



# Zimbabwe Red Cross Society

## Climate Change Workshop Report

Date: 24/07/07

Venue: Zimbabwe Red Cross Society Board Room

### Introduction

The President of the ZRCS welcomed the participants. He expressed his enthusiasm about the workshop as this was his line of expertise at the completion of his thesis on climatic change. The vice president of the ZRCS also expressed his appreciation of those who had taken their time to participate in the process. He emphasised that the process will help the Society continue to serve the vulnerable communities in a more effective way. The Acting National Programmes Coordinator for Zimbabwe Red Cross then chaired the meeting and ensured the smooth running of the workshop.

### Background

Zimbabwe like any other country in the world has not been spared by issues of climate change. Some evidence related to issues of climate change can be noted on changes in the rainfall patterns, amounts of rainfall received, temperatures, cyclones, droughts and floods just to mention a few. This workshop was done in the context of the "Preparedness for Change" program in collaboration with the Centre for Climate Change. The Zimbabwe Red Cross has also been challenged by climate change related disasters which are becoming more frequent or more severe. A good example is cyclone Eline. These brought both floods and droughts. Drought have been have been recurring since 2002. This has posed more challenges of food insecurity, water and sanitation problems just to mention a few. The main objectives of this workshop was to share information on climate change, the potential effects of climate change, assess how the Red Cross programming may be affected by climate change issues and recommend on the way forward for the Zimbabwe Red Cross preparedness on climate change issues and related disasters.

### 1. Main conclusions from the workshop

These were based on the main presentations of the day summarised below

#### Climate Change basics

The main presentations were from Pablo Suarez a consultant from the Red Cross based at Boston University. These gave participants an overview of the purpose of the workshop and the expectations. There is evidence of climate change in most parts of the world. There is an increase in the intensity of hurricanes, tropical cyclones, droughts and melting of glaciers in traditional areas. In some cases this is occurring in areas where they never used to occur. These effects were once considered as environmental problems only but are now being viewed as both environmental and humanitarian problems.

Two options were viewed to be available when dealing with the issue of climatic change. These are Mitigation and Adaptation.

- **Mitigation:** Avoiding changes in atmosphere so the climate doesn't get worse. This requires the developed countries that are responsible for the most pollution to take a stand and reduce their contributions to the levels of pollution
- **Adaptation:** communities have to get ready for a climate that will get worse. This requires participatory workshops (Vulnerability Capacity Assessments) that will enable communities to identify threats within their communities and ways to adapt to these different changes so that they cope better with the challenges. It is learning and sharing process that will result in communities identifying what can be done differently to better cope with the situations that confront them. It improves the communities' level of preparedness for climatic change.

## 2. Key Questions/concerns raised, the Red Cross in a changing climate

*How will Red Cross as a humanitarian organisation be affected by climate change?*

The Red Cross as a family will be affected because climatic change is a humanitarian problem. This will mean more work, 'new' and stronger disasters, poverty and social injustice. The Red Cross as a humanitarian organ has to help find some solutions to solutions to these problems.

It will also mean that there will be more funding available through donors such as GEF, EU. These donors are aware of the need to inform poorer communities of the effects of climatic change and possible ways of adaptation. The donors will be interested in focusing on communities as an entry point through reputable and well experienced NGOs and humanitarian organizations.

The Red Cross as a movement has a 'new' program called "Preparedness for Climate Change" The programme is:

- Managed by RC/RC Climate Centre, funded by the Netherlands
- 2006-07
- Up to 40 countries, up to €20,000 each (*plus technical assistance*)
- Flexibility to fit the needs of National Societies needs

If a National Society is interested it can go through the following four steps:

- Workshop on the risks of climate change
- Climate risks in context of national priorities and programs
- Capacity building for climate change,
- Climate change resilient RC programs

### **Climate change in the Zimbabwean Context**

A detailed presentation on the climatic change trends in Zimbabwe was made by a representative from the Meteorological department of Zimbabwe, while other scholars from the University of Zimbabwe and University of Bradford gave their input on climate trends in Zimbabwe. Data presented illustrated the recurrence of droughts since 2000. It was highlighted that when cyclones such as Cyclone Eline are associated with floods from neighbouring countries such as Mozambique yet in Zimbabwe they will result in good rainfall. It was also highlighted that the past season was characterised by long dry spells and sporadic showers while in some areas there were heavy down pours followed by long dry spells. Droughts in Zimbabwe are usually associated with the El Niño effects.

It was highlighted by weather scholars from the University that research on the past rainfall season indicated the onset of rains has changed. Rainfall onset is delaying by 33 days. This was consistent with other researches that indicated that farmers had noticed that the onset of the

rainfall season had delayed by a month. Where rainfall used to start raining in late October the rains were now starting late November. The Met Department highlighted that they had several challenges with their early warning technologies as they needed funds to buy latest technology to track weather patterns and weather changes. They also highlighted that their climate and rainfall information was not reaching the communities because they were not decentralised. They have made efforts to train AREX officers so that they pass the information to farmers but there is need to present the information in a way that will be useful to the farmers. The information need to be simplified with no technical jargon. All participants highlighted the importance of mainstreaming climate change issues into programming.

**How can Zimbabwe Red Cross Society be affected? (Group work)**

This question was presented to the participants. They were requested to split into 2 groups and discuss the ZRCS programs and activities sensitive to climate. Groups were asked to discuss the possible impacts and possible adaptation strategies. The findings are summarized in the table1 below.

**Table 1: Zimbabwe Red Cross Programmes and Activities that are Sensitive to Climate**

Programme and Activities	Possible Impact	Adaptation Strategies
<b>1. Food Security and Livelihoods</b>		
- Distribution of vegetable seeds, nutrition gardens, nutrition promotion, agro-forestry,	- Reduced yields, reduced programme impact	- Research on water harvesting techniques large scale (.i.e sand water dams) - Scale up on trainings on garden management with emphasis on water and soil conservation techniques - Include climate analysis in project proposals - Mainstream trainings in climate change and adaptation in trainings
- Distribution of seeds and fertilizer	- Reduced yields, reduced programme impact	- Research on water harvesting techniques that capture significant volumes of water, scale up on conservation farming promotion - Coordination with the met department on weather patterns, this information will cascade down to the farmers, through ZRCS officers, AREX and livelihood volunteers - Scale up on trainings on farm management in the context of climate change in relations to planting dates, fertilizer application , weeding etc - Advocate for the production of small grains by farmers through government structures and community leaderships
- Distribution of livestock	- Reduced livestock production as water sources are reduced	- Intensify on agro forestry interventions that are linked of livestock stock feed production
- Conservation farming	- Reduced yields, reduced programme impact	- Scale up on conservation farming techniques through trainings and advocacy through government structures and community leaderships
- Food distribution	- Increase demand of food	- Improve food production at HH level - Improve community grain reserves
<b>2. Water and Sanitation</b>		
- Borehole drilling	- Reduced programme impact	- Research on water harvesting techniques that are economical
- Well deepening	- Reduced programme impact	- Research on water harvesting techniques that are economical - Mainstream climate change in trainings
<b>3. Disaster Risk Reduction</b>		
- Drought tolerant crops - Early warning systems - floods, evacuation plan to higher grounds	- Reduced harvests - Food relief - Reduced deaths as a result of floods	- Scale up on VCAs, improve community early warning systems - Scale up trainings in DRR, mainstream climate change awareness workshops in all trainings and assessments
<b>4. HIV and AIDS programme</b>		
	- Higher mortality during droughts - Drought coping strategies may accelerate infection rate	- Explore options for targeting food-insecure communities with high HIV incidence

### **3. Agreed next steps**

It was agreed that the Zimbabwe Red Cross should facilitate a roundtable discussion with other key stakeholders as a basis for continuing the dialogue. This should include relevant government departments, NGOs, research institutions and other international organisations in the field of climate change and disaster preparedness and response. The Zimbabwe Red Cross Secretary General and National President made a commitment to proceed to Step 2.

Meetings have been pencilled to cascade information from this workshop to other key staff and volunteers who did not attend the meeting. This will also involve the printing and photocopying of the different presentations from this workshop. These meetings will also be facilitated by other technical partners to create a general awareness in preparation for Step 2.

The Zimbabwe Red Cross is considering the recruitment of a cadre to specifically look at the issues of climate change in the context of Disaster preparedness while at the same time integrating it with other programmes underway once the funding has been provided. Once the cadre is in place, this will enable the national society to conduct an in depth analysis on the climate risks for ZRCS programmes and identify its areas of priority with regards to climate change.

Institutional contacts will be maintained and effectively utilised for influencing the scope and scale of the organisation`s preparedness and response to programming for climate change issues

### **4. Difficulties faced in the preparations of the workshop**

- There was limited time for the discussions due to travel logistics by some of the key participants from the Zimbabwe Red Cross provincial structures.

### **5. Feed back on the technical support received**

The consultant seem to have thoroughly researched and had convincing presentations and live pictures from around the world which made it possible for the rest of the participants not familiar to issues of climate change conceptualise without difficulties. This was further blended with his knowledge of the Zimbabwe climate and the general programming of the Zimbabwe Red Cross. There is however need for more literature apart from the internet to influence programming in light of the new risks on board.

### **Conclusion**

The climate is changing and we know that the change will continue. The past will no longer explain the present and communities need to be aware of this and realize that they can do something about it. We can prepare for the changes through learning, sharing of information. There is need to expect the unexpected while paying more attention to predictions and prepare plans for disaster preparedness and response by supporting processes of transformation.

## Annex List of Participants

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