

Climate background

Climate change has now almost certainly become the most challenging barrier to sustainable development in the world's poorest communities.

Farmers like Uttam can no longer effectively predict rainfall or other crop conditions. Small entrepreneurs like Momata can still see years of work washed away by high magnitude storms. Children like their daughter can have their schooling interrupted for months on end by the latest climate event.

Bangladesh is particularly vulnerable to the effects being caused by a rise in the sea level, as almost one third of its land mass is in a coastal zone. Out of a population of 162 million, at least 35 million, or seven times the population of Ireland, are regularly at risk of displacement and forced migration in the coastal region.

Through Tearfund and Christian Aid, the 2015 World Development Appeal is supporting partners who work alongside communities at risk from climate change, strengthening people like Momata and Uttam for a future in their own land.

Today we are invited to support them, and to let them become our teachers. May we too, with our different tools and in our different context, advocate and work together for a more just and sustainable future.

And may our own resilience match theirs as we undertake this urgent work together, in service to our neighbours, and to the glory of God.

How can I help?

Learn

Please use the resources provided by World Development available online at www.presbyterianireland.org/world-development to find out more and to learn how hope is being built through local church-supported, sustainable development projects.

Pray

Prayer is a vital activity in the communities where Tearfund and Christian Aid work and partner. Use the information available through this World Development Appeal to pray knowledgeably for their work and the people involved.

Give

The 2015 World Development Appeal highlights projects in Bangladesh, and in Ethiopia (see web page). The emphasis is on local people helping themselves, but access to training and support can make all the difference. Your giving will enable organisations like Bangladesh Nazarene Mission to support some of the world's poorest people in building a way out of poverty and into a life of dignity and greater freedom.



For further information:
World Development, Assembly Buildings, Belfast BT1 6DW
www.presbyterianireland.org/world-development



Forecast:hope

World Development Appeal 2015





Extreme. Unpredictable. Chaotic.

Just some of the words used to describe the new climate realities to which the low-lying communities of coastal Bangladesh are having to adapt.

In the 2015 World Development Appeal, we give voice to some of their stories, as they work hard to shape more resilient livelihoods for themselves and their villages.

So listen – for you will also hear these frontline voices inviting us urgently to work in partnership with them. And then together, in their communities and in ours, and on the earth we share, we can build a more sustainable future, a future with a different forecast.

Some say Sundarban means beautiful forest in the local Bengali dialect, and some prefer forest of mangroves.

Whatever the origin of the name, however, the Sundarbans, a tidal region of mangrove forest on the Bay of Bengal, has long served coastal communities in Bangladesh as a protective barrier against tropical storms.

Today, however, those whom the mangrove trees once sheltered are facing the challenge of their lives: to reshape their livelihoods and build resilient communities in response to rapidly changing climate patterns.

Momata Bala vividly remembers Cyclone Aila, which devastated the region in May 2009 and displaced over a million people.

We suffered a lot, she says simply. It was a situation in which I felt despair.

Two years later, however, things finally began to change. Momata came into contact with the Bangladesh Nazarene Mission (BNM), which works through networks of churches to train communities in Disaster Preparedness and Climate Change Adaptation.

The high salt content of the flooded soil made cultivation difficult, but Momata received garden training from BNM and was rewarded for her effort by a bumper crop in her first year. Newly confident, she became part of a local self-help group, again with the support of BNM. The business training she received enabled her to set up a tea stall with her husband, Uttam Kumar Bala. The tea stall was followed by poultry, goats, bees, and a crab pond.

And that's not all. Thanks to the self-reliance she is learning, Momata reflects, her marriage has grown stronger. She and her husband are more confident that they will be able to cope, even though the future is uncertain.



Uttam agrees. He remembers how he farmed with his father when he was a boy, and can see for himself how much things have changed: erratic rainfall and unpredictable tidal surges, and a soil increasingly inhospitable to traditional crops. But now, he and Momata are shaping an alternative future, in the hope that communities everywhere, including our own, will do the same, and ensure a more sustainable way of life for us all.

In the meantime, though, the future is not one of despair. As Momata herself says: The training has prepared me to face any disaster.

Momata's Christian faith speaks to her of a new earth, and now she is hard at work, making it visible. The 2015 World Development Appeal invites us to hear her voice, and to do no less.

Forecast: *hope*

