



Social Sciences Teaching Unit
Levels 2 - 6
Environmental Justice



Why does being rich or poor
make a difference to the way environmental
degradation will impact on you?

Cover image: Dipali Goshwamim, a producer from Corr - The Jute Works in Kathalia. She is collecting the fibre from the jute stem. After harvesting, the bundles of stems are submerged in the water. They are kept submerged for 20–30 days for retting. After retting is complete, the fibres are separated from the stalks by loosening them; the stems are then broken off near the root, and the fibre strands are jerked off the stems. The fibres are then washed, dried, sorted and graded for use. This process is organic and free from any sort of chemical fertiliser or insecticide. Instead of the chemical fertiliser they are using compost fertiliser called Doyancha made from cow dung, water hyacinth, weed, and for insecticide they use neem and rainwater.

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Environmental Justice – Unit plan

Curriculum Levels: This unit can be used with classes from Level 1 to Level 5.

Duration: Seven Lessons (although it can be stretched out to last longer if necessary).

Learning Area Strands:

Elements of all four Social Sciences Strands are present, however, the unit corresponds particularly strongly with the 'Place and Environment' Strand.

Achievement Objectives:

The most relevant AOs will be determined by the Curriculum Level of the class being taught:

- *Level 2:*
Understand how places influence people and people influence places.
- *Level 3:*
Understand how people view and use places differently.
Understand how people make decisions about access to and use of resources.
- *Level 4:*
Understand that events have causes and effects.
Understand how formal and informal groups make decisions that impact on communities.
- *Level 5:*
Understand how economic decisions impact on people, communities, and nations.
Understand how people's management of resources impacts on environmental and social sustainability.
- *Level 6:*
Understand how individuals, groups, and institutions work to promote social justice and human rights.

Key Competencies:

- *Participating and Contributing:* In this unit students will learn about climate change, an issue that affects communities and nations all around the world. They will be introduced to ways in which they can help those who are worst affected. The unit will help students to understand the importance of contributing to the sustainability of the natural environment.
- *Relating to Others:* In this unit students will learn about how climate change is affecting both economically richer and poorer countries. This will help them develop an understanding of contexts and why people can react to issues differently. They will also become more aware of how their actions can affect others around the world.

Curriculum Vision:

As per the 2010 New Zealand Curriculum Vision, this unit will help students to become:

- *Connected:* Able to relate well to others, effective users of communication tools, connected to the land and environment, members of communities, and international citizens.
- *Actively Involved:* Participants in a range of life contexts, and contributors to the social, cultural, economic and environmental well-being of New Zealand.

Specific Learning Outcomes:

In our world, the people with the lowest impact on the environment are the ones being most affected by climate change. Environmental justice is about making our world fairer. By the end of this unit, students will have an understanding of the following:

- that the climate is changing and the effects are already being felt by the poor
- that the poor are more vulnerable to changes in the environment than the rich
- that the poor have among the lightest carbon footprints in the world
- that what we choose to buy and consume affects our carbon footprint
- that our behaviour in New Zealand has an impact on our global community
- that how we choose to act can have a positive impact on the global community.

For the Teacher...

To accompany this unit download from: www.tradeaid.org.nz:

- Child labourer stories from one of Trade Aid's partners in India. The stories are a series of interviews in which children (like Amreen who is mentioned in this unit) talk about their lives.
- Chaga and the chocolate factory – a storybook about a child's experience with slavery in a cocoa plantation.

The **FREE** hardcopy resources available to accompany this unit are available by filling in the form at: www.tradeaid.org.nz. These include:

- class set of Trade Aid Environmental Justice brochures
- DVD - *Environmental Justice* - 8 mins containing video footage of craftspeople carving soapstone, making drums, sewing mobiles, drying coffee etc.
- DVD - *Alternative Trade in a Conventional World* - 18 mins - provides an introduction to Trade Aid, Global trade issues, and Trade Aid trading relationships (suitable for students approximately Year 7 and up, and adults).

Access these resources for free by phoning customer services at Trade Aid on: 03 385 3535, or by emailing: tradeaid@tradeaid.org.nz, or fill in a request form at: www.tradeaid.org.nz.

Access to a Trade Aid shop and education services in your local area (provided your school is located near one of the 30 shops throughout the country. See website for locations):

- Fill in a 'request a speaker' form online or contact the Manager of your local shop. Trade Aid shops can often provide time for class visits to the shop or a speaker for your class to complement your environmental justice or fair trade lessons.

Lesson 1: Environmental cause and effect

Key idea:

- **An introduction to the causes and effects of environmental degradation.**

Activity 1: An introduction to some environmental issues

Explain what environmental degradation is. Give each student Attachment 1 and talk about each item briefly to check understanding of the words and issues. Have the students match the words to the pictures.

In groups students choose (or are allocated) an image from Attachment 1 representing one environmental issue (e.g. deforestation). In groups brainstorm the cause(s) and effect(s) of this issue e.g.:

The causes may be: deforestation happens because people cut down too many trees ⇒ because they export too much wood for people to build houses ⇒ because it is cheaper for people in NZ to import the wood from this country (and they like to buy cheap things) ⇒ because hiring labour in southern (developing) countries to plant and cut down the trees is cheaper ⇒ because prices you pay for things in southern countries are cheaper so people don't need as much money to live on ⇒ because they get low wages ⇒ because they need to be competitive or the foreign countries will not buy their products etc.

The effects may be: landslides happen leading to villages and houses being buried, causing displaced people, causing food shortages, causing rural to urban migration, causing increases in the growth of slums, causing increases in the spread of diseases, causing a reduction in the health of groups of the population etc.

Activity 2: Reporting back to the class

Each set of students then reports back to the class and the teacher writes the responses on the board. Note how many times certain words are repeated. Poverty, drugs, pollution etc. can all be catalysts for many things and caused by many things. Think about whether these links would occur if you were talking about positive actions, e.g. health, education, employment.

Activity 3: How bad is the problem?

Ask the students to colour code the images to represent their opinion of the extent of these problems in NZ, and then use another colour to represent the extent of the problems in the rest of the world (use 2 different colours):

Colour 1: big problem in NZ

Colour 2: big problem in the world

No colour: not a big problem in NZ or in the world.

Compare answers around the class and see if the opinions are diverse or similar (link this finding with the diversity of opinion expressed about Climate Change in the next lesson).

Activity 4: Paragraph Writing

For homework, or an additional exercise, ask the students to write a paragraph about any two of the pictures, explaining why they chose to colour them the way they did.

Lesson 2: Looking into climate change

Key idea:

- **The climate is changing and the effects are already being felt by the poor.**

Activity 1: What do you already know about the Climate Change debate?

'Climate change' is a very popular term that we often hear in the news; what does it mean? The term that came up in the last activity was 'global warming'. What is the relationship between the two? (The term 'climate change' is becoming the preferred option because it helps convey that there are changes in addition to rising temperatures).

If you think it is necessary for your class, a quite lengthy, but thorough and easy-to-understand explanation of climate change/global warming can be found at:

<http://www.explainthatstuff.com/globalwarmingforkids.html>.

Climate Change is a topic that creates heated debate so how do you know who to believe? From where have you heard about climate change? News, television, books, parents? If we cannot see it around us then do we have to trust all the information we see, hear or read? If not, then who do we trust? Scientists? Al Gore? If some students have seen *An Inconvenient Truth* talk about how believable or persuasive they thought it was? Did it make them want to act?

Activity 2: Interpreting Quotes

Cut up the quotes in Attachment 2 and hand them out to the students in pairs. Write a series of questions on the board to consider and report back. You can use some of the following ideas:

- Does their quote talk about 'taking action now'? Is it 'against taking action' or is it a 'non-judgemental' comment trying to represent several views?
- Do they personally agree with the comment they have and why might it be difficult to make this decision?
- Do you need to be a scientist to have an opinion?
- Is it better to take the opinion that 'it is better to be safe than sorry' when it comes to the planet?

After reporting back as a class, put together a short summary. Base this on the media clippings about the debate surrounding Climate Change. Mention that the debate is one that will change as time passes and more information is known.

Eg. Today most scientists believe that Climate Change is a reality. However, there are still many scientists who believe the projected effects of climate change on the future (such as higher sea levels and more intense weather patterns) are not based on accurate science. They believe that the future is impossible to predict with accuracy. There are also many scientists who believe that the Earth is warming but that this is not necessarily created by human impact and is instead a natural cyclical process. The majority, however, now believe that humans are creating climate change and that we need to act or the consequences will be severe.

Activity 3: The reality of Climate Change

Regardless of the debate what do we know is happening for sure?

Using the paragraphs below, discuss what is already changing. Using a large map, look at which countries appear to be suffering the most. Are they the rich or the poor countries?

“Beyond the Heart of the World, the Younger Brother is changing the whole earth. I don't know everything they are doing, but they are changing the whole earth. I don't know what you call it, but, yes, the Mother is getting warmer. The rain falls differently than before. It is later, but it falls harder. It is destructive sometimes when it should be nurturing. Many of the rivers are dry before they reach the sea. And the snows on the peaks that replenish the rivers are less each year. It is all happening very quickly. First, you took our gold. Then you took our land. Now you are taking the water and the air itself. The younger Brothers are waging a war on the earth and it must stop!”

Conversation with a Colombian coffee farmer: www.deansbeans.com.

“The people of the Carteret Islands will become the world's first climate change refugees as rising seas force them to leave their homes. This tiny atoll, which is a part of Papua New Guinea, has experienced first-hand the consequences of global warming. The islands are submerging and scientists predict they will be completely uninhabitable as early as 2015. The government of Papua New Guinea has organized an evacuation plan that will begin this year and continue through 2020. Many of the locals do not want to leave their home, but their efforts to combat higher tides and larger waves have not helped protect their islands. A sea wall has been built and mangroves have been planted to no effect.”

Climate change refugees forced to leave Carteret Islands - Jan 16, 2008 by Haley January Eckels: <http://tinyurl.com/yggyeg3>

“ZAMBIA has already started experiencing adverse effects of climate change through floods and droughts experienced in recent years, Tourism, Environment and Natural Resources Minister, Michael Kaingu told Parliament yesterday... The minister said the sectors that had been identified as the most vulnerable to adverse effects include agriculture, health, water and energy as well as forests and wildlife.”

The Times of Zambia (Ndola) - 21 November 2007:

<http://allafrica.com/stories/200711210039.html>.

Activity 4 (done over a number of weeks): Climate Change in the Media – a popular and debated topic

Students keep an eye out in newspapers, magazines etc. for mentions of climate change and choose an article to bring in weekly. How often is climate change mentioned around us? Is it supporting the hypothesis of climate change and the need to change our behaviour? In the articles, who is being mentioned as suffering from the effects of climate change? Make a classroom display for class discussions.

Activity 5: Social Inquiry – Research and Writing Activity

Students research which countries in the world are experiencing the effects of climate change already, as well as how and why these particular countries are affected. Also, which countries are likely to be the most vulnerable to climate change in the future, and why?

There have been a few countries used as examples in this lesson (Colombia, Papua New Guinea, Zambia) but are they just the tip of the iceberg?

Activity 6: An Inconvenient Truth

Watch *An Inconvenient Truth* as a class or school.

Lesson 3: What is the impact on people when resources are affected?

Key idea:

- **The poor are more vulnerable than the rich to changes in the environment.**

In Preparation: New Zealand and Bangladesh, 'North' and 'South'.

For homework, split the students into two groups. One will research life in Bangladesh (a Southern country); one will look at life in New Zealand (a Northern country). You can choose to use the matrix on the following page, or for older students ask them to write a short essay on their findings. The idea is to research the four areas listed in the retrieval chart: water, food, employment, leisure.

Useful words to search the Internet with are: Bangladesh (by itself) as well as teamed with daily life and economy. (This activity could also be done in class, during a period in which the students have computer access).

Before starting the activity talk about the division in the world between rich and poor countries. Why do development organisations now call rich and poor countries Northern and Southern countries? Using the map in Attachment 5, discuss the following:

- Why is New Zealand a Northern country?
- Who else in the South is also a 'Northern Country'?
- Why do we choose to use these words instead of First World/Third World, developed/developing?

Activity 1: Comparing what you have learnt with a partner

In class, pair up the students so they can compare their answers and fill in the other side of their retrieval chart.

In pairs, students will each draw a Venn diagram by discussing the similarities and differences of each lifestyle, inserting them into the correct places. As a class, talk about the answers and have the students add to their own chart as they hear each other's research.

Activity 2: Natural Resource Destruction – Cause and Effect

In pairs, students discuss how the destruction of natural resources creates a larger or smaller impact depending on your lifestyle. Use the first topic of water as an example and then have them talk about the other three areas mentioned on the chart.

- What would someone in New Zealand do if you took away or ruined their water source? (The answer could be a drive down to the supermarket to buy bottled water instead or installing a rainwater tank).
- How big an impact would this have on a New Zealander's life?
- What would someone in Bangladesh do if you took away or ruined their water source? (This might mean they have to find a different spring/river).
- How big an impact would this have on a Bangladeshi's life?

- Talk about the other areas as well, what resources could you remove that would impact food, employment or leisure? Compare the differences in how both countries would cope and, more importantly, what the consequences would be.

Using the cause and effect understanding from previous lessons, discuss some of the reasons a natural resource in Bangladesh or NZ might change or disappear e.g.:

- water sources becoming polluted could be a result of factory pollution
- soil to grow vegetables could disappear as a result of too much rain, devastating floods or tsunamis
- clean air could be ruined as a result of too many house fires in winter.

Retrieval Chart

Name: _____

Area of interest	Bangladesh	New Zealand
<u>Food</u> What and from where?		
<u>Water</u> What for and where from?		
<u>Employment (jobs)</u> What and who?		
<u>Education:</u> What and who?		

Lesson 4: Carbon Footprints

Key idea:

- That the poor have among the lightest carbon footprints in the world.

Activity 1: My Carbon Footprint

What is a carbon footprint?

See Attachment 3 for a brief explanation.

Either as a class if you have access to the Internet, or individually as homework, or in an IT lesson, students work out their own carbon footprint using: www.myfootprint.org or any other calculator on the Internet.

What makes the most difference to your carbon footprint? Change some of the values looking at what will lower your footprint a lot, or a little.

Work out the carbon footprint of someone living in Bangladesh.

The average ecological footprint of a New Zealander has been calculated at 7.6-8.7 ha/person. For Bangladesh it is 0.5 ha/person. For Australia it is 9.0 ha/person, and for China it is 1.2 ha/person. The world average is about 2.8 ha/person.

Activity 2: Bangladesh in Focus

Talk about the results:

- from what you have learnt about people living in Bangladesh, why do you think their carbon footprint is lower than a New Zealander's?
- read the article in Attachment 4 as a class. It is about the fears for Bangladesh and the potential impact they will experience from climate change.
- is it fair that Bangladesh (a country with a low carbon footprint) will experience the impact of climate change before the countries creating the most pollution? What could we do to try and make the situation fairer?

Activity 3: Paragraph Writing

Write a paragraph for homework about Environmental Justice.

- Do you think it is fair that the countries with the lowest carbon footprint are being impacted the most? Justify your answer.
- Who do you think the responsibility lies with to change their behaviour and what could they change?

Lesson 5: Connections with our global community

Key idea:

- **That what we choose to buy and consume affects our carbon footprint.**

In Preparation: Where do our household items come from?

For homework ask the students to look around their house. Make a list of five items that they know where they come from (the origin of some items will be more obvious than others). Make a quick sketch of each item on a small piece of paper. Or take a digital photo of the items at home (if all students have access to a camera) and in class print off the photos.

On a large map, students place the pictures on the board as close as possible to where the item was made.

Talk briefly about the results:

- where from?
- how many?
- what items?

Activity 1: How do these items impact the environment?

Choose one item on the board and, as a class, or in groups, discuss the potential impact that these purchases we make on a regular basis may have on the global environment. There are five big steps in the process you may like to base the discussion on:

- where would the raw materials come from/how would they be made/how would they travel to NZ/how are they packaged/how are they disposed of?
- each part of this process involves a pollution aspect; what is this pollution and how big is the impact?
- which country is being polluted by each part of this process (is it the foreign countries that are left with most of the pollution from the process?).

Activity 2: Can these impacts be reduced?

Individually think of actions for each part of the process that would minimise the pollution caused by buying things (you can think wider and include minimising social problems such as poverty that lead to environmental problems). Report back and make these into a class list that can be placed on the wall as a reminder.

Activity 3: Questions for the CEO

Turn some of these actions that you plan to take into questions, and email these questions to the retailer or CEO of the company of one of your five items. E.g. find out if the raw materials are sustainably sourced, or if the factory has environmental or social policies etc.

Lesson 6: Someone like you

Key idea:

- That our behaviour in New Zealand has an impact on our global community.

Activity 1: Amreen's Story

Listen to a story about a child who makes glass bangles for a living – download Amreen's story in PDF format at: www.tradeaid.org.nz (one of several children's interviews from a Trade Aid partner in India).

- What are some of the differences you remember from the story between your life and Amreen's?
- How does her story make you feel? Why?
- How would you feel if you received this jewellery for your birthday?
- What changes might allow Amreen to stop making jewellery and receive a present on her own birthday instead? E.g. what if her parents received enough money from making jewellery to send her to school full-time?
- How could these changes happen?
- What would these changes mean for people in rich countries receiving the products? E.g. higher prices for people in NZ would mean less money to spend on toys, holidays, food, education etc.
- What does Amreen's story have to do with climate change? What have we learnt about the link between poverty and vulnerability to climate change?
- What would positive changes in living standards mean for a community that is likely to experience the impacts of climate change within the next few generations?

Activity 2: Minoti's Story

Now listen to a story from a producer of embroidered products in India:



Minoti Khaal is pictured here, working while her baby sleeps on her lap. Being able to embroider while looking after her daughter Molika who is 1½ years old allows Minoti to supplement her husband's income. Like most of the women she works with, her husband is a farmer, but unfortunately his income from farming is not enough to support a family.

Through Minoti's earnings from craft production, Molika will be able to go to school when she is old enough. SMS, the group that Minoti works with, encourages all the women to make sure their children go to school. Minoti says she really enjoys the work and the women she works with.

How would you feel buying a product that was made by Minoti?

Activity 3: Create a Postcard

Imagine that you received some glass bangles for your birthday and they came with a postcard in the box. It is from Amreen and she wants to know if you like the bangles. What would you write back to her in response?

Lesson 7: Environmental responsibility as a global community

Key idea:

- **That how we choose to act can have a positive impact on the global community.**

Activity 1: Use Trade Aid as a case study and an example of how New Zealanders can take environmental responsibility for their actions

Request a class set of brochures from the Trade Aid website. Together as a class, read the brochure, taking time to explain the harder words and concepts.

Show the Trade Aid DVD (18mins) after reading the brochure (for younger students) or before reading the brochure (for older students). Talk about who Trade Aid is and what it does. Why might Trade Aid want to tell people about the unfairness of the current environmental degradation and climate change impacts?

Talk about the actions on the back of the Trade Aid brochure. Which ideas can you put into action now?

Activity 2: Case study - Bangladesh

Students read the case study in Attachment 6 and answer questions relating to Bangladesh and its climate change and poverty issues. You can use the following questions or some of your own:

- What are the problems Bangladesh faces from weather patterns and geography?
- Will these problems be exasperated by climate change impacts?
- What does the writer suggest as a way forward for Bangladesh?
- Is this suggested solution a good one in terms of the environmental impact? Why?
- What ideas from this case study could we apply to NZ to make ourselves more sustainable (less dependent on other countries)?
- Are there issues you see in this case study that you don't agree with, or that may not be as easy and successful as they seem?

As a second part to this exercise, students could choose another country and independently (or in pairs or small groups) research how that country is being affected by climate change and poverty. The questions above could provide a good basis to get them started.

Activity 3: Guest Speaker

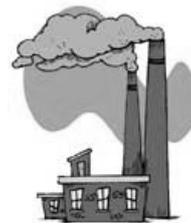
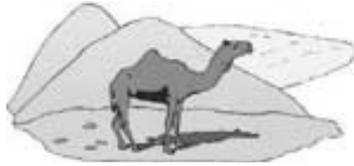
Through your local shop or the Trade Aid website ask a Trade Aid speaker to come into your class and answer any questions you may have about Trade Aid and the environment.

Activity 4: Create a Call to Action

The call to action can be designed for you, your community or your country to act for environmental justice - and then do it!

- How can you get the word out?
- Who will you promote them to?
- What actions will you promote?
- How will you promote them?

Attachment 1: Environmental Degradation



Air Pollution
Land Fills
Oil Spills
Terrorism

Congestion
Logging
Over Fishing
Hunger

Desertification
Nuclear Waste
Sea Pollution
Water Pollution

Drugs
Endangered Species
Global Warming

Images from <http://www.eslflow.com>

Attachment 2: Debating "Global Warming"

U.S. Senate Report: Over 400 Prominent Scientists Disputed Man-Made Global Warming Claims in 2007 Senate Report Debunks "Consensus"

"Over 400 prominent scientists from more than two dozen countries recently voiced significant objections to major aspects of the so-called "consensus" on man-made global warming. These scientists, many of whom are current and former participants in the UN IPCC (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change), criticized the climate claims made by the UN IPCC and former Vice President Al Gore."

Report Released on December 20, 2007, U.S. Senate committee on environment and public works.

"The Inconvenient Truth" is indeed inconvenient to alarmists

"In April sixty of the world's leading experts in the field asked Prime Minister Harper to order a thorough public review of the science of climate change, something that has never happened in Canada. Considering what's at stake - either the end of civilization, if you believe Gore, or a waste of billions of dollars, if you believe his opponents - it seems like a reasonable request."

Tom Harris, June 12, 2006, Canada Free Press

"Breaking the Global-Warming Gridlock"

"People can't directly sense global warming, the way they can see a clear-cut forest or feel the sting of urban smog in their throats. It is not a discrete event, like an oil spill or a nuclear accident. Global warming is so abstract that scientists argue over how they would know if they actually observed it." —Daniel Sarewitz and Roger Pielke Jr., THE ATLANTIC, July 2000

Forecasting the future remains a contentious exercise

"Plenty of questionable scientific claims muddy the discussion on climate change. Extreme weather events such as last year's hurricane season in the Atlantic are not conclusively linked to global warming," say scientists at NASA's Goddard Space Flight Center. "It is exceedingly difficult to establishing a causal link between global warming and these events."

Michael Coren, CNN, Feb 10, 2006

"Scientists who want to attract attention to themselves, who want to attract great funding to themselves, have to (find a) way to scare the public...and this you can achieve only by making things bigger and more dangerous than they really are."

Petr Chylek, Professor of Physics and Atmospheric Science, Dalhousie University, Halifax, Nova Scotia

"Emissions of greenhouse gases and aerosols due to human activities continue to alter the atmosphere in ways that are expected to affect the climate."

Summary for Policymakers, Report of Working Group 1 of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change

"The Little Ice Age and the Medieval Warming that preceded it from 950 to 1300 AD stand out in every temperature record as the major weather events of the last 1,000 years, and they're a hefty problem for global warming advocates. If the world was warmer in 1200 AD

than today, and far colder in the year 1400, why would we blame current temperatures trends on auto exhausts?"

Dennis Avery, Center for Global Food Issues

Debate on Climate Shifts to Issue of Irreparable Change

Some Experts on Global Warming Foresee 'Tipping Point' When It Is Too Late to Act.

"Now that most scientists agree human activity is causing Earth to warm, the central debate has shifted to whether climate change is progressing so rapidly that, within decades, humans may be helpless to slow or reverse the trend." Juliet Eilperin, Washington Post Staff Writer, January 29, 2006

"Blowing hot and cold,"

"What would Winston Churchill have done about climate change? Imagine that Britain's visionary wartime leader had been presented with a potential time bomb capable of wreaking global havoc, although not certain to do so. Warding it off would require concerted global action and economic sacrifice on the home front. Would he have done nothing?... The uncertainty surrounding a threat such as climate change is no excuse for inaction. New scientific evidence shows that the threat from ozone depletion had been much deadlier than was thought at the time when the world decided to act. Churchill would surely have approved. "

THE ECONOMIST, July 4, 2002.

"Addressing climate change is no simple task. To protect ourselves, our economy, and our land from the adverse effects of climate change, we must ultimately dramatically reduce emissions of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases. To achieve this goal we must fundamentally transform the way we power our global economy, shifting away from a century's legacy of unrestrained fossil fuel use and its associated emissions in pursuit of more efficient and renewable sources of energy. Such a transformation will require society to engage in a concerted effort, over the near and long-term, to seek out opportunities and design actions to reduce greenhouse gas emissions."

Pew Center on Global Climate Change

"I believe that it is fair to say that the people once labeled as 'a small band of skeptics' — those who championed the position that warming would be modest and primarily in the coldest air-masses have won the day. Many of these same scientists are now forming a new environmental paradigm. It is that the concept of 'fragile earth' must be abandoned. And it asks the impertinent question: since when is everything that man does to the planet necessarily bad?"

Patrick J. Michaels, CATO Institute Congressional Testimony

"So one awkward question you can ask, when you're forking out those extra taxes for climate change, is "Why is east Antarctica getting colder?" It makes no sense at all if carbon dioxide is driving global warming. While you're at it, you might inquire whether Gordon Brown will give you a refund if it's confirmed that global warming has stopped. The best measurements of global air temperatures come from American weather satellites, and they show wobbles but no overall change since 1999."

Nigel Calder, former editor of New Scientist, February 11, 2007

Scientists blame balloons for climate change debate

“Researchers at the US' National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration may have overturned one of the key weapons in the armoury of climate-change sceptics. Data from weather balloons in the 1970s has long puzzled scientists, because it appears to contradict computer models of global warming. Most models have a strong link between the temperature of the air, and that of the Earth. But atmospheric data showed little or no change in atmospheric temperatures since the 1970s, despite warming at ground level. However, it seems that this data was not subject to proper analysis, the scientists say, and the impressions it gives - that temperatures have remained roughly constant in the intervening decades - is misleading.”

12 August 2005 www.theregister.co.nz

"There is no meaningful correlation between CO2 levels and Earth's temperature over this [geologic] time frame. In fact, when CO2 levels were over ten times higher than they are now, about 450 million years ago, the planet was in the depths of the absolute coldest period in the last half billion years. On the basis of this evidence, how could anyone still believe that the recent relatively small increase in CO2 levels would be the major cause of the past century's modest warming?"

Tim Patterson, Carleton University Paleoclimatologist Professor speaking before the Commons Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development.

Attachment 3: Your carbon footprint

Your carbon footprint is the direct effect your actions and lifestyle have on the environment, through the emissions of carbon dioxide. Probably the biggest contributors to your footprint are your travel needs, and your electricity demands at home. However, all your actions have a direct or indirect impact, including your diet, and the clothes you wear.

- Cars, buses and aeroplanes burn petrol
- Public transport may use petrol and electricity
- Your home uses a significant portion of your personal electricity needs
- Buying products uses electricity in the shops you purchase them from, petrol to get the product from the factory to the shop, more petrol to run the factory etc.
- Going for a walk uses no petrol or electricity but what power does your body run on? Maybe that toast you had for breakfast used electricity to cook it, and growing and processing meat takes more fuel than growing vegetables, so what did you have for dinner last night?

Petrol and electricity are two of the main energy sources that emit carbon emissions which makes them ideal items to focus on minimising. However, carbon dioxide is also produced by all animals, plants, fungi and microorganisms which mean that we create carbon emissions in everything we do!

The idea behind counting our carbon footprint is that if we know how much carbon we are emitting and what type of lifestyle leads to the largest emissions, then we have the choice to try and minimise them. By using a calculator online somewhere like: www.myfootprint.org you can test the difference between using different types of transport, or by eating certain types of food. You can also see what difference it makes if you were living in a different country.

Attachment 4: News article from the BBC on Bangladesh

Climate fears for Bangladesh's future

By Roger Harrabin, Environment analyst, BBC News, Bangladesh

14 September 2006

Floods swept away Masuma's home, and her sister's baby. Masuma's home is a bamboo and polythene shack in one of the hundreds of slums colonising every square metre of unbuilt land in Dhaka, the capital of Bangladesh. Masuma is an environmental refugee, fleeing from the floods which have always beset her homeland but which are predicted to strike more severely with climate change.

She has found her way to the city from the rural district of Bogra - a low-lying area originally formed from Himalayan silt where the landscape is still being shaped by the mighty Brahmaputra river as it snakes and carves through the soft sandy soil.

"In Bogra we had a straw-made house that was nice. When the flood came there was a big sucking of water and everything went down," Masuma says.

"Water was rising in the house and my sister left her baby upon the bed. When she came back in, the baby was gone. The baby had been washed away and later on we found the body," she recalls.

Masuma's story is already commonplace in Dhaka, the fastest-growing city in the world. Its infrastructure is creaking under the weight of the new arrivals. Climate change is likely to increase the risks to people like her.

Climate modellers forecast that as the world warms; the monsoon rains in the region will concentrate into a shorter period, causing a cruel combination of more extreme floods and longer periods of drought.

They also forecast that as sea level rises by up to a metre this century (the very top of the forecast range), as many as 30 million Bangladeshis could become climate refugees.

"Climate refugees is a term we are going to hear much more of in the future," observes Saleem-ul Huq, a fellow at the London-based International Institute of Environment and Development (IIED). He says many Bangladeshi families escaping floods and droughts have already slipped over the Indian border to swell the shanty towns of Delhi, Bombay and Calcutta.

"The problem is hidden at the moment but it will inevitably come to the fore as climate change forces more and more people out of their homes. There will be a high economic cost - and countries that have to bear that cost are likely to be demanding compensation from rich nations for a problem they have not themselves caused," Mr Huq predicts.

It is a problem that incenses informed politicians in countries like Bangladesh, which are at the sharp end of climate change.

Environment Minister Jafrul Islam Chowdhury demands that rich nations should take responsibility for a problem they have caused. "I feel angry, because we are suffering for their activities. They are responsible for our losses, for the damage to our economy, the displacement of our people."

DfID (UK Government Development Programme) is already starting to modify some aid programmes for the poorest of the poor who make their homes on shifting silt islands in the great rivers of Bangladesh. The islands - known as choars - last on average about 20 years. Then the inhabitants are flooded out, and need to seek new land created elsewhere by the highly-dynamic rivers. Locals say siltation levels appear to have diminished, so less new land is being created.

For Pulmala Begum, who lives on an embankment on the Brahmaputra, rebuilding has become commonplace; but each time, she loses more. She has been displaced by flood waters six times. "We used to have a house and cattle and now we've got no land where we can move to. This time we don't have any money to make another start, or to educate our children," she laments. "We have nothing left, but we have to survive, so we've had to build our house from reeds."

The UK government is the biggest donor to Bangladesh, but its current annual aid package of £125m cannot hope to tackle the scale of the challenge now, let alone the problems that will come.

I understand that a review by Sir Nicholas Stern, commissioned by the UK's prime minister and chancellor to look at the economics of climate change, will conclude that rich nations need to do far more to adapt to the inevitable consequences of climate change.

It will also say developed countries must cut emissions immediately to minimise the effects.

Sir Nicholas' approach is criticised by some economists who argue that as climate change is beyond human control we should continue to maximise economic growth so we will be able to afford to pay for adaptation in the future.

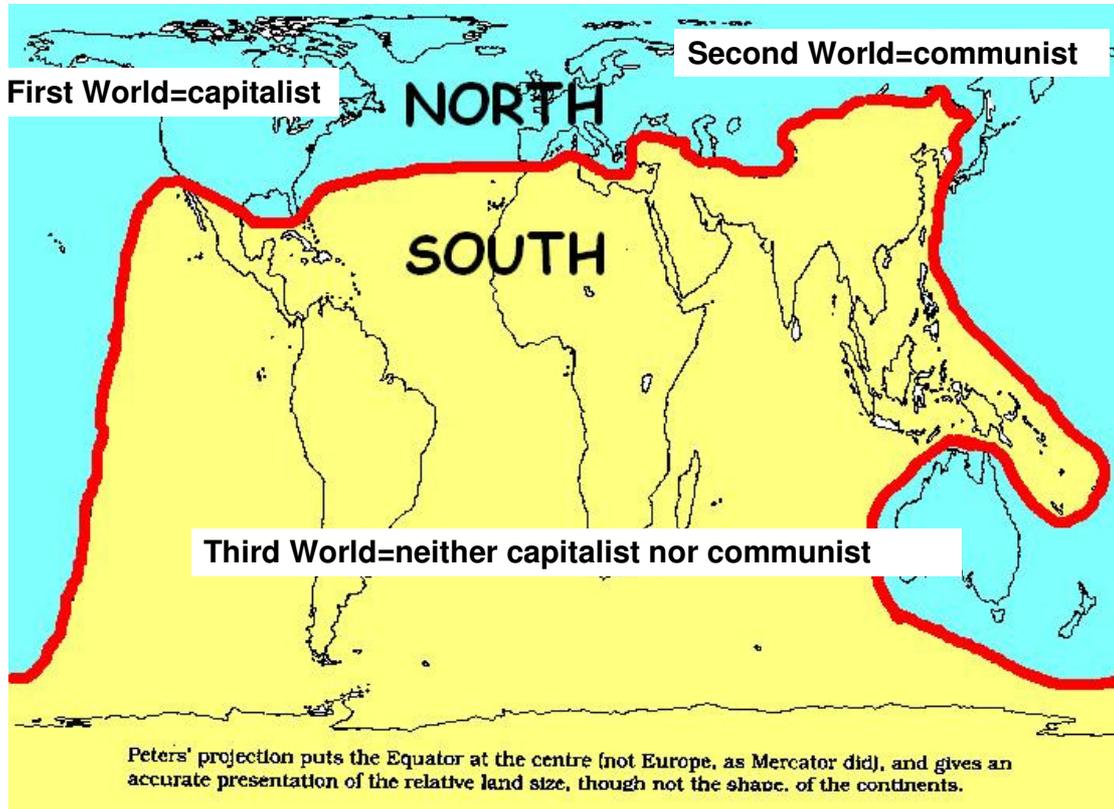
In a recent article for the Spectator magazine, former chancellor Lord Lawson argued: "Far and away the most cost-effective policy for the world to adopt is to identify the most harmful consequences that may flow from global warming and, if they start to occur, to take action to counter them."

Locals are angry they are paying the cost of the West's emissions.

The Stern review is likely to insist that both mitigation and adaptation are necessary, and will argue that economists have under-estimated the costs that climate change will impose and over-estimated the costs of cutting emissions.

Mr Huq goes further: "It is ridiculous for people who know nothing about Bangladesh to make pronouncements on how much of it can or cannot be saved. Bangladesh is extremely vulnerable, and there is a major moral issue because this is not a problem that people here have caused," he said.

Attachment 5: Northern and Southern countries



50% of this wealth stays with 20% of the people
50% of this wealth is shared amongst 80% of the people

'North'

- 21% of the world's population
- 84% of the world's wealth

'South'

- 79% of the world's population
- 16% of the world's wealth

80% of this wealth stays with 20% of the people
20% of this wealth is shared amongst 80% of the people

Attachment 6: Bangladesh case study

Written by Pennie Stringer

People and Country

Mother Nature can be cruel – ask a farmer next time you bump into one! In New Zealand, we often see what we call ‘four seasons in one day’ and the weather is a topic of near obsession. However, if you look further beyond at Bangladesh, you will see Mother Nature being particularly unkind.

A low-lying country situated at the head of the Bay of Bengal, most of Bangladesh is a delta formed by the convergence of three great rivers – the Ganges, the Brahmaputra and the Meghna.

Low-lying is the key phrase: 80% of the land is less than 1.5 metres above sea level, and, given that the climate is a tropical-monsoon type and that it is one of the wettest climates in the world, this seems especially inauspicious.

Storm clouds deliver more than 60 inches to most places annually, whilst some of the hillier areas receive 200 inches. Add to this precipitation the spring snow melt carried by the rivers from the towering Himalayan Mountains and you can have no doubt that that Bangladesh is one of the most flood prone countries in the world.

To an extent, this cycle brings environmental benefits. Half the country is flooded to a depth of 30cms every year for several months, causing massive disruption, yes, but also bringing extremely fertile silt to agricultural areas. Indeed, these annual floods are insignificant compared to the disastrous floods caused by tropical cyclones.

In the early summer (April and May) and late in the monsoon season (September to November), cyclones can whip up winds with a speed of 100-150 miles an hour, which pile up the waters of the Bay of Bengal in crests up to 20 feet which then crash onto coastal and offshore island areas.

History reveals the high human cost of such forces of nature. Since the early 18th century, when records began, over one million people have been killed in storms like this – 815,000 of them in three storms occurring in 1737, 1876 and 1970. The latter cyclone and tidal surge killed more than 450,000 people. Another 125,000 died in a repeat disaster in 1991. The Bangladesh government estimated the damage at US\$5 billion – completely beyond the means of a poor developing country.

Severe storms have happened more recently too, memorably resulting in a massive flood in 1998 which affected some 30 million people and was the most damaging of the century. The devastation is just beyond compare with anything we have ever experienced here.

This vulnerability to flooding and cyclones, particularly in the coastal areas, is somehow doubly cruel for a country already wrought with obstacles. Natural disasters anywhere can be ruinous: destroying crops; damaging buildings; shattering infrastructure; spoiling food supplies; overwhelming sanitation systems; contaminating and polluting drinking water; killing livestock and – of course – claiming human lives.

In a country such as Bangladesh, extreme conditions do all of these things on a grander scale and with far greater impact than we can imagine, largely because it is not a country that can respond quickly and effectively to such calamities. It is just not equipped to do so.

This brings us to another aspect of Bangladesh which renders it a nation requiring our attention. We have already looked briefly at Mother Nature's role here but, in addition, the human geography and socio-economic history and profile of the country need to be considered. Here, too, Bangladesh seems to have been dealt a challenging hand.

A country just over half the size of New Zealand, Bangladesh supports a population of over 150 million, a population that is growing at a rate of over 2% a year and makes it one of the most densely populated countries.

It is also one of the world's poorest countries: the average income is US\$260 a year and almost half the population lives on less than US\$1 a day. Over 80% live on less than US\$2.

Child malnutrition joins water-borne disease as a major health issue – both endemic in areas prone to flooding and a challenge to the resources of the country. More worryingly still, over 80 million people are considered to be at high risk of arsenic related diseases caused by the exposure of arsenic-bearing rocks in tube-wells. Whilst not unique to Bangladesh, it is here that it has its most concentrated impact.

To compound the kind of poverty that blights any developing country, Bangladesh cannot benefit from recent debt relief initiatives as it has a track record of paying back debts very promptly and does not qualify for the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) initiative. This is despite a burden of international debt believed to exceed \$100 per citizen.

If the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) are used as a measure of success for advances in developing nations, Bangladesh appears to be under achieving in terms of progress. The progress assessment published by the Bangladesh government and the UN in February 2005 concedes that many of the Goals will not be reached without specific policy intervention and increased funding. Reducing poverty, decreasing child malnutrition, addressing the quality of education, and improving maternal health are key problem areas. It is estimated that the price tag for Bangladesh to reach the standards required is about US\$4 billion per annum. Compare this with the recently agreed United Nations Development Assistance Framework which envisages UN agency support of US\$249 million over the period 2006 – 2010.

Perhaps the answers lie within the country itself: what capacity does Bangladesh have to help itself? After the litany of problems faced by Bangladesh, wouldn't it be nice to hear some good news? Is there any?

Well, yes, there is.

Bangladesh has a flourishing civil society, and in this has facilitated significant progress. Again, with an eye on the MDGs, it has shown a real commitment to change.

1. Bangladesh has achieved success in population control with total fertility rate (TFR) declining from 6.3 in 1975 to 3.3 in 1997-99, halving the population growth rate and this at a low level of income and at a low level of literacy.
2. Bangladesh has reduced mortality rates, specifically infant and child mortality. Infant mortality has declined from 153 deaths per 1000 live births in 1975, to 94 deaths in

1990, and to 66 in 2000. This pace was among the fastest in the developing world in the 1990s.

3. Bangladesh had made advances in disaster preparedness and in overcoming mass starvation and the threat of famine prevalent with its vulnerability to natural disasters, with near self-sufficiency in rice production and increased cereal production.
4. Bangladesh has made impressive steps to reduce child malnutrition. The proportion of underweight children has gone down from 72% in 1985-86 to 51% in 2000.
5. Bangladesh has achieved success in mainstreaming women into the development process. Women have played an important role in the success of micro-credit, ready-made garment exports, reducing population growth, increasing child nutrition, and in the spread of primary education. There is gender parity in primary education and an almost imperceptible gender gap in secondary education. Significant gender gaps persist, but women in all walks of life have become more visible and are vital to wider social and economic changes in future.
6. Advances made by the non-government organisations (NGOs), grassroots organisations and vocal civic institutions have been crucial. The emergence of these players helps to offset the backdrop of weak state and market institutions. Harnessing the poor through community-based organisations and NGOs has been important in the poverty reduction strategy and such social enterprises will continue to develop a pro-poor development agenda.
7. There have been significant steps towards a viable democratic transition with assurance of free and fair elections despite weak democratic institutions in the country. There is also increased political and electoral participation of women, more press freedom, and active civic movements. Democratization has yet to take deeper roots, but progress is evident.

For a young Muslim nation battling with the inevitable turmoil caused by a fraught path towards true democracy (Bangladesh gained independence in 1971. Prior to that, it was East Pakistan) these advances must be viewed as substantial and deeply encouraging, even given ongoing international concerns about political and police corruption, religious extremism and media suppression.

But long-term development is about independence, isn't it? It is about being able to sustain yourself, whilst trading happily with the rest of the world. How can Bangladesh do this? 90% of Bengalis live in the countryside, heavily dependent on agriculture, which is threatened by the fragile environment and unable to meet the demand for jobs from the young population (life expectancy is around 62 years of age), who may try to seek work overseas, sometimes illegally. Neither is agriculture a long-term, sustainable economic answer: natural resources are simply inadequate. In such circumstances, economic diversification is essential to future development.

It is in this fact that the true dilemma lies. Conventional instruments of economic growth have been unsuccessful: shoehorning liberal market policy reforms into Bangladesh has boosted traditional measures of growth, but has also aggravated divisions between rich and poor, and between urban and rural communities.

More importantly, export markets are threatened by “free trade”, none more so than the textile industry which is in danger of collapse following the recent termination of the MultiFibre Agreement due to WTO regulations. On top of this, a 2000 US trade act giving preferential treatment to poor countries excluded Bangladesh and, since then, garment orders from US customers have fallen by up to 40%.

This is critical. Whilst agriculture cannot offer long-term economic stability and growth, textiles is an area in which Bangladesh should be flourishing. The garment industry was built on the back of women’s labour: over 1.5 million women earn a living by stitching garments, bringing in piteously low (c US\$1.50 a day) but nevertheless essential income. Already, over 300,000 have lost their jobs. This not only renders the women of Bangladesh unemployed, but impounds too, the social problems such as repression and violence that they already face – removing from them the education and means to seek redress.

In a country where child labour is already a problem, this loss of earnings also removes the means by which parents pay for their children’s education. The impact of this is manifold: 21% of school age children are already out of school and they will go on to join the 45 million illiterate adults who are caught in the cycle of poverty. Such children are more likely to enter the labour market in dangerous, low or unpaid conditions.

The role of Fair Trade/Trade Aid in Bangladesh

In these circumstances, fair trade offers positive, long-term solutions to many of these problems. And Bangladesh has a lot to offer consumers. Jute, for example, was once the economic engine of the country, with 80% of the world market back in the 1940s and still 70% in the 1970s. Since then, polypropylene products (plastics) have become more popular, but jute remains a source of great potential. (Show picture of jute plant, contained in CD).

A tall, branchless plant, growing well in moist and swampy land, the fibres of soaked then sun-dried jute can be used to make cloth, shawls, rope, carpet backing cloth, and bags ideally suited to packing grains. It is the perfect eco-friendly material, rotting into the ground and acting as a natural fertiliser, and grows well and abundantly in Bangladesh.

Trade Aid brings jute products (amongst others) to New Zealand through enlightened co-operatives which maximise the potential of the land as well as the people.

Profile 1:

Take **CORR, the Jute Works**, for example. Focusing on the socio-economic dignity of the disadvantaged in general and women in particular, CORR encourages the empowerment and handicraft producers; provides opportunities for training and development; offers routes to markets; and confers financial security through fair wages and special funds.

CORR is 220 autonomous co-operative groups, comprising over 4800 female and 160 male producers across Bangladesh (many illiterate). Many of the women make handicrafts between household duties as a means of supplementing income and, because the materials used are local, the work can be done at home – avoiding exploitative factory conditions. The ability to earn independently, and to own the earnings completely, is crucial to enhanced social respect and dignity. With CORR promoting and marketing the products, such women can focus on the skills they already possess.

Beyond this, CORR offers several additional benefits that would never be found in the 'conventional' sector:

1. Producers are helped to save a proportion of their earnings for future investment.
2. A Group Development Fund, managed by the groups themselves, is mainly used for raw materials and provides experience in fund management.
3. The Small Credit Fund encourages diversification in income generation, such as small trades, crop businesses, kitchen gardening, and livestock rearing.
4. A Welfare Grant is for individuals to draw from for immediate needs or for savings
5. Emergency medical assistance.
6. Environmental programmes including planting saplings to maintain ecological balances; digging deep wells for clean, pure drinking water; installing sanitary toilets (a rarity in rural Bangladesh).
7. Disaster assistance to support those facing a natural calamity.

In addition, CORR places a strong emphasis on philanthropy, education and building links between the co-operatives and society as a whole.

Of course, it is not only the producers who are affected by such enterprise. Organised women, with a common voice and position, are able to express their opinions and highlight the problems faced by the underprivileged in Bangladesh. They are also able to contribute to household income, thereby helping to send their children to school. This, at last, can break cycles of illiteracy and poverty.

Experience from Vi Cottrell and Corr: the Jute Works

"The most lasting impressions from my trips are always of the meetings with village co-operative groups, no matter which trading partner I am visiting. We usually begin with the history of the group – recounted by one of the elected office bearers, or an older member. There is often someone especially outgoing who makes jokes and recounts personal stories. We begin to talk about what changes they have seen. Sometimes when the subject of children or grandchildren comes up, I get out my photos (which cause both bewilderment and hilarity) and then the women really begin to talk.

"On the subject of men and husbands: I was told by one woman that she enjoyed the gender training most 'because it gave me new ideas.' Discussing whether husbands were jealous of their wives' ability to earn, Shima told me: 'My husband has changed over the years. Now he is always discussing decisions with me. He also helps me with my work.' Rehana said: 'Now we are earning, our husbands love us – there is no violence in our village.'

"Everywhere the stories are the same: better houses, more children attending secondary school and university, purchase of cows, goats and chickens through the savings schemes. One woman showed us a comprehensive vegetable garden, and it was clear from what she said that she earns as much, if not more, from selling vegetables than she does from making hundreds of jute frogs for the Japanese market.

"All of this success is wonderful – but it has taken more than ten years to achieve, and it is not enough that these women go on enjoying a better lifestyle (although it does remain a very simple lifestyle, and they still have times of disaster, like when the whole village had to live on a bamboo platform for a month because of floods) while others in the village remain very poor. So the strategy is that women, who have been part of the group for a long time, voluntarily retire and make room for a new member. There was evidence that this is happening – so strong is the sense of group and community responsibility."

Another woman Vi talked to at The Jute Works was Safia.



Safia from Corr – The Juteworks

Safia has polio and cannot walk but is very proud that she is able to pay for everything by herself including her treatment. She has savings for the future from the Jute Works' saving scheme she belongs to, and she is also able to pay school tuition for her brother who is living next door to her. She said that her life before was very different and hard as her only employment was working in the fields crushing up lumps of soil. She has now been making jute products for 25 years.

Profile 2:

Aarong is another such catalyst for change. The name means 'village fair' and this handicraft marketing arm of Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (BRAC - the largest NGO in Bangladesh) provides an arena for craftsmen of all trades. Products include pottery, natural fibres, wood, leather, woven cloth and silk products, jewellery and candles. With its beginnings in 1978, Aarong contributes greatly to BRAC's goal of poverty alleviation and empowerment of the poor, and now represents some 35,000 artisans of whom 85% are women.

Aarong has identified three basic constraints for gainful employment of the low income and marginalized people in the rural areas. These are: lack of working capital, marketing support and opportunity for skills' development. Aarong provides a wide range of services to alleviate these problems:

1. On the spot payment on product delivery to encourage efficiency and productivity.
2. Special efforts to reach out to producers in remote areas to ensure fair value for their efforts.
3. Marketing communication and information for artisans.
4. Advances against purchase orders where necessary.
5. Training and education in skills' development to raise product quality and marketability.

6. Product design and support in product development.
7. Quality control to increase producer awareness of the importance of quality.

Recent news from Aarong: House rebuilding and Repairing Project.

Aarong has decided to use Trade Aid's rebates, together with contributions from other trading partners made at different times, to start this scheme in support of producers suffering from the frequent floods and other disasters that drive them from their homes. When they return, their dwellings are often no longer habitable, and they do not have the resources to rebuild them - and yet for only US\$74.00 a house can be repaired "in such a way that it lasts for at least three-four years and survives any natural disaster." US\$150.00 will rebuild a "strong house" with a roof of iron sheets, wooden doors and windows and a bamboo fence. The walls appear to be thatch on a wooden frame.

A survey of producers was conducted, and those selected for inclusion in the scheme are women who are the sole earners in the family because their husbands are disabled or unable to work, widows and divorcees, those who are homeless and those unable to meet expenditure for day-to-day necessities, let alone the repair of a house. Building has begun, and it is good to think that Trade Aid's surplus is building nine strong houses and repairing another! (See pictures to accompany story of Achia and the house).

Achia Begum's Story

One of the recipients of a new house is Achia Begum (see picture – she is in the centre in yellow, her daughter stands on her right and her mother is second from right in the photo). Achia was married fifteen years ago and was supposed to move to her in-law's house. However, this never happened and after a year her husband absconded and never came back, leaving her to care for her daughter. Achia was able to join the Barul Block Print Centre as an apprentice, and through her earnings has been able to send her daughter to secondary school, support her elderly mother as well as her married brother's family. And now she is getting a new house.



Achia Begum (in yellow) standing amongst the construction for her new house.

In summary

Through these fair trade co-operatives, producers are encouraged to help themselves – a vital step in restoring pride and self-esteem, whilst simultaneously playing an important role in reviving and maintaining a rich art and craft heritage. And this is a central feature of all the partners Trade Aid works with in Bangladesh: they all promote the continuity and development of traditional arts and handicrafts and maximise the existing skills of producers. Rather than seeking to introduce new, unsuitable means of income generation, Trade Aid's partners look to the strengths of the producers, nurture them and, of equal importance, look to the wealth of Bangladesh's natural resources and uses these, in a sustainable way, to create some beautiful and authentic products.

Along with jute products, Trade Aid also buys products made from paper; metal; grass (kaisa), bawn, cane, date palm and other fibres; terracotta; hemp; and other natural materials. Such organisations may be instrumental in shifting the fortunes of Bangladesh society and economy not only at the micro- (individual/family/community) level but also at the macro-(national) level. Employment brings income to individuals and their families, but fair trade also ensures that communities benefit through socio-economic advances.

Children can be educated, the future generation better placed to confront the challenges inherent in their country. Women's empowerment will ensure greater equality and involvement at the political level – again important in promoting democracy and stability, and in cleansing political life of corruption. Such progress, albeit slow, is undoubtedly vital to the ongoing processes of democratisation.

Moreover, fair trade offers a means of stimulating sustainable economic activities – activities which are founded on the traditional resources and skills of the country – outside of the constraints imposed by 'free trade' arrangements. By recognising the cultural and economic value of Bangladesh's handicraft heritage, and by overriding the crippling strictures of international trade rules, fair trade provides a real alternative to individual producers and to the country as a whole.

The ramifications for an emerging nation such as Bangladesh are significant.

Fair trade, by creating and supporting real income generation for thousands of producers, hints at the potential of any nation given economic independence and autonomy. It not only bolsters the cause of society's most disadvantaged members, but elevates the economy of the country on the whole by recognising and supporting the real potential of Bangladesh's natural resources and traditional skills. This could be decisive in future crises, perhaps one day enabling Bangladesh to manage the natural calamities and societal hurdles it faces from within, and helping to reduce a crippling dependence on international aid (the country's external debt totalled an estimated US\$21.25 billion in 2005). That would be true democracy and would place Bangladesh in a far better position for reaching those Millennium Development Goals.

Mother Nature may have been cruel to Bangladesh, just as trade rules are, but our response as consumers can, at least, be to stand up against the negative forces of nature and the WTO. Buying fairly traded goods from Bangladesh is one action we can take which has very real results and might, in the future, be the means by which this often beleaguered nation can stand on its own two feet and take its rightful place as an independent, democratic, self-helping land.