



We believe in life before death

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**Christian
Aid Week
11-17 May 08**

Time for action on climate change



Christian Aid/Mohammadur Rahman

As sea levels rise in coastal Bangladesh, saltwater is contaminating the water supply of riverbank and coastal communities. These communities also face losing homes to rapidly increasing river erosion

The changing climate is poised to reverse decades of development. Forget making poverty history; poverty is set to become permanent unless we address climate change as a matter of urgency.

Your donations this Christian Aid Week will help communities in the developing world to cope with the effects of climate change. But money in itself is not enough. We also need to act. We can all use our influence on politicians and business leaders in the rich world – who are the

ones making many of the key decisions affecting poor countries. Global warming is not just a distant forecast. It's already happening now, and poor people are the ones who are being hit the hardest.

Climate change increases the unpredictability and severity of extreme weather patterns. During the past 35 years, hurricane-force storms have almost doubled. Eleven million people are threatened by hunger because of years of unprecedented drought in east Africa.

Ninety per cent of the victims of weather-related natural disasters during the 1990s were from poor countries. And an estimated 150,000 people are dying annually from diseases exacerbated by the changing climate. For example, scientists predict that malaria-carrying mosquitoes, which cannot survive at low temperatures, are now spreading the disease further as regions warm up, putting hundreds of thousands of people at risk.

And the outlook is bleak. Even if we are able to stabilise CO₂ emissions, global average temperatures are still likely to rise by at least 2°C by 2050. If this is the case, 1-3 billion people will face acute water shortages. Thirty million more people will go hungry as crops fail across the globe. Melting ice caps, combined with the thermal expansion of the oceans, means that sea levels are set to rise dramatically. A rise of one metre would displace ten million people in Vietnam and 8-10 million in Egypt, as well as potentially submerging around 16 per cent of Bangladesh.

Climate change is an issue of injustice. The world's poorest people have done the least to contribute to the problem, and yet they are suffering the worst effects. Carbon has fuelled the rich world's wealth and development. But the devastating impact of our CO₂ emissions on our climate means that poor countries cannot now develop in the same way.

Christian Aid is pressing for an international agreement to ensure that rich countries dramatically cut their CO₂ emissions so that poor countries can develop in a way that won't further increase climate change and condemn

them to perpetual poverty. This agreement will call for rich countries to cut their own CO₂ emissions by at least 80 per cent by 2050; compensate poor countries for the damage already caused by climate change so they have the resources to adapt; and assist poor countries to develop in ways that will limit CO₂ emissions.

Eighty per cent by 2050 means cuts of five per cent every year. This is the absolute minimum action required if global warming is to be kept below the tipping point of 2°C. Five per cent every year is a big challenge. But it's one that we must meet. Millions of lives depend on it.

As citizens of a rich country, we are all in a powerful position to make a difference. And this is where we need your help. Please sign the prayer and action card this Christian Aid Week, and send a message to the government that urgent action is needed on climate change now.

Campaigning works. Previous campaigns have delivered real change on issues such as debt and fair trade. We need to take action on climate change now, before it is too late.

**christian
aid**

**Find out more about Christian
Aid's Climate Changed campaign,
and sign up to take further action,
by visiting
www.christianaid.org.uk/climate
or www.christianaid.ie/climate**