**Humanitarian Response to Natural Disasters**

**AFTERSHOCK Simulation in the morning,**

**followed by U.N. Disaster Assessment and Coordination Council (afternoon)**

**2015 Boulder-Fairview Model U.N. Conference**

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**UNDAC - United Nations Disaster Assessment and Coordination**

**OCHA - Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs**

The United Nations Disaster Assessment and Coordination (UNDAC) is an organization founded in 1993 whose purpose is to help respond to sudden-onset international disasters and emergencies. It is a part of the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and serves as one of their emergency response tools in order to provide free and experienced assistance at very short notice to countries experiencing either natural disasters or complex emergencies.

UNDAC is usually involved in the very first critical stage of such emergencies in order to administer technical assistance. Teams trained in disaster response can reach affected areas extremely rapidly, as soon as 24 hours after the event, making it an essential resource for OCHA. As stated by a review of the UNDACs information management process ”In the immediate aftermath of such an emergency, the UNDAC team will set up an On-Site Operations Coordination Centre (OSOCC) from where the operational activities of the humanitarian organizations responding to the emergency are coordinated. Information management is a key aspect in this phase as the information gathering, processing, and disseminating activities will determine the timeliness and appropriateness of the response by the international humanitarian community.”



The UNDAC has four main components:

**Staff**: Experienced emergency managers made available for UNDAC missions by their respective governments or organizations. UNDAC members are specially trained and equipped for their task.

**Methodology**: Pre-defined methods for establishing coordination structures, and for organizing and facilitating assessments and information management during the first phase of a sudden-onset disaster or emergency.

**Procedures**: Proven systems to mobilize and deploy an UNDAC team to arrive at the disaster or emergency site within 12-48 hours of the request.**Equipment**: Personnel and mission equipment for UNDAC teams to be self-sufficient in the field when deployed for disasters/emergencies.

As of now, the current UNDAC member countries (who provide financial support through OCHA) are:

* **Africa – Europe – Middle East**: Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Russian Federation, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom.
* **Asia & Pacific**: Australia, China, India, Japan, Korea, New Zealand, Singapore.
* **Americas**: Argentina, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, México, USA.

The UNDAC has helped with many disasters since its beginning in 1993, when there were two response missions; the Nepal floods, and the Maharashtra Earthquake in India. Since the the number of missions has grown significantly. This past year in 2014, there were 15 missions, including response to the Ebola crisis and monitoring of the Syrian border. All in all, the UNDAC has responded to a total of 242 emergencies over 22 years. This link provides a helpful infographic regarding the accomplishments and growth of UNDAC since its beginning. https://docs.unocha.org/sites/dms/Documents/141205\_undac\_missions\_v3.pdf

UNDAC teams are designed to be self-sufficient and knowledgeable. “They are trained in various skills, such as coordination, needs assessments and information management. The teams also advise and strengthen national and regional disaster response capacity. When required, an UNDAC team establishes and runs an On-Site Operations Coordination Centre (OSOCC) and a Reception and Departure Centre (RDC), which provide a platform for cooperation, coordination and information management for international humanitarian response agencies and national responders. First responders use the Virtual OSOCC website for real-time information exchange during ongoing emergencies.” During the Haiti Earthquake in 2010, the UNDAC sent out a 10-member team within 24 hours, who proceeded to set up stations to organize incoming aid and teams. By the end of two weeks, a coordination platform for incoming aid was established, and more than 60 USAR teams had helped provide medical care to thousands of people. During disaster such as this, coordination is crucial, since such great numbers of incoming aid and relief groups can quickly lead to confusion and end up delaying the process more than helping. The UNDAC was able to successfully aid in coordination, ensuring that the supplies were obtained with efficiency.



On April 25th, 2015, an Earthquake hit near the capital of Nepal, with 39 out of 75 districts severely affected, and many people requiring immediate aid. A state of emergency was announced, and a request for UN assistance put out. 24 UNDAC teams were sent to Nepal immediately, with more to follow. In an update about the situation released by the UN, the aid items deemed most necessary immediately following the disaster were “ongoing search and rescue; medical supplies; tenting for hospitals; body bags; shelter materials; drinking water and purification; generators; and, communication equipment.” Although many organizations and relief groups responded to the emergency, there was still a great lack of necessary relief and supplies. The UN had only 3 helicopters available to provide rescue for remote areas, the places which were often the most devastatingly impacted and in need of the most help. Government instability lead to supplies being delayed and unable to reach impacted areas as quickly as was necessary. While there are many success stories, and the UNDAC seems an infallible solution, international emergency response is still notoriously lacking. Government corruption and red tape blocks much needed supplies. Inadequate equipment and transportation leaves victims stranded in rural areas. Confusion and useless/unnecessary items sent by well-meaning charities crowded vital airports and shipping docks. There is simply never “enough.” So the question remains - how can we become more efficient, more prepared, and more cooperative as an international community in the face of natural disasters.

**Delegate Preparation for the UNDAC Council**

There are two components to this UNDAC Council. In the **morning** you will participate in the AFTERSHOCK Natural Disaster Response training simulation used by Canada's Natural Disasters Response Teams. **Make sure you watch both of these**: 15 slide overview - https://paxsims.files.wordpress.com/2015/04/aftershock-slides.pdf

16 minute video - https://paxsims.wordpress.com/aftershock

You will be playing one of these two person, team roles: A. Government of the Republic of **Carana** (hypothetical island country east of Africa dealing with a large scale natural disaster)

B. U.N. specialized agencies under **UNDAC** with a U.N. civilian police contingent (CIVPOL);

C. Multinational, Humanitarian Assistance Relief Task Force (**HADR-TF)**

D. a collection of natural disaster relief Non-Government Organizations (**NGOs**)

**After** the simulation is completed, you will change roles and each student will represent one of the eight countries in the **UNDAC council**, discussing and writing resolutions on methods to improve U.N. [Disaster Assessment and Coordination](https://docs.unocha.org/sites/dms/Documents/Dec2014_UNDAC_brochure_final_ForWeb.pdf). You will focus specifically how UNDAC and the international community can respond most effectively and efficiently to human suffering after large scale natural disasters such as: hurricanes, earthquakes, floods, etc.

**Participating**, top eight, contributing **UNDAC states** to international humanitarian relief from 2003-2012 in order:

United States, United Kingdom, Germany, Sweden, Japan, Netherlands, Norway, Canada

**Position Paper**: Your position paper should:

1. briefly describe your country's role in past international natural disaster relief efforts and

2. describe methods and techniques UNDAC can implement to better respond more effectively and efficiently to human suffering after large scale natural disasters.

Sources:

<http://www.unocha.org/what-we-do/coordination-tools/undac/overview>

<http://help1.blogs.tipg.net/files/2009/04/undac-role-in-assessment.pdf>

<http://www.irinnews.org/report/30237/nigeria-undac-issues-a-report-following-lagos-explosions>

<https://docs.unocha.org/sites/dms/Documents/141205_undac_missions_v3.pdf>

(This one has a really great infographic, but the picture is too small to paste into the doc.)

<http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.180.9295&rep=rep1&type=pdf>

<https://docs.unocha.org/sites/dms/Documents/Dec2014_UNDAC_brochure_final_ForWeb.pdf>

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<http://www.unocha.org/what-we-do/coordination-tools/undac/membership>

<http://reliefweb.int/report/nepal/update-nepal-deployment-united-nations-disaster-and-coordination-assessment-team-undac>

<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/may/02/nepal-government-criticised-blocking-earthquake-aid-remote-areas>

<http://www.voanews.com/content/nepal-government-faces-criticism-for-quake-aid-response/2745909.html>

<http://www.unocha.org/what-we-do/coordination-tools/undac/methodology-training>