

Travel along with Pablo Suarez – Associate Director of Programmes of the Climate Centre



Pablo Suarez has been facilitating and co-organizing many workshops, seminars and initiatives all across the world in the first half year of 2008. Some of the highlights of his travels have been the Pre-hurricane meeting in Panama, the Workshop on climate change adaptation, development and disaster risk reduction in Trinidad and Tobago, the set up of a audio visual project in Malawi and climate change advocacy in Uganda.

Trinidad and Tobago

In February 2008 Pablo's first stop was at the Workshop on climate change adaptation, development and disaster risk reduction in Trinidad and Tobago. A very good report and a film on the meeting were produced by ProVention Consortium, who organized this in cooperation with the Climate Centre. The workshop brought together 50 participants from civil society, national and local governments, academia, regional inter-governmental bodies, media and the private sector in order to work towards the overarching objective of the development of a Programme of Action for

strengthening community resilience and local adaptive capacity in a changing Caribbean climate. Please visit the Provention website at <http://www.proventionconsortium.org> to read more about the event.

A back-to-back meeting took place for the Caribbean countries participating in the Preparedness for Climate Change programme. Project managers from the Red Cross societies of Antigua and Barbuda, the Bahamas, Jamaica, St Kitts and Nevis and Trinidad & Tobago shared their experiences and lessons learnt -so far- with the programme.

Panama

Pablo's next stop brought him to Panama City, where he joined the ProVention Annual Forum 2008 'From Grassroots to Global: People-Centred Disaster Risk Reduction'. This event was again organized by ProVention Consortium, but then in partnership with the IFRC Zonal Office in Panama. The 2008 Forum fostered cross-disciplinary and cross-regional linkages and learning by bringing ProVention partners and relevant stakeholders together from around the globe. In addition, the Annual Forum aimed to produce recommendations for government authorities and international actors on how to support bottom-up change related to DRR, and to inform the strategic direction and work plan development of the ProVention Secretariat for 2009 and beyond. Please visit the ProVention website for more information on this event at <http://www.proventionconsortium.org>.

Morocco

In March 2008, a seminar entitled 'Environnement durable, changement climatique et mouvement de population au Nord de l'Afrique' (A sustainable environment, climate change and movements of the population in North Africa) took place in Mehdia, Morocco. Pablo joined the 46 participants from the RC/RC societies from mainly North African countries. A questionnaire, held amongst the participants, showed that the

majority of people present perceived displacement of populations, loss of revenues, decreasing access to water resources and potable water and the impacts on public health induced by climate change, as major concerns for their National Societies. Participants came up with actions in response to climate change to be taken up by their National Society: Awareness raising on the humanitarian aspects of climate change, come up with actions to deal and address desertification and the creation of a designated cell (taskforce) within the National Society dealing with the issues of climate change. Another important conclusion is that the National Societies would like to see the integration of climate change into the existing programmes of their National Society: youth, health and disaster management. Participants shared their observations and experiences with the Climate Centre filmmaker, Nadia von Christierson, who is putting together a 5-minute film on this seminar, in collaboration with the Centre for the Co-operation in the Mediterranean.

Panama

In June 2008, another important event brought Pablo back to Panama, where he participated in the 'Pre-hurricane meeting', where he facilitated a session on climate risk management tools, co-organized by the IFRC, the Water Center for the Humid Tropics of Latin America and the Caribbean (CATHALAC) and the International Research Institute for Climate and Society (IRI) - a first step in a recently established collaboration. The aim of the session was to help disaster managers understand these new tools, learn the basics of how to access, interpret and utilize available information on climate-related risks. Participants got a simple yet broad introduction to the possibilities of new options including predictions, remote sensing, GIS and video & communications, and learned about the opportunities available to them. Following the Pre-hurricane meeting, the half-day participatory workshop 'New tools for climate risk management' was perceived as

useful and entertaining. The workshop also provided an opportunity for practitioners to help the experts improve the design and communication of these new tools. Two masters students from Columbia University, Sarah Abdelrahim and Lisette Braman, are supporting the Red Cross to better utilize climate information from IRI and CATHALAC through their summer internships. Read more about the pre hurricane meeting at the IFRC website: www.ifrc.org

Uganda

In July Pablo has been travelling through various countries in Africa. In Uganda he facilitated a workshop on climate change hosted by the Uganda Red Cross Society in Kampala and attended by over 20 people. Many good ideas emerged during this workshop. After the workshop the Uganda Red Cross participated in a meeting held in Munyonyo with the Minister of State for Water and their technical team, plus parliamentarians and local NGOs. Spirit of collaboration was really ripe, and a concrete plan was crafted for combined efforts between the Ministry and Red Cross to address climate change adaptation by an integrated approach to massive tree planting in rural areas, selecting sites and species specifically for:

- increasing groundwater recharge in areas where wells are drying up (which is huge problem in Uganda)
- reducing runoff where flood risk is growing
- improving food production where soils & rains are adequate (avocado, fruit trees, etc)
- promoting timber for firewood and/or diversification of livelihoods.

All while helping with carbon sequestration.

Malawi

After his meeting in Uganda, Pablo visited the Malawi Red Cross. The Malawi Red Cross is determined to produce more audio-videos to raise awareness on climate change in the future. The Malawi Red Cross and Malawi Meteorological Services have already been

collaborating in a project entitled “Audiovisual tools for community-based adaptation”, as part of the Advancing Capacity for Climate Change Adaptation (ACCCA) programme, funded by UNITAR and partners. The Climate Centre audio-visual team worked with government agencies and subsistence farmers, producing videos in which members of the community describe the impacts of climate-related events. The first final product from the video project on climate change was a 5-minute piece produced by a talented and enthusiastic group of high school students from Lilongwe, in collaboration with the local Red Cross and a RC/RC Climate Centre intern, Mehdi Comeau, from University of Colorado - Boulder.

Additional video work is being developed by Fernanda Baumhardt, a former CNN executive from Brazil currently completing her masters thesis for Vrije Universiteit in the Netherlands. After this video farmers are informed on:

- different farming practices (take advantage of different rains to plant new crops)
- different grain storing approaches (instead of in permanent structures, now maize kept in bags so it can be moved to high ground when floods come)

And so far, farmers have started to replace chickens with flood-resistant ducks, and begun to pay more attention to the predictions of the Meteorological Office in Malawi. The Malawi Red Cross is now developing video for farmers in other communities, making disaster management plan (in video format!)

In the future the Malawi Red Cross is also aiming:

- To make a TV spot on climate change for the Red Cross
- To make a Participatory Video with the community of Mphunga to promote adaptation among Malawian farmers
- To train Red cross volunteers and staff with Participatory Video.

Climate change issues are slowly but surely becoming an integral part of programs,

activities and training in the Malawi Red Cross. They are certainly aiming to expand the regional coverage of this video-mediated approach. A Red Cross high school club is being formed to assist the National Society in developing more video products to raise awareness (likely to nurture the new generation of RC staff and volunteers in this country).

Ethiopia

Additionally, Pablo spent several days in northern and central Ethiopia, working in collaboration with Oxfam America and the World Food Program on a project aimed at helping subsistence farmers understand and develop innovative risk sharing mechanisms that can help them access agricultural inputs more suitable to changing climate conditions.

*Updated info and films are available on:
<http://www.climatecentre.org>*

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