

risc reading international solidarity centre enews

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a half termly bulletin for primary teachers, focusing on topical global issues

The world's hidden disaster

It will take years for the many thousands of people affected by the tsunami to rebuild their lives – long after its impact has faded from our TV screens and from newspaper headlines. While the world's media attention is focused on the countries devastated by this natural disaster, it's important to highlight the world's hidden disaster which receives far less media attention: the global issue of poverty and its underlying human causes. More than 150,000 people died as a result of the tsunami – yet more than 150,000 people die every week due to poverty. While relief agencies are carrying out vital work saving lives and rebuilding communities in the areas affected by the tsunami, the importance of tackling poverty across the globe needs to be addressed and action taken – as global citizens we can all be part of this.

Responses for global citizens

Ask questions: issues to discuss and research

- Although the Tsunami was a natural disaster, the majority of people who lost their lives were poor... why were they so vulnerable? What's behind the inequalities that lead to such poverty?
- Why was the British Government slow to promise large scale financial support to the countries affected by the tsunami? They are offering £100 million and promise to match funds raised by the public. Compare... the original budget for the Millennium Dome which was set at £758 million but needed an extra £500 million to cover its failures... The Scottish Parliament Building which was to have cost £40 million but the final bill was almost £400 million...
- Will the money pledged by governments reach those who really need it? After Hurricane Mitch in Central America only a third of the money pledged came through, which helps explain why so many people are still living in temporary accommodation in Nicaragua.
- How long will we remember the people in SE Asia who have lost everything? Who remembers the Bam earthquake? It struck in Iran on Boxing Day 2003 killed 46,000 people injured 20,000 and left 60,000 homeless... it prompted what was the largest humanitarian response in history – 53 countries, private groups and individuals pledged hundreds of millions dollars... A year later the UN Appeal for Bam has received just \$17 million of \$32.6 million in foreign-aid promised. Only 5% of the houses have been rebuilt so far.
- What are local people doing to help in the countries affected? Media images often show only foreign aid being delivered, reinforcing the stereotypical view that the 'victims' of the disaster are totally dependent on us for help and are doing little for themselves – yet there is a huge response from within these countries, involving their own local NGOs, community groups, government & military personnel and thousands of individuals.
- How much money do the countries involved owe in debt repayments? Last year Sri Lanka, Indonesia and Thailand paid out \$20 billion on debt repayments. The total debt burden for the countries affected is \$300 billion. A debt freeze for the tsunami-hit countries must ensure the money saved reaches the people who need it most – what will the situation be when the freeze is lifted? Why can't the debts be cancelled?
- What is happening in places which made the headlines before the tsunami disaster? Iraq? Sudan? Palestine? Ukraine? With the media focus on SE Asia, what have we not heard about?

Take action: ways to make a difference

- Campaign for change, eg support 'Make Poverty History' and other campaigns to put pressure on politicians to bring about positive change. The 'Make Poverty History' Coalition, an alliance of charities, trade unions, campaigning groups, faith communities and individuals, urges world leaders to take long term action that could lift millions of people out of poverty. www.makepovertyhistory.org
- Email Tony Blair to ask him to take the lead in 2005 to tackle world poverty. [www.makepovertyhistory.org/mph/userprofile/emailtony.jsp](mailto:userprofile@emailtony.jsp)

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- Raise money for the Disasters Emergency Committee (DEC) the umbrella group of UK aid organisations - who are working to provide clean water, food and shelter to thousands in the countries affected. www.dec.org.uk
- Donate good quality items to your local Oxfam shop - they can be resold to support Oxfam's work. Raise awareness that individual gifts of clothes, blankets, medical supplies, food, toys aren't appropriate - the cost of collecting and transporting these goods is more than the cost of buying them from local suppliers in Asia. Sourcing goods in the region helps the local economy and helps put communities back on their feet.
- Don't forget the Millennium Development Goals – these can be used as a focus in the classroom and assemblies. 2005 marks a third of the way to the 2015 deadline to reach these goals – let's ensure that world governments meet them. www.un.org/millenniumgoals

Events

2005 is the First Year of the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development

Sustainable development requires a holistic approach. DESD is a call to re-orient educational policies, programmes and practices so that education plays its part in building the capacities of all members of society to work together to build a sustainable future. Activities will focus on advocacy, communication and networking, facilitating all educators to include sustainable development concerns and goals in their own programmes. Taken from portal.unesco.org/education/en/ev.php-URL_ID=23295&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html

2005 is also

- **International Year of Microcredit** which aims to build sustainable and inclusive financial systems
- **Year 3 of the United Nations Literacy Decade**
- **Year 5 of the International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-violence for the Children of the World**
- **Year 5 of the Decade to Roll Back Malaria in Developing Countries, particularly in Africa (2001-2010)**
- **Year 9 of the United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty (1997-2006)**

January

19: Martin Luther King Day The third Monday in January celebrates the life and legacy of the American civil rights leader who championed justice and equality throughout society. www.thekingcenter.org/holiday

27: Holocaust Memorial Day Raises awareness and understanding of the Holocaust and its contemporary relevance to all of society. This year the theme is 'Survivors and Liberation'. www.holocaustmemorialday.gov.uk

29 Jan-5 Feb: National Storytelling Week Promotes the oldest art form in the world. It is the traditional medium of communication from generation to generation. www.sfs.org.uk/

February

21: International Mother Language Day Proclaimed by UNESCO in November 1999, and observed every year since February 2000 to promote linguistic and cultural diversity and multilingualism. www.un.org/Depts/dhl/language/index.html

March

1-13: Fair Trade Fortnight The theme this year is 'Check out Fairtrade' an opportunity to explore the impact of Fairtrade on 5 million producers and their families. www.fairtrade.org.uk

4: World Book Day Designated by UNESCO as a worldwide celebration of books and reading. Aims to encourage children to explore the pleasures of books and reading by providing them with the opportunity to have a book of their own. www.worldbookday.com

8: International Women's Day Promoted by the United Nations General Assembly to recognise that peace and social progress require the active participation and equality of women, and to acknowledge the contribution of women to international peace and security. www.internationalwomensday.com

8: Commonwealth Day Celebrates the links amongst the 54 countries that make up the commonwealth. This year the theme is 'Education – creating opportunity, realising potential'. www.rcsint.org/day/?subSection=theme

19-20: Earth Day This is the moment when night and day are equal throughout the Earth - reminding us of Earth's beautiful systems of balance which humanity has partially upset and must restore. www.earthsite.org

21: International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination Promoted by the United Nations General Assembly, this is the anniversary of the killing of 69 people at a peaceful demonstration in Sharpeville, South Africa, against the apartheid 'pass laws'. www.un.org/cyberschoolbus/iderd/

22: World Day for Water Raises public awareness and focuses attention on the vital need to protect and conserve water resources. The theme for 2004 has yet to be announced. www.worldwaterday.org



Get a White Band and show your commitment to Make Poverty History
www.makepovertyhistory.org

Resources

Natural Disasters Humanities Education Centre

free from RISC, send stamped addressed A4 envelope or download PDF from Oxfam website details below

Living Through a Natural Disaster Longman 2004

Year 5 literacy resource (recount), science, geography – covers Cyclone Tracy – Darwin Australia, Huang He (Yellow River) Flood – China, El Nino – Central America.

Useful websites for up to date information

Oxfam

www.oxfam.org.uk/coolplanet/teachers/latest.htm

BBC natural disasters

www.bbc.co.uk/science/hottopics/naturaldisasters/tidalwaves.shtml

BBC 'hot topics' site on natural disasters, including earthquakes, floods & storms, tidal waves & droughts. Could natural disasters devastate Britain? What do you know about disasters? Do you feel at risk? Timeline of events.

Department for International Development (DFID) Asia earthquake & tsunamis

How you can help: www.dfid.gov.uk/news/files/emergencies/asian-earthquake-help.asp

Situation reports: www.dfid.gov.uk/news/files/emergencies/asian-earthquake-sitreps.asp

Disasters Emergency Committee (DEC)

www.dec.org.uk/

The Disasters Emergency Committee is an umbrella group of UK aid organisations – including ActionAid, British Red Cross, Oxfam – working to provide clean water, food and shelter to thousands. To call from the UK dial 0870 60 60 900.

Global aid organisations

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/asia-pacific/4131881.stm>

BBC link to global aid organisations that have launched urgent appeals for donations to help survivors of the Indian Ocean earthquake disaster, including the Hindu Forum Disaster Relief Task Force, Islamic Relief and Medair.



One World Week 20-30 October

We're going to hear a lot of promises made in 2005 about making poverty history.

It's a promising year because:

- the UK holds both the EU and G8 presidencies
- the Commission for Africa is due to report
- progress towards the 2015 Millennium Development Goals will be assessed.

Opportunities for big promises – but will they be kept? Will poverty be history by 2006?

OWW offers you the chance to make promises that will be fulfilled. By 2006, what difference will you have made in your local community and to yourself – and the world?

OWW 2005 helps you to act

globally...

Many promises have been made in the global arena – from the North to the South on poverty, debt, aid and trade. Promises as custodians of this planet, our One World. Promises to leave future generations a world worth inheriting. But what's our part in making sure they are kept?

locally...

Make a promise to make a meaningful difference in your community by October 2006. Work across boundaries with new communities towards peace and justice, both locally and internationally.

individually...

Be aware of your power to make a difference. Make a personal commitment to live more responsibly, mindful of others – and stick to it.

Send for an **2005 Action Kit** for everything you need to make commitments to a fairer world in 2005 and beyond:

PO Box 2555, Reading RG1 4XW, t: 0118 939 4933, enquiries@oneworldweek.org, www.oneworldweek.org



RISC has a very wide selection of teaching resources for all ages and curriculum areas as well as a selection of artefacts for loan, please email us your name and address for further information.