

CHRISTIAN AID WEEK HIGHLIGHTS THE IMPORTANCE OF DISASTER PREPAREDNESS

11th May 2008

Christian Aid launches its annual fundraising week today with a main theme of disaster preparedness, featuring a high profile TV advertising campaign showing a violent tropical storm hitting a village.

The cyclone which hit Burma underlines the urgent need for disaster preparedness around the world. If early warning systems or cyclone shelters had been in place, thousands of lives could have been saved.

The storm was brewing in the Bay of Bengal for several days but communities in the affected areas were ill prepared due to a lack of early warning systems. The death toll is 22,000 and expected to rise.

In contrast the cyclone that hit Bangladesh in November 2007 was stronger, but killed only 3,300 people due to early warning systems and cyclone shelters set up by aid agencies such as Christian Aid and the government of Bangladesh.

Christian Aid Week is the UK's longest running fundraising week and every year the charity highlights some of the projects which benefit from funds raised by the public. This year two of the key stories are Bangladesh and Honduras and how the charity has helped communities to be better prepared when disasters such as cyclones hit.

Christian Aid works with some of the world's poorest people, who are always the most affected by disasters. The more disasters they endure, the poorer they become. It is a vicious cycle of poverty and vulnerability. Climate change is making their position even more precarious as the frequency of disasters increases. But this can be changed; there are inexpensive and effective ways of reducing the effects of disasters – whether they are earthquakes, hurricanes or cyclones.

Christian Aid's TV advert, launched on 4 May and running on terrestrial and digital channels, has been created in the style of virtual world computer game The Sims. It shows a Honduran village at the height of a hurricane, and then how donations are used for much more than just emergency food and water. The inhabitants are shown rebuilding and adapting their village and lives with Christian Aid's help. When another hurricane occurs, this disaster preparedness helps save lives.

The animated village is based on projects in Honduras where some villages are affected by devastating hurricanes each year. Here our disaster preparedness programme helps prepare the community, for example showing people how to install early warning alarms, build stronger homes on stilts to avoid floods, protect their livestock and run evacuation drills. The adverts show how £10 could buy a small radio that can alert a village, while £40 could buy an early alarm system for a village.

Christian Aid launched an appeal for Burma on 5 May. Christian Aid is also part of the Disasters Emergency Committee which launched an appeal on the 8 May.

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For more information on the Christian Aid Week appeal please visit

<http://www.caweek.org>

For more information on Christian Aid's Burma appeal please visit

http://www.christianaid.org.uk/emergencies/current/burma_cyclone/index.aspx

For more information on the Disasters Emergency Committee Burma cyclone appeal please visit

<http://www.dec.org.uk/>

For more information, pictures or case studies, please contact Kate Wills on 020 7523 2446 or at kwills@christian-aid.org

Notes to Editors:

Christian Aid works in some of the world's poorest communities in more than 50 countries. We act where the need is greatest, regardless of religion, helping people build the life they deserve.

May 2008

We need your help - sign up to play your part in Christian Aid Week by visiting www.caweek.org

www.christianaid.org.uk