the “Hope and Houses” web page.
- Ask students to analyze how Habitat for Humanity’s goal to respond to disasters compares to the organization’s general mission.
- Have students investigate types of microenterprise that the people of Haiti and Sri Lanka depended upon before disasters struck both areas. Have students share this information with the class.

■ Activity Tips:

- Encourage above-level students to take on leadership roles in their group. You may also choose to assign these roles to them.
- Encourage students to incorporate information from a variety of sources into their presentations. They should investigate the causes and effects of the disaster as reported by government disaster response sites and other relief organizations.
- Challenge students to incorporate sound clips and short videos into their presentations.

■ Assessment Tips:

- After providing students with your feedback, challenge them to make any improvements to their presentations. Ask students to record their presentation’s “script” as a voiceover and then offer to donate this presentation to your local Habitat for Humanity affiliate.

■ Optional Extension Tips:

- Have students investigate the Hyogo Framework for Action, which provides the principles for disaster reduction (http://www.preventionweb.net/files/1217_HFABrochureEnglish.pdf). Ask students to analyze how these principles influence Habitat for Humanity’s efforts. Have students share this information with the class.

In the Wake of Disaster

Grades 9–12

Objectives

Students will:

- read about and conduct independent research concerning notable natural disasters and Habitat for Humanity's recovery efforts.
- create and give a presentation based on their research.
- use skills of collaboration and cooperation to work in small groups.

Educational Standards

Common Core State Standards

Literacy in History/Social Studies

- Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects to answer a question (including a self-generated question) or solve a problem; narrow or broaden the inquiry when appropriate; synthesize multiple sources on the subject, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.
- Determine the central ideas or conclusions of a text; trace the text's explanation or depiction of a complex process, phenomenon, or concept; provide an accurate summary of the text.

National Geography Standards

- Students should understand how physical systems affect human systems.
- Students should understand how to apply geography to interpret the present and plan for the future.

National Science Standards

- Students should develop understanding of natural and human-induced hazards.

Scope

- 4 class periods (45 minutes each)

Materials

- Slide presentation software and access to the Internet for student use
- Slide projector and computer for student presentations
- **Article:** "Hope and Houses" (from *Habitat World*)
- **Worksheet:** Disaster Response
- **Worksheet:** Researching the Recovery
- **Worksheet:** Presentation Plan
- **Teacher Resource:** Presentation Rubric

Lesson Plan

In this lesson, students will learn about natural disasters that have devastated communities worldwide and the components that go into Habitat for Humanity's efforts to rebuild. In small groups, students will generate a slide presentation about these subjects.

■ Preparation:

Before beginning the lesson:

- Make copies of the "Hope and Houses" article and the accompanying worksheet, "Disaster Response," for students. Have students read the article and complete the worksheet for homework.
- Make copies of the two other worksheets for students.
- Arrange for students to use the computer lab for a series of class periods.

■ Procedure:

Day 1 Discuss the topic of disaster recovery. Assign small groups and topics for presentations.

1. Discuss the article "Hope and Houses" and student answers to the questions on the "Disaster Response" worksheet.
 - Make sure students understand that Habitat for Humanity works *alongside* families when rebuilding after disasters, just as they do when they are revitalizing communities or building homes under typical circumstances. Also, explain that the organization is able to provide supplies and construction help through financial donations, partnerships, and volunteer labor.
 - Have students reflect on the importance of Habitat for Humanity's long-term commitment to families affected by disaster.

2. Introduce slide presentation assignment.

- Explain to students that they will be creating a slide presentation that focuses on one natural disaster, its impact on affected communities, and Habitat for Humanity’s role in the recovery. The presentation must be at least 10 slides in length, factually correct, and appealing to the audience. Share the “Presentation Rubric” with students so they are aware of the assignment’s expectations.
- Assign students to small groups and give each group one of the following presentation topics:
Haiti, 2010 (Earthquake)
Chile, 2010 (Earthquake)
Philippines, 2009 (Typhoons)
Vietnam and Cambodia, 2009 (Typhoon Ketsana)
Samoa, 2009 (Pacific Tsunami)
United States, Midwest, 2008 (Flooding and severe weather)
Myanmar, 2008 (Cyclone Nargis)
United States, Gulf Coast, 2005 (Hurricanes Katrina and Rita)
Thailand, Indonesia, India, Sri Lanka, 2004 (Indian Ocean Tsunami)
- Distribute the “Researching the Recovery” worksheet to each group. Have students read and answer the questions as they research their topic on the Internet. Direct them to the Disaster Response section of the Habitat for Humanity website (<http://www.habitat.org/disaster/default.aspx>). Using the program links, students can find specific information pertaining to each disaster. Make sure students look for the links to special reports they can download for the most up-to-date information.

Day 2 Students design their presentations.

- Discuss the aspects of effective slide presentations. Share with students the following Do’s and Don’ts of slide presentations:
 - Do include information that interests the reader (such as statistics, quotes, and facts) and arrange it in small chunks or bullets so as to not crowd the slide.
 - Don’t use too many sounds, colors, or animation applications that distract the audience.
 - Do use images that relate to the content on the slide and appeal to the audience.
- Distribute copies of the “Presentation Plan” worksheet to students. Tell students to write down ideas they have for the content and design of each slide before adding text to the slide presentation.

- Allow students the remainder of the class period to work with the slide presentation software to create their presentations. Make sure to observe group work in order to assess collaboration and cooperation habits on the students’ individual assessment rubrics.

Day 3 Students complete, practice, and refine their presentations.

- At the start of class, review with students the elements of proper presentation style, including:
 - using appropriate volume and speed of speech
 - maintaining eye contact with the audience
 - using gestures and pauses for effect
- Have students assign each person in their group a part of the presentation to deliver. Allow groups the remainder of the period to complete and practice their presentations and to make any adjustments to the content or design of their slides.

Day 4 Students give their presentations.

Before students give their presentations, tell them that there will be a short question and answer period following each presentation. The audience should take notes during the presentation in order to be prepared to ask questions afterward.

■ Assessment:

Evaluate students’ presentations according to the presentation rubric on page 12.

■ Optional Extension:

Have students learn about Habitat for Humanity’s Disaster Risk Reduction programs, which help people prepare for disasters in order to mitigate their effects. Direct students to http://www.habitat.org/disaster/mitigation_preparedness/default.aspx to read about current initiatives and approaches. Have students create a disaster preparedness checklist that families in your local area could use to make sure they are prepared for emergencies. Tips on the checklist could range from what items should be included in an emergency-supply kit to ways to protect one’s home from a potential hazard or disaster. Contact a local Habitat for Humanity affiliate office and offer to donate the checklists so that they may be used as a resource for families in your community. You can locate affiliates by entering your zip code in the space provided at <http://www.habitat.org/>.

Hope and Houses

In the aftermath of disasters, Habitat's response and recovery efforts work to put families on the path to permanent, durable housing.

By Teresa Weaver

The most devastating disasters can be a brutal testament to the power of nature and the resilience of people.

Killer winds, floodwaters, earthquakes and even civil unrest do not differentiate between the rich and the poor, the most powerful and the most vulnerable. But invariably, the ones who suffer most in a disaster are those who had the least to begin with.

Behind all the devastating statistics in any disaster—lives lost, homes destroyed, livelihoods obliterated—are stories of perseverance and hope.

Ana Subramaniam and her family in Sri Lanka are only one of 23,000 families in the region helped by Habitat for Humanity in the wake of the tsunami that struck in December 2004. But one family's story can speak volumes about the long-term impact of well-planned, well-executed disaster response.



Disasters and civil unrest can create unprecedented housing need. A large encampment of people left homeless by the January earthquake in Haiti. Photo by Steffan Hacker

When the tsunami came ashore, the Subramaniams ran for their lives. They didn't look back as the killer waves demolished nearly 120,000 houses and claimed more than 35,000 lives in Sri Lanka alone. The family's 250-square-foot hut, made of tin sheets and brick, was washed away.

Ana and her husband made a makeshift shack out of dried coconut leaves on their land, where they lived with their two small children until Habitat Sri Lanka helped them build a 300-square-foot home.

Once the family was secure in a safe, decent home, Ana turned her thoughts to making a living. She pawned her most valuable possession—a gold necklace given to her by her husband on their wedding day—and invested in growing green chilies in the white sandy half-acre next to their house.

Unrelenting rains doomed the first crop, and Ana's husband suffered a serious illness that left him partially paralyzed. She persevered, and the second crop of green chilies succeeded beyond anyone's expectations. She hired a dozen people from her community to help her pluck the chilies and gave them 10 percent of the harvest in wages, spreading her hard-won good fortune among 12 other families.

One family's turnaround begins with the construction of a permanent, durable house, and ultimately an entire community is rebuilt.

Urgent and Long-term

In the 34-year evolution of Habitat, disaster response has become an increasingly vital component of the organization's mission to provide simple, decent shelter for people in need.

Since its first foray into disaster response—after 1992's Hurricane Andrew in the southeastern United States—Habitat has helped provide permanent shelter solutions for survivors of natural disasters and unrest in every corner of the world.

In addition to the 23,000 families served after the Indian Ocean tsunami, more than 2,000 families have been helped by Habitat in the aftermath of 2005 hurricanes Katrina and Rita on the U.S. Gulf Coast. Also, Habitat has worked with more than 750 families in the Sichuan Province of China after a devastating earthquake in 2008.

Every calamity has increased Habitat's depth of knowledge and sense of purpose. "What we have learned is that people will only return to a sense of normalcy when



A woman leaves a distribution site in Leogane, Haiti with one version of a Habitat emergency shelter kit.
Photo by Ezra Millstein

they have a place they can call home,” says Habitat CEO Jonathan Reckford.

Disaster response complements Habitat’s core mission of providing shelter solutions, Reckford says. “It amplifies our work, our partnerships and our capacity to serve more families.” After serving tsunami survivors, for example, Habitat’s Asia/Pacific operation became the organization’s largest program. And in the U.S. Gulf Coast after Hurricane Katrina, two affiliates that had been building only a few houses a year were merged to become one of the largest-producing affiliates in the country.

Hope in Stages

Because shelter is crucial to the recovery and the well-being of any community—the foundation on which issues such as health, education and the creation of wealth rest—Habitat is a logical, essential player in disaster response.

“In the communities where we work, Habitat is an established leader when it comes to shelter,” says Kip Scheidler, Habitat’s senior director of global disaster response. “So when shelter is impacted in such profound ways, time and time again around the world, our staff and volunteers step up—often regardless of how they themselves

have been impacted by the disaster—with resilience and an awe-inspiring commitment to Habitat’s mission.”

“It doesn’t change our mission,” says Mario Flores, Habitat’s director of disaster response field operations. “It’s just a different methodology of doing things. You’re still working with people who are excluded from the formal mechanisms of accessing housing. And you’re still trying to create community and demonstrate Habitat’s principles.”

Within two weeks of the Haiti earthquake, for example, Habitat and its partners began distributing emergency shelter kits that included tools to help families cope with immediate housing needs and prepare them for more permanent solutions.

Transitional shelters—simple steel or wood frames covered with heavy tarps—offered a little more protection from the predictable rains and set the stage for the construction of permanent, well-built core houses. In addition to providing immediate aid, Habitat’s early presence at disaster sites is also important for the networking opportunities it provides, putting the organization’s experts in strong positions to help shape overall rebuilding. Habitat is a member, for instance, of the United Nations-sponsored shelter cluster, which helps coordinate all shelter assistance operations at any major disaster.

Because of ongoing disaster response training, Habitat Haiti staff members were as prepared as possible when a series of hurricanes struck in 2008. But the sheer enormity of the 2010 earthquake overwhelmed all protocols in place.

The Haiti earthquake is an extreme example of common issues in disaster recovery. In many developing countries, “people build whatever they can to live however they can,” Flores says. In the absence of building codes, construction regulations or land use plans, poorly built shelters can spring up on steep hillsides or other unsuitable land without proper sanitation or water supply.

Such development typically translates into extremely high fatality rates after a disaster and usually an infrastructure in shambles. Also, many such countries have economies that depend on micro-enterprise, where people’s livelihoods are based at home. If their house is destroyed, so is their capacity to earn a living.



Ana Subramaniam and her family lived in a makeshift shack until they partnered with Habitat Sri Lanka.

But hope can be found amid any tragedy, even after the most large-scale, landscape-changing disasters. “There is a big opportunity to really change some of the root causes of underdevelopment,” says Flores.

Haiti, for instance, was a complex humanitarian crisis even before the Jan. 12 earthquake. Rebuilding from the rubble up offers daunting challenges and unlimited possibilities. Habitat has made a bold commitment to serve 50,000 families in Haiti over the next five years, providing shelter solutions for an estimated 250,000 people.

Malvin Pagdanganan, logistics and supply chain manager for Habitat’s emergency program response in Haiti, is a veteran of five disaster response teams, but he still struggles to describe the emotional impact of being among the first to see an area in ruins.

“I always know it’s not going to be pleasant,” he says. “I’ve conditioned my mind and put it on a 24/7 work mode. As soon as I get to a disaster site, I immediately start finding ways to build houses.”

The challenges are different at every site. After the

Indian Ocean tsunami in 2004, Pagdanganan says, the greatest hurdle was securing land for building. After Cyclone Nargis hit Myanmar in 2008, simple logistics were the biggest challenge.

“Just getting around the island villages was difficult, because they were all surrounded by huge rivers,” he says. “We had to bring construction materials by 15-ton boats, which took about six or seven hours from the mainland.”

Ultimately, though, Habitat succeeds at disaster response by focusing on its core competency—building safe, decent houses—and working directly with families in need.

“We see the physical change and the psychological change,” Pagdanganan says. “We learn about who they are and how they live, and we provide alternatives. Having them participate in the solution gives them a sense of value and ownership. People are changed for the better.”

For inspiration, one need only look back to Sri Lanka, where Ana Subramaniam now grows green chilies, eggplant, okra and other vegetables on the sandy beaches of Batticaloa. Today, others in the community emulate Ana’s successful farming techniques, using cow dung to fertilize the sand and lock in moisture.

Ana has already earned enough to buy back her pawned necklace and to dig a well in her compound, complete with a fuel pump motor. She has plans to build three additional rooms on her family’s house, including an enclosed bathroom.

“With a good house, good garden, good job, our status in life is improved,” she says.

For a family that had lost everything, now all things are possible.

Disaster Response

Directions: After reading the article “Hope and Houses,” answer the following questions.

1. What does the author of the article mean by “the ones who suffer most in a disaster are those who had the least to begin with”?

2. Why do you think rebuilding a home is so important to the rehabilitation of a community? How was this the case with the story of Ana Subramaniam’s family?

3. How has disaster response helped Habitat for Humanity expand its influence and serve more families in need?

4. What are Habitat core houses? What is their purpose? Where are they being built?

5. How is Habitat for Humanity’s response to disaster different from those organizations that focus only on immediate relief efforts?

6. Why was the Haiti earthquake especially devastating to the area?

7. Describe some of the challenges that rebuilding efforts faced after the Indian Ocean tsunami and Cyclone Nargis.

8. Why do you think it is crucial that Habitat for Humanity works with community members to rebuild after disaster strikes rather than simply rebuilding homes for people affected?

9. Summarize Habitat for Humanity’s role in disaster recovery.

Researching the Recovery

Directions: Use the following questions to guide your research. Don't limit your research to these questions, though. As you gather more information, decide what you think your audience should know to help them fully understand your topic.

1. When did the disaster take place and what was the scientific cause of it?

2. How did the disaster affect the immediate and surrounding areas? How did it affect the country?

3. What are/were the costs related to rebuilding after the disaster?

4. What are/were other challenges related to rebuilding after the disaster?

5. What strategies has Habitat for Humanity implemented to benefit families in the area? What have been the effects of those strategies?

6. Will Habitat for Humanity be implementing additional strategies in the future? What are they?

7. How many families has Habitat for Humanity been able to help in the area?

8. Are there any personal stories of hope and recovery regarding someone who was affected by the disaster? Summarize one.

9. What other aspects of the disaster do you think your audience should know?

10. Is there any more information about the recovery you could share with the audience?

Presentation Plan

Directions: Write down notes concerning the content and design of each slide.

1

Title:

Content:

Image/design:

2

Title:

Content:

Image/design:

3

Title:

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Presentation Rubric

	Exceeds Expectation (4)	Meets Expectation (3)	Partly Meets Expectation (2)	Fails to Meet Expectation (1)
Accuracy of Information	All information is well-researched and accurate.	Most of the information is well-researched and accurate.	Some of the information is accurate.	Little to none of the information is accurate.
Organization and Coherence	Content is arranged in a highly logical order with a strong connection between ideas.	Content is arranged in a logical order with a good connection between ideas.	Content is arranged in an order that is, at points, illogical. The connection between ideas is weak at times.	Content is not arranged in a logical order. There is no connection between ideas.
Delivery Style	Delivery is confident, clear, and engaging. Student shows high awareness of audience.	Delivery is clear and engaging.	Delivery is clear, but student cannot maintain the audience's attention throughout.	Student shows little interest in the presentation.
Visual Appeal	All slides are organized clearly and provide visual interest.	Most slides are organized clearly and provide visual interest.	Some slides are organized clearly and provide visual interest.	Few or none of the slides are organized clearly and provide visual interest.
Group Work and Cooperation	Student is highly focused and takes an active, clear role in group work.	Student is focused and takes an active role in group work.	Student is unfocused and has difficulty finding a role in group work.	Student shows little interest or does not participate in group work.