

# Natural disasters as incredible challenges for individuals

Sociology



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Natural disasters create incredible challenges for individuals, societies, and nations. The loss of human life and infrastructure, both human and physical is devastating to the psychic and economic well being of all involved. But after the mourning for lost family members and friends, could it be possible that natural disasters are actually good economically for the nations that experience them? Clearly, history shows us that this is not always the case. Fagan (1) shows how drought and other disasters created by a naturally fluctuating climate caused the downfall of several ancient civilizations. But in more modern economies, a natural disaster actually appears to have the potential to improve the economy of a nation. Bennett (2) points to the Sichuan, China earthquake that killed nearly 80, 000 people in 2008. Official governmental records show that the economy actually grew at a faster than normal rate for the area affected by the earthquake. While economic statistics from the central government in China are notoriously inaccurate, there is little doubt that the economy did actually grow in the short and the long term during the months after the earthquake. In a way, natural disasters can be a sort of economic boon if some of the aid money is directed and used with an eye to the economic future of the nation. Aid money, however, can bring its own set of economic hindrances, as Collier (5) is quick to point out. Aid can actually act as a trap that prevents growth in the long run. How should we best help those in need after a natural disaster? What to do for Haiti? First, we need to address human needs. The basics of life need to be provided quickly and logically so comfort and order can be maintained in the short term. The intermediate aide is then needed to rebuild communities and then the third wave of aid should focus on

replacing damaged and inefficient infrastructure. In this way, a nation such as Haiti may immerge from a disaster with a more competitive industrial infrastructure that is capable of competing in a global economy.