CHRISTIAN AID’S APPROACH TO BUILDING DISASTER-RESILIENT COMMUNITIES

WHAT IS THE BUILDING DISASTER-RESILIENT COMMUNITIES APPROACH?
This approach has been designed and developed by Christian Aid based on a project funded by the Department for International Development (DFID). It is aimed at reducing communities’ vulnerability to natural disasters across Africa, Asia and Latin America and the Caribbean by improving disaster-risk-reduction strategies and people’s ability to protect themselves in the event of a disaster.

Why is Christian Aid working on disaster risk reduction?
• Because we are committed to empowering people to find their own solutions to the challenges they face.
• Without disaster risk reduction, many of our programmes are unsustainable. Disasters can wipe out years of development work, waste resources and keep people trapped in poverty.
• Disaster risk reduction is an effective use of resources (every £1 spent on disaster risk reduction is estimated to save £4 in emergency response costs).

What is new about the Building Disaster-Resilient Communities approach?
• A holistic approach (mitigation, livelihood, policy and advocacy).
• Three levels of intervention:
  – community (awareness raising, pilot projects, community strengthening)
  – partners (capacity-building plan, advocacy strategy)
  – Christian Aid (links with climate change adaptation, accountability).
• Communities’ analysis of their own vulnerabilities and capacities through a participative vulnerability and capacity assessment.
• Incorporating climate science and making this accessible for communities.
• Improved accountability to beneficiaries.
• Research, networking and strategic alliances.

The Building Disaster-Resilient Communities Project in Action

Honduras – mitigation work. This bridge allows villagers to be evacuated during flooding

Philippines – integrating disaster risk reduction into local development plans

Our partner the Marinduque Council for Environmental Concerns (MACEC) developed a toolkit to integrate disaster-risk-reduction and climate-change-adaptation techniques into local development plans. As a result, these were incorporated into the plans of 184 villages in the area in which MACEC works.

Philippines: livelihood diversification

In the Philippines, Ivan’s family export the butterfly pupae they produce on their farm. Helping farmers diversify into butterfly farming can render their livelihoods more sustainable: unlike fields of crops, butterflies can be moved indoors to safety if a storm hits.

Research
Through research, the Building Disaster-Resilient Communities project aims to explore our local partners’ knowledge of disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation and to develop collaborative research studies to support and strengthen project implementation.

For instance, in Malawi, a livelihood diversification study looked at the potential of goat production for people in a specific region. A Christian Aid partner organisation used the findings from the study to guide its decision-making in its livelihood diversification programme.

Meanwhile, Christian Aid – in partnership with UK-based and local research institutes – is conducting a research project in the Philippines to identify gaps in the accountability of the government to its citizens and also between local and national authorities.

Strategic alliances
Christian Aid and the Institute of Development Studies have launched the Climate and Disaster Governance initiative to investigate governments’ handling of disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation and to support policy-makers and civil-society organisations engaged in disaster-related and climate-resilient development.

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