



SHELTERBOX AND ROTARY: THE ENVIRONMENT



Here at ShelterBox, every time we work with communities who have lost their homes, livelihoods or loved ones to hurricanes, tropical storms, flooding and drought, we see how **the climate crisis is just as much a humanitarian crisis**.

This is becoming increasingly clear when we talk to people whose lives have been devastated by extreme weather events.

Take Patrick, for example - a father of six from Vanuatu. When Category 5 Cyclone Harold tore through the island nation in April 2020 - causing widespread damage, he shared with us his concerns about climate change, and the increasing unpredictability of cyclones: "you would think that the cyclones would just come in the cyclone season, but now when we talk about climate change, the cyclones are coming at times when you don't think they will come. It's not the cyclone season, but a cyclone will come".

For small island developing states like Vanuatu, climate change is the most significant single threat to sustainable development. For example, when subsistence food gardens were wiped out, and thousands of kava crops were destroyed after Cyclone Harold, major food shortages were experienced across the island -significantly impacting on the livelihoods of many residents.

But, it's not just island nations. In countries like Somaliland, extreme drought has killed up to 80% of livestock - which rural families rely on, for income and survival. And in severely poverty-stricken countries, such as Malawi, the more frequent and more extreme weather events are only making situations worse - when entire homes are destroyed.

Climate change poses a significant threat to humanity. It is a threat which can only be tackled with immediate global action - something which ShelterBox and Rotary must work hand-in-hand towards.

HOW DOES CLIMATE CHANGE AFFECT NATURAL DISASTERS?

Droughts:

Although droughts are a natural part of our climate, climate change is increasing the severity of extreme drought in some regions around the world. Somaliland, the Lake Chad Basin, and the Eastern Mediterranean have all seen the devastating effects in recent years.

Increasing temperatures, more extreme changes in rainfall, and less snowfall are contributing to worsening drought conditions.

Even regions that may not see changes in rainfall are feeling the impact. Warmer temperatures lead to higher demand for water and more surface evaporation, putting greater stress on water supplies.

One of the most devastating effects of droughts is the strain they can put on food supplies. In countries where communities don't have reliable sources of nutritious food, droughts can cause food prices to go up, leading to social unrest, famine and migration.

Floods:

As temperatures rise, the warmth can lead to more extreme rainfall in some regions.

At the same time, the sea level rises predicted for the coming years will cause increased flooding in coastal and low-lying areas. Coastal erosion will also increase.

Flood risks are also increasing across many urban and rural areas because of the changing landscape. Natural flood barriers like forests are being cut down and expanding cities create huge areas of impermeable land where high levels of water are not easily drained away.

Hurricanes:

Whilst climate change is not increasing the number of tropical storms we see, the rising temperatures are causing the storms to become much more intense and have a far more devastating impact. In recent years, we have seen far more of the highest possible categories of storms – Categories 4 and 5.

Research also suggests that climate change is influencing the speed of tropical storms, causing them to move more slowly, leading to greater destruction. We saw this recently in the very slow-moving Hurricane Dorian which devastated the Bahamas in 2019.

Wildfires:

Rising temperatures and changing rainfall patterns will lead to more extreme drought.

Drought conditions often fuel deadly wildfires, with areas such as the US and Australia particularly susceptible.

Deforestation and farming techniques, such as slash and burn are also a large contributor to wildfires. In 2019 fires ravaged the Amazon Basin, destroying more than 2 million acres of rainforest.

As well as huge areas of forest, thousands of homes have been lost globally over the past decade due to wildfires.

