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INTERVIEW

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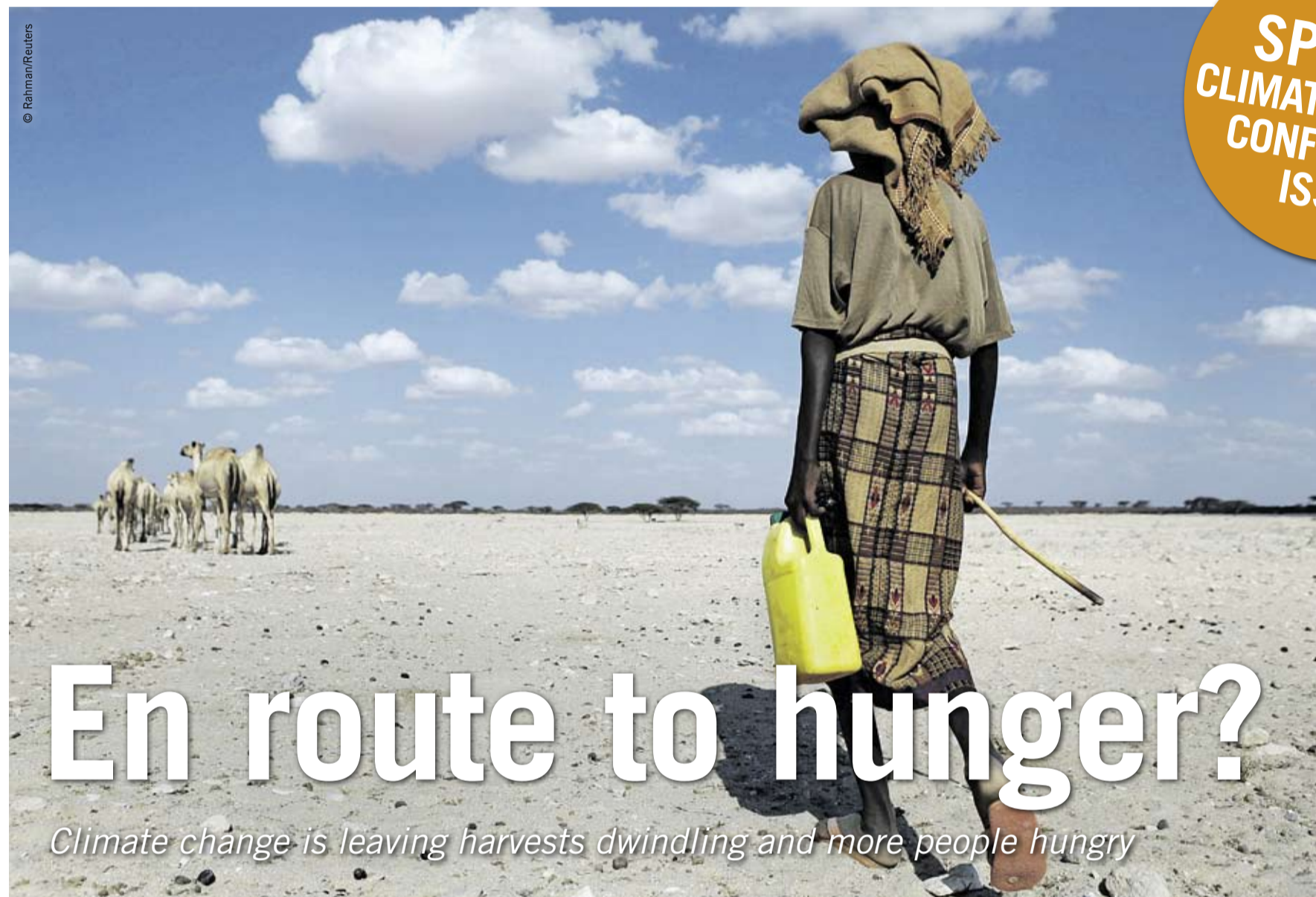
ABOUT THIS PUBLICATION

This special issue is an extract
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SPECIAL
CLIMATE CHANGE
CONFERENCE
ISSUE

CLIMATE AND HUNGER CRISIS



En route to hunger?

Climate change is leaving harvests dwindling and more people hungry

NATURE ON THE RETREAT:
Climate change is causing
more and more land to
dry out. This Somali
boy leads his family's
camels back into the
desert after taking them
to a watering hole. Many
nomadic families in
Somalia have lost their
animals to the droughts
which have now lasted for
three years.

Politicians, environmentalists and journalists travelled all the way to the polar ice caps to see for themselves that climate change is threatening the existence of polar bears. Yet political decision-makers have seldom confronted the issue that climate change is also leaving many people in developing countries facing drastically dwindling habitats.

By Rafaël Schneider

Small farmers in southern Africa, whether in Kenya or Burkina Faso, are currently experiencing their third or even fourth dry season in a row. Just as polar bears hope in vain for the return of cold temperatures and ice, farmers are waiting in vain for the revival of the dry and wet season cycle, and fruitful harvests. In many developing countries, the agriculturally-productive areas are receding just as quickly as the bears watch the ice sheets shrinking in the warm water.

In Europe and North America, yet also in East and South-East Asia, the immediate impact of global warming on agriculture will in fact be a positive one. The increase in rainfall caused by moderate levels of global warming could lead to yields in North America rising by up to 20 percent (IPCC Report 2007). This may go some way to explaining why climate policy amongst industrialised nations pays little attention to the issue of food security.

A food crisis is imminent

The situation in many developing countries is very different. As a result of insufficient rainfall or irregularly-occurring wet seasons, Africa lives under the threat of 50 percent harvest reductions within the next ten years. By 2020, regional harvest decreases of 30 percent are also expected in Central and South Asia, as well as Latin America. Climate change is not only threatening the existence of polar bears; it is threatening the existence of billions of humans.

Before all else, the target must be to prevent further agricultural areas being lost through changes to climate conditions. If the temperature rise is

not kept under 2 degree Celsius, even the implementation of expensive technological solutions will not be enough to compensate for the consequences of climate change in many places.

However, limiting the temperature rise should not lead to diminished opportunities for development in poorer countries. Equal access to common commodities is a must for all humans, and this applies equally to the atmosphere. Emissions trading tempts industrialised nations to invest less in the reduction of greenhouse gases than they could. Instead, they invest in cheaper climate protection measures in developing countries.

Yet shifting greenhouse gas reductions from industrialised nations to developing countries is only possible up to a point. Developing countries require enough of an emissions leeway to allow them to fight poverty and hunger through agricultural and economic growth.

In developing countries, climate change requires a twin approach: to avoid hunger, agricultural cultivation techniques must be adapted to the changes in climate which are already taking place. At the same time, the development of such countries must be designed to keep their ecological footprint as low as possible. In other words, it is vital that developing countries move immediately to make the most of new environmentally-sound and energy-efficient technology.

The costs of adapted cultivation methods and modern technologies are generally higher than slipping back to established and easily available conventional equipment. This is not only down to purchase costs - for example, a diesel pump is cheaper than a solar pump - but also the need for research and training. Cultivation methods specific to their location must be investigated and enhanced, and people must learn how to handle these

new techniques. Developing countries do not have the means to do this alone. According to the polluter pays principle, this is the duty facing the industrialised nations of the north: they have triggered climate change, so it is up to them to bear the cost of finding a just balance and to provide adequate support to sustainable development in the south.

Agriculture ensures lives

When confronting food security and climate protection, a dilemma exists: given that agriculture causes a not-insignificant proportion of global greenhouse gas emissions, increased production would only add to this. This is particularly so where increased cultivation takes place on a large industrial scale at huge plantations. Yet agriculture also lays the foundation for the existence of many small farmers in developing countries. Through agriculture, they are the cornerstone of food supply, and their subsistence strategy contributes to the upkeep of biodiversity. If agriculture is to be adapted to climate change, a focus must be placed on ensuring sustainable, locally-adapted cultivation methods, which at the same time contribute to the reduction of greenhouse gases. Climate change was caused by the dependency rapid technological progress dependent on huge energy consumption, and only a small fraction of humanity has profited from this and got rich. Climate conferences will only deliver lasting, just and sustainable results by paying due attention to the link that global warming has with agriculture and food security.

Dr. Rafaël Schneider works for
Welthungerhilfe in Bonn.

INFO

Further Facts

Welthungerhilfe is a private, non-profit, politically independent and nondenominational relief organisation which works under a voluntary Presidency and the patronage of the German Federal President. It has supported some 5,900 projects in over 70 countries with 1.9 billion Euro since its foundation in 1962. If you are interested in the work of Welthungerhilfe, its projects or further articles on climate change, please visit our English homepage at:
www.welthungerhilfe.de/home_eng.html.

»Action, not negotiation«

Klaus Töpfer demands a »Green New Deal« of coordinated measures tackling both the economic and climate crises



INTERVIEW

Professor Dr **Klaus Töpfer** has been Vice-President of Welthungerhilfe since 2008. As Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme from 1998 to 2006, he built an outstanding international reputation. From 1987 to 1994, the CDU (Christian Democrats) politician was the Federal Minister for Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety, then Federal Minister for Regional Planning, Building and Urban Development. He is also the founding director of the Institute for Advanced Sustainability Studies (IASS), founded in 2009.

WELTERNÄHRUNG: Professor Töpfer, can climate change still be contained?

KLAUS TÖPFER: Climate change must be contained. Scientists are in agreement that the temperature rise must be limited to a scale of up to two degrees Celsius. Otherwise, we will not be able to cope with the consequences.

How can this be achieved?

Huge changes must be made to achieve this, above all to energy supply. We must also find a way to work with developing countries on a technological level to make it possible for these countries to overcome poverty without placing too great a burden on the environment

How does climate change have an effect on developing countries?

Until now, infrastructure has often been developed without paying any attention to the climate. This can now be seen in the occurrence of a variety of extreme weather conditions such as storms or droughts, and the consequences they have. Take the Philippines, for example. After several storms, there were massive landslides, destroying the country's infrastructure. It is particularly the developing countries that often are not in a position to deal with the consequences of climate change. Agricultural production must also be adapted to climate change. But developing countries, who aren't responsible for climate change, cannot achieve this on their own. So a development framework of cooperation between many countries must be organised in such a way as to provide developing countries with the techniques and financial ability to adapt.

In December, a follow-up agreement to the Kyoto Protocol is set to be concluded at the UN Climate Change Conference. Will it work?

What we have to ask ourselves is if a follow-up agreement is the best thing that can be done at this moment in time. It took us 13 years to have Kyoto ratified. We don't have that kind of time anymore. What we need isn't more negotiation, what we need is action. Taken together, only 20 countries are responsible for around 80 percent of worldwide CO₂ emissions. We need a clear reduction programme, particularly for those countries who account for the largest quantities of pollution. That's where arrangements have to be made.

Could the introduction of new, environmentally-friendly technologies be a potential way of improving the situation in developing countries?

More and more environmentally-friendly technologies are being developed - for instance in the area of renewable energy - which are also available to developing countries. But it is not just about providing technological assistance. What is needed is the financial means. In order to be able to adapt to climate change, additional finance to the tune of billions must be provided.

What should be done with this additional finance?

Infrastructure must be expanded and safeguarded to prevent extreme weather conditions from leading to catastrophes such as in the Philippines. To be more precise, this means that housing structures must be developed accordingly. When they are built, much closer attention must be paid to ensuring that all new buildings are securely constructed. Agriculture must also adjust to the changed conditions. In addition, dykes must be built on large rivers or coasts, and must be maintained. We must strive to change our energy supply structure - away from fossil energy sources, towards renewable, non-carbon energies. This must all be financed through additional funding.

In what ways must agricultural production adjust to the changed conditions?

All our efforts must be focused on agriculture. Soil use is key to determining how much carbon dioxide, CO₂ that is, can be absorbed by the soil. Scientific research has shown which measures are particularly suited to the capture of large quantities of carbon. The most important of these is forestry. Yet clearances and even fire clearances are still taking place, with the associated consequences. Of the negative effects against the climate, at least 20 percent are triggered by unsustainable forest management - that we now know. With a view to Copenhagen, I believe that everyone is in agreement that specific pro-

grammes must be financed to minimise or completely halt deforestation.

What demands does climate change place on an organisation such as Welthungerhilfe?

Firstly, the duty of Welthungerhilfe is always to help where hunger prevails, where people are starving, where they have no more hope. It's a case of achieving the kind of structural change which will reduce the prospect of hunger. In precise terms, that means investing in water projects in places where we can provide for dry periods. This is what we are currently doing in Kenya, for example.

What is being done in Kenya?

Welthungerhilfe is driving a systematic rain water collection programme so that water falling in large quantities in tropical rainfall can be saved for later dry periods. If we are not only to provide short-term help in overcoming famine but also to contribute in the medium to long term to transforming help into self-help, such structural measures are urgently needed. We are extremely grateful to all those who have donated what little they can to the cause.

The world is still in the grip of the financial and economic crisis. Do we actually have the capacity, either economically or politically, to tackle the issue of climate change? Why mustn't we turn a blind eye?

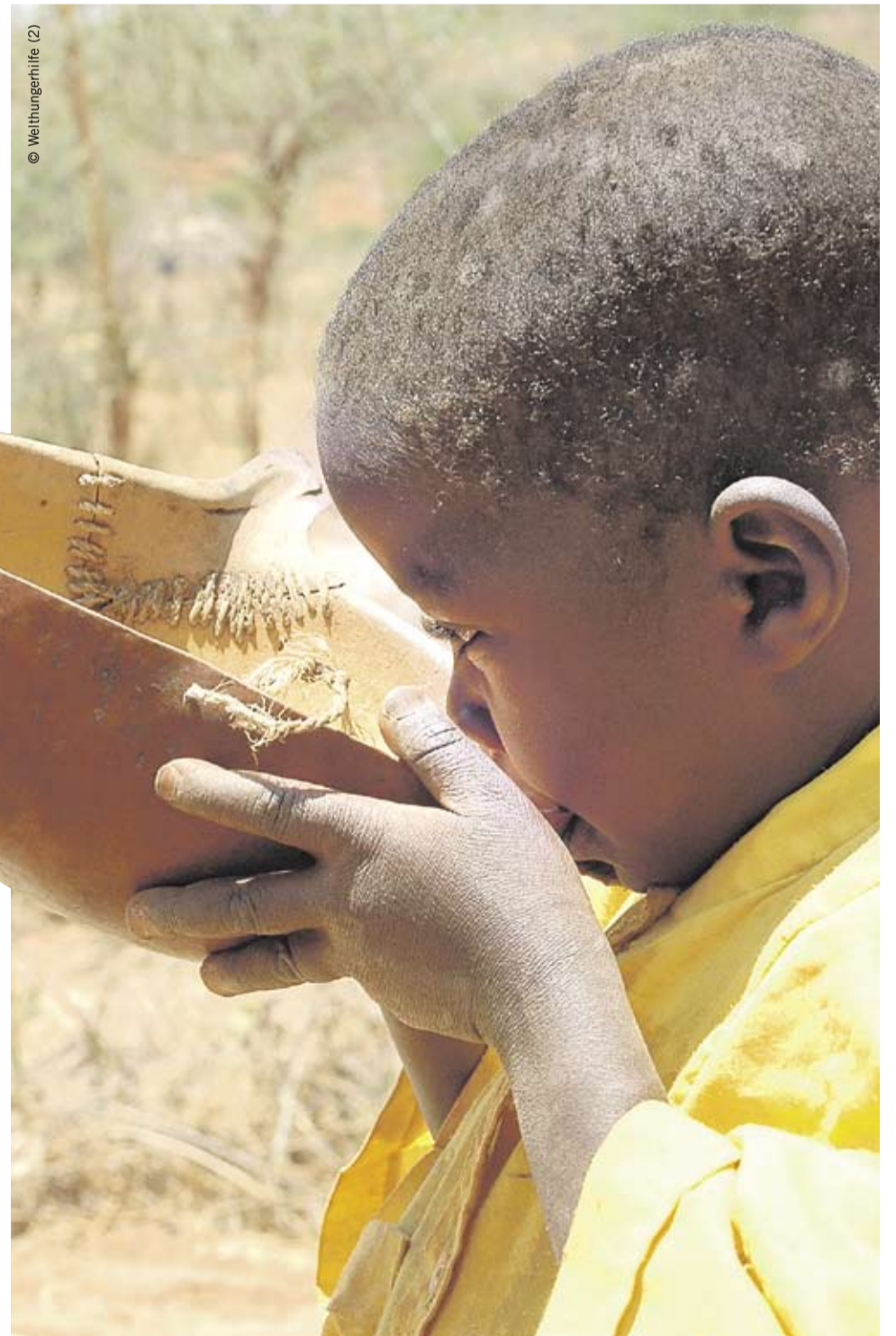
We have no other alternative. Deal with the financial and economic crisis first, then come to the climate crisis: that's wrong. The right thing to do is to deal with the climate crisis by dealing with the economic crisis at the same time. We must work on both crises with the same set of tools. This is certainly possible - it's what can also be called a »Green New Deal«. Economic structures must be altered so as to be politically and economically viable, so that they create jobs and at the same time relieve the burden on the environment.

Can you give any examples?

It includes investment in renewable energies, changing our local transport systems and building more efficient electricity networks that enable a large number of meaningful energy savings. But the improved insulation of our houses is also important. 40 percent of our CO₂ emissions come from construction materials. So there are many tools and measures that can create jobs, help to overcome the economic crisis and at the same time offer a significant contribution to getting a hold on the climate crisis. It's not a case of »either or«, but »both and«. Kill two crises with one stone, that's the challenge of good policy-making.

Interview by Patricia Summa, who works for Welthungerhilfe in Bonn.

»What we need isn't more negotiation, what we need is action.«



IN THE LAND OF DROUGHTS: This Kenyan boy uses a ladle to drink water from one of the few watering holes. In Kenya, droughts have reigned for several years.

INFO

Tackling climate change globally

From 7th to 18th December 2009, the United Nations International Climate Change Conference takes place in Copenhagen. Officially, it is the 15th conference of the signatory states (»COP 15«) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). This convention was approved in 1992 at the UN Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro. It is the first international agreement to recognise climate change as a global problem. All 192 United Nations member states have since ratified the convention. The first signatory state

conference was held in Berlin in 1995. At the third in Kyoto, Japan in 1997, the Kyoto Protocol was passed, committing 39 industrialised and transformation countries to lowering their greenhouse gas emissions between 2008 and 2012 by an average of 5.2 percent, to below 1990 levels. The protocol came into force in 2005, and the USA is the only industrialised country not to have ratified it. As the Kyoto Protocol runs out in 2012, an agreement must be reached for the years following 2012. Negotiations on this are the focus of the Copenhagen climate summit.



RESPECT FOR NATURE: Hurricane Aila ripped many trees from their roots. To protect themselves from further storms and floods, the people of Sibpur build dykes out of sand and clay, securing them with bamboo.

Learning to live with disaster

In the Ganges Delta, Indians are bracing themselves for the effects of climate change



INTERVIEW

As part of the disaster protection programme in the Indian village Sibpur, the 35 year-old farmer Tapasi Kalsa helped to organise shock troops working to provide aid.

WELTERNÄHRUNG: How did you react to the storm?

TAPASI KALSA: Seven hours before the storm, we received a storm warning via mobile phone. Helpers swarmed out, using megaphones to warn people to get to a safe place. First aid teams took elderly or disabled people to higher up places.

Did you receive assistance from the state?

It was only after three days that we received dried food, candles, matches, plastic sheets and medication. The aid supplies were only enough for a quarter of the inhabitants.

To what extent has the disaster protection programme improved the lives of the inhabitants?

People are now more aware of the dangers, they are more vigilant. As soon as our storm warning had been given, the people began to pack their emergency aid kits. The storm has destroyed 450 houses in Sibpur, but not a single life was lost.

Do you intend to pass your experience on to further village communities?

At the town council, we discussed how we could spread the disaster protection programme to further places. We agreed that the town councils are responsible for this, and should organise the corresponding aid from village to village.

Interview by Rainer Hörig.

On 25th May 2009, Hurricane Aila swept through the Ganges Delta, leaving a trail of devastation. Many people lost almost everything they had. But, thanks to the innovative disaster protection programme, the worst was avoided.

By Rainer Hörig

On this particular afternoon, a stormier and stormier wind was blowing. Leaves and branches were flying through the air. With a lurch, the storm tore off the roof over heads. We watched as the sea overflowed the dyke, the dyke finally broke and a giant tidal wave came pouring in. The clay walls of our houses could not withstand the tide and collapsed into the bubbling flood. We were only just able to find safety on a higher up street.

Trees, houses and huts destroyed

With a dispassionate composure, Kamal Patra describes the events of 25th May 2009, when Hurricane Aila swept over his village, Sibpur, on Sagar island in the Ganges Delta. His life was turned upside down by the storm. For six months, the 45 year-old has been living with his family of six in a roadside hut made of bamboo and plastic sheets. They are surviving on poorly-paid hired labour, and by embroidering saris of dazzling colours and gathering up crab larvae in the shallow coastal waters.

On the day of the storm, the whole of Sibpur lay under water. Thousands of trees had been ripped from their roots, and overturned. Hundreds of houses were either partially or irretrievably damaged. In the whole of Bengal, the storm claimed over 150 lives, while hundreds of thousands were left homeless. Yet in Sibpur and four further villages, there was no cause to mourn the loss of life. Here, people were prepared for the disaster. Thanks to an innovative disaster protection programme set up by Welthungerhilfe with its long-term on-site partner, the Ramakrishna Mission, most inhabitants were able to help themselves, or make sure that aid was provided for those who needed it. »Although Aila was a severe storm, loss of life was lower than previous storms«, says farmer Tapasi Kalsa in assessment of the programme's success.

Six months on, large stretches of coastal land in Sibpur sit in disrepair. The branches of leafless trees reach into the blue sky. Piles of clay are a reminder that, once upon a time, there were houses here. Workers excavate earth from the ground, using it to build up the layers of new dykes. »With climate change, there will be storms more and

more often, and they'll be increasingly fierce«, states Professor Sugata Hazra, a geologist investigating the Ganges Delta at the Jadavpur University in Calcutta. It certainly isn't a rosy outlook for the millions of farmers and fishers in the area. Kamal Patra can afford to buy neither a car nor a fridge. He has lived his whole life in harmony with nature and managed his land in complete climate-neutrality. Together with millions of others, he is paying the price for the hole that other, far more affluent inhabitants of the Earth have dug for him. And Patra adds: »People say that the climate is changing. I have no way of judging that. And even if I could, what can I do to stop it?«

The farmers in the Ganges Delta have no influence over the weather conditions, but they can be prepared for natural disasters, and in doing so limit the potential losses arising from them. The impetus to do so is provided by social workers from the Ramakrishna Mission in Calcutta, who have been striving to improve living conditions in the Ganges Delta for 40 years. »Each year, many of our efforts are reduced to nothing by storms«, observes Dr Manas Ghosh, an agricultural expert at the Ramakrishna Mission. »That's why we came to the conclusion that preparation for emergencies had to be a firm component of our development efforts.«

Early warning system established

Manas Ghosh and his colleagues took advantage of the good relations that they enjoy with the villages to develop a prevention plan together with the inhabitants. Welthungerhilfe despatched an expert to Calcutta to support the process. In numerous meetings, the village inhabitants were consulted on the dangers provoked by the storms, and discussed possible ways of protecting themselves from them. »It was a process of mutual learning«, explains Manas Ghosh. In close cooperation with town mayors and civil servants, disaster protection programmes were then drawn up. Village inhabitants drew maps of the areas they live in, inserting places susceptible to and safe from flooding, identifying escape routes and places of refuge.

The discussion process led to the formation of voluntary aid troops to provide first-aid in emer-



MUCKING IN TOGETHER: Public funding is supporting the island inhabitants in their dyke construction efforts.

gencies and ensure that those in particular danger are brought to safety. An Early Warning System was established. With financial aid from Europe, the small village school was raised by one storey, to serve as an area of refuge. Several wells in the village were given new foundations, almost a metre higher, to avoid salt water flowing into the wells during flooding and leaving the water undrinkable. The dykes protecting the island of Sagar from the salty flood were repaired and reinforced. Self-help groups brought the village inhabitants together and demonstrated how important documents, candles and matches, medicine and dry food can be packed to remain watertight. Called the »Family Survival Kit«, inhabitants can take this kit with them in case of flooding and ensure their survival for at least a couple of days.

In March 2009, the project reached completion. Two months later, Aila put it to the test for the first time. The Ramakrishna Mission continues to run the project at local level, and is looking for new financial backing. Because, in the future, it is very likely that storms like Aila will return to devastate the Ganges Delta again and again.

Rainer Hörig works as a freelance journalist in Pune, India.

Natural disasters strike the very poorest

While in industrialised countries natural disasters chiefly cause financial harm, in developing countries they place many lives in danger

STUDY | Natural disasters such as earthquakes, droughts and hurricanes primarily strike in developing countries. Of all people, it is principally the poor who are left to feel the brunt of nature's force. They lose what little they own, their livelihoods, their lives. In comparison, however, industrialised countries suffer few victims; the high losses that they suffer are chiefly financial. Experts fear that climate change will bring about yet more storms, torrential rain and droughts.

It is five years since, at the end of December 2004, the pictures of the tsunami in South-East Asia shocked the world. But 2008 was also a year of disasters, costing the lives of almost 250,000. The majority of the victims were in China (cold temperatures, earthquakes, floods) and Myanmar (Cyclone Nargis accounted for the deaths of 138,000). Equally devastating were the hurricanes Gustav, Ike and Hanna in the Caribbean. Worldwide, over 200 million people were affected by natural disasters.

Prevention saves lives

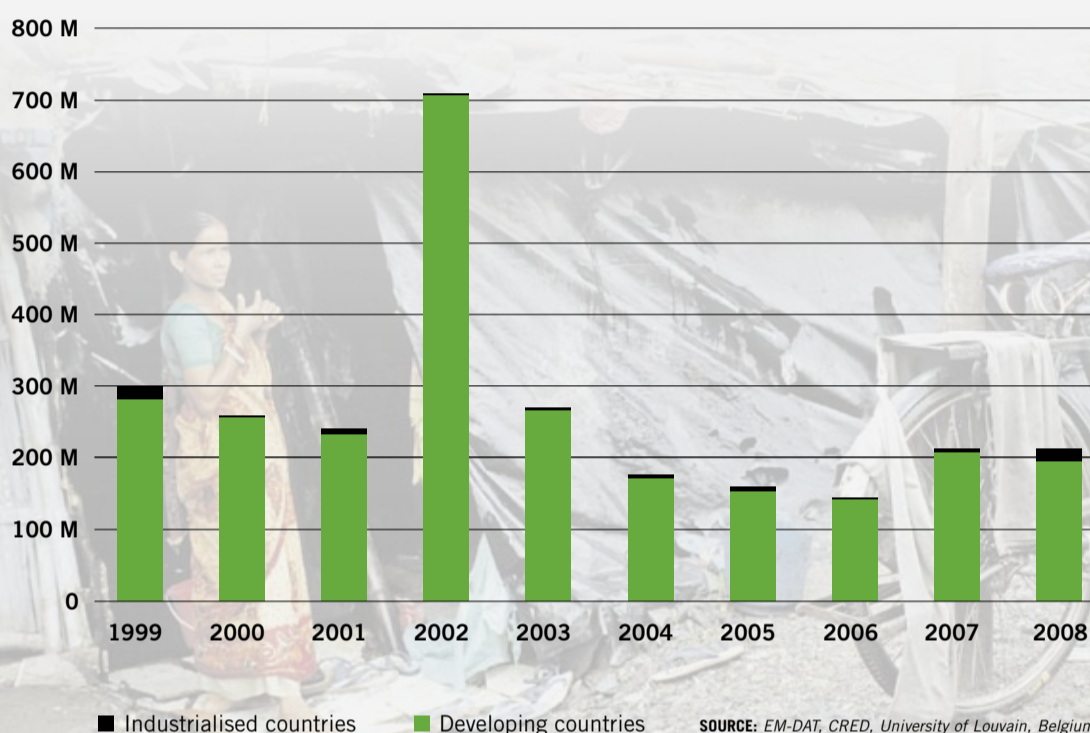
The numbers affected in 2007 were similarly high: with more than 100 million affected, the floods in China were particularly severe, as were those in India and Bangladesh, each totalling more than ten million. And in Bangladesh, cyclone Sidr was devastating. However, Sidr also demonstrates the value of disaster prevention: while 138,000 were killed in a similarly strong cyclone in 1991, the total of 4,000 deaths in 2007 was considerably lower.

In 2003, Europe was caught off guard by an extreme heat wave which led to the deaths of 35,000 people, and similar numbers died after the Bam earthquake in Iran. 2002 was a year of hunger and droughts: almost 430 million people were affected, with around 300 million in India alone. To this can be added the 167 million affected by floods, and 113.4 million affected by storms. On top of the occurrence of large-scale forest fires, key examples of the economic losses suffered by industrialised states were hurricane Kyrill in Europe (2007), hurricane Katrina in the USA (2005), four more US hurricanes and ten typhoons in Japan (2004), as well as high water levels in Europe (2002).

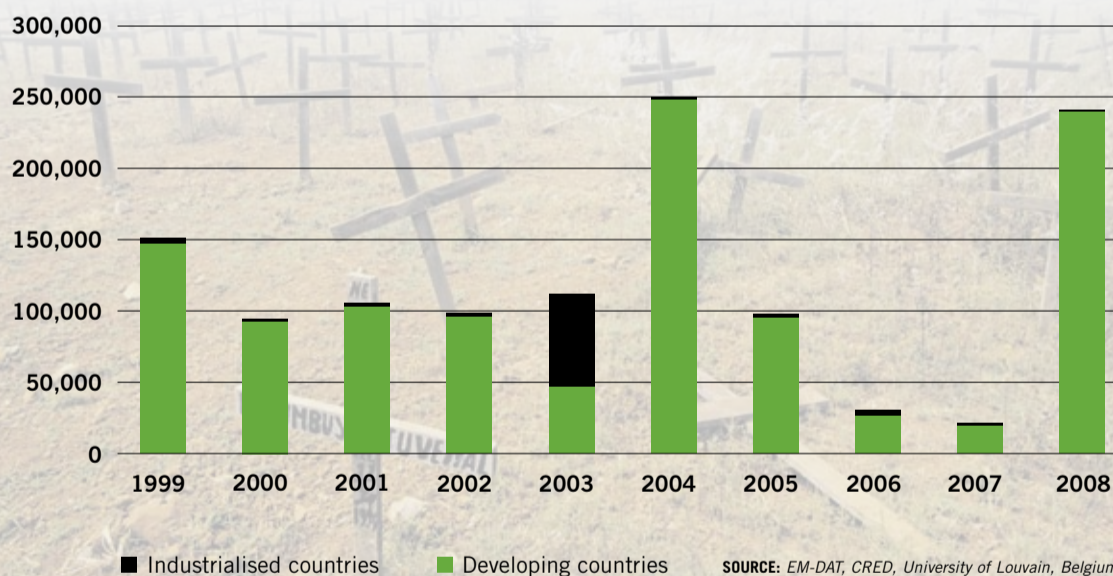
Early Warning Systems help to save lives. Under the threat of a hurricane or the imminent arrival of earth and seaquakes, they allow people to bring themselves to safety before it is too late. Climate change increases the risks of disaster. In working together to achieve development, it is becoming increasingly important to be able to better estimate the potential risks and put into action Early Warning Systems. To achieve this, it is also vital to ensure that those in danger are familiar with the emergency procedures created, and are in a position to save themselves.

NUMBERS & FACTS

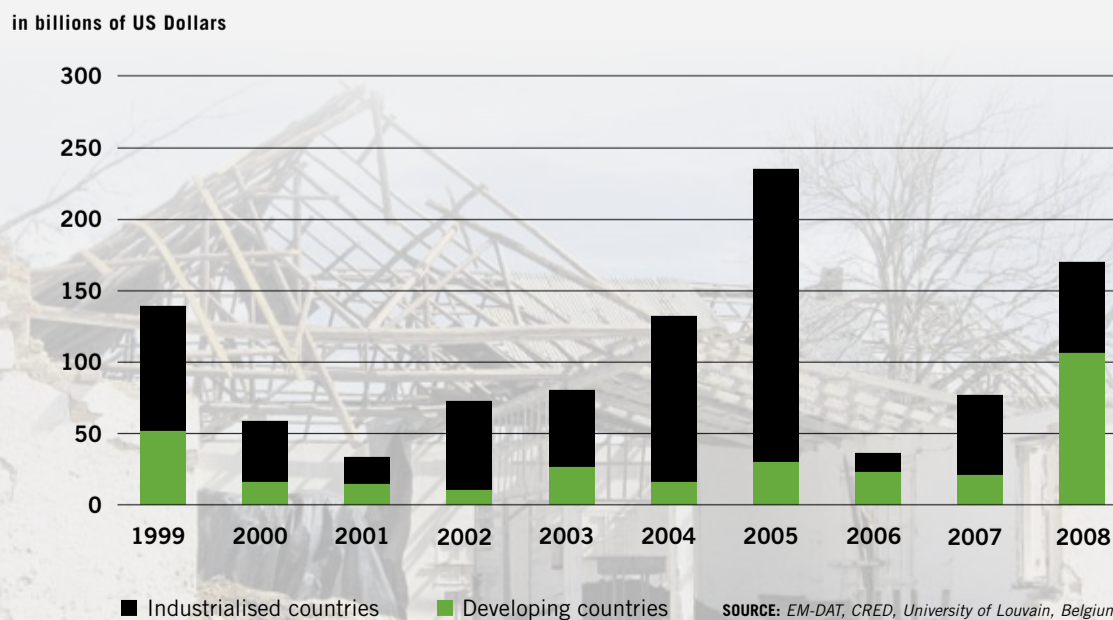
People affected by natural disasters



People killed by natural disasters



Losses incurred by natural disasters



IN BRIEF

Climate change and development policy

BERLIN | In their 17th report on the current development aid situation, the German aid organisations terre des hommes and Welthungerhilfe demand a clear commitment from the German Government to providing binding financial guarantees for climate change, anchoring this as a stand-alone mission in their development policy. Both aid organisations criticise the fact that climate change is affecting precisely those people who have not caused it and are least in a position to defend themselves against its consequences. *pas*

An extract of the report in English is available for download at:

www.welthungerhilfe.de/home_eng.html

Ecoagriculture helps small farmers

MAINZ | The ecological cultivation of food and its sale at fair conditions helps small farmers and their families in developing countries, according to a study carried out for the German Association for Natural Land Cultivation and the Weltladen-Dachverband. *cas*

Green alternative to Google

WITTENBERG | The internet search machine »Forestyle« sees itself as an environmentally-friendly alternative to Google. Users of Forestyle can support the conservation of rainforests while searching the web. Its administrators promise that part of its advertising income will go to rainforest conservation. *cas*

<http://uk.forestyle.org/>

Welthungerhilfe active for disaster reduction

BONN | In November, Welthungerhilfe was voted onto the executive board of the German Committee for Disaster Reduction for the second time. The committee is the German arm of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction. *cas*

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