

Aid to the Church in Need

Emergency Earthquake Appeal

Resource for secondary-aged young people



Aid to the
Church in Need

ACN UNITED KINGDOM

Introduction

This assembly/youth group session will inform your young people about the earthquake and explain how they can help.

Aid to the Church in Need have been working in Syria for a number of years to help the ancient Christian communities maintain existence.

We know that schools and youth groups across the country are raising funds and praying for those affected by the earthquake. We hope, that by the end of this session, your young people will be inspired to join their efforts with ours as we all pray and fundraise for those who need our help now.

Instructions:

If you decide to use it as an assembly (15-20 minutes) you may wish to use slides 1-6 and slides 18-20 only. If you have more time, we invite you to use the whole presentation.

This presentation uses the analogy of a bucket to explain how a country can be devastated. If you overfill a bucket or fail to balance it, the contents spill out. This is like a country because a country has many things to balance and contend with. Syria is like a bucket that has been overfilled and unbalanced and now, cannot cope. The reason for this is the civil war (12 years), the financial crisis which brought extreme poverty, the pandemic and now the earthquake. ACN is helping Syria get back to a place of balance and security.

Slide 1:

The young people will not know what the assembly is about as they enter the room. The picture and the questions will possibly prompt them to guess it is about the earthquake. You may want to ask them to discuss their thoughts with a partner.

Slide 2:

This is the same picture. It is more obvious that the man is in a crisis situation. Explain that they are at the Christian Hope Centre, Syria which has been providing assistance to vulnerable families for a number of years. ACN has supported this project and will continue to do so now it has opened its doors to those who had to flee their homes after the earthquake.

Seconds after the earthquake people were rushing into the streets. It was pouring rain and freezing cold, but staff from the Hope Centre told ACN that even before the second earthquake, the sound of the church bells could be heard across the city, announcing to people that they could find refuge and shelter in the churches.

Slide 3:

Logo of the Christian Hope Centre

Slide 4:

This is a short video clip which explains what happened and how ACN has responded. There is a pause in the video with no music, during which time prayers can be offered for those who died.

Slide 5:

A 2-minute video from Aid to the Church in Need's photographer, Xavier Bisset, sharing his experiences from Syria after the earthquake.

Slide 6:

Explain that they can help. Donations given to Aid to the Church in will go directly to the people who most need them.

Slide 7:

There are five other facts which will be covered briefly to explain:

- Why we are focusing on Syria more than Turkey
- Why the situation in Syria is a 'tragedy within a tragedy'
- What ACN are doing
- How this relates to Catholic Social teaching

Slide 8: Fact 1

When the earthquake hit, the houses, churches and other buildings were particularly vulnerable after twelve years of damage through war. The country has not recovered from the war and ACN has already been supporting people as they tried to survive. Projects included: the rebuilding of homes, projects for young people, food parcels, help for refugees and emotional support for those lived through the war.

According to the world Health Organisation 23 million people are likely to be affected by this disaster.

Slide 9:

This video shows a family before the earthquake, to reiterate the point above.

Slide 10: Fact 2:

The earthquake has been described by Syrians as a tragedy within a tragedy also because the financial crisis the country has suffered. Poverty was extreme, families could not afford basic supplies basic supplies because of astronomical levels of inflation, job prospects were practically none and there were very few opportunities for young people. This meant that many had to rely on the Church to survive.

Slide 11: Fact 3

This is a quote from Sr Annie (an ACN project partner pictured on the slide) which illustrates the above point. The pandemic tipped the balance for many Syrians, already in this dire situation.

Slide 12:

Here is the bucket analogy, showing five buckets as a visual representation of country. The first three buckets show the problems explained above and the last two, show ACN bringing a greater sense of equilibrium.

Slide 13:

Examples of needs, infrastructure and institutions that need to be relatively healthy for a country to be safe. Many of these were damaged in Syria pre-earthquake, so Syria has already tipped over into disfunction.

Slide 14 & 15:

Visually reiterates the above (can be shown swiftly).

Slide 16: Fact 4

ACN was already working with Syria, trying to bring balance and safety back to the communities who had suffered so much. Now the need is immediate and even greater as the earthquake came after this recipe of disaster.

Slide 17:

An example of a girl who has been helped by ACN.

Slide 18:

Why support the work of ACN? This has partly been already explained because of the work on the ground already taking place. In addition to this, ACN has promised €500,000 for emergency relief. Some international organisations do not have the ability to reach the people helped by ACN because ACN works directly with the actual people living there.

Slide 19: Fact 5

The operation with ACN and Syria is an example of Catholic Social Teaching being lived. ACN's partners in Syria know what needy people need and mobilise teams of volunteers to look after everyone, such as:

- the elderly and the infirm
- orphans
- widows
- families struggling to survive
- single mothers
- those suffering with mental illnesses
- students trying to get an education
- those who have no income.

After the earthquake a member of staff from the Hope Centre said that they have seen greater solidarity among people than there has been since before the war. People are gathering to share and pray together and many who themselves are living in poverty are gathering whatever resources they have to help others.

ACN has approved are a number of relief projects addressing the immediate and short-term needs - the charity is working to provide blankets, food for displaced families, medicine, personal hygiene items, and care for the elderly living alone.

ACN needs to help assess the safety of homes to see if they are at risk of collapsing and wants to continue enabling people to help themselves. This facilitates greater human dignity and the initiatives demonstrate the principles of participation and subsidiarity.

An invitation to pray, inform people about the work of ACN and to act.