

Newsletter

Issue 4, February 2005

Negotiating disaster risk reduction

Like our planets, UN conferences each have their own pace. The conference on Climate Change comes around every year, while UN meetings on Disaster Risk Reduction occur only once every ten years. But recently, the constellation brought them together with an interval of less than two months. A unique opportunity to look for synergy between the two areas.

At the Climate Conference (Buenos Aires, December 2004) however, there was no serious sign that climate change reduction strategies are incorporating strategies for disaster risk reduction. While the risk of disasters happening is of course one of the main incentives to address climate change. There was *some* progress in linking the two, though, illustrated by a special plenary session on methods and tools for assessing vulnerabilities to climate change; a session in which the bottom up approach of many disaster risk management programmes was acknowledged as most valuable. Side events on disaster risk reduction furthermore met with grown interest. But a firm linkage of climate change and disaster management did not occur.



Yet at the World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction held in Kobe, Japan in January, climate change suddenly featured high on the agenda – particularly during negotiations on

the concluding document. Whether or not to recognise, in this document, climate change as an underlying risk for disasters was the most controversial issue. The controversy created a lot of publicity on climate change, which in effect was a means of awareness raising perhaps unforeseen by the negotiating countries. In the end, climate change was recognised as contributing to disasters, for the first time and at several instances.

The concluding document of the conference – the Hyogo Framework for Action – might be interesting literature for the negotiators within the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change. Although critics say there is a lack of political will to make the document a strong implementing tool, it shows a remarkably wide consensus among disaster scientists, governments and civil society organisations on the *vision* on disaster risk reduction. Climate change negotiators who are still looking for a political vision on adaptation to climate change might find inspiration in the Hyogo Framework for Action.

Madeleen Helmer

Head of the Red Cross/Red Crescent Climate Centre

Linking climate change and risk reduction at COP 10 in Buenos Aires

In December scientific research was presented in Buenos Aires, at the tenth session of the Conference of the Parties (COP 10) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. Its cross-cutting findings were clear: climate change is a reality and the effects of global warming are already threatening millions of vulnerable people around the world.

For these people – mainly the poor in developing countries – have insufficient capacity to adapt to climate change. The scale of this change may be uncertain, but it will bring on a long-term shift in weather conditions, which entails the occurrence of more, and increasingly severe, extreme weather events. Although these events cannot be prevented, their negative effects can be mitigated. Any pre-disaster planning therefore, any disaster management

programme, should answer to the immediate and long-term threats of climate change.

The message was welcomed and emphasized by conference representatives of the Red Cross and Red Crescent movement. The movement's expertise in linking climate change and disaster risk reduction showed clear signs of being increasingly recognized within the international community. Marjorie Soto Franco, for example, was invited to join in a workshop with all participating states, to discuss the impact of climate change on vulnerable communities and the possible ways of adaptation.

Marjorie, programme manager for the RC/RC Climate Centre in Nicaragua, presented the Climate Change and Disaster Preparedness project run by the Nicaraguan Red Cross.



Marjorie Soto presents the Climate Change and Disaster Preparedness project in Nicaragua at COP 10.

She explained Nicaragua became particularly convinced of the need to strengthen its inhabitants' resilience against climate change risks after hurricane Mitch ravaged Central America in 1998, killing more than 10,000 people. "Climate change will likely increase the frequency and intensity of extreme weather events that strike Nicaragua annually", she said. "According to scientific studies for the region, extremes in drought and precipitation are likely to occur. Intensified hurricane activity is also to be expected. As a result, an increasing number of people and their livelihoods are at risk." When explaining the exact content of the Climate Change and Disaster Preparedness

project as the Nicaraguan Red Cross' answer to the threats posed, Marjorie stressed the importance of cooperation and participation for gaining any success.

"The key method in our programme has been to enter and enable a dialogue between *all* stakeholders", she said. "The Nicaraguan Red Cross was already embedded in the *disaster management* structures of the country, but it had no or little institutional relations with experts and policy makers in the area of *climate change*. So we made linkages and built bridges. We got scientific institutions and the national meteorological office to create a forum with national, local and even village authorities. This now functions as an effective means of consultation and cooperation."

Marjorie furthermore told the auditors how raising public awareness on climate change risks is another important element in the project. Awareness was limited "and so we opted for setting up partnerships with educational institutions, to integrate climate change education in the curriculum of schools and research programmes of universities. The Red Cross itself integrated climate change education into its disaster management programme at local and community level for here also, more awareness was needed."

Finally, Marjorie mentioned that the resilience of the targeted people themselves has been strengthened. Emergency response teams have been trained, early warning systems have been set up at community and municipal level, and regular drills in disaster response are being held together with the local authorities.

This has made the Red Cross Climate Change and Disaster Preparedness project in Nicaragua a success. And getting the opportunity to tell so many 'people that matter' about it in Buenos Aires, made it very worthwhile for the RC/RC movement to attend the conference.

Attendance was furthermore worthwhile as it offered other opportunities for lobbying as well: together with the UN International Strategy for Disaster Risk Reduction, the

Climate Centre hosted a side event called *Disaster reduction and climate change – opportunities for synergy*. And last but not least the Red Cross participated in an adaptation and sustainable development weekend with other humanitarian and environmental agencies, and chaired a special session on food security and climate change.

For more information about COP 10 contact the Climate Centre at centre@redcross.nl.

Awareness

2nd International Conference on climate change and disaster preparedness: 21-24 June 2005

From 21-24 June 2005 the Red Cross/Red Crescent will organize its 2nd International Conference on climate change and disaster risk reduction in The Hague, Netherlands.

In 2002 the 1st RC/RC International Conference on climate change and disaster preparedness took place in the Netherlands and marked the official launch of the RC/RC Climate Centre. Humanitarian aid workers, policymakers and scientists from both the disaster and the climate change community met each other, many for the first time. Their interaction led to a better understanding of the potential negative impacts of climate change on vulnerable people and the implications for humanitarian work. Perhaps even more importantly, many new and fruitful contacts were established between the various communities present at the Conference.

Since 2002 adaptation to climate change and disaster risk reduction have become increasingly important issues, at national and international level. An increasing number of policymakers, scientists and civil society organisations acknowledge the need to understand the new risks associated with climate change and extreme weather events and to address these risks in research, policies and programmes. The first bridges between the 'climate adaptation' community

and the humanitarian and development community have been build.

The Conference will take three. On June 22nd the work of the participants will be presented in clusters around requested themes. On the 23d participants will have a chance to attend a number of workshops. Two themes have already been identified:

1. Community based climate adaptation, with the aim of bringing together known initiatives in this area and to draw lessons form the first experiences;
2. Methods and tools to assess vulnerability to climate change.

It is also likely that there will be a workshop on financing mechanisms for climate risk reduction.

For more information please contact the Climate Centre at climatecentre@redcross.nl.

National forum on climate change and disaster preparedness in Nicaragua: cooperation is the key

In November a two day forum was held in Managua, Nicaragua. The forum (*'the climate is changing, together we can reduce the risks'*) was organised within the framework of the climate change and disaster preparedness project of the Netherlands Red Cross in cooperation with the Nicaraguan Red Cross. It had many different stakeholders attending; it brought together a wide variety of perspectives on climate change and its effects.

Representatives from scientific institutions for example, focused on the practical consequences that large scale atmospheric-oceanic circulation patterns (like El Nino) could have on the regional climate. Risk managers talked about ways of preventing natural hazards from becoming humanitarian disasters. They stressed that hazards turn into disasters mostly when people have no or inadequate defence mechanisms.

This introduced the activities of some humanitarian organisations present. They discussed their efforts to combine risk analysis and scientific approaches of climate change, to develop adaptation strategies within communities at risk. The exchange of

their field experiences was quite extensive, indicating that the topic of climate change is gaining ground within the area of disaster preparedness and development work.

The Red Cross, in this context, has over the years gained a lot of practical expertise, which it shared especially regarding its project in Nicaragua. Getting the Nicaraguan Climate Change and Disaster Preparedness project up and running, was initially difficult due to a lack of knowledge on the consequences of climate change – the topic was new particularly for humanitarian aid workers. What made the project eventually successful and sustainable has been its inter-institutional approach (involving all stakeholders), combined with an awareness raising component and practical measures at the grass root level.

A fourth main contribution to the forum was made by those responsible for Nicaragua's early warning system. This system, which needed technical and political efforts to come into being, was set up after hurricane Mitch. Since then, it has saved many lives and became a strong tool in mitigating the effects of natural hazards.

If the forum participants agreed on one thing in particular, it must have been that any successful approach to reduce the negative impact of climate change demands cooperation. *All* perspectives mentioned, need to be brought together; *all* parties involved, need to be heard and listened to. For climate change is not just a scientific or a political issue. It is something bound to affect us all (although especially the most vulnerable in the least developed regions of the world). Consensus on this made the forum a real breakthrough in the area of disaster preparedness.

For more information about the national forum in Nicaragua, please contact Marjorie Soto at crolreptic@tutopia.com.

National seminar on climate change and disaster preparedness in Viet Nam: need to inform and cooperate

“... from now on frequency, scale and intensity of such hazards as storms, floods and droughts no longer follow previous patterns. [...] To cope with these fluctuations, we should make joint efforts, co-operate in our actions and promptly take necessary precautionary measures.”

With these words Prof. Dr. Nguyen Van Thuong, President cum Secretary General of the Viet Nam Red Cross Society, opened the National Seminar on Climate Change and Disaster Preparedness. The event took place in Hanoi in November and was a joint effort by the Viet Nameese Red Cross and two governmental organisations: the Institute for Meteorology and Hydrology, and the Central Committee for Flood and Storm Control. Both are organisations in charge of disaster management, especially in relation to climate change and extreme weather. The seminar was supported by the Netherlands Red Cross.



Prof Dr Nguyen Van Thuong, President cum Secretary General of the Viet Nameese Red Cross opens the national seminar.

The seminar had the overall objective of raising awareness on the relation between climate change and disaster preparedness and on possible measures to adapt to climate change. Also, the meeting aimed at clarifying and promoting the role of the three organising parties and enhancing dialogue and cooperation between *all* stakeholders in Viet Nam. Thereto, many different actors had been invited. Invitations had gone not only to government institutions and NGOs involved in disaster preparedness (such as the IFRC), but also to people from environmental and health organisations.

Unfortunately, attendance was much lower than was hoped for. Especially important government decision makers and organisations with no direct link to disaster preparedness, were absent. This was certainly a disappointment. However, the people that did attend showed great interest in the subject, which resulted in lively and interesting debates.

An issue that was raised time and again was the need for good and adequate information at all levels. Information on hazards and emergency response needs first of all to be delivered in time – a responsibility, according to a representative of the Institute for Meteorology and Hydrology, of central and local governments, socio-economic organisations, research institutes and aid agencies *together*. Forecasts and warnings, he said, need to be as accurate and timely as possible, enabling people to better respond to natural calamities.

But apart from being made available in time, information should also be made *accessible* in time – to everyone. According to Mr. Phung Van Hoan of the Viet Nameese Red Cross Society especially community based methods of communication are likely to be successful in Viet Nam. He therefore suggested the Red Cross to get its activities incorporated in those of local organisations like Women's or Farmer's Associations and political bodies. "We should rely on the community" he said.

A regional IFRC representative agreed, adding that the Viet Nameese Red Cross has strong capacities already to bring information on climate change and risk reduction to communes. "At the local level" he said "the

Red Cross has many volunteers who are well trained, experienced in the area of disaster preparedness, enthusiastic and very capable of spreading knowledge in an organised way."

Full use, the participants therefore agreed, should be made of *everyone's* capabilities and strengths. New partnerships are required to that end. Disaster management organisations should be joined by institutions in sectors like health and environment to cooperate at different institutional levels and improve people's resilience to weather related hazards. For communities to adapt and respond to climate change, sharing of expertise and experience is a necessity.

More information, including a report of the seminar's results, can be requested from Mr. Duong Van Hung, project officer of the Viet Nameese Red Cross (dpccpo@gmail.vnn.vn) or Melanie Miltenburg of the Netherlands Red Cross (melaniemiltenburg@vnn.vn).

Awareness programme for local Red Cross branches in the Netherlands

In the spring of last year, the RC/RC Climate Centre started an awareness raising programme for local volunteers of the Netherlands Red Cross. In two years time, we hope to visit most of the 354 local Red Cross branches, to deliver a presentation on climate change and the link such change has with the work of the Red Cross and Red Crescent. Also, we attend national and regional Red Cross meetings, approaching volunteers with our message and distributing information about ourselves.



There is a clear Dutch need for dissemination and education. The Climate Centre might be *based* in the Netherlands, this doesn't mean every citizen or Red Cross volunteer knows all about climate change and extreme weather events. While knowledge is a prerequisite to reduce people's vulnerability to the negative effects of climate change.

Programme goals

The first and main goal of the programme is to explain why the Red Cross / Red Crescent is concerned about the effects of climate change. Most volunteers have heard about climate change, and link it to environmental trouble and the need for a reduction in greenhouse gasses. The humanitarian consequences of climate change are less known. Our aim therefore is to highlight this aspect of climatic changes, pointing out that an increase in extreme weather events poses severe threats to people and communities. The second goal, then, is to link climate change and its negative impact to the activities of the local branches themselves. We talk about how heat waves and floods influence their work, and about how branches can prepare themselves for such events. We might start a debate on the way certain social care programmes for the elderly are constructed. Often, these are interrupted during summer holidays. This however might need adjustment in the face of threats posed by the increasing occurrence of heat waves.

Practical action that local branches can take, we furthermore point out, is financially or otherwise participate in climate change and disaster preparedness programmes in developing countries. The people most at risk of natural hazards resulting from climate change do not live here, but there.

The presenters

Twenty two volunteers, with an average age of 27, have been trained to deliver the Climate Centre presentation at the local branches. Their youth is an indication that climate change is a topic that young people seem to have a particular interest in, which is good knowledge for branches who wish to get more young people involved in volunteering.

The results

The response from local Red Cross branches who invited the Climate Centre's volunteers to come talk about climate change has been very positive. The subject, they believed, is highly relevant and they appreciated especially the 'what can you do'-discussions. Linking climate change to ways of attracting young volunteers (by for instance asking youngster to join a heat wave team), was also appreciated.

Sponsoring

The climate change programme in the Netherlands is being sponsored by the National Commission for Sustainable Development, NCDO. Because almost all governments have committed themselves, in the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, to increase public awareness on the issue, many countries have similar funding opportunities for public education on climate change.

For more information about this campaign, please contact Fleur Engel at fengel@redcross.nl.

Community projects for disaster preparedness have started in Viet Nam



Commune people in Binh Thuan take Red Cross workers to the field to explain about the vulnerability of local fisherman to extreme weather.

In Viet Nam, the implementation of several community based projects to strengthen people's resilience to the negative effects of

extreme weather events, has started. After a long period of preparing, Viet Nam's coastal provinces Nghe An, Ha Tinh and Quang Binh in December were the first to kick off their projects. They did so with enthusiasm and energy.

The projects are all small scale and vary from constructing first aid centres, to setting up centres for search and rescue activities, to extending the commune loudspeaker system. Loudspeakers are a well accepted means of providing news in Viet Nam. They are used for spreading daily news, but also serve in dissemination and awareness raising activities. In times of imminent extreme weather, the loudspeakers are often the only way to warn people, since most villagers have no television or radio set. At present, the loudspeaker system often covers the most important or most central villages in the commune only (with a commune being comprised of several villages). After finishing the extension of the system, also remote villages will be reached.

The centres that are being build for providing first aid and for search and rescue activities, will not only serve in times of disaster. In 'normal' times also, they are able to provide basic medical care.

All projects are commune initiatives, based on the needs the commune people formulated themselves. Reaching this stage of actually building and constructing took intensive preparation.

First, the villagers participated in a training organised by the local Red Cross, to understand the hazards they are vulnerable to and to hear about ways of reducing their vulnerability. The training dealt with several hazards, but gave special attention to climate change and extreme weather events. After this, a commune assessment on weather related hazards, vulnerabilities and capacities took place, also facilitated by the local Red Cross. Local leaders and villagers sat together with representatives of local organisations like the Women's Association and the Farmer's Union. For three days they discussed their vulnerabilities and needs. Their combined efforts resulted in a disaster preparedness plan. Finally, out of this plan, one activity was selected to be implemented

within the context of the Red Cross Disaster Preparedness and Climate Change projects. The activities are commune matters, with contributions from the communes and partly implemented by the villagers themselves.

Most communes already had disaster preparedness plans. However, these had been made by the local government without much involvement of the commune people. The now applied participatory approach was new to all: to local Red Cross workers, to the local government and the local people. It was a learning process, but with results agreed on by all. Even more so, all participants were very happy with the new approach.

Red Cross workers were content because of their ability to work directly with the village people and local leaders. Villagers were happy with the knowledge they gained and the realisation that they actively can improve their own resilience. Local governors finally, expressed their appreciation as they recognised how the quality of the disaster preparedness plan had been improved by the community based approach. They believe it is possible to apply the approach elsewhere. Viet Nam's government is very much in favour of community based development, but the local leaders had not actually seen such development at work before.

Like Nghe An, Ha Tinh and Quang Binh, the provinces Ninh Thuan and Binh Thuan also will soon start their projects. They are all expected to finish the implementation by the end of 2005. By then, a total of 30 projects in 30 selected communes will have been carried out, which will have reduced these communes' vulnerability to natural disasters.

For more information please contact Mr. Duong Van Hung, project officer of the Viet Nameese Red Cross (dpccpo@pmail.vnn.vn) or Melanie Miltenburg, the Netherlands Red Cross (melaniemiltenburg@vnn.vn).

Red Cross project promotes self sufficiency in Nicaragua

A key element in the methodology of the Red Cross' Climate Change and Disaster Preparedness project is improving self-sufficiency of the communities involved. Self-

sufficiency is important because the participating communities are remote and isolated, especially during the occurrence of extreme weather events. Emergency response teams from nearest cities have difficulties reaching the areas at such times. Within the project, two little communities in the vicinity of Puerto Cabezas have been receiving special attention. Wawaboom and Betania are villages with hardly any facilities: there is no health care system, no electricity and no communication facilities. There is one dirt road leading to the village, which becomes largely impassable during the raining season. The level of disaster preparedness, it might be evident, is not very high.

The risks are large however. The region is extremely prone to natural hazards, especially those related to extreme weather. During hurricane Mitch the area suffered enormous amounts of rain, which caused flooding of the nearby river Wawa. Within the past four years the river flooded again – twice. The threats this poses are of many sorts. Houses and properties are damaged. Agriculture is ruined (possibly leading to famine). And people's health is being put at risk by the occurrence of respiratory diseases, dengue fever, diarrhoea and other water borne diseases.



Shelter for communities of Wawaboom and Betania.

Within the framework of the Red Cross project several measures have been or will be taken to increase the self-sufficiency of the communities.

First, communication facilities were needed to enable people to call in help during emergency situations. So far, one radio has been installed in the community of Wawaboom. In the near future another radio will be installed also in Betania.

Second, a shelter has been constructed in Betania with support of both local communities. The shelter was put in Betania although the village has never been flooded. In fact, it is meant mostly for potential refugees from Wawaboom, which is closer to the river. The building can shelter a hundred people. It has a first aid station inside, with the necessary equipment. 41 People within both communities have been trained in first aid response. Near the shelter a fresh water well has been dug, to supply people with clean water in emergency situations. In non emergency times, the shelter can be used for capacity building purposes like giving workshops on disaster preparedness.

Community self-sufficiency has furthermore been increased by the introduction of the family plan. This plan is the foundation of all other emergency response activities within the community. Every household was asked to construct a map with escape routes, and list which actions they needed to take in case of an emergency. The plan focused on the protection of property and people within the household, also mentioning health care promotion and first aid provision.

The construction of the family plan gave Red Cross workers an excellent opportunity to individually interact with people and to create some feeling with emergency response on the lowest level possible.

Finally, the Red Cross project supported the development of community emergency response brigades. Before, there was a great lack of capacity to build the emergency structure but in recent months eight teams (on different topics) have been established. They involve 41 people of both Betania and Wawaboom.

What is worth mentioning, is that in and by this project the Red Cross has also been acting as a mediator between the participating communities on the one hand and the municipality of Puerto Cabezas on the other. The relation between the two

initially was not warm, to say the least. The project however gave rise to newly, mutual respect. The spin off: more developmental activities in the areas.

More information about the Climate Change and Disaster preparedness project in Nicaragua can be requested from Marjorie Soto at crholreptic@tutopia.com.

Bangladesh: international workshop on community level adaptation to climate change

'Local communities in parts of the world dealing with climatic events such as heat waves, droughts, floods and hurricanes, will need to adapt to climate change. For climate change will have a disproportionate impact on such vulnerable communities around the world'.

This was the main conclusion of a three day international workshop held in Dhaka, Bangladesh, in January. The workshop was the first of its kind and was attended by some eighty experts, policy makers, donors, NGOs and grass roots practitioners. Attendants were mainly from the Asia Pacific region, but also flew in from Africa, Latin and North America, and Europe. Together, they discussed the negative impact climate change could have on vulnerable local communities. Also, they looked at ways of enabling these communities to adapt to such change.



The workshop was jointly organised by the Bangladesh Centre for Advanced Studies (BCAS), the International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED), the Regional and International Networking Group (RING) and the World Conservation Union (IUCN).

The Red Cross / Red Crescent Climate Centre was one of the parties asked to share its expertise on the matter. It presented methods and tools it uses within its local level community based adaptation activities in Viet Nam and Nicaragua. Both the methods and tools – it was explained – have been developed in such ways they can be replicated in other parts of Nicaragua and Viet Nam, or even in other countries. The Climate Centre's means to get large parts of local communities involved in disaster preparedness were also mentioned: general assessments, institutional dialogues, vulnerability and capacity assessments, and municipality activities.

For more information on the workshop visit www.bcas.net/CCAdaptation/index.asp.

For more information on the Methods and Tools used by the Climate Centre contact us at climatecentre@redcross.nl.

Advocacy

World Conference on Disaster Reduction reiterates common vision on reducing disaster

The World Conference on Disaster Reduction (WCDR) was held from 18 to 22 January 2005 in Kobe, Hyogo, Japan, and adopted a Framework for Action ('Building the resilience of nations and communities to disasters' Hyogo Framework for action 2005–2015. A/CONF.206/L.2/Rev.1, see also www.unisdr.org/wcdr). The Conference provided a unique opportunity to promote a strategic and systematic approach to reducing vulnerabilities and risks to hazards. It underscored the need for, and identified ways of, building the resilience of nations and communities to disasters.

More than 4000 people attended the many thematic sessions.

The WCDR adopted the Hyogo Framework for action 2005-2015 with the following strategic goals:

a) The more effective integration of disaster risk considerations into sustainable development policies, planning and programming at all levels, with a special

emphasis on disaster prevention, mitigation, preparedness and vulnerability reduction;

b) The development and strengthening of institutions, mechanisms and capacities, in particular at the community level, that can systematically contribute to building resilience to natural hazards and disasters.

c) The systematic incorporation of risk reduction approaches into the design and implementation of emergency preparedness, response and recovery programmes for disaster affected communities.

And the following 5 priorities for action were underlined:

- 1) Ensure that disaster risk reduction is a national and local priority with a strong institutional basis for implementation;
- 2) Identify, assess and monitor disaster risks and enhance early warning;
- 3) Use knowledge, innovation and education to build a culture of safety and resilience at all levels;
- 4) Reduce the underlying risk factors;
- 5) Strengthen disaster preparedness for effective response.

The Hyogo framework for action has for the first time included climate change as an underlying risk factor for disasters. The inclusion of climate change was the result of intense negotiations of states with strong and opposite views on this subject. The compromise texts that refer to climate change provides a number of interesting opportunities for mainstreaming climate change risks in disaster risk reduction strategies and vice versa, and both strategies to be embedded in poverty reduction strategies leading to sustainable development.

For more information, please contact the Climate Centre at climatecentre@redcross.nl.

New paper from Vulnerability and Resource Group (VARG)

'Disaster Risk Management in a Changing Climate' is the title of the discussion paper by the Vulnerability and Adaptation Resource Group (VARG) which was presented in a draft version during the World Conference on Disaster Reduction in Kobe.

Climate change is an underlying risk factor for disasters and it is expected that its influence on disasters will increase in the coming decades, due to a further warming of the globe and a related increase in extreme weather events and related effects.

Disaster risk reduction measures and adaptation to climate change both focus on reducing vulnerabilities. Because of a different historic background (climate change adaptation coming from the environmental context and disaster risk reduction from the disaster relief context) there is yet little synergy in practise, but a lot of opportunities for more coordination and cooperation in the near future.

The discussion paper illustrates this potential for synergy and is therefore a helpful document in facilitating this process at programmatic and institutional level.

The VARG is an informal network of bilateral and multilateral agencies, which was created to exchange information on the impacts of climate change on development processes and to share experiences and views on possible remedial measures.

In 2003 the VARG published the document 'Poverty and climate change'.

'Disaster Risk Management in a Changing Climate' can be found at www.unisdr.org/wcdr/ on the 'what's new' page. For more information, please contact the VARG secretariat: Frank Sperling at fsperling@worldbank.org.

News items February 2005 (source www.climateark.org)

Brussels and UK clash over emissions

(Financial Times, 15 February 2005)
The European Commission yesterday branded as "illegal" the UK's plan to raise its greenhouse gas emissions, as the government stuck with its proposal to allow British industry to emit more carbon dioxide.

<http://news.ft.com/cms/s/e56bd8ae-7ef5-11d9-9c86-00000e2511c8.html>

Bush holds the line on Kyoto as debate grows in US public

(Agence France-Presse, 14 February 2005)

With the Kyoto Protocol on climate change set to take effect, President George W.

Bush's administration still rejects it as too costly for the US economy and based on questionable scientific hypotheses.

But criticism of the White House stance is growing, even from the ranks of the Republican majority in Congress, and in a handful of states where critics say US environmental policies are too often shaped by economic concerns.

<http://www.politicalgateway.com/news/read.html>

Earth's 'lung,' the Amazon forest, breathes uneasily in a time of climate change

(Associated Press, 12 February 2005)

As the light plane banked left, the smell of smoke reached the cockpit. The landscape below was an ashen green, the sun above an orange glow behind sooty billows of gray.

The Amazon forest was burning, and it was more than a sign of human encroachment. It was also the sight and scent of a dangerous chemistry, of tons of carbon dioxide transformed from wood and leaf rising into an atmosphere already loaded with it.

http://www.boston.com/dailynews/043/world/Earth_s_lung_the_Amazon_forest:.shtml

2004 Was Fourth-Warmest Year Ever Recorded

(New York Times, 10 February 2005)

Last year was the fourth warmest since systematic temperature measurements began around the world in the 19th century, NASA scientists said yesterday.

<http://www.climateark.org/articles/reader.asp?linkid=38885>

Links

www.waterandclimate.org

Cooperative programme on water and climate.

www.unisdr.org/wcdr

UN International Strategy for Disaster Reduction for the official documents of the World Conference on Disaster Reduction held in Kobe, January 2005.

www.ifrc.org/meetings/events/kobe

One of the International Federation's key messages is that planning should focus on the needs of those who are potentially affected. Any planning at national and local level should place the most vulnerable at the centre of the process.

www.unfccc.org

UN Framework convention on climate change.

www.ipcc.org

Intergovernmental panel on climate change.

www.proventionconsortium.org

ProVention Consortium.

www.climateark.org

Climate change portal.

www.wmo.ch

World Meteorological Organisation.

www.cpc.ncep.noaa.gov

Climate Prediction Center.

www.greenfacts.org

Scientific facts on climate change and global warming.

www.climatehotmap.org

Hotmap illustrates the local consequences of global warming.

Contact us

Red Cross / Red Crescent Centre on Climate Change and Disaster Preparedness

Netherlands Red Cross
PO Box 28120
2502 KC The Hague
Netherlands

Phone: +31 (0)70 4455666

Fax: +31 (0)70 4455712

Email: climatecentre@redcross.nl

www.climatecentre.org