

Angola
 Antigua and Barbuda
 Argentina
 Armenia
 Bahamas
 Bangladesh
 Bhutan
 Bolivia
 Burkina Faso
 Burundi
 Cameroon
 Cape Verde
 Chile
 Colombia
 Cook Islands
 Costa Rica
 Dominican Republic
 El Salvador
 Ethiopia
 Fiji
 Gambia
 Grenada
 Guatemala
 Guyana
 Honduras
 India
 Indonesia
 Jamaica
 Kenya
 Kiribati
 Kyrgyzstan
 Laos
 Madagascar
 Malawi
 Mali
 Mauritius
 Mexico
 Micronesia
 Mongolia
 Morocco
 Myanmar
 Namibia
 Nepal
 Nicaragua
 Papua New Guinea
 Philippines
 Rwanda
 Seychelles
 Solomon Islands
 Saint Kitts and Nevis
 Sudan
 Suriname
 Syria
 Tajikistan
 Tanzania
 Thailand
 Timor-Leste
 Tonga
 Trinidad and Tobago
 Turkmenistan
 Uganda
 Uzbekistan
 Yemen
 Zimbabwe¹

Preparing for **climate** change

‘PfCC’ 2006–11

Red Cross Red Crescent Climate Centre



Concerns over a rise in disasters is leading to increased disaster-preparedness and climate-related health programmes by the Fiji Red Cross. This workshop in Natutu village covers how to stay above water level, what supplies to prepare, and what radio stations and mobile-phone messages to watch for. (Photo: Rob Few/IFRC)

The second phase of the Red Cross Red Crescent Climate Centre’s programme to help National Societies address the humanitarian impacts of climate change and variability concluded in June 2011, with international disaster managers worldwide reporting climate-related risks are now increasingly included in regular planning and programming. In total, more than 50 plans by Red Cross Red Crescent National Societies or International Federation offices now mention climate risk.

“Climate change is set to profoundly alter the way we live, and how we seek and share economic growth,” according to *Strategy 2020* of the International Federation of Red Cross

and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC). “These trends,” it adds, “are likely to increase vulnerability on a large scale by heightening and creating new patterns of marginalization, impoverishment and insecurity.”

It was this vulnerability that the two Preparedness for Climate Change programmes (“PfCC”), funded by the Netherlands government, were designed to address. Through them, 64 National Societies educated themselves, their staff, and their volunteers about the likely humanitarian impacts of climate change and variability. They thought through how these impacts might affect their most vulnerable populations and the need for their own

¹ Thirty-nine countries took part in PfCC1; 27 in PfCC2; and two in both.



In this community in Bangladesh, only a handful of people own radios or televisions, so disaster warning has to be done by megaphone. (Photo: Amir Jina)

humanitarian services. In the process, societies drew on the expertise of local partners and knowledge centres, building a base for future collaboration. This laid the foundations for “climate-smart” disaster risk reduction (DRR) – an important form of climate change adaptation (CCA) for the Red Cross Red Crescent.

As the IFRC’s Reference Centre on climate change and variability, marking its tenth anniversary in 2012, the Climate Centre’s advice has always been that it is not necessary to create entirely new programmes to address climate risks. The best approach is to enhance what National Societies *are already good at* and integrate it into existing plans and programmes.

“Climate-risk management means looking at what is predictable, what is changing across various timescales, and how to prepare,” says Maarten van Aalst, the centre’s new director, who took over in 2011 and is also a coordinating lead-author for the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC).

The programme comprises various components for each National Society:

- An internal *workshop* on climate change, involving experts from knowledge centres, ministries and meteorological offices
- A *background report* containing a climate-risk assessment and links to the different programmes of the National Society
- An *action plan* on ways to address climate risk and identify partners.
- *Communications products* to disseminate key messages

Most of these steps were intended to be integrated with other planned activities at the societies’ discretion.

The Climate Centre also encouraged National Societies to take part in *regional* workshops involving other societies and the IFRC, to develop their understanding of how climate change can be addressed, and to exchange ideas and experience.

Climate Snapshot **Rwanda**

Africa zone

Rwanda is an overwhelmingly agrarian country where some 80 per cent of the population are farmers. Climate impacts, mainly drought and floods, are leading to food insecurity, displacement, migration, and the selling-off of household possessions. The main programmatic burden this imposes on the Red Cross is the result of people moving to areas where there is insufficient water. The chief activity the National Society would like to expand in the face of this rising climate risk is rainwater harvesting, mainly in the east of the country, where water stocks are being expanded to see communities through dry periods. El Niño years tend to see heightened rainfall during the September–December rainy season, while La Niña years tend to see reduced rainfall. But the relationship is inconsistent and it is possible to have reduced rainfall and an increase in short droughts during El Niños.



An event honouring women worldwide who walk long distances every day to fetch water: young women and girls walked six kilometres carrying water to the Copenhagen Bella Centre where the 2009 climate negotiations took place. (Photo: Jakob Dall/IFRC)



The programme emphasized the importance of ensuring all interested departments within National Societies, including disaster management, organizational development, and health and care, were involved. For example, it provided a one-page guidance sheet on climate-related *health* issues. It is often difficult to get climate change treated as a genuinely cross-cutting issue. Many government ministries and partners, for example, tend to treat it in isolation, addressed only by one department.

In their action plans, National Societies outlined concrete activities that form the basis of funding proposals for actual climate-related programming. This constituted significant

‘A surge of acceptance of the issue’

progress toward the overarching goal of both PfCC programmes: to increase community resilience in the face of rising climate risks.

An example. The IFRC’s Sahel region covers Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Gambia, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Mali, Mauritania, Niger and Senegal – four of them PfCC countries.

In 2010, once again, drought pushed several Sahel nations to the brink of mass starvation. In Niger, where the vast majority of the population depend on rain-fed agriculture for their survival, the crisis was largely the result of failed rains: they arrived too late and ended too early.

Sahel countries also face multiple climate-related health hazards, and (a climate pattern now familiar in sub-Saharan Africa) severe floods alternating with extreme drought. “The Sahel region is especially affected by the consequences of climate change... increasingly affecting the economies and livelihoods of vulnerable groups,” according to the 2011 Red Cross Red Crescent plan for the region. Now, however, and partly thanks to PfCC work, IFRC support to Sahel National Societies “will mainly focus on strengthening DRR projects, including adaptation to climate change, early-warning system development, disaster preparedness, and response.”

As PfCC1 moved into PfCC2, says Rebecca McNaught, focal point for National Societies in Asia, the Pacific, and the Middle East, there was “a significant move toward the issue of climate change by the larger system, running with it, integrating it into regular appeals or regional proposals.



Humanitarian leaders met youth from around the world at a 2009 Copenhagen roundtable to discuss climate change, including IFRC secretary general Bekele Geleta (centre) and Ulla Tornaes (left), then Danish development minister. PfCC2 was implemented entirely through IFRC regional offices. (Photo: Jakob Dall/IFRC)



Four-hundred Red Crescent volunteers in Syria helped residents plant nearly 40,000 trees in the desert areas of Ahasakka and Deir Ezour in response to ongoing drought conditions.

(Photo: Hosam Faysal/IFRC)

“I’ve seen National Societies take things on their own and just do it. There have been some wonderful surprises. I also think we’ve seen a surge of acceptance of the issue of climate change in general, including policy dialogue and partnership with governments.”

According to Lisette Braman, a PfCC programme officer and an associate at the International Research Institute for Climate and Society (IRI), whose climate helpdesk continued to be a vitally important resource for the Red Cross Red Crescent, “National Societies drew on the expertise of local partners and knowledge centres, building a base for future collaboration.”

Any humanitarian programme initiated at the multilateral level ultimately depends for its success on uptake at national and local level. In this sense too, PfCC, which now includes one third of all the countries in the world, has been a success. So enthusiastic was the response to PfCC1 that the Climate Centre, concerned its capacity to provide technical support might not keep pace, had to establish a waiting list.

Behind this mainly quantitative consideration are more qualitative ones. Was the programme truly innovative or was it just “more of the same”? What did National Societies take home from the programme for the longer term? How interdisciplinary was it? How sustainable were its elements? Did other donors step forward to support similar work? What spin-offs did it generate?

Here again PfCC scored highly. An analysis in the IFRC South-East Asia region, for example, showed National Societies were more likely to consider climate risk if they had taken part in PfCC. In many countries, collaboration with climate institutions improved. Information over a range of timescales (days to decades) has been integrated into the IFRC Disaster Management Information System, regularly consulted by societies.

The Climate Challenge Innovations Fund (CCIF) was set up in 2010 as part of the preparedness effort for small climate-related initiatives by National Societies that had taken part in either of the PfCC programmes. “The idea was for innovative

Scientific accuracy and ‘myth busting’

ideas to provide inspiration throughout the Red Cross Red Crescent,” says Fleur Monasso, the PfCC programme officer at the Climate Centre in The Hague. Selection criteria included a connection to climate-risk analysis, the possibility of integration into priority activities, and replicability.

An example. The Chilean Red Cross was awarded CCIF funds for a pilot project called *Juventud y el Cambio Climático*² in Santiago – designed jointly by the society’s health, youth, and disaster-management departments to train volunteers as facilitators of climate change adaptation work for schools, create training modules for children and young people, host awareness-raising discussions in schools, and sponsor two projects for children and youth.

² Youth and Climate Change.

A Red Cross climate workshop in Laos.
(Photo: Red Cross Red Crescent Climate Centre)



PfCC by numbers

2.6 million Total combined budget in euros of the two PfCCs.

64 Number of Red Cross Red Crescent societies that took part in PfCC.

62% Average proportion of societies across the two programmes that completed all four steps.

50 Minimum number of National Society and IFRC plans that now include climate change and variability.

47 Number of requests for assistance received by the IFRC/IRI climate helpdesk in 2010 during PfCC2.

13 Total number of applications from National Societies to the Climate Challenge Innovations Fund.

6 Number of years the PfCC programmes ran for.

9 Number of countries its successor, Partners for Resilience, will operate in.



Local radio on the Atlantic coast of Nicaragua has played in key role in getting Red Cross warning and preparedness messages out to communities. (Photo: IFRC)

Another Innovations Fund project, in the South Pacific, touched on a key element of PfCC: combining community and scientific knowledge. It focused on Pileni Island – a remote but resilient community that faces an increase in storm surges, where the Solomon Islands Red Cross is expanding traditional methods of sea-wall protection. Attention was paid during the training of Red Cross staff and volunteers to scientific accuracy and what one called “myth busting”.

In collaboration with the Netherlands Red Cross and the Climate Centre, the Ethiopian Red Cross used CCIF funds to embark on “participatory video”: a methodology that involves a group in shaping, creating and filming their own video, from storyboarding to camera operation. Rural women engaged in a video to promote fuel-efficient woodstoves which they make and sell themselves and which limit deforestation and save time wasted in gathering fuel.

Climate Snapshot **Chile** Americas zone

In its region, Chile is regarded as a pacesetter in efforts to address climate change – specifically within a three-year plan organized by the environment ministry. But the Chilean Red Cross says that although many NGOs work on climate themes, they do so largely with reducing greenhouse gases in mind, not adaptation. The society says that a concrete plan to incorporate humanitarian agencies into work on climate impacts awaits finalization. For its part, the National Society is clear that climate impacts are already being felt in its four main areas of work: risk management; health, where changes in disease vectors are being observed; youth work, where there is great interest in developing the skills to address changing climate-risks; and a general decline in social well-being, for example, among the elderly in the south-central area of the country, linked to failed harvests. The Red Cross is working hard to expand its volunteer base, including significant adaptation components.

Climate Snapshot **Bangladesh** Asia-Pacific zone

The Bangladesh Red Crescent Society has developed a four-year adaptation programme with which PfCC2 was integrated and coordinated. The country is extremely vulnerable to climate-change impacts because of its geographical location, high population density, high levels of poverty and the reliance of many livelihoods on climate-sensitive sectors, particularly rural agriculture and fisheries. Bangladesh’s economy hinges primarily on agriculture. The main factors influencing farming are cyclones, floods, drought, salinity, tidal waves, seasonal variability, erratic rainfall patterns, heat and cold waves. Climate change, which brings more extremes, has a major impact on food security. It is a significant and emerging threat to public health in Bangladesh. Water resources are probably one of the most affected sectors. Climate change has already caused a serious scarcity of drinking water in coastal areas due to salinity.

Climate Snapshot **Armenia**
Europe and Central Asia zone

Armenia is one of the most disaster-prone countries in its region, and the 2010 strategic plan of the Armenian Red Cross Society (ARCS) strongly advocates the need to reduce the vulnerability of the population to natural disasters. Climate change will have an “enormous” impact as both a cause and an accelerator of disaster. Although climate change is a new area of activity for the National Society, DRR was already a priority. The main points of ARCS activity are public awareness, capacity building, and advocacy. The society believes it can provide effective public guidance on specific risks; training in communities and schools in climate-related fields will be an important new focus. The integration of climate-related components into vulnerability and capacity assessments will encourage communities to prioritize the issue and integrate adaptation. The development of different types of assessment of possible disaster areas might follow.

The IFRC Caribbean office felt the experience of writing background documents during PfCC1 led to such improved understanding that they decided to fund the work of four non-PfCC National Societies: Belize, Dominica, Saint Lucia, and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines.

In the IFRC Europe zone, which covers the Caucasus and Central Asia, the National Societies of Armenia, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan built new partnerships and expanded existing ones with scientific institutes, government agencies, universities and NGOs concerned with climate risk.

“Many challenges remain,” says van Aalst. “We made progress with PfCC2 in key areas, like making climate part of

Climate Snapshot **Yemen**
Middle East and North Africa zone

A recent risk map the Yemen Red Crescent Society helped to compile indicated that nine out of the country’s 22 governorates were highly vulnerable to disasters and epidemics. Top of the list were flash floods. The 2008 floods in Hadramout and Al-Mahara were so severe that it was impossible to get through to the affected areas quickly enough. Changing weather-patterns often expose people to drought and food insecurity. Lack of water is a chronic problem and Yemen is likely to become the first country in the world to officially “run out” of water, with water tables falling at a rate of up to six metres a year. Yemen’s average temperature has increased by nearly two degrees centigrade since 1960, while average rainfall has been decreasing over the same period at a rate of nearly 10 per cent each decade. Heavy rainfall events are also expected to increase, exacerbating the problem of flash floods.

Red Cross Red Crescent programming, and broadening the scope of climate work beyond disaster management to include, for example, health professionals. But many people still connect ‘climate’ more with things like renewable energy than rising risks.

“Most importantly, we need to scale-up implementation of PfCC lessons in regular programming. Much capacity-building work remains if we’re to become truly ‘climate-smart’.”

June 2011



Demobilized soldiers in Ethiopia struggle to raise a crop in a drought-stricken region in the south of the country, where climate impacts are especially severe and flash floods alternate with extreme drought.
(Photo: Alex Wynter/IFRC)