

Can communities ever recover fully from serious natural disasters?

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Serious natural disasters such as tsunamis, earthquakes, hurricanes and floods immediately devastate communities whereas drought inflicts damage over time. However, the degree of recovery depends on the type and scale of the catastrophe, the speed at which local people, government and international organisations respond, population density, the affected country's resources, the quality of infrastructure and the loss of life and livelihoods. By examining such factors it should be possible to explore whether certain type of community can recover better than others leading to a conclusion as to whether it is ever possible to fully recover from such natural disasters.

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The scale of these disasters makes it very difficult to cope and recover in the aftermath as communities are left helpless with the impossible task of re-building lives and buildings. The Indian earthquake of 2004 created a massive tsunami which killed 250,000 in fourteen countries whereas the Nepalese earthquake of 2015 destroyed the capital city of Kathmandu and killed 9000. Whether such disasters are localised or wide spread recovery here was aided by a rapid international response: burying bodies in Aceh province to minimise the spread of disease or rescuing and re-building in Kathmandu. However, whereas well organised funding allowed the people of Aceh to recover after five years, people in

① The first paragraph is a solid introduction focusing on the key words and meanings of the question. The final sentence adds a personal voice and clearly defines the scope of the argument. However, there is incomplete emphasis on the full range of factors that make a community e.g. social, cultural, economic, political and environmental.

The candidate communicates clearly with a vocabulary range ('devastate', 'inflicts'), and a consistent and appropriate register. There is one grammar error (in red) and the list is a little cumbersome, as well as having slightly repetitive vocabulary at the end ('recover', 'whether').

② The second paragraph defines 'scale' as either widespread or localised and effectively exemplifies with details. The 'Indian earthquake' is slightly inaccurate, but does not impede the quality of the response. The candidate develops a comparison to support the argument that the relationship between local government and outside agencies is key to a successful recovery ('could it be that...' suggests the candidate's voice).

Kathmandu were still living in tents. The high population density of Kathmandu and inaccessible mountain terrain may be partly responsible, but the prioritising and distribution of funds was slow. In the end Aceh seems to have recovered more quickly than Nepal despite more casualties. Could it be that, although outside organisations are often quick to respond to disasters with both money, technology and man power, recovery is also dependent on a willingness to accept such aid and distribute it fairly. For example, the severe drought of 2010 in Somalia possibly resulted in many deaths because of local corruption and in-fighting.

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However, most communities will feel helpless and isolated anyway. Their immediate experience could be of losing family and friends, of losing infrastructure such as housing, schools, roads, water and sanitation and faced with the constant threat of disease and looting. In poorer countries livelihoods like fishing and farming are fragile. Five years after Cyclone Nargis hit Myanmar most households had not been able to replace fishing boats and livestock taken by the storm. Also, six months after the 2010 Haiti earthquake, there were few signs of recovery. Plenty of aid had been sent to Haiti so what happened to it? In the end slow recovery reinforces a community's sense of isolation, adding to hardship and helplessness and leading to possible migration. Hurricane Katrina's destruction of the southern states of America in 2005 lead to more than a million people being displaced with few returning. Even in a prosperous country like the United States, the government was slow to respond and was accused of mismanagement so created a refugee crisis whereby full recovery was either going to be impossible or different in a new situation.

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Once destruction has occurred and an assessment made of the situation then the quality of economic recovery matters, not only to re-build quickly but to enable infrastructures to withstand future disasters. In the end

There is clear communication and structure, with a varied and sophisticated vocabulary (in red – a little inelegant at times).

③ This paragraph analyses the consequences of 'slow recovery' and its effect on the community with a careful selection of examples and evaluation throughout.

There is a wide vocabulary with some sophisticated structures and crafting of the English to create a persuasive tone (often of indignation to reflect the frustration of the community). The red text highlights some occasional wordiness.

④ This paragraph emphasises the need for quality reconstruction using examples to develop, and evaluating the difficulties of ever achieving this in the context of loss and repeated natural events.

hurricanes will occur a few times a year in the Caribbean and often densely populated towns lie in earthquake zones or at the foot of a volcano. This is where people choose to live through family and economic ties so any recovery could be repeatedly destroyed unless improvements are made. However, this could be very difficult for poor countries like Haiti where recovery depends entirely on international aid or where there is cultural devastation amongst the Hindu and Buddhist temples of Kathmandu, all obstacles to ever making a full recovery.

5 In conclusion, the extent of recovery from a serious natural disaster depends on the speed and degree of aid received, a committed response from local government to allow recovery and the scale of the disaster. Admittedly, the poor are hit hardest and the loss of family, home and livelihood will make any form of recovery slow. Nothing will ever be the same again but anything towards full recovery must consider proper funding to produce improved reconstruction and allow local people to learn the skills needed for the country to be self-sufficient. Over time, suffering could be eased and economic growth improve enough to establish a different 'full recovery', after which foreign aid could gradually withdraw.

Again, the candidate is quite sophisticated with vocabulary with barely an error, but it can be a little inelegant (highlighted in red).

5 This is a conclusion which returns to both the question and introduction, and evaluates the argument in the context of other considerations (climate change/control of aid agencies). It does a lot more than just summarise the main points. It is possibly a little abrupt with the last sentence but does point to the distant future.

There is use of a wide-ranging vocabulary with some sophistication and appropriate register. There are no errors in the use of language or communication.

**Total mark awarded =
26 out of 30 (Level 5)**