

Session 3

Environment



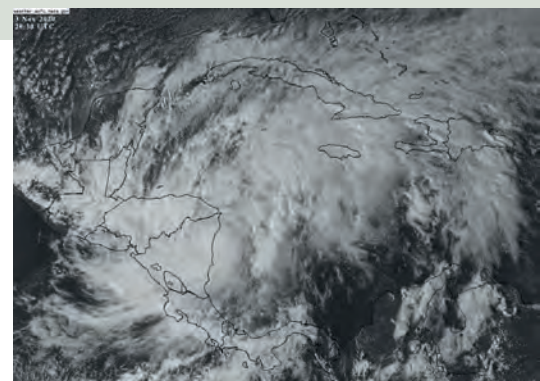
‘In Nicaragua, Christian Aid responded to Hurricane Eta with our partner Soppexcca. We provided food and hygiene kits to 5,000 people in desperate need, as well as psychosocial support to children and adults through recreational activities like drawing, drama and play.’

caid.org.uk/climate

The people of Nicaragua live in constant threat of natural disasters and the chances of them happening is growing greater every day. So, what are the big four natural threats that the people face?

1. Hurricanes and cyclones

A hurricane or cyclone is a large rotating storm with high-speed winds that forms over warm waters in tropical areas. Hurricanes have sustained winds of at least 73 miles per hour, and an area of low air pressure in the centre called the eye. As Nicaragua sits in between two oceans, the Atlantic and the Pacific, these storms can start on either side of the country. In 1998, Hurricane Mitch killed about 3,800 people. Within the space of two weeks in November 2020, two hurricanes named Eta and Iota swept through Nicaragua. About 160,000 Nicaraguans were evacuated from their homes, and it was reported that many people, including at least six children, were killed in the storm.



Check out news footage on the effect of the hurricane at youtu.be/YQ5odfezDA0

Discussion In what ways does the weather impact our lives in the UK? Talk about the worst weather you’ve experienced in this country. Have you ever seen news reports of weather causing serious damage or endangering lives? Scientists report changes in the weather patterns over the last few decades. What do you think might be causing that? Do you think hurricanes are possible in the UK?

Activity Construct a building able to withstand a hurricane

You will need junk (for example milk cartons, lolly sticks, sellotape, paper, blue tac), a tray as a base to attach the building to, an electric fan or hairdryer to create a strong wind, and a water bottle with a sports cap top to squirt water at the finished model. Obviously, ensure that no water comes into contact with electrical equipment. The challenge is to build a shelter that will survive high winds and being hit by forceful water.

2. Earthquakes

Nicaragua lies where two tectonic plates meet, and so is prone to having many earthquakes all year round. In April 2021 alone there were more than 100 quakes of different sizes. Of these, 12 were over 4 on the Richter scale, where 4 describes a light earthquake with buildings and objects shaking, but no major damage caused. In 1992, a major earthquake hit the country, killing more than 100 people and causing an 8m high tsunami. The most recent significant quake was in 2014, when more than 100 buildings collapsed and over 12,000 people needed assistance.

As Nicaragua is a relatively poor country, many buildings are not built to withstand earthquakes of this magnitude. While fewer people have died in recent years, the after-effect of an earthquake on the country and on individuals can last for years. Can you think why this might be?

Game Earthquake Jenga

You will need a cushion and a Jenga game. Try playing a game of Jenga but start with the tower placed on a cushion instead of a solid surface. In Nicaragua many buildings are built on poor foundations which means they do not stand a chance when an earthquake strikes.



3. Mudslides and erosion

‘My daughter and son’s farms are seriously affected by the weather and my daughter’s coffee (farm) is really small. When the rain came in August, we had a mudslide because of the very heavy rain. It was a new coffee plantation, wiped out.’ Yolanda Amador Morales

Mudslides occur when a period of intense rainfall happens, and the great volume of water mixes with soil, causing it to turn to mud and move downhill. During Hurricane Mitch, more than 60cm of rain fell over the Castitas volcano, causing one side of it to collapse. The resulting mudslide was ten miles long and five miles wide. Nearly 1,000 people lost their lives, and many more homes and towns were lost.

Game **Cherry landslide**

You will need a pudding basin, a plate, a knife, a bag of flour and a cherry. Completely fill the bowl with flour, and place the plate over the top. Quickly and carefully turn the bowl over on to the plate, creating a mound of flour. Place the cherry on the top of the mound. The aim is for each player in turn to cut away a section of the flour without the cherry falling off the top. The person who is responsible for the drop has to pick up the cherry with their teeth.

4. Volcanoes

Volcanoes are an opening of the earth’s crust through which molten rock, gases and ash can escape. Nicaragua has a large number of volcanoes, of which between seven and ten are believed to be active. In March 2021 the San Cristobal volcano erupted, covering the city of Chinandega in thick ash. While these eruptions don’t always cause deaths, the disruption and damage they caused often increase the pressure on an already poor nation like Nicaragua.

Activity Why not create your own volcano by following the instructions and video at <https://bit.ly/3tVVaXv>

Discussion Why do you think that people live in areas that are so prone to natural disasters? Why don’t they relocate to areas that are less dangerous?



Make a difference

Find out more about the work of international and national charities that work to support people in areas that are prone to natural disaster. What kind of support do you think is best? What is the best way to choose which charity to support? Perhaps you could set aside a small amount from your pocket money or allowance each week which you save ready for any emergency appeals from your chosen charity.

Bible link:

Isaiah 54:10 (NRSV) For the mountains may depart and the hills be removed, but my steadfast love shall not depart from you, and my covenant of peace shall not be removed, says the Lord, who has compassion on you.

Psalms 46:1-11 (NRSV) God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, though the earth should change, though the mountains shake in the heart of the sea; though its waters roar and foam, though the mountains tremble with its tumult.

Discussion The writers of these two passages had clearly experienced natural disaster, but also trusted in God to see them through dark times. They talk about steadfast love, a covenant of peace, a refuge and strength, a very present (and very much in evidence) help. These are very strong descriptions – how do they make you feel, and how do you visualise God when you hear them? How would you describe your experiences of God?

Prayer

Write the words describing God onto stones or bricks, adding words of your own. Make a pile of the stones or bricks, thinking about how God is unmovable and strong enough to withstand the mightiest earthquake and hurricane. Thank God for the promise that God’s steadfast love and covenant (promise) of peace will never leave us. Pray for the people of Nicaragua, asking God to give them strength and help in times of need.

