

## Commentary on the Crazy Climate poster

This information sheet gives you more details about the issues and stories covered in the Crazy Climate poster.

### Floods

Another consequence of global warming, paradoxically, is too much water – flooding. Poor communities in Asia and Central and Latin America are at the mercy of natural disasters such as storms, hurricanes and earthquakes. And as the climate changes, these events are becoming more frequent and severe, causing evermore serious flooding.

### Christian Aid in Bangladesh

In Bangladesh, Christian Aid partner **Friends in Village Development (FIVDB)** is well known for its groundbreaking work in the education sector, and for developing its educational materials. Much of the educational work and training offered by the organisation is aimed at improving the future of various community groups. It also focuses on supporting vulnerable communities, such as those who inhabit remote flood- and earthquake-prone areas, and runs special programmes to help people be better-prepared for disaster. Women and children are prioritised in all its work.



Christian Aid/Eduardo Martino

Gile Begum attends an FIVDB school in Inadnager, a very poor village in Sumanganj. During the 2004 floods, she had to stay on the bed in her house for nearly two months. Gile describes the difficult experience: 'Nobody could really help each other because they were too involved in trying to cope themselves. I was very frightened, especially of the high tide sweeping people away or of people dying. I can't remember if anyone died but some of our neighbours got swept away.'

Gile is very aware of the need to be well prepared for floods. This is as a result of attending school. Gile wants to be a doctor so that she can cure the diseases that are rife in her village. She thinks all children should have the chance to finish school to the end of primary level at least.

In 2005, FIVDB reached more than 90,000 families through various projects, including aid and rehabilitation programmes. These included food distribution; a cash-for-work scheme; providing seeds; rebuilding houses and

'The sea is rising. It's higher than it used to be. And on the way to school we often have to take our shoes off and roll up our trousers because the water often comes up over the bridge. I worked on building up the wall of tyres [to reinforce the riverbank] and I helped fill sandbags to strengthen the bank.'

Chus Echevarría, El Salvador

raising homes, roads and other buildings by building up the earth. It supported those most in need, with an emphasis on women, helping people to set up duck farms and gardens to ensure a regular supply of vegetables to families affected by the floods. With the floods of 2007, FIVDB has again been involved in aid and relief work.

### Christian Aid in El Salvador

Christian Aid partner organisation **Aprodehni** works in three main areas: health, looking after the environment and promoting the rights of children and the family. Long-term projects include constructing wells, water systems and latrines; replanting forests; training women and young people in leadership skills and as health promoters; educating children about their rights; and running vocational workshops for young people. It also helped to rebuild houses following the earthquake in 2001 and carried out reconstruction work following Hurricane Stan in 2005.

Jesús (pronounced *Hay-soos*) Antonio Echevarría, or Chus for short, works with Aprodehni to help protect his community from flooding. Aprodehni teaches people how preventative measures, such as building up the riverbanks with sandbags and replanting the native mangrove trees, can help to stop the river flooding the local houses.



Christian Aid/Amanda Farrant

## Bangladesh

### Background information

Bangladesh is a low-lying country, traversed by numerous rivers. It has a coastline of about 580km along the Bay of Bengal. It is exceedingly flat and subject to annual flooding. The annual floods spread fertile silt across the land, but also frequently sweep away large tracts of land. River erosion is a serious problem as it frequently leaves people homeless or landless.

The only significant area of hilly terrain, constituting less than one-tenth of the nation's territory, is the Chittagong Hill Tracts in the narrow south-eastern part of the country. There are also small hilly areas in the province of Sylhet. In the south-western corner of the country, there is a great tidal mangrove swamp. However, few extensive forests remain in Bangladesh and the wooded area amounts to less than one-sixth of its total area.

### Climate

Bangladesh's climate is of the tropical monsoon variety. In all areas about 80 per cent of the annual rainfall typically occurs in the monsoon period, which lasts from late May to mid-October. In addition to the monsoon rainfall, Bangladesh is subject to devastating cyclones, from April to May and September to November. Temperatures range from an average daytime low of 21°C in the cold season to a maximum of 35°C. January tends to be the coolest month and May the warmest.

Severe floods occurred in 1974, 1988, 1998, 2004 and 2007. Such floods are happening more often.

### Carbon footprint

According to the *UNDP Human Development Report 2006*, the average annual CO<sub>2</sub> emissions per person in Bangladesh are 0.3 tonnes. Compare this figure to the UK (9.4 tonnes) and Ireland (10.3 tonnes) figures.

## El Salvador

### Background information

El Salvador is the smallest, most densely populated and most industrialised country in Central America. It has a landmass of 21,000 sq km. Widespread deforestation in the region has made the terrain more vulnerable to mudslides during times of floods. Natural disasters, such as hurricanes, tropical storms, earthquakes, volcanic eruptions and the El Niño phenomenon, have brought further setbacks to the country's development.

### Climate

El Salvador's climate is tropical in coastal areas and temperate in the highlands. The rainy season occurs between May and October and the dry season between November and April. Temperatures in the capital San Salvador average around 30°C during the day and around 22°C at night, with slight dips in January.

Hurricane Mitch hit Central America in late October 1998, bringing huge amounts of rain and widespread flooding and landslides. The Salvadoran government pronounced 374 people dead or missing. The areas that suffered the most were the low-lying coastal zones, particularly in the floodplain of the Lempa and San Miguel Grande rivers.

Long-term reconstruction was still underway when, in early 2001, El Salvador experienced a series of devastating earthquakes that left more than 250 people dead, 2,000 injured and 1,200 missing. Approximately 16,000 houses were damaged and 4,200 were destroyed. One person in every six was left homeless.

During the same year, the El Niño climatic phenomenon brought drought to the region. Recent El Niños occurred in 2002-2003 and 2006-2007.

### Carbon footprint

According to the *UNDP Human Development Report 2006*, the average annual CO<sub>2</sub> emissions per person in El Salvador are 1.0 tonnes. Compare this figure to the UK (9.4 tonnes) and Ireland (10.3 tonnes) figures.