



In harm's way: Oxfam America's game on rethinking natural disasters

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Overview

Objective

Players gain a more personal experience of a humanitarian crisis and will come to understand that severe storms—and other natural events—do not have to become disasters for a country’s poorest people. Through planning and preparation, lives, property, and people’s livelihoods can be saved during emergencies.

Important note

This is a role-playing game led by two speakers reading scripts. All players should be encouraged to use their imaginations, to move about, and to interact with each other as much as possible. Before starting the game, the speakers should give themselves ample time to become familiar with their scripts and the roles of the players. (Speakers who want more detailed information about disasters and how to prevent them can refer to the background reading cited at the end of these instructions.)

Number of players

Minimum of 30/maximum of 150, plus two speakers

Age

High-schoolers on up

Game overview

The speakers guide four groups of players representing the fictional country of Takshadam after a cyclone has hit. The four groups are the government, a local aid organization called Takshadam Agency for Food Security (TAFS), residents of Remotali Province, and residents of Metropoli Province. The decisions the players make and the way the four groups interact determine whether people live or die and whether they can save their animals, homes, and other property. A pair of newsflashes, announced by the speakers, moves the game along at a fast pace. Cards representing supplies of food, water, and shelter allow the players to feel a sense of security—or loss. During a discussion period at the end, players describe how their groups handled the disaster and explore steps they could take to prepare Takshadam better so that the next storm does not result in a disaster for the country.

Duration

90 minutes, including:

Assigning roles	5 minutes
Setting the scene	15 minutes
Getting to know your group	15 minutes
Newsflash 1	15 minutes
Newsflash 2	15 minutes
Discussion	15 minutes
Closing	10 minutes

Materials



You will need to print the following Oxfam materials (see pages 8–25)

- Two copies of the script (one for each speaker).
- Two copies of the tip sheet called “What Happens in a Disaster” (one for each speaker).
- One copy of each of the four situation sheets to distribute to the appropriate group.
- One identity ticket for each participant. These describe the players’ roles within one of the four groups. Here’s how you should divide them (see the table below for sample breakdowns in the number of players in each group):
 - Government players get 15 percent of the total tickets.
 - Aid agency players get 10 percent of the total tickets.
 - Remotali players get 40 percent of the total tickets.
 - Metropoli players get 35 percent of the total tickets.

# of players	30	50	75	100	150
Government	4	7	11	15	15
TAFS	3	5	7	10	10
Remotali	12	20	30	40	65
Metropoli	11	18	27	35	60

Make:

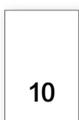
- Four large signs, one labeled Government, one labeled TAFS, one labeled Remotali, and one labeled Metropoli.
- 50 emergency supply cards representing food, water, and shelter.



Mark 15 index cards with a blue circle for water and the number 1 to represent one water truck that can carry 1,000 gallons of water. (Each card signifies 1,000 gallons of drinkable water. That’s enough to last 250 people for one day.)



Mark 20 index cards with a brown square for shelter and the number 3 to represent three single-family shelters. (Each card signifies enough shelter for three families.)



Leave 15 of the index cards plain to indicate white for rice, and mark each with the number 10, which represents 10 25-pound sacks of rice. (Each card signifies enough food to provide 10 families with 16 meals.) Regardless of how big the group gets, the number of emergency supply cards remains the same.

- Create a slide, and project on a screen or hand print in large letters on a poster board (use two if necessary) this list of emergency resources still available in Takshadam after the storm has hit:

Communications

- Some working telephones
- Shortwave radios

Transportation

- A few paved roads remain intact
- Small fishing boats, some with motors
- One government helicopter

Food

- One government warehouse with rice, in the capital
- Small emergency stores of rice scattered in villages across Remotali
- Two large warehouses of rice owned by TAFS, one in each province

Water

- One crippled water filtration plant in the capital
- A handful of communal wells with clean water in the capital and its surroundings
- Clean wells scattered across one-third of the villages in Remotali

Shelter

- TAFS’ international donors have promised to fly in plastic tarps
- The government has a limited supply of plastic tarps

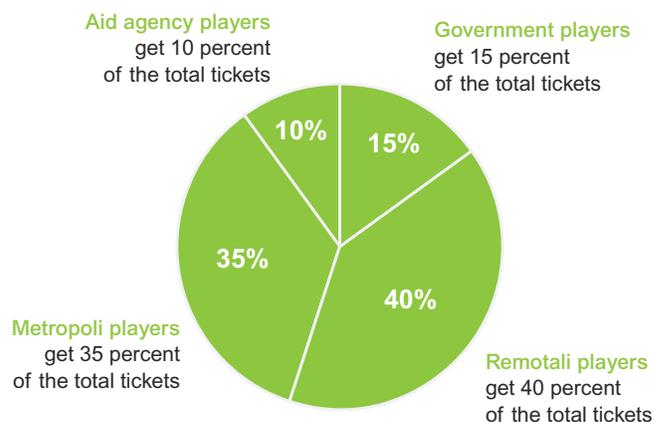
Have handy:

- A basket or paper bag to hold the identity tickets
- A few pens and some paper for each group
- Chairs for certain group members to sit in

Preparing for your event

- Find a room in which to hold the event. Make sure that it is large enough to hold a big crowd.
- Select two speakers in advance. You, as the organizer of this event, could be one of them. Provide each with a script and ensure they have a thorough knowledge of it.
- Speakers should read and be familiar with the tip sheet called "What Happens in a Disaster." It's a list of some of the problems survivors and aid workers typically confront in the aftermath of a disaster. The list can help guide the discussion at the end of the game.
- Give yourself at least 30 minutes to set up the room.
- Organize up to four volunteers to help with setup, registration, and ticket distribution, and to direct people based on the identity tickets they select.
- Make the signs and cards referenced in the materials list.
- Have all your printed materials handy.
- Decide where you want the speakers to stand to read their scripts.
- In different areas of the room, post the four signs you made. Players will gather around these signs once they have their identity tickets and know which group they are in.
- Arrange a limited number of chairs for each of the four groups: each government player should have a chair, each member of the aid agency should have a chair, and each community should have only three chairs for its most important members. Everyone else in the two communities sits on the floor. The chairs are meant to illustrate the differences in power among the players.
- Post the emergency resources list at one end of the room.

- Set up a table at the entrance to the game room where people will receive their identity tickets when they walk in. Know in advance approximately how many people to expect, and be prepared to adjust the number and ratio of identity tickets depending on attendance. Plan the event based on the absolute minimum number of participants you expect. If more show up, they can play the role of children in Metropoli and Remotali. Make sure you print out some extra tickets for that role. Here is how you should divide the tickets:



Sample breakdowns of the number of players for each group according to total group size:

# of players	30	50	75	100	150
Government	4	7	11	15	15
TAFS	3	5	7	10	10
Remotali	12	20	30	40	65
Metropoli	11	18	27	35	60

Playing the game

Assign roles (five minutes)

As participants enter the room, ask them to pick an identity ticket that describes the role they will play in their group. Some of the roles are designated as key roles.

Make sure you hand out identity tickets with these key roles first, especially if you get fewer players than expected. (Key roles are designated on the identity tickets with an “*.”)

Below is a list of the groups, the roles within them, and the percentage they represent of the total players. If more players than you expected show up, assign them roles as children of Remotali or Metropoli Provinces. Do not expand the ranks of the government or the aid group.

As players receive their identity tickets, ask them to gather with their group around the signs you have posted:

Government, TAFS, Remotali, Metropoli.



Government of Takshadam 15 percent of total players

Key roles: prime minister, minister of public health, minister of transportation, minister of emergency management

Others: minister of local government, public relations person, government staff members



TAFS

10 percent of total players

Key roles: executive director, head of programs

Others: needs assessment expert, disaster management coordinator, program officers



Remotali Province

40 percent of total players

Key roles: three village elders (all males)

Others: members of a women's self-help group, poor farmers, poor fishermen, poor mothers, children



Metropoli Province

35 percent of total players

Key roles: three village elders (all males), three wealthy residents with government connections

Others: members of a women's self-help group, poor day laborers, poor mothers, children

Set the scene (15 minutes)

Speaker 1 welcomes everyone, reading the script that describes what causes a disaster and briefly introducing Takshadam. The speakers then give each group its own situation sheet detailing its circumstances, along with the

emergency supply cards in the ratios indicated below. The speakers should encourage the members in each group to read out loud the description of their roles to the rest of their group. Someone in each group should also read the situation sheet for that group out loud.

Get to know your group (15 minutes)

Players will have 15 minutes to read their situation sheets, talk among themselves, and get to know each other's roles.

Emergency supply cards

Players use these water, food, and shelter cards to help each other survive. Each group receives a different number of cards depending on how well that group is prepared to confront a storm. Players may decide to hoard their cards, distribute them to villagers, commandeer them from others, negotiate for their use, or simply lose them as a result of the disaster. At the beginning of the game, the speakers distribute the cards to the key role players in the following amounts:

- **Government:** five water cards, five food cards
- **TAFS:** five water cards, five food cards, 10 shelter cards
- **Remotali:** five water cards, five food cards, five shelter cards
- **Metropoli:** two water cards, three food cards

Remotali, which has worked hard over the years to plan for storms, gets 15 cards. Metropoli, whose wealthy residents and government officials have tended to ignore the needs of the poorest there, gets five cards. The government gets only 10 cards because it, too, has failed overall to help the country prepare for or prevent natural events from turning into disasters. But TAFS, being smart and dedicated to preventing future disasters, gets 20.

During each of the two newsflashes, the speakers automatically remove one card of each type from each group. This loss adds to the tension among the groups as they struggle to divide dwindling resources among themselves. The number of cards each group winds up with by the end of the game indicates how well—or poorly—it met the emergency needs of the people of Takshadam. In an ideal world, Takshadam's citizens would get the most cards, but depending on how people play the game, this island country could be far from ideal. It's possible the government will hoard cards for its own use. Maybe the roads will be in such poor shape that the aid agency won't be able to distribute its food and water cards. Maybe the people of Metropoli, who are in the worst shape, will start robbing the people of Remotali for their cards.

Newsflash 1 (15 minutes)

Speaker 2, continuing with the script, reads Newsflash 1, which announces a cyclone has hit Takshadam. Speaker 1 tells the players they have 30 minutes to plan a response and take action to survive. These 30 minutes (broken into a 15-minute segment for responding to Newsflash 1 and a 15-minute segment for responding to Newsflash 2) represent the first 48 hours following the storm's landfall. The speakers will now visit the groups, taking emergency supply cards from each of them—one for water, one for food, and one for shelter (though Metropoli and the government have no shelter cards at all)—collecting 10 cards total.

Ad libbing, the speakers should encourage players to assess their group's needs and work to get the assistance they require—or can offer. They should urge the players to use their imaginations in their role-playing and to interact with participants in other groups.

The speakers now need to be walking around among the groups and listening carefully to the conversations between the players. What the speakers hear will help them guide the discussion at the end of the game. They should listen for themes that might include the following:

- There are logistical challenges to getting aid when roads and bridges are washed out.
- Wealthy or well-connected people get help first.
- There is limited or no access to food, water, and shelter.
- Children are lost; families are separated.
- Communication lines are down; people can't get information.
- The government wants the military to control the distribution of supplies.
- Communities have no say in how the emergency response is carried out.
- The government has not helped people prepare for annual cyclones.

Speakers may also get questions or requests for guidance from the players. The speakers should encourage players to rely on the expertise—i.e., the imaginations—of those within their groups to sort out those problems.

Newsflash 2 (15 minutes)

Following the script, Speaker 2 reads Newsflash 2. It alerts players to a looming water shortage. The speakers now visit the groups again, removing a second round of emergency supply cards—another 10—in the same ratios as before. The speakers continue to walk around among the groups, absorbing their conversations and listening for themes to address during the discussion at the end of the game.

Discussion (15 minutes)

Speaker 1, reading from the script, interrupts the action with an announcement that 48 hours have now passed. The game is over. The speakers lead the players in a discussion about the simulation—what they thought, what they felt, what they learned. The speakers can start the discussion by asking the players which group has the most emergency supply cards. What does that indicate about that group's response to the crisis? If the government still has cards, does that mean it has failed in its duty to help people? What would account for the aid agency still having cards at the end of the game? Was it slow to respond? Does Metropoli have more cards than anyone suspected it would? Why does it have so many—or so few?

Closing, Speaker 2 (five minutes)

Speaker 2, reading from the script and then ad libbing, points out at least three problems that happened during the simulation and notes that these are common occurrences in the aftermath of an emergency. To help identify those problems, the speaker can refer to the tip sheet called "What Happens in a Disaster" on page 13.

Closing, Speaker 1 (five minutes)

Reading from the script, Speaker 1 outlines what actually happens in a disaster, some pitfalls to watch out for, and statistics on lives lost in disasters annually. The closing also includes information about Oxfam's response to emergencies and how participants can take action.

Background reading

For those who are interested, here are some Internet links to Oxfam reports with more details on disasters, their consequences, and how to prevent them:

"Adaptation 101:

How climate change hurts poor communities—and how we can help"

www.oxfamamerica.org/publications/adaptation-101 ↗

"The Right to Survive:

The humanitarian challenge for the twenty-first century"

www.oxfamamerica.org/publications/the-right-to-survive ↗

"Weathering the Storm:

Lessons in risk reduction from Cuba"

www.oxfamamerica.org/publications/weathering-the-storm ↗

Playing the game: Sample timeline

5:00 P.M.

5:00–6:00

- Volunteers arrive.
- Volunteer coordinator assigns volunteers to specific tasks.
- Volunteers set up the site.

6:00–6:05

- Volunteers greet guests and have them draw identity tickets.
- Volunteers direct guests to join their groups.

6:05–6:20

- Speaker 1 reads the first part of the script: “Setting the scene.”

6:20–6:35

- Speakers pass out a situation sheet to each group.
- Speakers pass out emergency supply cards to each group.
- Members in each group read their identity tickets out loud to other members of their group and spend time getting to know each other.
- A member of each group also reads the situation sheet out loud to other members of that group.

6:35–6:50

- Speaker 2 reads the first newflash.
- Players in all the groups begin to respond to the crisis.

6:50–7:05

- Speaker 2 reads the second newflash.
- Players in all the groups continue responding to the crisis.

7:05–7:20

- Speakers announce that 48 hours are up and the game is over.
- Players and speakers discuss the experience.

7:20–7:30

- Speakers close the event with a brief overview of disaster risk reduction and how players can become involved with Oxfam.

7:30 P.M.



Script

Setting the scene (15 minutes)

SPEAKER 1:

Welcome to Oxfam America's emergency simulation.

We're here today to experience a disaster—one that should not be happening. Like many of the calamities that claim hundreds of thousands of lives each year, this one starts with a natural event: a severe storm with winds up to 130 miles per hour and a tidal surge 20 feet high.

▮ [PAUSE]

In the 42 years between 1970 and 2012, about 1.9 million people died in the wake of disasters related to weather and water—the terrible storms, floods, landslides, fires, and droughts (and the insect infestations and epidemics they unleashed) that hit countries around the world. Along with all those who were killed came an estimated \$2.4 trillion in economic losses.

▮ [PAUSE]

But these dramatic natural events don't have to result in widespread death and destruction. That happens only when people live in rickety homes or in dangerous locations and when they don't have the resources to keep themselves safe, recover their losses, and advocate for their rights. In rich countries, the average number of deaths per disaster is 23. But in the poorest countries, the average soars to 1,052.

▮ [PAUSE]

Think about a flimsy house perched on the edge of a ravine where heavy rains trigger frequent landslides. Picture a hut at the foot of an active volcano. Imagine a home on low-lying ground near the ocean and in the path of a hurricane. Does that last one sound familiar? That was New Orleans when Hurricane Katrina hit. The city's poorest residents had no way to get out when the levees broke and water swallowed their houses. In many countries, people living in these conditions are likely to have few savings, little access to medical care, and no insurance. A major storm, should they survive it, can easily overwhelm their ability to cope—and disaster unfolds.

Now imagine that same storm hitting a community where early warning systems are in place; where transportation and medical care are easily accessible; where the houses are sturdy and people live on high, safe ground; and where people have access to information and are aware of their rights. Here, a storm might generate some excitement and

produce some property damage, but chances are it will not qualify as a disaster.

What turns a natural event into a disaster, in other words, is people's vulnerability—their poverty, the discrimination they experience, their unfulfilled rights. And when a natural event strikes where people are living in a vulnerable situation—whisking away what little they have—it drags them deeper into poverty.

How can we cut down the chance of that happening? That's what we're going to explore today. With the right tools, planning, and political will, the risk of disaster can be reduced.

As we go through this exercise, keep in mind the real lives that are at stake. Imagine if it were you, your family, your loved ones who were among the dead, missing, or without a home.

During this exercise, the country we will live in and the roles we'll play are fictional. And while the details of our reality during the next hour or so are not real, the circumstances they represent are.

We are going to simulate the first 48 hours of a disaster. The time is going to whiz by. Every 15 minutes, 24 hours will have passed. Your job is to respond to the crisis—and survive.

And now, let's begin.

You are all residents of the small island country of Takshadam. In a minute I'll pass out sheets that describe it in more detail. But for now know that Takshadam is a developing country where wealth is divided unequally. The majority of residents are very poor, living day to day, fishing, farming, and caring for their livestock. The small group of wealthy residents is largely associated with the government.

The population is split almost equally between two provinces. To the west is the small and densely populated province of Metropoli, where the capital and most government institutions lie. To the east is the province of Remotali—vast and with few roads or public services.

I would now like to introduce you to the different segments of Takshadam's population in the room with us today.

[Point to the government.] Here is the government of Takshadam. Its members include the prime minister and heads of federal agencies that deal with security, public health, and transportation—all especially important during emergencies. But in the past, most government officials have shown a low level of commitment to helping communities

during crises. And when they have stepped up to the job, they have tended to favor the elite in Metropoli Province, since that is where many of them reside.

[Point to TAFS.] Here we have Takshadam Agency for Food Security, known to everyone as TAFS. It is a local aid group based in Remotali and supported by international donors. Its mission is to help the poorest communities prepare for the seasonal storms that batter the island, wiping out their harvests and spoiling their water supplies. TAFS, with some government assistance, has built a series of emergency shelters elevated above flood levels in Remotali. It has also helped scores of villages in Remotali to cover their wells and construct storage tanks to keep their water safe. Recently, TAFS began helping communities in Metropoli, too, by building an emergency food warehouse there.

[Point to Remotali.] Over here we have the residents of Remotali. Many of them are farmers or fishermen, and most of them are poor. Despite that, the province has strong local leaders. They have worked with TAFS and a few of the responsive government officials to help their communities find ways to produce more food and prepare for the storms that have been hitting the island with increased intensity as climate change upsets the familiar weather patterns.

[Point to Metropoli.] And here are the people of Metropoli, many of whom live in slums crowded around the country's capital where clean water is scarce in their neighborhoods. Many of them eke out a living as day laborers, having no land or fishing boats of their own. But Metropoli is also home to wealthy urbanites and the families of influential government employees who can afford cars and enjoy the security that comes with living in well-built houses on high ground.

Getting to know your group (15 minutes)

We are now going to pass out situation sheets to each of

SPEAKER 1:

your groups, describing your particular circumstances. We are also going to give each group a set of emergency supply cards. The cards with blue circles represent water. The number 1 on each one means it is worth 1,000 gallons of water. Those with brown squares represent shelter. They are marked with a three, which means each card is equal to three single-family shelters. And those that are plain white represent food—in this case, rice. Each is marked with a 10, indicating it is worth 10 25-pound sacks of rice.

Not all of you get the same number of cards. Their distribution depends on how seriously your group takes its responsibility to prepare for and prevent disasters.

Remotali, which has worked hard over the years to plan so that its residents are not as badly affected by storms, gets 15 cards. Metropoli, whose wealthy residents and government officials have tended to ignore the needs of the poorest there, gets five cards. The government gets only 10 cards because it, too, has failed overall to help the country prepare for and prevent disasters. But TAFS, being smart and dedicated to preventing future disasters, gets 20. Depending on the roles each of you is playing, you may want to hoard your group's cards, distribute them to villagers, commandeer them from others, or negotiate for their use. Your cards are yours to control. Remember, they represent critical resources that will help keep you alive. But they are just a tool: if your group runs out of cards, for whatever reason, then it's up to you to think of other steps you can take to help meet your group's emergency needs. Your survival depends on making sure you have enough shelter and clean water.

We'll give you 15 minutes to get to know your circumstances and your group members. As you read through your situation sheets, contemplate how you might use your emergency supplies—and keep them safe.

As events unfold, these are the two questions you must try and answer:

- What are your top priorities in dealing with this emergency?
- What is your plan of action?

And remember, this is a role-playing game. Be creative with the parts you have been assigned and the problems you encounter.

[The speakers pass out the situation sheets and the emergency supply cards to each of the groups. The speakers should remind participants that this is a role-playing game. For it to work well, players need to use their imaginations. They need to interact with those in their own group as well as with players from the other groups.]

Newsflash 1 (15 minutes)

[After the groups have had 15 minutes to absorb the details in their situation sheets, Speaker 2 interrupts with this announcement:]

Newsflash! Cyclone Noru slammed into the island of

SPEAKER 2:

Takshadam today with winds up to 130 miles per hour and torrential rains across the entire country. A 20-foot tidal surge flooded coastal villages. Early reports indicate that 30,000 people are dead—many of them in Metropoli where government officials have failed to build shelters and develop

evacuation plans despite repeated promises. An estimated 200,000 homes have been destroyed. As international aid groups announced plans to send relief goods, the ministry of transportation reported that flooding and debris have closed the airport indefinitely. Roads leading to the capital have been washed out, and the main port is heavily damaged and inaccessible to any but the smallest boats.

Each group must now decide how to respond to the cyclone. The storm has swept away some of your emergency resources, so we'll be collecting two or three emergency resource cards from each group in a moment. The next half hour will represent the first 48 hours following the storm's landfall.

In an actual emergency, an effective response often depends on people from different organizations and communities working with each other. We encourage you to figure out your plan of action by working with other groups in this room.

Similar to a real disaster, there are no detailed instructions on what you should do. Each group needs to make its own decisions, and that means recognizing—and using—the strengths and abilities of people within your group. Posted at the end of the room is a list of the resources that are still available in Takshadam. I'll read it to you.

[Speaker 1 reads the resources sheet.]

Now you may begin. And remember, there are two questions you need to answer:

- What are your top priorities in dealing with this emergency?
- What is your plan of action?

[Speakers collect one water, shelter, and food card from each group.]

Newsflash 2 (15 minutes)

[After the groups have wrestled with the early consequences of Cyclone Noru, Speaker 2 interrupts with a second newsflash, which triggers action that will last for 15 minutes:]

Newsflash! Many islanders on storm-battered Takshadam

SPEAKER 2:

are facing a new disaster as they scramble to find clean drinking water. Salt and contaminated water from a massive tidal surge triggered by Cyclone Noru have polluted many of the country's ponds and shallow wells, which are the main sources of drinking water. The ministry of health has reportedly placed tight restrictions on fresh water still available from the filtration plant in the capital in Metropoli, limiting it to government officials and their families only. The water

crisis threatens to increase the death toll from the storm—particularly in Metropoli where government officials have done nothing in recent years to make community wells storm-resistant. Without alternatives, many people in Metropoli are being forced to rely on contaminated sources. The risk of a cholera outbreak from drinking dirty water is skyrocketing. The latest reports indicate the storm killed 42,000 people, the vast majority of them from Metropoli where there was no safe place to flee the tidal surge.

With this new wave of bad news, 24 hours have now passed

SPEAKER 1:

since the storm hit and you have lost more of your emergency resources. We'll be collecting more emergency resource cards from each group.

[Speakers collect one supply card of each type from each group. Metropoli and the government do not have any shelter cards.]

Discussion (15 minutes)

[The speakers prepare to end the game and begin a discussion with the players about the experience. Speaker 2 reads this announcement:]

Forty-eight hours have now passed. Everyone, please take

SPEAKER 2:

a seat with your group. You've done all you can do. Now it's time to assess the situation.

|| [Pause]

We've just received the latest reports on Cyclone Noru: 53,000 people have been killed, with more than 90 percent of them in Metrolopi. Many more women died than men—likely because in this country women are not taught to swim and their customary long skirts restrict their movements. About 40,000 people are still missing. And 650,000 people are homeless.

|| [Pause]

SPEAKER 1:

We've brought you all back together so we can discuss this shared experience. We'd like to begin by inviting you to talk about what happened in each of your groups. Let's start by finding out which group has the most emergency supply cards. What does that tell you about how well—or poorly—that group met the emergency needs of the people of Takshadam? What does it tell you about the planning and preparation this group may have done in advance, knowing that the people of Takshadam are highly vulnerable to disasters?

Questions the speakers could ask about the cards:

- If the government has cards left, do you think it did all it could to help the people of Takshadam? What else could it have done?
- Should Remotali have shared some of its cards with Metropoli?

Other questions the speakers can consider asking:

- What challenges did you face in responding to the disaster?
- What could the groups have done differently that would help lessen the impacts of this storm on vulnerable people in Takshadam?
- What role does preparation play in reducing people's risk to disaster? What role does preparation play in emergency response?
- What could you have done to be better prepared?
- What steps could be taken in the future so the same disaster does not occur the next time a storm hits?
- How realistic were some of the measures you took?
- What differences did you notice among the groups and how they responded to the emergency?

Closing (five minutes)

SPEAKER 2:

It's been really interesting hearing everyone's ideas. We thought we'd share some of the observations we made as we walked around—particularly as they compare to actual emergency responses.

[The speakers should now refer to the “What Happens in a Disaster” tip sheet so they can link what they heard with points on the sheet. For example, did the speakers notice the players encountering any of the following?

- There are logistical challenges to getting aid when roads and bridges are washed out.
- Wealthy or well-connected people get help first.
- There is limited or no access to food, water, and shelter.
- Children are lost; families are separated.
- Communication lines are down; people can't get information.
- The government wants the military to control the distribution of supplies.
- Communities have no say in how the emergency response is carried out.
- The government has not helped people prepare for annual cyclones.

And the speakers could say this: Just like in a real emergency, here today I heard this group grappling with the problem of XX. This is actually very realistic, and it's quite common for XX to happen. (Read corresponding bullet point from “What Happens in a Disaster” tip sheet on page 13.)

Closing (five minutes)

SPEAKER 1:

Responding to disasters when they occur is a crucial part of Oxfam's humanitarian mission. Saving lives, protecting the health of disaster survivors and upholding their dignity, and providing support for communities to build back better than before continue to be top priorities. But finding ways to help communities prepare for emergencies and prevent natural events from becoming disasters is the cutting edge of Oxfam's work.

As you may have begun to see through this exercise, there is much a community can do to keep people safe in the face of natural events like cyclones. In Remotali—with its network of shelters and covered water supplies—most families survived the storm. But in Metropoli, where the government had turned its back on citizens and made no effort to help them

prepare, the death toll was shockingly high. And as always, it was poor people who were hit hardest.

Louis Romano, an Oxfam partner who has a great deal of experience with disasters, puts it this way:

“We’ve found that not all of society is prone to disaster. Rather, it is a certain section of society: the poorest. Those without access to basic services. Those without well-constructed homes. Those living on the banks of rivers, at the edges of ravines, at the feet of volcanoes.”

Oxfam tackles these problems from several angles. Some of the approaches are practical, such as working with communities to store food and seeds safely in regions where harsh weather and pest infestations can lead to devastating food shortages. Or improving water sources in areas where droughts frequently decimate crops and livestock. Or training people to become emergency responders in regions prone to floods or earthquakes.

But reducing the risks people face from disasters also requires systemic change. Oxfam works with communities to advocate that national governments and international agencies put resources into reducing those risks—not just responding to disasters after they have occurred. In El Salvador, for example, an Oxfam partner co-authored a law that for the first time requires that disaster preparedness be incorporated into development planning.

But most important is addressing the root cause of disaster: poverty. For Oxfam, that includes pushing wealthy nations to lift the crippling burden of debt from impoverished countries, helping strengthen the voices of women and other vulnerable and disenfranchised groups, and assisting marginalized communities around the world through microfinance programs.

We hope that your experience here today has helped you think in a new way about disasters—and how people can avoid them when they have a chance to exercise their basic human rights to life, liberty, and security.

If this simulation affected you—and as I look around the room here today, I can see that it has—then do something to make a change. Today. Before you leave. Start by joining Oxfam’s e-Community. By taking this simple step, you’ll receive updates on the issues you care about and learn about ways you can make a difference, from calling for legislative change to educating your peers.

If you and your group are interested in fundraising, you may also consider donating money to our Global Emergencies Fund. This fund enables Oxfam to respond immediately to emergencies. It also enables Oxfam to work on reducing people’s vulnerability to disaster before it strikes.

And last, you can educate those around you on issues of poverty. Poor people suffer from emergencies most. We can do something about that, but we need your voice and the voices of those around you to call for lasting change. Hold your own Oxfam America emergency simulation or an Oxfam America Emergency *Hunger Banquet* event. We have all the tools you need.

You can make a difference. Please join us. And thank you all for coming and participating.

Tip sheet: What happens in a disaster

This tip sheet lists some of the problems that survivors and aid workers typically confront in the aftermath of a disaster. Speakers can use this sheet to help guide the discussion at the end of the game by identifying which of these occurrences happened during the simulation.

Aid response barriers

- Staff members with the local aid group could be struggling with the consequences of the storm themselves: they could be missing family members, their houses could have been destroyed, and damaged roads could prevent them from getting to their office.
- With limited local supplies of food and clothing, aid groups may have to source relief goods abroad, delaying their delivery.
- Coordination between local aid groups and international ones could be difficult.
- Relying on contributions from donors, international aid groups may not be certain how much money they will have available for an emergency response, which impedes their ability to plan programs.

Logistical barriers

- Access to clean water, food, electricity, medications, or health facilities could be cut off.
- Families might be separated and children lost.
- If communication networks are down—no cell phones, no landlines—people will have a difficult time getting accurate information about who has been affected and what the needs are.
- With bridges washed out and a limited number of helicopters available, the logistics of delivering aid could be highly complicated.
- Many people could be unreachable.
- The banks could be closed, preventing people from getting their money.
- Airports could be shut down, making it difficult to evacuate people and deliver emergency supplies.

Political influence

- For political reasons, governments could delay declaring a state of emergency, which in turn delays the assistance people need.
- Wealthy and well-connected people tend to get help first.
- Governments may deny visas, making it impossible for aid workers from international aid groups to enter the country.
- Governments may want the military to control distribution of relief supplies.
- Governments may prohibit the use of satellite phones, often the only means of communication between the affected area and the outside world.

Conflict and insecurity

- Conflict can accompany the distribution of aid. Vehicles could be hijacked, relief goods stolen, and aid workers attacked.
- There could be a great deal of insecurity in the country, preventing aid groups from using an effective response: the distribution of cash to families in need. Too much cash in one place could trigger theft and violence.

Community action

- The local disaster management committee might implement its evacuation plan.
- Communities that take in displaced people may need the support of aid groups, too, to handle the unexpected burden of the new arrivals.
- In the rush to meet basic needs, aid groups could fail to allow local people the chance to guide the response in a way that would suit them best.

Situation sheet: Government of Takshadam



Country overview

You are all residents of the small island nation of Takshadam in the Indian Ocean. It's a developing country whose wealth is divided unequally. The majority of residents are very poor, living day to day, fishing, farming, and caring for their livestock. The small group of wealthy residents is largely associated with the government.

About 200 miles long and 150 miles wide, the island has a tropical climate and lies very close to sea level. Wrapped in broad beaches, the island's main crop is rice—the staple food for Takshadam's four million residents. The population is split almost equally between two provinces. To the west is the small and densely populated province of Metropoli, where the capital and most government institutions lie. To the east is the province of Remotali—vast and with few roads or public services.

Severe seasonal storms hammer the island, occasionally flooding the rice paddies with salt water and ruining large portions of the harvest. With climate change, the intensity of the storms has increased. In two of the past five years, Takshadam's harvests, which have been thinning in recent years, have been badly hit. Much of the soil on the island has lost its fertility, and many farmers are too poor to afford fertilizer. As a consequence, the islanders have been experiencing periodic food shortages, particularly affecting poor people. The shortages have also placed a strain on families' efforts to secure enough grain for the poultry that many of them keep and depend on to supplement their diets.

Women carry a heavy load in Takshadam. They tend to be overworked and undervalued. They are responsible not only for raising children but for most of the labor that ensures their families' survival: fetching water, gathering wood for cooking fires, tending the rice paddies. Takshadam's culture typically prohibits women from holding positions of authority, though among the elite in the capital, women have secured some government positions.

Government of Takshadam

It has been a tough year for the prime minister and his cabinet. Your treasury reserves are nearly gone, and food shortages are becoming a serious problem. You have weighed the idea of raising taxes, but with the social unrest sparked by the scramble for food, you've decided to wait another year.

As a government, you do not have many of the important resources you need—starting with well-educated and efficient staff members within your ministries. Many of you landed your jobs not because of your qualifications, but because of who you know. Your ministries have become bloated bureaucracies, requiring layers of paperwork to respond to even the simplest requests. Small bribes can help speed things up, and many of you now routinely expect payoffs from citizens anytime you perform a service of any sort for them. As a consequence, islanders have little faith that you are representing their interests in any way.

But that perception is not entirely accurate. There are some among you who are dedicated public servants, working within the system while striving to meet the needs of Takshadam's people. And you have good relationships with local leaders, who are dismissed as insignificant by others in your administration. Some of you even have influence with the prime minister, though he and his top officials are wary of the good things you keep saying about TAFS—the local aid group that has done so much to help the province of Remotali. They are suspicious of the financial support TAFS gets from international donors. Is TAFS using that money to seed unrest? In some respects, the prime minister and his inner circle view TAFS as competition—and its good works as an indictment of the government's lackluster performance.

Broken promises are part of the problem: you as top officials have vowed many times to help Takshadam prepare for the increasingly intense storms that hit the island every year. You have told citizens about your plans to build shelters and secure emergency food and water supplies. And you have even created a new cabinet position—a minister of emergency management. But that's as far as you have gotten: talk and the appointment of another rich crony.

For the residents of Remotali, your lack of action doesn't have such serious consequences. Over the years, they have steadily worked with TAFS to build a network of shelters and safe wells that have helped to save many lives in the most severe storms. But for many of the people of Metropoli, where your capital lies, your indifference has been deadly. Their poverty has left them totally exposed to the dangers that high winds and flooding bring. Their makeshift houses collapse. Whatever stores of food they may have had are swept away. And their water sources—shallow wells that dot the slums where they live—become polluted.

In your defense, you point to the new grain warehouse on the outskirts of the capital now stocked with an emergency supply of rice. It's a TAFS warehouse, but you expedited the permitting process and have told the citizens of Metropoli that ensuring its construction was one of your top priorities—proof of your commitment to their future safety. What you don't tell them is that your minister of emergency management is developing new rules for the distribution of the rice during a crisis—rules that favor Metropoli's elite. The unspoken rule of your government is that during a disaster, your interests—and those of the privileged people connected with you—come first.

Snapshot of the Takshadam government

CONDITIONS:

- Treasury reserves are nearly gone.
- Food shortages are looming across the country.
- Social unrest has prevented the raising of taxes.
- Bureaucracy stymies efficiency.
- Bribery by government officials is widespread.
- There has been no planning or preparation for the frequent storms.
- Government officials favor the elite.

RESOURCES:

- Some public servants are honest and dedicated.
- Some government officials have good relationships with local leaders.
- A new grain warehouse sits on the outskirts of the capital.

Situation sheet: TAFS (Takshadam Agency for Food Security)



Country overview

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About 200 miles long and 150 miles wide, the island has a tropical climate and lies very close to sea level. Wrapped in broad beaches, the island's main crop is rice—the staple food for Takshadam's four million residents. The population is split almost equally between two provinces. To the west is the small and densely populated province of Metropoli, where the capital and most government institutions lie. To the east is the province of Remotali—vast and with few roads or public services.

Severe seasonal storms hammer the island, occasionally flooding the rice paddies with salt water and ruining large portions of the harvest. With climate change, the intensity of the storms has increased. In two of the past five years, Takshadam's harvests, which have been thinning in recent years, have been badly hit. Much of the soil on the island has lost its fertility, and many farmers are too poor to afford fertilizer. As a consequence, the islanders have been experiencing periodic food shortages, particularly affecting poor people. The shortages have also placed a strain on families' efforts to secure enough grain for the poultry that many of them keep and depend on to supplement their diets.

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TAFS overview

You are like the little engine that could—a determined local aid organization that sees no problem as insurmountable, even when financial resources are tight. Early on, you recognized the benefits in helping the people of Remotali plan for the seasonal storms that had so frequently left death and destruction. The secret behind your successes—and there have been many in the 22 years since you opened shop in Remotali—is the inclusion of villagers in every phase of every project that you undertake. When they come to you with problems, you work out the solutions together.

And that accounts for the hundreds of wells across Remotali that now have covers. During the storms, the caps keep contaminated floodwater from spoiling the villagers' drinking sources. You worked with them to improve those wells. You helped them design, site, and build a network of storm shelters to offer families protection when they flee the storms. And together with a large group of farmers, you're

helping them experiment with a new system of growing rice that has dramatically increased their yields. You bought the surplus from a recent harvest and have now filled two large warehouses—one in Remotali and the other in Metropoli—with emergency stockpiles of rice.

International donors have been impressed by your initiative and increasingly have helped to fund some of your work. During extreme emergencies, they have even agreed to supply relief goods—tarps for shelter and extra food—that are not readily available on the island. But distribution of those supplies remains a challenge, as you own only a handful of trucks, and the few rough roads that lace Remotali wash out during hard rains.

Nevertheless, you have become adept at crisis management, particularly since hiring a disaster management coordinator a few years ago. His job has been to work closely with village elders and some of the more responsive government officials to prepare for disaster response and to take steps that can help prevent natural events from turning into disastrous situations for the region's most vulnerable populations. He is responsible for planning how TAFS will respond to any serious storms that affect Remotali. He keeps tabs on the availability of emergency supplies, the reliability of transportation routes, and the status of communication systems to try and help meet people's basic needs. His job is to make sure the distribution of Remotali's limited supplies is efficient—and remains equitable.

But for all your good work, you have met with some resistance from top government officials. They are suspicious of the close relationship you have with village elders. Are you seeding opposition to the government's tight control over the country? Are your international donors secretly funding plans for an overthrow? And some of Takshadam's ministers are jealous, too: you are getting all the credit for community projects they would like to claim responsibility for. This dynamic has led to a climate of mistrust—and occasional sabotage by the highest officials. It has also meant that it's been virtually impossible for you to expand your programs into Metropoli, where the capital sits, despite the dire need that exists there. The one exception is the rice warehouse you built—something the government now has its eye on for its own uses.

Snapshot of TAFS

CONDITIONS:

- TAFS has a long history of working well with local leaders in Remotali.
- Roads are limited in number and none are paved.
- TAFS has a prickly relationship with the government.

RESOURCES:

- Some beat-up trucks, not always reliable, are available for transporting goods.
- International donors have promised emergency supplies of food and shelter materials.
- A network of storm shelters dots the province.
- Water supplies in many local wells are safe because the wells are covered.
- Two large warehouses of rice are available—one in each province.
- A well-trained disaster management coordinator is part of your staff.

Situation sheet: Remotali Province



Country overview

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Remotali overview

Remotali is a poor province with a proud spirit. There are two activities most of you here do to earn your livings: you fish and you farm. Small fishing boats, most of them without motors, line the broad beaches that stretch between the coastal communities. The catch off the shores of Remotali feeds people across the country. But lately, the amount of fish has been shrinking, and scientists are predicting that global warming could bring about a complete collapse of the local fisheries.

On land, those of you who farm are also struggling. The government has paid only fleeting attention to the agricultural needs of Remotali. Hunger has become a familiar feeling in many households, especially when ill-timed storms lash the island and ruin the rice crop.

Despite these hardships, you have remained resourceful and hard-working—a standard set by village elders who command a great deal of respect, though they have no official authority in the eyes of the government. Guided by your elders, you

have always embraced the opportunities that come your way, and one of them was the arrival of TAFS 22 years ago. Now a well-established local aid group, it is committed to ensuring that you, the people of Remotali, have the tools you need to take care of yourselves—and to prosper.

Soon after it opened its doors, TAFS began focusing its attention on the devastation that cyclones brought to the island. Working closely together, you and TAFS set about finding ways to prevent the death and destruction that everyone thought were inevitable. Today, the fruits of that joint effort can be seen throughout the province.

Well-stocked and sturdy storm shelters now dot the coastal communities, providing safe refuge for villagers fleeing the high winds and tidal surges of cyclones that in the past have killed many of Remotali's residents. And in about a third of the villages, community wells have been covered with concrete caps and connected to large storage tanks. The caps keep contaminated floodwater from sloshing into the drinking supply, and the tanks allow clean water to be stored for times when demand is extra high. In the past, when storms have damaged local water outlets, the consequences have been swift and deadly. Waterborne diseases, like cholera, took their toll.

With the help of TAFS and support from an undersecretary in Takshadam's ministry of agriculture, some of you farmers launched an experimental rice-growing initiative. It has now paid off with striking results. Your yields were high enough that TAFS was able to buy the surplus and fill two large warehouses, one in Remotali and one in Metropoli, with emergency supplies of rice—a first for the island.

In the past, when disaster struck, you suffered greatly. The Takshadam government had few resources, and even less inclination, to help its neighbors in the east. Now, through your own hard work and smart planning, you are in an envious position: you may be poor, but you are prepared. When the next cyclone hits, you will have your escape routes memorized. You will have designated some high ground to which you can lead your livestock for safety. You will have shelters for weathering the storm and clean water to drink.

But with that preparation comes obligation. Many of you have relatives living in slums around the capital in Metropoli, where the government has done little to protect them from the onslaught of storms. In times of crisis, far-flung families look to each other for help, and Metropoli residents have come to lean heavily on you—a situation that severely strains the limited resources of your province.

Snapshot of Remotali

CONDITIONS:

- Fish stocks are shrinking.
- The soil is poor and harvests are slim.
- Hunger is increasing.
- Frequent storms cause widespread damage.
- Relatives in Metropoli rely on family members in Remotali during crises.

RESOURCES:

- A local aid agency is headquartered here.
- Many village wells are covered and the water kept safe during storms.
- Local leaders are strong and community-minded.
- A series of well-stocked storm shelters dots the province.
- Evacuation routes have been planned.
- An emergency supply of rice is stored in a warehouse.
- Corrals on higher ground are available for livestock during floods.

Situation sheet: Metropoli Province



Country overview

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Metropoli overview

The province of Metropoli is one of stark contrasts and an unfair distribution of wealth. The richest people in the country live in Takshadam's capital, which is here in Metropoli, right on the coast. Yet the vast majority of you are poor and undereducated, living in the slums that surround the city and in the agricultural areas beyond it. Many of you left extended families back in Remotali and moved here with spouses and children to look for better opportunities. But they are few.

You are day laborers, working on other people's boats and in their fields. The work is physically demanding, and the wages you earn are barely enough to feed your families. And there is no money—ever—to improve the condition of your homes. These are shacks, made of corrugated metal and thatch, and they often partially collapse in strong winds.

One of the most challenging problems you face is access to clean water. There is a small treatment plant in the capital, but most of this water is siphoned off for the elite. The vast majority of you depend on crumbling wells scattered through

your neighborhoods. Many of you have diarrhea from drinking this water, but you have no choice. Consuming it is better than going without—as has happened before when storms have swept the island, polluting your wells with salty ocean water and waste from the flooded outhouses that crowd your neighborhoods. During those times, many of you have died.

Despite all this, your social networks remain strong and there is a deep sense of family obligation and a willingness to help those more needy than you. This extends to your many relatives in Remotali, who feel as you do. Most of your local leaders are honorable and well intentioned, though they have little influence with the government, which does not recognize your system of customary law.

A small group of you, the richest, are largely untouched by the hardships of most of Metropoli's residents. You have built strong homes on higher ground, out of reach of coastal flooding. You can easily afford the hike in food prices. You are the ones with family members well placed in government offices. And they make sure that you are taken care of.

All of you are wary of the seasonal storms. The wealthy among you have your own emergency strategies: private stores of food and water stashed in your family compounds and a well-planned escape route. But the rest of you face the fury of the storms with no defenses. After each one of them, the government has made a show of promising to better prepare the island, and your province in particular, for the next crisis, but it has failed to follow through.

There are no emergency shelters in Metropoli and no backup stores of clean water. Only TAFS, the local aid agency to the east in Remotali, has concerned itself with your survival. Recently, it built a large grain warehouse on the outskirts of the capital and stocked it with an emergency supply of rice—a move many in the government have eyed with greed. They figure that rice can be commandeered for their own political advantage.

Snapshot of Metropoli

CONDITIONS:

- Most people live in slums packed with flimsy homes.
- The elite live in sturdy houses on high ground.
- Crumbling wells are the source of drinking water for many people.
- Outhouses tend to overflow during times of heavy rain.
- There are no storm shelters anywhere in the province.
- There are no public emergency supplies of clean water.
- Food shortages have been plaguing many families.

RESOURCES:

- A small filtration plant provides a limited amount of clean water.
- TAFS has stocked a warehouse with an emergency supply of rice.
- Remotali residents have helped their relatives in Metropoli during past emergencies.
- The elite have private stores of emergency supplies like rice and water.
- The elite have devised escape routes for themselves.

Identity tickets

These identity tickets describe the roles participants will be playing. We suggest you determine how many tickets to print out based on the absolute minimum number of participants you expect. If more show up, they can play the role of children in Metropoli and Remotali, so you may want to print out some extras of those (additional tickets located on the last page). Key roles are identified with an “*.”

GOVERNMENT

Prime minister *



You have held this position for 15 years—after promising a term of no longer than seven years. You are working out a way to change the rules of government so that the post is yours for life. This requires iron-fisted control over your top cabinet members.

GOVERNMENT

Minister of local government



This position was created as a way to quiet the unrest simmering among Takshadam's poor people who claimed their voices and concerns were not being heard.

Though the prime minister and other cabinet members consider the post a formality only, you are sincere about your work with village elders and take your job very seriously.

GOVERNMENT

Minister of public health *



A key part of your job is to ensure the safety of Takshadam's drinking water. You are deeply troubled that there is so much sickness in the country because people don't have access to clean water. But you have few resources to improve the water supply for anyone. To keep your job, however, you have scrimped and scraped to ensure that top officials and their extended families have a clean supply.

GOVERNMENT

Minister of transportation *



You make the rules about who gets to use Takshadam's airport and central port at the capital. You can be bribed—and you let everyone know it.

GOVERNMENT

Minister of emergency management *



Your post has just been created. You have no experience in emergency management, but you are good friends with the prime minister, who recommended you for this job. Your plan is to downplay the death and destruction that severe storms often bring and to let the military run the show when there's a disaster.

GOVERNMENT

Government public relations chief



You put a positive spin on every fumble the government makes. And you find ways to claim the good work of others for your bosses. A big part of your job is to downplay the seriousness of disasters to avoid interference by meddling groups. You consider TAFS—the local aid agency funded by international donors—to be one of the worst meddlers. During times of emergency, you withhold critical information from TAFS so your bosses won't look bad.

GOVERNMENT

Average government staff member

You are a petty bureaucrat. You have little authority inside the ministry where you work, but that doesn't stop you from acting important and domineering in your neighborhood when you go home.



GOVERNMENT

Stellar government staff member

Despite the bureaucracy and low-grade corruption that pervades Takshadam's ministries, you believe in the importance of public service and that government can—and should—do good things for people. You try to help citizens find solutions to their problems.



TAFS

Executive director of Takshadam Agency for Food Security (TAFS) *

You are a native of Remotali who managed to go abroad for an education and returned to help the people in your province improve their lives. You have excellent relationships with the village elders. You also work well with the minister of local government, who has introduced you to some lower level officials who admire the things TAFS has been able to accomplish.



TAFS

Head of programs for Takshadam Agency for Food Security (TAFS) *

You work closely with the executive director of TAFS. Together, you make a strong and effective team. Unlike many in Takshadam, you believe that women should play a more equal role with men in community affairs. In the programs you administer, you strive to ensure that women's voices are heard and that they have active and important roles.



TAFS

Needs assessment expert for Takshadam Agency for Food Security (TAFS)

Following a disaster, your job is to determine the needs of each community and to report that information to the TAFS office. And though TAFS is not actually working in Metropoli, you try to get a feeling for the needs there, too, because you know many people in Metropoli will lean on their family members in Remotali for help. The numbers you gather about ruined homes, lost boats, and flooded fields often differ strikingly from those the government announces.



TAFS

Disaster management coordinator for Takshadam Agency for Food Security (TAFS)

Your job is to work closely with everyone at TAFS to prepare for disaster response and to take steps that can help prevent natural events from turning into disasters. You are also responsible for planning how TAFS will respond to the serious storms that hit your island. You pay particular attention to the needs of women, which are often overlooked in emergencies. You also coordinate directly with village elders and some of the more responsive government officials—including the military, if necessary.



TAFS

Program officer for Takshadam Agency for Food Security (TAFS)

Like the head of TAFS programs, you are a big proponent of giving women a greater role in their communities. You design your programs—including those that relate to emergencies—to give women a chance to prove their competence. Of course, you're mindful of men's feelings about all of this, too. You work wisely, and with sensitivity, to achieve a balance.



REMOTALI

Village elder in Remotali *

As a man, you are deeply concerned about your community, but you have little faith that the government will ever take much interest in its well-being—even though the minister of local government has visited your village on several occasions. You are ready to embrace new initiatives that might help improve the lives of your people, but you are wary about giving women too much of a role in community decision-making. However, you respect the staff members at TAFS and listen carefully to their ideas. You have been through many emergencies and have good ideas about how to cope.



REMOTALI

Member of a women's self-help group in Remotali

Being a member of this group has turned your life around. With a loan from the group, you have started a small business that has allowed you to earn enough money to ensure that your family now has plenty to eat. Your success has greatly impressed your husband, and he has begun talking your skills up among his friends. You have found a new confidence—and an urge to help other women achieve some of the independence you have now experienced. You are no longer afraid to speak out and voice your opinion.



REMOTALI

Poor farmer in Remotali

Your last rice harvest was a little better than some of the previous ones, but still barely enough to feed your family. You have high hopes for the new harvest because of the help you got from TAFS staff members: they taught you how to fertilize your fields with dung from your small herd of cows and the manure scraped from the yard where your hens scratch. If the harvest is good, you may even have a little extra money to repair the thatch roof on your house and buy the anti-parasite medicine your treasured animals sorely need.



REMOTALI

Poor fisherman in Remotali

Your boat is barely seaworthy after 14 years of heavy use—especially after being severely damaged in a storm two years ago. You continue to patch the leaks as best you can—and pray. You desperately need new nets, but the size of your catch has shrunk so much in recent years that you are barely earning enough to feed your family. There is no money for new nets, so you, your wife, and your children spend long hours mending the ones that you have.



REMOTALI

Poor mother in Remotali

Four of your five children are still living—and for this you are grateful. You continue to mourn the youngest one, who drowned last year when a tidal surge from a cyclone flooded your village. You had all fled for safety to a nearby shelter, but somehow he had wandered off in the chaos and was swept away by the high water. You and your husband have spent the past year trying to restore what you lost in that storm. Your house was severely damaged, but you did manage to lead your cows to safety before the worst of the storm hit. Your cows have been providing you with some essential milk this past year, but your family has been hungry often.



REMOTALI

Child in Remotali

You are 8 years old and devoted to your older brother, who is 11. The two of you spend a fair amount of time helping your mother with some of the household chores—fetching water; gathering firewood; watching your younger siblings, of which there are three. You hope to go to school sometime soon, but your parents do not have enough money to pay both your school fees and those of your older brother. For now, he gets to go, but you are learning to read a little with his help.



METROPOLI

Village elder in Metropoli *

As a man, you are deeply concerned about your community, but you have little faith that the government will ever take much interest in its well-being—even though the minister of local government has visited your village on several occasions. You are ready to embrace new initiatives that might help improve the lives of your people, but you are wary about giving women too much of a role in community decision-making. You have somehow survived the worst storms the island has seen and have witnessed more loss and sadness than most people can bear. You are angry that the government has invested virtually nothing in helping your community prepare for future storms.



METROPOLI

Wealthy resident in Metropoli *

You live in a neighborhood well above the level of floodwaters that often swamp much of the capital city when a cyclone hits. Your house is well built and designed to be storm resistant. You have a stash of emergency supplies—enough to last for weeks—and plenty of resources to evacuate your extended family, if necessary. Not one of your close friends has ever suffered much as a consequence of any cyclone, and certainly none of them have ever died. Since you hold a high position in the government, you're not worried that your means of making a living will be washed away by any future storm. You'll always have a job and all the money you need.



METROPOLI

Member of women's self-help group in Metropoli

Being a member of this group has turned your life around. With a loan from the group, you have started a small business that has allowed you to earn enough money to ensure that your family now has plenty to eat. Your success has greatly impressed your husband, and he has begun talking your skills up among his friends. You have found a new confidence—and an urge to help other women achieve some of the independence you have now experienced. You are no longer afraid to speak out and voice your opinion.



METROPOLI

Poor day laborer in Metropoli

You pick up jobs wherever you can get them—in the fields of the capital's wealthy landholders, on the boats of fishermen, in the compounds of the elite. You own nothing—not even the shack in which you live. For this, you pay exorbitant rent to a wealthy landlord. You lost your wife and all three of your children in a cyclone four years ago. You remarried and now have two new young children, and your wife is pregnant with a third.



METROPOLI

Poor mother in Metropoli

You are a widow with three children, all under the age of 11. Your husband was killed two years ago while working as a hand on a fishing boat when a cyclone hit. You and your children barely escaped death by fleeing to the compound of the wealthy woman whose laundry you do. She gave you shelter for the duration of the storm. Since the death of your husband, you have found it very difficult to earn enough money to feed your children, and all of you have been living in a shack that you built on land near the beach that the government does not consider habitable.



METROPOLI

Child in Metropoli

You are 6 years old. You spend a fair amount of time helping your mother with some of the household chores, such as fetching water; gathering firewood; and even watching your younger siblings, who are 2 and 3. You hope to go to school sometime soon, but your parents do not have enough money to pay your school fees.



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