

## Preparing for climate change on the Bahamas

The Bahamas Red Cross is one of the national societies that entered the Preparedness for climate change program set up by the RC/RC Climate Centre. Last fall, it took the program's first step by inviting the Centre's technical advisor Pablo Suarez to conduct a workshop. At the meeting, Red Cross staff was given a brief overview of the latest scientific findings on climate change, were informed on the potential national risks of a changing climate and discussed how these risks might affect the organization's programs and mission.

The workshop convinced the employees of the need to take the next step of the program and, ultimately, the remaining two as well. A staff member was hired to make a first analysis of the 'climatic' vulnerability of ongoing programs and prepare a background document on the impacts of climate change in the country. The initial findings were that, although the government and scientific and environmental organizations have started a climate change dialogue, their knowledge and research results are not being passed on to the general public.

### Short film competition

As a prelude to completing step 2 of the Preparedness for climate change program and to begin to create more awareness on the issue, the Red Cross introduced a short film competition on climate change. There were eighteen

entries, with three finalists chosen by a panel of judges. The panel comprised of representatives of the Ministry of Tourism (Environmental Committee), the Bahamas International Film Festival, New Providence Community Centre, the Bahamas Reef Environmental and Educational Fund (BREEF), and the Bahamas Broadcasting Corporation.

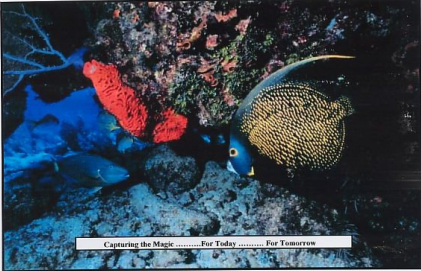
The winning entry, Three Bahamians in a tub, is being aired nationally by the Bahamas Broadcasting Corporation on a regular basis. As a result of working together in the competition's context, the Corporation furthermore has committed itself to work with the Red Cross on another similar project.

Following the success of the film competition, the Red Cross asked its employees to suggest more visible ways to raise awareness on climate change and its negative impacts, to inform people of the national society's involvement and to promote the Bahamas Red Cross Climate Change Resource Centre. This centre, housed in the Red Cross headquarters, set up with support of a local partner, is open to paid staff, volunteers and the general public. It provides resource materials collected from all organizations in the country addressing climate related risks.

### Natural blessings calendar

When asking for submissions for the film competition follow up, the desire was stressed to focus on the Bahamas' natural blessings, which need to be protected now and in the future. The result has been a beautiful calendar distributed within the organization and to all Red Cross partners. A national

competition starting in September will provide the photo's for the 2008 edition.



Capturing the Magic.....For Today.....For Tomorrow

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**2007**

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<p><b>September</b></p> <p>M T W T F S S</p> <p>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</p> <p>8 9 10 11 12 13 14</p> <p>15 16 17 18 19 20 21</p> <p>22 23 24 25 26 27 28</p> <p>29 30</p>	<p><b>October</b></p> <p>M T W T F S S</p> <p>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</p> <p>8 9 10 11 12 13 14</p> <p>15 16 17 18 19 20 21</p> <p>22 23 24 25 26 27 28</p> <p>29 30 31</p>	<p><b>November</b></p> <p>M T W T F S S</p> <p>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</p> <p>8 9 10 11 12 13 14</p> <p>15 16 17 18 19 20 21</p> <p>22 23 24 25 26 27 28</p> <p>29 30</p>	<p><b>December</b></p> <p>M T W T F S S</p> <p>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</p> <p>8 9 10 11 12 13 14</p> <p>15 16 17 18 19 20 21</p> <p>22 23 24 25 26 27 28</p> <p>29 30 31</p>

In the context of the Preparedness for climate change program the Bahamas Red Cross currently and furthermore is reviewing all its programs. It already has made a number of changes, which include integrating climate change and disaster risk reduction policies and activities in its projects.

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### **Clear language**

While doing so, Rebecca knows the importance of personal interaction and especially: clear language. For many, information and knowledge made available by meteorological offices or scientists is too technical. Working together with them and other stakeholders is important and very beneficial, but their message often needs to be 'translated' into language national societies and local communities can understand and work with. Samoa Red Cross are working on this at the moment. Rebecca says "climate change has become a hot topic in Samoa but there is still a lot of public uncertainty about it. Samoa Red Cross are integrating it into their drama shows so that people have the myth taken out of it. They also give some practical steps that their audience can take to be better prepared for natural and health hazards that are exacerbated by changes in climate".

Rebecca gathered information on climate change in the Pacific region to make an accessible manual for Red Cross Societies. Included in the manual is a diagram on the funding associated with the Kyoto Protocol made available through the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and the UNDP Small Grants Program in the Pacific which has a growing amount of money available for climate change adaptation activities. "Of course just like the disaster management sector, the climate change arena has its own set of jargon and abbreviations which can be intimidating so I try to take the mystery out of it when I am training up staff and volunteers" says Rebecca.

### **Sharing information**

Also in the manual are experiences of other national societies that have worked on climate change. If something is particularly interesting Rebecca sends it around by email. "The more examples you can provide, the easier it is for others to start to formulate their own unique response in their country's context". Sharing information is so crucial, on the local level as well the national and regional."

Once national societies get involved in the *Preparedness for climate change program*, one of the first things they do is map which stakeholders are present in their country and what it is they are doing. Then, connections can be made and gaps can be seen. Tuvalu and Samoa have undertaken these steps and now contribute to climate change activities in their country in association with NGO's and the government. Kiribati, Tonga and Solomon Islands Red Cross are now involved in these first steps. Rebecca believes that the work of Pacific national societies on climate change might provide not only an important role in their countries, but also in sharing their experiences around the world. She will try and help them achieve that.

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