

# Climate Change Conference

COP16 Cancún |

29 November – 10 December 2010 |

advocacy toolkit

 International Federation  
of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

## ***Red Cross Red Crescent and climate change – background information***

### ***Introduction***

Climate change has major implications for humanitarian organizations such as the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC). This background document highlights these implications and our engagement in a global effort to meet the challenges of a changing climate. Readers are encouraged to refer to the *Red Cross Red Crescent Climate Guide* for further information.

### ***Why is climate change relevant for the Red Cross Red Crescent?***

- Global climate is changing, resulting in more frequent extreme weather events and higher average temperatures. Patterns of dry and wet periods are shifting, and sea levels are rising, increasing people's vulnerability and the extent to which their lives and livelihoods are threatened.
- The number of climate-related disasters has risen from an annual average of 200 in the early 1990s to more than 350 a year since 2000.
- The number of people affected by climate-related disasters rose from an average of 190 million per year in the 1990s to 243 million per year in the 2000s.
- The most vulnerable and poorest people in the least developed countries are the hardest hit. Even though these communities are the least responsible for the greenhouse gas emissions that are causing climate change, they will continue to be affected the most.
- These populations face threats to their health, well-being, property and livelihoods. Problems are compounded by poor healthcare infrastructure, continued deterioration in water and food security, and weak socio-economic support systems. Communities will suffer further as climate change affects the natural resources upon which so many developing country economies are dependent.

### ***How does climate change affect Red Cross Red Crescent work?***

- The rise in frequency of climate-related disasters, food shortages and vector-borne diseases will increase the demand for Red Cross Red Crescent assistance. Red Cross Red Crescent disaster response capacity will need to be increased significantly to cope with this growing challenge.
- Humanitarian assistance during a disaster and throughout the rebuilding and recovery phase is often costly. Moreover, as the number of disasters increases, development progress will also be

seriously threatened, which implies further costs. Therefore, the Red Cross Red Crescent will need to strengthen the capacity for disaster relief and increase its efforts with vulnerable people and communities in disaster preparedness and disaster risk reduction activities.

- Malaria epidemics are largely related to climatic conditions: rainfall, temperature, humidity. In Africa, which accounts for 90 per cent of all global malaria cases, an early warning system for malaria epidemics has been successfully introduced in a number of countries.
- According to a report produced by the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), increased weather variability and climate change will negatively impact agriculture and human well-being, with crop yield declines in South Asia, higher global prices, and increased vulnerability to droughts and floods in Africa. Child malnutrition may increase by 20 per cent by 2050. By teaching communities to reduce their vulnerability and protect their livelihoods, they will become more resilient to disasters. Efforts should be aimed at food security, nutrition, drinking water supply, sanitation, primary healthcare, and increasing disaster risk awareness, so that floods, storms, heat waves, droughts and diseases will have less impact.

## ***What has Red Cross Red Crescent done so far about climate change?***

- In 1999, the 27<sup>th</sup> International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent asked the IFRC to examine the future impact of climatic change on the frequency and severity of disasters. One early consequence of this decision was the establishment of the Red Cross Red Crescent Climate Centre.
- In 2002, the IFRC and the Netherlands Red Cross established the Red Cross Red Crescent Climate Centre. The centre supports the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement to understand and address the humanitarian consequences of climate change and extreme weather events. The centre's main approach is to raise awareness; advocate for climate adaptation and disaster risk reduction (within and outside the Red Cross Red Crescent); analyse relevant forecast information and integrate knowledge of climate risks into Red Cross Red Crescent strategies, plans and activities.
- In 2007, building on this growing experience and expertise, the International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent adopted a new resolution that called on the IFRC to support *“National Societies in their work [on climate change adaptation], including through representation of their interests and concerns at the international level.”*
- A key commitment of the 2007 International Conference was to invest in partnerships to address the humanitarian consequences of climate change. The IFRC’s secretariat is leading an inter-agency task force on climate change. The task force is facilitating information-sharing and active engagement of humanitarian organizations – such as the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), World Food Programme (WFP) and other United Nations and international non-governmental organizations – at international climate change negotiations. The task force member organizations adopt joint advocacy positions to achieve greater impact.

- At the multilateral level, the Red Cross Red Crescent has been active in the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) conferences since 2001, and in the negotiations themselves since Bali, 2007.
- The Red Cross Red Crescent continues to focus its message and humanitarian diplomacy efforts on the inclusion of explicit protection for “the most vulnerable people” as part of any binding global accord.
- National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies are integrating climate information into their programming. This is done through public awareness campaigns on climate change and careful evaluation of potential new risks and existing risks in strategic programming.
- The Red Cross Red Crescent is working with communities across the globe to strengthen their ability to adapt to the challenges of climate change. There is a particular focus on disaster preparedness, disaster risk reduction, food security and livelihoods.
- To further support this focus on community action, 60 National Societies from developing countries have been involved in the *preparedness for climate change programme*. The programme goal is to increase National Societies’ understanding of the risks of climate change and to assist in adaptation of their programmes to be more proactive in building local resilience.

## ***What happened at the UN Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen?***

- In Copenhagen (COP15 – the 15th meeting of the Conference of Parties of the UNFCCC) countries aimed to conclude two years of negotiations in a new global agreement. This was to be a follow-up to the Kyoto Protocol that would include commitments for ambitious reductions of greenhouse gases to avoid an acceleration of climate change and limit the global temperature rise to 1.5 or 2 degrees Celsius.
- Copenhagen sought commitments to support developing countries with financial and technical support to adapt to the unavoidable impacts of climate change and to take a so-called low carbon development path (with less focus on the use of fossil fuel).
- Copenhagen did not achieve a global agreement. Countries took note of the Copenhagen Accord, a document of political intent to help the negotiations process move forward, but the events in Copenhagen were largely seen as a disappointment.
- However, the language used within the Copenhagen Accord in regard to early warning systems, risk and vulnerability assessment, risk reduction and management, risk sharing and transfer mechanisms to address loss and damage associated with climate change impacts, is in line with Red Cross Red Crescent advocacy positions.
- One of the most concrete results of Copenhagen is that developed countries agreed to support developing countries with “fast start” financing of 30 billion US dollars during the period 2010–2012. These funds will be spent in a balanced way on mitigation of and adaptation to climate change. Priority will be given to the most vulnerable countries.

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*Background information for Cancún Climate Change Conference*

## ***What is happening post-Copenhagen?***

- Countries continue to meet and negotiate with the aim of reaching a global agreement to address climate change. The next conference (COP 16) will take place in Cancun, Mexico (29 November–10 December 2010). However, after the failure of Copenhagen, expectations of reaching a global agreement have reduced significantly.
- Following Copenhagen, focus is shifting away from global level agreements and the emphasis is now on national and regional level agreements and programmes that are supported by the global community.