

Geography and Economics Activity

**networks**

Asia

The Costs of Natural Disasters

Many countries have beautiful natural landforms and resources that help aid their economies and add to the quality of life for those living in the region. A country's physical geography can also make the area more likely to suffer from natural disasters. For example, a coastal region may be hit by tsunamis or hurricanes. Areas near mountains may suffer from the effects of volcanic eruptions or earthquakes. Landslides and avalanches sometimes occur after these events, changing the land and causing property damage.

Risk of Weather-Related Disasters in Asia

The densely populated coastal areas of the southeast part of Asia are especially at risk for weather-related disasters. The major natural disasters that occur in these areas are mostly due to:

- Weather events such as typhoons, hurricanes, and flooding
- Volcanic eruptions, earthquakes, and tsunamis
- El Niño, which causes lower sea levels east of the region, less monsoon rains in India, and drought in Indonesia

The risk of damage from natural disasters has increased as a result of changes to coastal habitats, such as mangroves and coral reefs, that provide protection against marine flooding. Risk has also increased because crowding in urban areas is pushing the population outward from the urban areas into more disaster-prone areas. In addition, many of the areas have not planned and prepared adequately for such disasters.

According to the Asian Development Bank, the people of Asia are 4 times more likely to be affected by natural disasters than the people of Africa and 25 times more likely than those in Europe or North America. The area's storms, floods, landslides, and other natural disasters threaten the economic progress that has been occurring in some parts of Asia.

Economic Impact

The economic impact to the countries in Asia is not only the cost of damage to homes, businesses, and property. Often as a consequence of the disasters, manufacturing stops or slows during the disaster and after the disaster occurs. Stores lose business and money during the time they have to be closed while recovering from a disaster. Retailers and other businesses also incur repair and rebuilding costs. The earthquake and tsunami that struck Japan in March 2011 cost an estimated \$210 billion in lost profits and repair costs.

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Not only does a disaster itself change a region's economy, but the rebuilding process can change it also. Cleanup, construction, and remodeling professionals are needed in larger numbers after a disaster. Also, some people and businesses cannot work until the rebuilding is complete, so payments for rebuilding and the costs of daily life often are made by insurance companies, government, and other aid sources. Recovering from natural disasters requires many resources from an area and beyond.

The growing awareness of the need for disaster prevention and preparedness has led to new planning initiatives in many Asian countries. Countries in the region are working together to create plans, programs, and legislation that eventually will help millions of people and businesses survive and quickly overcome the effects of a disaster.

Thinking Economically

Directions: Use the text to answer the following questions.

- 1. Explaining** What types of areas are most likely to have hurricanes and tsunamis?

- 2. Identifying** What types of natural disasters are most likely to affect countries in Asia?

- 3. Explaining** How can natural disasters affect the economy of a region?

Researching Activity

Research more about a natural disaster that occurred in Asia in the past five years. What type of disaster was it? What was the extent of the damage? What efforts occurred afterward to help the area recover? Write an essay to present the information you find.