

Session 5

Heroes and villains



Nicaragua experiences the effects of two major villains – climate change and deforestation.

Climate change is brought about by humans around the world, especially in countries like the UK and the US, where too much carbon dioxide is produced by factories and in vehicle exhausts. As a result, weather patterns around the world are changing. Nicaragua suffers from earthquakes and hurricanes, but also from too much or too little rain. All of these are being made worse by climate change.



If there's too much rain, coffee beans can suffer from fungal diseases. If there is not enough rain and too much sun, the beans can suffer from diseases like chasparria. This causes half the bean to become ripe too soon and look scorched, while the other half remains under-developed. Nicaraguan farmers are currently seeing a loss of about 30% of their crops; the figure used to be just 5%.

The changing climate also affects people's health.

Deforestation happens when trees and forests are cut down, either for the timber or to use the ground for other purposes, such as building houses and roads, or to grow crops. The forests are the habitat of many plants and creatures, and the trees help to combat climate change as they absorb carbon dioxide and produce oxygen. They also contribute to the water

cycle. Nicaragua has lost a large proportion of its rainforest.

But it is not all bad news. There are heroes in Nicaragua who help to combat the effects of climate change and deforestation, and help the farmers to diversify into growing different crops.

Commitment for Life works with Christian Aid, who in turn work with Soppexcca. This is a cooperative, which means a large group from the community working together and supporting each other. The cooperative works with the environment and helps people learn about climate change and deforestation. People find new and better ways to grow their crops, ways which help them and the environment. Farmers are shown new crops, such as cocoa, which will grow better and earn them more. Soppexcca also promotes human rights and equality, and provides schools, educational materials and uniforms, and medicines for the poorest families. It is a Fairtrade organisation that makes sure all the members of the cooperative get paid fairly for their work.



The Fairtrade Foundation is another hero in this story. When you buy produce with the Fairtrade mark on, you know that the people who produced it get a fair wage, and are able to feed their family and pay their bills with the money they earn. Groups of farmers also get some extra money, the Fairtrade Premium, which they can spend to improve their community or their farming. Sometimes this means we have to pay a little more on the things we buy, but it is worth it to know that we are making a difference to someone's life.

‘With climate change, I worry about my daughters’ and new little grandson’s future. I’m going to advise them, when they need to plant one tree, sow at least two. From him being little, I’m going to teach him to protect the environment. With climate change I think we must teach our families to respect the environment and to do every action to secure and improve it because without it, we don’t have anything.’
Angela Zelaya, mother to Johaira (15) and Ariana (5).



Prayer

Dear God, we are sorry that sometimes the things we do spoil your beautiful creation and make life harder for others. Help us to play our part in making things better. Help us to share what we have with others and help them, like the people in the cooperatives. Help us to take care of our environment, like the farmers are learning to do. Thank you for organisations like the Fairtrade Foundation, Soppexcca and Christian Aid, who do all they can to make the world a fairer place for all. Amen.

Bible link Colossians 3:23 (New International Reader's Version)

Work at everything you do with all your heart. Work as if you were working for the Lord, not for human masters.

- I wonder if you can share a story of something you've done which would make God smile?
- I wonder whether you ever think of God when you're doing chores or homework?
- I wonder what your dreams for the future are – for yourself, for the world, for Nicaragua?

Game:

Play a heroes and villains game. One team are the heroes, and the other team are the villains. One way you could do this is to stand up some empty drinks bottles or cans in the middle of the room like skittles – you may need to stand two cans on top of each other. One team has balls or beanbags and has to throw them to try and knock all the skittles down faster than the other team can stand them up again. Set a timer, and see how many are standing when the time runs out. An alternative might be to have some buckets with a piece of recycling in each. The villains try to tip the recycling out onto the floor while the heroes try to put one piece in each bucket. Remember to recycle all the equipment after the game!



Greta wonders... What are the things you want in life, and what are the things you need?

Why do you think it is important that children know about the environment?

Many people in Nicaragua grow cocoa beans, but have never tasted chocolate. How would you describe chocolate to them?

Action point

Check your own carbon footprint – this webpage from the WWF will calculate the impact you have on climate change and explain how your lifestyle choices can affect other countries as well as the UK. www.footprint.wwf.org.uk

Visit a local supermarket and see how many items you can find with the Fairtrade mark. Find out whether your church and your school buy Fairtrade coffee and tea. Write a letter to your MP to ask whether they use Fairtrade and local produce in their offices and in parliament, and explain why you think this is important.

If you have a piece of garden you can use, why not plant a tree? Or you could use the seeds of fruit or the tops of carrots or pineapples to grow a plant indoors.

Activity

Cut some rough templates out of card to draw around to get a feather shape – a long leaf shape with one end rounded and the other end coming to a point, about 15 to 20cm long. Use these templates to draw onto paper then cut out the shape. Decorate these feathers in any way you choose, as long as they are bright and colourful – you could use paints, collage, pens even real feathers!

Now cut two large wing shapes out of thick cardboard, each the length of the longest-armed child's arms. Get everyone to stick their feathers onto the wings. Place the finished wings onto the floor and each child can lie down with their arms out over the wings while someone takes a photo. You could use these photos to make 'Save the Rainforest' posters.

Alternatively, for younger children, you could make parrots using an upturned paper cup, feathers, wool, paper and wobbly eyes.

