

'When disaster strikes, you have to help': the volunteers in a global crisis

Level: Intermediate

1 Warmer

a. Predict the article by reading the title and the subtitle.

- What do you think this article will be about?

2 Reading the article carefully

a. Now, read the article and see if your predictions were right. Is there anything you strongly agree with or don't agree with in this article? Why? Why not?

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From Syrians helping in Germany's floods to Russian CrossFitters fighting fires, ordinary people helping to deal with the climate crisis

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- 1 When Anas Alakkad from Damascus saw pictures of the flooded German towns on Facebook on Sunday night, he sent messages to Syrian friends around Germany. The 28-year-old, who arrived in Germany as a refugee six years ago, felt he had to try to help.
 - 2 Alakkad and his best friend, Faris Allahham, started by translating messages from German organisations into Arabic. By Monday, they decided to go to the flooded area themselves, a two-and-a-half-hour drive from their homes. He and six other Syrians spent the whole of Tuesday clearing debris from a house in the small town of Sinzig, where at least 12 people died in floods the previous Wednesday. Alakkad and friends attracted more interest on Facebook group. On that Wednesday, the number of Syrian volunteers arriving in the area had doubled. "When disaster strikes, you have to help each other. We all know how important that is," said Alakkad.
- Ms Feng, 53, China**
- 3 When Ms Feng, a former university worker, saw the flood waters hit Zhengzhou last week, she was quick to volunteer to help. She said, "Under such circumstances, I don't think too much, I only try to do what I can."
 - 4 She believes much more can be done to prepare for such events as the climate crisis worsens. She thinks safety education is crucial and should be taught in school. "Our children lack such education, and this is quite frightening. Now the situation is much better with professional rescue teams' help, but I still think the Chinese government can do better at flood prevention." She says that her city is well prepared for fire, with rehearsals every year, but that there is no system to prevent floods.
- Grigory Mochkin, Russia**
- 5 Volunteering has made her feel useful. "I feel happy. Helping others, being needed by others give me a special kind of happiness."
 - 6 When a fire broke out in Yakutsk, the capital of the Yakutia region in north-eastern Siberia, an athletic 32-year-old CrossFit trainer sprang into action. Grigory Mochkin said he became one of hundreds of volunteers to fight the fires because " [the fires] have touched us so closely, the place where we live".
 - 7 Recording a video during a recent trip, he called on CrossFitters around the world to send support to help the volunteers fighting the fires in Yakutia. "CrossFit strong," he said, putting a fist in the air. Mochkin and other volunteers, including other CrossFitters, cover many miles to help control the fires. "It's hard when the smoke blows in our direction," he said. "But in general, for us athletes, it's easier, it's normal for us."
- Beau Gullede, 21, and Annaet Juarez, 25, US**
- 8 Young women serving on the California Conservation Corps' wildland fire say the work is exhausting but rewarding. Beau Gullede, a 21-year-old from California in her second year in the programme, says she was the only woman when she started and felt like she didn't belong. That feeling changed when she was sent out to fight her first real fire in July 2020. She spent 12 hours helping to build a 'fireline' – to stop the flames from moving forward. Now she feels differently. "I was physically exhausted, but I was so happy my body could push through and do anything," she says.
 - 9 Annaet Juarez, 25, is part of an all-female crew and says fighting fires is harder than she imagined, and her team makes the work easier to get through. She says it makes her stronger and know that she is able to do so much more.

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3 Writing comments on social media

a. You have just come across this article on social media.

1. What is the overall idea of the text? Circle the correct sentence a-c.
 - a) Social media is the main cause of an increase in volunteers around the world.
 - b) From floods to fires, all around the world, normal people are choosing to help when there is a natural disaster.
 - c) There will be more and more natural disasters around the world, so it is important to convince people to become volunteers.
2. Read the article again, quickly this time. Underline the things you strongly agree with, and double underline anything you disagree with.

b. Now write a comment that you would post on social media after reading this article. Give your general response to the article, and support this with a couple of points you agree or disagree with. Use the questions to guide you. Remember to use the handy phrases below. Talk about ideas from the text in your own words. Do not copy sentences or phrases directly from the article and remember to be polite.

Handy Phrases for Commenting on Social Media

Posting an opinion:

It seems to me that ...

In my experience, ...

You could say that ...

I think you're/they're right about ...

I agree that ...

As far as I understand, ...

Personally, I think...

I am not sure/convinced that ...

What/Why do you think ...?

c. Read some of your classmate's comments. Reply to someone else's comment on the article. Remember to use Handy Phrases to give your opinion and say why you agree or disagree with them.

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4 Optional homework

- a. Go back to the article and think: who do you know might be interested in it? Then, share the article via social media with them. Tell them what the article is about and why you think they will be interested in it.