

3.2.2 Programme support

The Climate Centre supports several programmes that are officially managed by the Netherlands Red Cross or the IFRC.

Set up in nine countries, the programmes aim at reducing climate risks in poor areas facing multiple natural hazards. Here, underdevelopment and disasters intertwine: poor people are rendered acutely vulnerable to disasters and disaster victims trapped in chronic poverty.

The programmes are implemented together with the Red Cross societies of the countries involved: Viet Nam, Indonesia, Mozambique, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, Guatemala, Colombia, Tuvalu and Samoa. The Centre contributes to the activities by providing knowledge, advice and support in obtaining financial means.

Viet Nam

Quang Binh is one of the most disaster-prone provinces in Viet Nam. It suffers from typhoons and floods that cause considerable damage and loss every year. It is also well known for its huge sandbanks. Here, drought and erosion lead to desertification, causing loss of farm land and degradation of ecosystems and water sources. According to government studies, typhoons and droughts will get more frequent and be more intense.

Quang Binh was earlier involved in the pilot project Climate Change and Disaster Preparedness, which ended in 2005. Last year the pilot was followed up in Quang Binh with a project called Reforestation for Adaptation to Climate Change, run for one year by the Vietnamese and Netherlands Red Cross.

Reforestation had already been identified during the initial pilot as one of the most effective and desirable ways to help the people of Quang Binh. Not only does tree planting effective in the long term but it also has a close link to both environmental protection and poverty reduction. Trees protect people from strong winds blowing off the arriving from the South China Sea and counter desertification. Now about 45 hectares of casuarina trees have been planted in the coastal sand dunes. The casuarina is known to be highly resistant to drought and wind, it tolerates salt and adapts to poor soils. The tree stand is maintained by some 30,000 households within the community itself.

Yet there is more to this reforestation project. Raising awareness among local actors and inhabitants of Quang Binh is also part of it. In this context the local Red Cross organized training for community-based disaster management and preparedness for disasters related to climate change. This was followed by a Vulnerability and Capacity Assessment, on which several disaster preparedness plans have now been based.



Young casuarina trees in the nursery. MELANIE MILTENBURG/NETHERLANDS RED CROSS

The Climate Centre's contribution

The Climate Centre contributed to the reforestation project by securing its finances: it negotiated coverage of the entire 2006 budget with Rabobank Netherlands. It also provided programme advice, for example, on how to include climate risks in the Vulnerability and Capacity Assessment.

Since Quang Binh is not the only Vietnamese province facing severe risks from extreme-weather events, and since the Netherlands Red Cross wants to extend its disaster preparedness efforts in the country, the Climate Centre helped draw up funding proposals that were submitted to the European Union. Both proposals were granted, covering a total of € 627,039. With this money, vulnerable people in eight coastal provinces (including again Quang Binh) will be able to strengthen their resilience in the next two years.

Also in 2006, the Climate Centre together with the international development organization SNV⁵ explored the possibility of using the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) to fund more projects that will reduce CO₂ emissions in the future. Tree planting is a disaster preparedness tool and is used by industrial countries to meet their obligations under the Kyoto Protocol. The CDM allows industrial countries to implement activities in developing countries that reduce overall emissions and then count those reductions in meeting their own emissions targets.

So why not have the Red Cross plant trees in hazard zones, financed by a government that uses them in meeting its Kyoto obligations? A reforestation project such as the Vietnamese would in principle be eligible for CDM funding. It would have to generate more “certified emissions reductions” (CER) than the Quang Binh pilot does to meet the actual transaction costs for CDM. Since the reforested area here is relatively small, the income from CER is expected to be the same as these costs.

Available funding	€ 25,000 (between January and December 2006, of which € 19,000 was transferred to the Netherlands Red Cross and € 6,000 was kept by the Climate Centre)
Donor	Rabobank Netherlands
Partner organizations	Vietnamese Red Cross, Netherlands Red Cross

Indonesia

In the context of a changing climate, rainfall in Indonesia is projected to increase in some regions and decrease in others. The wet season will probably get wetter, the dry season drier, and extreme events such as floods and droughts are expected to multiply. While more rain might benefit some areas by enhancing water supplies for irrigation, it would elsewhere accelerate soil erosion and reduce the productivity of the land.

Furthermore, with a total coastline exceeding 81,000 kilometres, Indonesia will suffer significant impacts from sea-level rise. Even very small rises will affect millions of people in coastal areas: if not by directly displacing them then by eliminating the industrial and agricultural zones or the fisheries on which they depend. Their supply of drinking water will be salinated, their sewerage systems overwhelmed and their flood control management will be insufficient. All this will leave them more vulnerable to water-borne diseases like diarrhoea and disrupt marketing and transportation networks, limiting their access to goods. Climate change in Indonesia will increase the occurrence of vector-borne diseases such as malaria and dengue, which are already serious health threats.

⁵ SNV is a Netherlands based organization providing advisory services to local organizations in over 30 developing countries to support their fight against poverty.