

SAVE OUR PLANET



ENSURE ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

Halve the proportion of people without access to safe drinking water by 2015. Transform the lives of millions of slum dwellers. Reverse the loss of environmental resources.

We're on track to meet or even exceed the safe drinking water target. But 8 out of 10 people who still get their water from unsafe sources are in rural areas of the developing world and we need to close the gap with better delivery.

Most regions are moving forward in improving the lives of the urban poor. In the last ten years, the share of urban people living in slums dropped from 39 percent to 33 percent. The biggest improvements are in East and South Asia – especially China. But in actual terms, slums are growing – with 828 million people living in them, as opposed to 767 million a decade ago.

Meeting the target for sanitation appears to be out of reach, as half of the population in developing regions is living without sanitation. In 2008, 2.6 billion people lacked improved toilet facilities. In South Asia, the

number of people using improved facilities will have to double.

Green house gases continue to rise, which shows us how urgent the problem of climate change is. But there has been some progress. From 1986 to 2007 the 195 countries which are party to the Montreal Protocol achieved a 97 percent reduction in their use of substances which deplete the ozone layer.

Deforestation continues at an alarming rate – 13 million hectares a year – which is equivalent to the size of Bangladesh. It is only partially counterbalanced by forest planting. Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean continue to be the largest net losers of forests. Our oceans and seas remain polluted and over-fished. Global emissions of carbon dioxide are expected to grow.

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Caritas in action: Slum life in Brazil

All sorts of things float by in the river which runs through the slum – not just rubbish, but dead pigs, horses and even sofas. In the stagnant water which collects in the scattered rubbish of old tires and plastic bottles live the mosquitoes which carry dengue fever.

The shanty town, or favela, of Peixinhos in the Recife region of north eastern Brazil, is not unusual for the desperate living conditions of its people. Brazil may be the fifth largest country in the world and the ninth richest, but it is one of extreme inequality. 54 million of its people live below the poverty line.

In Peixinhos, a youth group is making a difference. It goes out and cleans up the rubbish and spreads the word on health and hygiene. The group – which is called GCASC, Community Group Caring for Their Children – is supported by Caritas England and Wales (CAFOD).

At 12 years old, Pedro Leandro Sodre Barbosa is enthusiastic about taking part. “To stop pollution its important to recycle, and to do that we must stop people just throwing rubbish anywhere. It’s important for us also to have some pride in where we live, even if we are poor. We go out planting to protect our environment now and to make it feel more like home,” Pedro says.

Robson Ramos dos Santos is 20 now and a community worker in Peixinhos. He joined the group when he was seven and says that without it he would not be alive today. “Life here is very difficult for young people. Many don’t make it past 18 years of age. Many are killed.”

One of them was Robson’s own brother, whose gang name was Mascara, or the Mask. He was involved in drugs, like many of the young people in the favelas, who have little to occupy them. Every weekend as many as three or four are killed – most by organised groups which work for drug traffickers, and who are former or current police officers.

GCASC teaches dancing and drumming and provides a quiet place for children and young people to read and study, where they are off the streets and safe. The workshops it runs have helped cut down the level of violence.

Luciano is another successful graduate of the group. Now 24 and a professional player of the traditional maracatu drum music, he was just 15 when he witnessed two of his friends gunned down in the street. Luciano says he needed a place of safety and a new way forward. “The group helped me discover my artistic talent and now I live each minute of

What can we do?

Actively fund programmes to provide sanitation to target regions – especially in rural parts of the developing world.

Find the large multi-sectored investment which will be necessary to improve the lives of slum dwellers. We must encourage private partners to join us.

Decisively respond to climate change beyond the negotiations which have taken place in recent years.

Stop the expected surge in carbon dioxide emissions once the current economic downturn is over.

The rich world must provide sufficient levels of secure financial and technological support for the poor world to mitigate and adapt to the effects of climate change.

Legislate to conserve the world’s biodiversity through protecting more key habitats and the species who live in them.

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Photos:

(Page 1) A school greenhouse in Bolivia. David Stephenson/Trúcaire, (Page 2) Sorting through recycling. Marvella Haddad/CAFOD.