

Mastering Climate Change

'Disaster Masters' is an interactive role play that has been designed by the British Red Cross as a resource for young people of secondary-school age (11 to 16) and above.

The programme was designed in 2008 for older learners as a twin to the successful 'Operation Amphibian', a disaster role play used by children in primary schools.

'Disaster Masters' aims to:

- Introduce young people to the work of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC)
- Explore various human aspects of disasters and emergencies and how these are affected by climate change
- Increase young people's understanding of the world around them
- Build personal resilience to disasters and emergencies through the medium of role play
- Develop an empathy with those affected by disasters and emergencies, and to represent them as actors in their own recovery rather than helpless recipients of aid

"It really taught me to think before actually making a judgement"

The flooding scenario used in the role play is based on a real-life example provided by the Tuvalu Red Cross. Tuvalu is a small island nation of low-lying atolls in the South Pacific which are threatened by ever higher tides and storm surges, and considered very vulnerable to changes brought on by global warming.

"It is so sad about Tuvalu. We must do something to stop this happening anywhere else"

'Disaster Masters' involves the participants in a number of different activities such as first aid and treating the 'wounded', building emergency shelters, using radios and bridge building. The final activity in the role play sees the islanders and the IFRC working together to assess the communities' needs in the short-term and, in the long-term, the rebuilding of the island.



"It was really fun. I didn't realise how much the Red Cross rely on communities to help them with their work"

The programme takes three hours to run in a single session but can be split into shorter ones.

Since the first pilot in 2008 – in Tobermory, on Scotland's Isle of Mull – the role play has been introduced around the United Kingdom. Over 500 people have been trained to run 'Operation Amphibian', and it is hoped that in a couple of years a similar number will be versed in 'Disaster Masters', for example on Jersey in the Channel Islands.

"I realised how important decisions can be for other people"

The role play is an important component of a resilience-building programme for young people. For example, two groups from



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Birmingham in the UK – some of whom are affected by gang involvement and negative peer pressure – are being trained to deliver 'Operation Amphibian' and 'Disaster Masters' to younger pupils (*the photos show them in training last month*).

"I came out a much better person"

This not only promotes personal disaster resilience but helps to prevent community violence and gives young people ideas on how they can respond to disasters and climate change.



"I learned a lot about making choices"

The creators of 'Disaster Masters' have found that unless young people are taught about first aid and climate change in the context of team work, critical thinking and confidence building, they may find it difficult to come forward. 'Disaster Masters' enables action as it combines these skills and knowledge in a fun activity.

"I think it is very good in helping to develop team work and discussion"

Sally Dempsey and Gill Allbutt from the British Red Cross would like to thank Tataua Pese from the Tuvalu Red Cross for all the support and advice he has generously given to the development of the role play.

This activity, which explores the effects of climate change on communities, can be easily adapted to use case studies involving disasters in other countries. 'Disaster Masters' is also a good vehicle for use in Peer Education. The activity is still in its trial stages and the British Red Cross would encourage other National Societies to trial it and provide feedback for its continual improvement.

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