HANDOUT 3

Why Poverty Affects the Impact of Earthquakes

What are some of the things that a wealthy country like the United States has that might protect people when earthquakes strike? Here's one idea to get you started:

If you have enough money you can build good, strong buildings. In fact, governments in prosperous places like the United States often set standards for buildings to be sure they are safe. If you don't have much money you might construct a building to a lower standard. A building that's well constructed is less likely to collapse when there's an earthquake than a building that isn't well constructed. One reason so few people died in the 1989 San Francisco earthquake is because fewer buildings collapsed. In Haiti, on the other hand, many buildings collapsed, and people died as a result.

Now make a list with your group of other things that make earthquakes in the United States safer than in Haiti because the United States is a wealthier country.