

Volunteering in the Pacific – going with the flow!

Cherise Chadwick, a former intern at Yemen Red Crescent from Kings College London, took on a 3 month volunteer placement with the Federation Pacific office in Fiji recently. Cherise has used her expertise in climate change and disaster risk reduction to work on a range of activities, many of them climate related:

- **Community Based Approaches workshop**

The Community Based Approaches workshop was held in December 2009, which brought participants from many of the National Societies in the region to come and talk about their experiences in practically using the Vulnerability and Capacity Assessment (VCA) and Community Based Health and First Aid (CBHFA) methodologies in their work. The workshop brought out many useful insights into issues and best practices but also identified how national societies have been adapting the tools to their own Pacific and national contexts.

The workshop also included a brainstorming session on how climate change can be incorporated into these existing methodologies. Integrating adaptation into the normal tool box ensures that national societies help communities identify all risks and vulnerabilities including changing climate risk.

- **Subsequent Community Based Approaches publication**

From the workshop a publication has been produced that tries to demystify the various tools and some of the complexities within them. The publication is also aimed at promoting an integrated approach of using the tools and encourages national societies to take ‘no regrets’ approach to risk reduction. Case studies were also produced on best practice and lessons learned from the region. In addition, new tool reference cards were produced for the Pacific context using the best practices and lessons learned as well as some practical advice for integrating climate change into them.

- **Advocacy work in the run up to Copenhagen**

In the run up to Copenhagen, the Federation head quarters in Geneva created an advocacy tool kit for National Societies which the Federation office in Fiji modified for the Pacific context. Cherise travelled to the Cook Islands and the Solomon Island’s to assist in creating a plan for advocacy in the run up to Copenhagen. It was used as a capacity building exercise for the National Societies in informing them about Copenhagen as many Red Cross staff and volunteers had heard a lot about Copenhagen in the media but were keen to see what it really meant for their National Society and their communities. It was also used as an opportunity to explain the Red Cross/Red Crescent role in these negotiations and more widely with climate change. One aspect was to help the National Societies strengthen their relationships with government officials travelling to Copenhagen and map out what Red Cross role will be after Copenhagen back in country. It was stressed that local action and building technical capacity with branches and volunteers was key to addressing the affects of climate change on communities.

- **Disaster Management Forum in Papua New Guinea: Boera village**

Cherise joined the team that travelled to the PNG Red Cross Central Division Disaster Management Forum. Cherise facilitated two sessions, the first, was a sensitization presentation to climate change and what it meant for PNG and more specifically their work within Red Cross as staff and volunteers. Secondly she gave a session on humanitarian diplomacy which involved examples for all programmes including climate change and some practical planning time for various advocacy activities. This was finished off with some role plays which always go down well.

- **Gearing up for the Preparedness for Climate Change Programme (PfCC)**

This year in the Pacific region PfCC will be focusing on Papua New Guinea Red Cross and Fiji Red Cross Society. This year's emphasis on PfCC will continue to be capacity building within national societies to help them understand climate change and what it means for their work with their communities but with a particular focus on how to integrate climate knowledge and adaptation activities within existing programmes and frameworks. Here is a short list on the expected outputs for PfCC2 in the Pacific region

- The development of community based communication tools for climate change and adaptation as well as for the national societies.
- Integrating climate change into existing and new regional trainings.
- Supporting those who have already gone through the PfCC programme in initiating their action plans and refreshing training

And what are Cherise's thoughts on the most important lesson she's learned? "Listen to the National Societies and tailor any work to their needs and go with the flow!"

Cherise with Papua New Guinea Red Cross staff and volunteers:

