

Climate hero

Belle Anse, Haiti: Solomon's story



Solomon Jean-Pierre PHOTO: KESNER MICHEL/ACTIONAID

“My name is Solomon Jean-Pierre and I’m 11 years old. I live with my dad, my three brothers and two sisters in a small place called Belle Anse, in Haiti. It’s a beautiful place, but we always suffer when storms hit.

When Hurricane Noel hit our community late October 2007, I was walking home from school. It was a Friday afternoon and it was pouring with rain. I saw red muddy water coming down the mountain, gushing through the streets. The rains had caused a flash flood. I was so scared. I quickly climbed the nearest tree to get out of the way. From up there I saw people, animals, pieces of houses and furniture carried away with the water. I was so scared, I didn't even notice I was bleeding; I had climbed a tree we always avoided (as it has big spines) and I was covered in scratches. All I could think about was my family.

I don't know how long I was in the tree, but minutes felt like hours. When the rain stopped and the water lowered, I rushed home to find my dad, brothers and sisters on the roof of a nearby house. I was so relieved. My dad was so happy to see me alive. We went over to our home to find it had gone. The water took away our home, our crops and all our possessions. It was heart-breaking to see my dad sobbing. But we were lucky, as we were all alive.

We, and families like ours, received immediate help from the government and local organisations. They helped us with food, shelter and things to go back to school with. This meant we could get our lives back to normal. But I was scared it would happen again and I didn't know what we could do to protect our community. Many of my friends felt the same.

That was why I was so happy when my dad came back from a community meeting and told us that ActionAid was organising projects for us children. The projects gave us a chance to talk about our experiences, understand what happened, and even do things to help protect ourselves. We had meetings to talk about what we saw and how the flash flood affected us. It was good to be able to do this, as I could talk about my fears and realise I was not the only one feeling like that. We also had lessons on climate change and protecting the environment. This was followed by a greenhouse project, which I am the most excited about.

The greenhouse project is lots of fun. We learn about what we can do to improve our local environment. The main aim is to grow trees which we can plant in and around our communities.

ActionAid and their partner organisation CODAB

[Coordination of Organisations for the Development of Belle Anse], helped us to build greenhouses to grow tree saplings. They also taught us to prepare the soil, how to mix nutrients to feed the saplings, how to care for the trees and how to transplant them. I did so well in the training I was chosen by my group to be in charge of our greenhouse. I am so proud, as I am helping to protect our community.

In our greenhouse we have 2,000 saplings. These fast growing trees are planted in areas around agricultural fields, our homes and up in the hills to help stop soil erosion. So far, we have planted just over 1,000 trees. The roots will help to hold the soil together and prevent the landslides we had last year.

I also teach younger children about our environment and what we can do together to improve it. They come to the greenhouse for a few hours every Saturday to see what we are doing and to help out.

Working in this greenhouse every day makes me feel good about what I can do to protect our community. I see my future with positive eyes, as I am helping to rebuild my area. When I get older, I will get more training as I want to learn more about using and protecting the land.

This project has helped me to face my fears, and now I am helping to protect our future.”

Solomon 2009:

“Since then, my dad and I have built a greenhouse in our yard where we grow plants. We use some of the trees for sale and the others we plant in our area. It's really getting greener now, we are so happy about it!”

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Words to remember

Belle Anse: a town in the south-east of Haiti

Haiti: a country in the Caribbean

Hurricane: a violent wind which has a circular movement, especially found in the West Atlantic Ocean

Gush: to flow or send out quickly and in large amounts

ActionAid: an international charity working in over 50 countries to end poverty

Climate change: a term used to describe changes to normal weather conditions and patterns caused by humans

CODAB: Coordination of Organisations for the Development of Belle Anse

Sapling: a young tree

Nutrient: any substance which plants or animals need in order to live and grow

Erode: to rub or be rubbed away gradually

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Background information

Background to Belle Anse (Haiti):

Belle Anse is a town in the south-east of Haiti. The Republic of Haiti is a country in the Caribbean. The people who live there speak Creole and French. Its capital is Port-au-Prince.

Background to Hurricane Noel:

Haiti has two rainy seasons: April to May and September to October. June to November is hurricane season. Hurricane Noel reached Haiti at the end of October 2007 and its rainfall (continuing over five days), caused severe flooding and mudslides. Many families lost their homes or had to move away from affected areas.

Deforestation in Haiti has increased the severity of the floods that accompany hurricanes. It is estimated that only 2% of Haiti's original forests remain (Wikipedia). With the loss of trees and their roots, soil is more easily eroded and heavy rain can cause larger mudslides.



Solomon's greenhouse, Belle Anse, 2009 PHOTO: RONALD ST. VIL/ACTIONAID

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**Deforestation and landslips in
Haiti after Hurricane Gustav,
August 2008**

PHOTO: GIDEON MENDEL/CORBIS/ACTIONAID

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Lesson ideas

Age range: we have written these lessons with pupils aged between **eight and 14** in mind and therefore some activities might not be suitable for your pupils. Wherever possible, we have added extra information and extension activities so you can adapt these ideas for your class.

Introduction: use these lesson ideas to learn about deforestation and how some people are working to plant and protect trees.

Subject links: English, geography, PSHE, citizenship

Cross-curriculum dimensions: Global dimension and sustainable development

Time: three to four lessons



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Learning objective	Lesson ideas	Resources
<p>To learn about hurricanes and how they affect people</p> <p>To learn about deforestation and how trees are important to our climate</p>	<p>Activity one Find out what your class know about hurricanes and record thoughts.</p> <p>Read Solomon's story as a class. You could split the class into small groups and ask them to generate questions to swap with other groups or to share with class. Your groups or class might find it beneficial to list the points of Solomon's story that they understand and the points they need to do some more research on.</p> <p>Activity two Find out more about Hurricane Noel and Haiti. Please find below some suggested research prompts. You could divide your class into groups to research different areas and then report back.</p> <p>Haiti: Where is it? What is its official name? What is its capital? What is its official language? What is its population? What is its currency? What is its life expectancy?</p> <p>[Questions continued on next page]</p>	<p>Some suggested websites: http://maps.google.co.uk/ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Main_Page http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/americas/country_profiles/1202772.stm#facts http://www.globallinks.org.uk/countries/haiti.html http://www.bbc.co.uk/weather/features/understanding/hurricane_cycle.shtml</p>

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Learning objective	Lesson ideas	Resources
<p>To learn about hurricanes and how they affect people</p> <p>To learn about deforestation and how trees are important to our climate</p>	<p>Hurricanes: What is a hurricane? How do hurricanes form? Where do hurricanes get their energy from? When are where do hurricanes usually happen?</p> <p>Hurricane Noel: When did it occur? Which countries were affected? How did it affect Haiti?</p> <p>Extension activities: Pupils can finish this activity by presenting their combined research in posters for the wall.</p> <p>Pupils could write a newspaper article or blog about Hurricane Noel as if they were a reporter in Haiti at the time. Or Pupils could write a newspaper report or blog, from the future, about how the people of Belle Anse have survived a large hurricane with minimal disruption because of the Greenhouse project.</p>	<p>Some suggested websites: http://maps.google.co.uk/ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Main_Page http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/americas/country_profiles/1202772.stm#facts http://www.globallinks.org.uk/countries/haiti.html http://www.bbc.co.uk/weather/features/understanding/hurricane_cycle.shtml</p>

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<p>To learn about hurricanes and how they affect people</p> <p>To learn about deforestation and how trees are important to our climate</p>	<p>Activity three Ask pupils for their thoughts to these questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • how does the greenhouse project help to protect Solomon's community from future hurricanes and floods? • why is it important for everyone to protect trees? <p>(These questions could be used as homework set before this activity.)</p> <p>Use pupil's thoughts to lead them into learning about the Amazon rainforest and exploring the effects of deforestation on the world.</p> <p>Amazon rainforest: What is a rainforest? How are rainforests different to forests? Where is the Amazon rainforest? Why is the Amazon rainforest important to everyone in the world? What is deforestation? Why is it happening? Why is it important to slow deforestation down?</p> <p>Ask your pupils to answer this question: How is climate change linked to deforestation?</p> <p>They could present their thoughts in a written answer or a diagram, working individually, in pairs or small groups.</p> <p>Extension activity: Pupils can research where other rainforests are in the world, what is happening to them and what people are trying to do to save them.</p>	<p>Some suggested websites: http://schools.rainforestsos.org/ http://schools.rainforestsos.org/images/stories/pdfs/factsheet-teachers2.pdf</p> <p>http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Amazon_rainforest</p> <p>http://www.actionaid.org.uk/powerdown – enter 'rainforest' or 'deforestation' into the Keyword search</p> <p>http://news.bbc.co.uk/cbbcnews/hi/newsid_3540000/newsid_3546300/3546395.stm</p> <p>http://news.bbc.co.uk/cbbcnews/hi/newsid_4560000/newsid_4563300/4563353.stm – facts about deforestation</p>

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Learning objective	Lesson ideas	Resources
<p>To learn about the emotional effects of surviving a hurricane and how someone can feel empowered to change their future for the better</p>	<p>Activity four Start the activity off by posing the question: how does Solomon turn the disaster of Hurricane Noel into a positive?</p> <p>Ask pupils to underline all the words that relate to how Solomon feels at certain points of his story. Pupils can do this individually or in pairs.</p> <p>Draw a graph tracking how Solomon feels at certain points at his story. See rough example below. Think about things he might have felt but didn't put in his story. Extract quotations from his story and think about why he has used those words e.g. why was it 'heart-breaking' for Solomon to see his dad sobbing?</p> <p>Please note: some children might find it easier to just record what Solomon does in his story at key moments.</p> <p>Activity five As a class, read the last two paragraphs of Solomon's story starting at 'Working in this greenhouse...'</p> <p>Ask the question: why does Solomon's feel so positive at the end of this story? Share thoughts as a class.</p>	<p>Example graph</p>

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Learning objective	Lesson ideas	Resources
<p>To learn about the emotional effects of surviving a hurricane and how someone can feel empowered to change their future for the better</p>	<p>Ask your class: why does ActionAid call Solomon a climate hero?</p> <p>Some thoughts to start you off:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Doing things for others • Protecting trees • Gives hope to others <p>Extension activities:</p> <p>Ask your pupils to write a letter to Solomon telling him their thoughts about his story and send them to Solomon Jean-Pierre c/o Schools team, ActionAid UK, Hamlyn House, Macdonald Road London N19 5PG or email them to schools@actionaid.org.uk</p> <p>Please note, it is easier and more environmentally friendly for ActionAid UK to email letters to our representatives in Haiti who would be able to print off the letters for Solomon.</p> <p>Or pupils can write their own climate hero story and email it into ActionAid at schools@actionaid.org.uk</p> <p>To close this topic, pupils could create a wall display showing how afforestation (repopulating an area with trees) in an area can mean disasters like Hurricane Noel have less of an impact on people like Solomon.</p>	

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Tracking Solomon's feelings

