

Disaster strikes!

Aim: this assembly will help pupils to understand more about disasters, and can be used in response to a new disaster when it happens.

Materials/preparation

- You may wish to use the accompanying *Disaster strikes!* assembly presentation, available to download from christianaid.org.uk/learn
- Space has been left for you to adapt this assembly by inputting information about a new disaster. For updates on disasters affecting people in developing countries, visit news websites and christianaid.org.uk/emergencies
- This assembly requires you to role play an emergency announcement about a disaster (see below) for which you will need the following: an assistant, paper/a glass full of water, a bell.

Assembly presentation

Show slide 1. Once the pupils are seated, you could begin the assembly with some standard announcements. During these, drop all your papers or spill your glass of water everywhere and exclaim 'Oh, what a disaster!' before carrying on as before.

After a minute, another teacher should come in ringing a bell and shouting: 'Emergency! Emergency!' [Use your judgement about how realistically you enact this scenario; if you feel that some children might find this very alarming, make it clear that you are acting and that there is no real emergency.]

You: *What on earth is going on?*

Other teacher: *Oh, nothing is going on here – don't panic. I just heard you saying 'Oh, what a disaster!' when you dropped your papers/water. And I thought you should maybe have a think about what a disaster really is.*

You: *What do you mean?*

Other teacher: *Well, a real disaster is not something to be taken lightly. Real disasters can cause terrible harm to people and the places where they live. Real disasters are usually dangerous and frightening for people living through them. [Turn to pupils.] Let's try to think about a real disaster now.*

You: Ask pupils to close their eyes. *Imagine that you are playing happily at home. Picture your house... your toys... your books... your brothers and sisters. Now imagine there's a loud knocking on the front door. You go to the door and open it. One of your cousins is standing there, and he's out of breath – he's*

obviously been running very fast. 'Quick!' he shouts. 'Floods! Get out now! Run for your lives!' You don't have much time to stop and collect your belongings. What would you grab on your way out of the door – would it be a photo? A favourite teddy, or a game? The hand of your brother or sister, so that you could help him or her to escape the rising water?

Ask the pupils to open their eyes and ask a few to share how they would feel and what they might try to save in the flood.

Show slide 2. *Thankfully emergencies like this do not happen often in Britain. Sometimes we have flooding in some areas, and people's homes and businesses are affected. People's belongings get ruined: photos and personal possessions cannot be easily replaced, although we usually have insurance policies that help us to replace most of our belongings. Luckily we have regular forecasts that help us prepare for bad weather, and there are lots of people on standby to help others get to safety if conditions are really severe.*

Show slide 3. *But this is not the case in every country in the world. Juan David Paz is seven and he lives in a country called Guatemala. One day he experienced a situation almost exactly like the one we imagined just now. His home was destroyed by floods, and because the floodwater rose so quickly, his family had little warning or time to escape.*

Show slide 4. *When Juan David's cousin came running to warn them, Juan David and his family had to escape first on foot and then by boat, leaving all their belongings behind. Like most of you, Juan David made the decision that the most important thing to keep safe from the*

floods was his family. Fortunately they were all ok, though he was separated from his mum, who was sheltering in another place, for more than a week. At one point, Juan David had to climb a tree to escape the water, and saw his house get washed away.

Show slide 5. Juan David says: 'I watched my house fall into the water; it was breaking in half. Lots of my toys were lost. I never used to be scared of the water, but I am now.'

Ask the pupils: how do you think Juan David felt when he heard his cousin's warning? Can you imagine how much he must have missed his mum during the eight days they were apart? How do you think he felt when his house was washed away before his eyes?

It is difficult to imagine these things. But the charity Christian Aid knows that it is very important to try to understand the experiences of people living through disasters, such as a major flood, so that we can understand how best to help people who have been affected by a disaster. Rescuing others during disasters like floods is vital. But in areas where disasters like floods happen a lot, it's really important that people living there are helped to prepare for coping better with disasters in the future.

Christian Aid works with partner organisations all around the world to help people affected by disasters. For example, in Guatemala, where Juan David lives, Christian Aid worked with an organisation called CPDL, which helped families like Juan David's to prepare for flooding and keep themselves and their homes safe.

Show slide 6. Floods happen quite often in this area of Guatemala. CPDL used radio messages and mobile phones to warn people about potential floods. Juan David's cousin had heard one of CPDL's flood warnings on the radio and then he ran to warn Juan David's family to escape.

Show slide 7. CPDL helped communities to draw up maps so that when another flood happens, the people in the most danger can be

helped first. And it also helped communities to work together so that if a serious flood hits, they will all help each other to escape. **Show slide 8.** Hugo Roldán, who lives near Juan David, says: 'If we hadn't had help from CPDL we all would have just looked out for ourselves, but instead we all helped each other.' CPDL provides emergency supplies of food and clean water for families forced to leave their homes because of floods.

Show slide 9. Of course, disasters come in all sorts of shapes and sizes. They might be earthquakes, or hurricanes, or droughts, or floods, or storms. Christian Aid partners work with people affected by disasters around the world to help them with the things they might need. Ask pupils if they can think what things people might need during and after a disaster (answers might include: help finding their families; food; water; medicine; shelter).

And Christian Aid's partners also help people to be better prepared for future disasters so more lives and homes are saved. Ask pupils if they can think of things that might help people cope with future disasters (answers might include: finding ways to warn people about disasters before they happen; having an emergency plan about where to take shelter; building stronger houses to withstand extreme weather; working together to help each other).

You can reflect on a recent disaster/a disaster you are studying. Try to include information about:

- the type of disaster and where it happened
- the number of people affected
- why people were vulnerable
- what is being done to help people cope with the immediate effects of the disaster
- how people will be helped to cope in the longer term and prepare for future disasters.

You: Goodness, I never knew there was so much to learn about disasters. I will think twice before I describe something silly – like some dropped paper/spilt water – as a disaster. And I'll also think about what I can do to help people around the world when disaster strikes.

Prayer

Dear God, after the earthquake, let there be rebuilding. After the rain, let the waters recede. After the suffering, let there be comfort. After the others have forgotten, let me be the one who remembers. Amen.

Action

- Download the Christian Aid *Disaster Strikes!* pack from christianaid.org.uk/learn-disasters-primary (from April 2013).
- You can order the *Disaster Strikes!* poster from schools@christian-aid.org
- When a disaster happens, you can find out more details about Christian Aid's response and what you can do to support it at christianaid.org.uk/emergencies