

Knowledge of the future can lead to action now!

A reflection of the opportunities and challenges faced by Red Cross and Meteorological Offices in the Pacific by participants of the Pacific Red Cross Disaster Management Forum, New Caledonia 23rd - 27th June 2008

Visit to Meteo France

A visit to the Meteo France office during the Pacific Red Cross DM forum stimulated discussions on the relationships Pacific Red Cross Societies have with their Meteorological Offices. It also enabled participants to view computer equipment that is used to model weather and climate predictions. The Director gave a well targeted talk that outlined the functions of Met offices and some of the obstacles they face. Reflecting on the visit, Red Cross participants identified that Met offices face a number of challenges such as:

- Targeting their information to a wide range of users
- Forecasting is not a perfect science, they get blamed if the forecast is not right
- Lacking equipment that provide measurements to feed into computer models
- Lacking computers to forecast
- Politicisation of early warnings

Red Cross and Met offices

Amongst weather, seasonal forecasts and information on climate trends, Met offices hold very useful information. Red Cross Societies have enthusiastic volunteers, links to communities and the ability to communicate messages to wide audiences. Samoa Red Cross gave examples of working with their Met Office that assisted communities to understand and act upon early warnings. Tuvalu Red Cross gave an example of working in partnership with the Tuvalu Met and the National Disaster

Management Office's in schools. Some of the challenges that National Societies face in dealing with weather and climate information include:

- Lack of community understanding of and reaction to warnings
- Red Cross find it difficult to interpret the language used in weather/climate information
- Conveying the difference between weather and climate
- Need for translation of information into water, agriculture, disaster, health sectors for practical application of risk reduction measures

Participants then divided into teams and put their thinking hats on to brainstorm opportunities for improving Red Cross and community understanding and use of weather and climate information. Some fantastic ideas were put forward, with many National Societies keen to implement them in their own countries.



Picture: Meteo France gave Pacific Red Cross participants to learn more about forecasting and the challenges that Met offices face as well as ideas for improving relationships with Met Offices.

