

Integrating climate change into Red Cross Red Crescent programmes: from global commitments to local action

Daili Rodríguez, a volunteer with the Colombian Red Cross, examines coastal erosion on the road to the new village of San Tropel, built under Colombian Red Cross supervision to house Wayuu indigenous people displaced by coastal erosion. It was part of the Netherlands Red Cross 2008–10 Pledge Project for climate-related disaster risk reduction. (Photo: NLRC)



Introduction

At the 30th International Conference of the Red Cross Red Crescent Movement a series of commitments were made to address the humanitarian consequences of climate change, with specific regard to understanding and reducing impacts felt by the most vulnerable. The Preparedness for Climate Change Programme (PfCC), initiated by the Red Cross Red Crescent Climate Centre and implemented in conjunction with the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (International Federation), assisted a total of 64 National Societies from 2006–2011 as they took first steps toward honoring these commitments. Now, five years later, this paper recognises the hard work of these National Societies by featuring some of the many actions they have taken, while also highlighting a drastic increase in the number of climate related references made in general appeal documents – seen as demonstrating a general increase in climate change awareness across the Movement.

Considering climate change and health

From year to year and month to month, the climate interacts with our health in many ways, think about the seasonality of some vector borne diseases, the incidence of heatwaves in summer, the occurrence of water borne disease during wet seasons. The pioneering work of Indonesia, Kenya, Tanzania, and Vietnam Red Cross is beginning to investigate how a *changing* climate interacts with flooding and dengue incidents and how the Red Cross Red Crescent can respond with its governments and teams of volunteers alongside affected communities.



Indonesian Red Cross volunteer Firmus Resi with a young *jati* shrub planted on the edge of a maize field on Flores island as part of the Netherlands Red Cross 2008–10 Pledge Project for climate-related disaster risk reduction. (Photo: NLRC)

Climate, policy dialogues and networks

National Societies and selected civil society actors in Serbia, Macedonia, Montenegro and Croatia have taken the lead amongst civil society organizations to join forces in advocating and raising awareness about climate change concerns in their countries. South East Europe is highly vulnerable to climate change, which will induce socio-economic, humanitarian and environmental challenges. A cross-sectoral cooperation in the field of climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction is needed to face these challenges. This is one of the concrete examples within the Movement where the NSs are seriously attempting to advocate in a joint effort with other organization to bring in their expertise in national adaptation plans.

What did we commit to?

In 2007, at the 30th International Conference of the Red Cross Red Crescent (International Conference), the International Committee of the Red Cross, the International Federation, National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, and governments expressed deep concern “that people everywhere, especially the poorest of the poor, face an increased burden due to the rise in disasters and the scarcity of resources induced by multiple factors such as environmental degradation and climate change, contributing to poverty, migration, health risks and aggravated risk of violence and conflict”. Parties resolved to address the humanitarian consequences of environmental degradation and climate change by:

- raising awareness
- working with partners
- decreasing vulnerability
- assisting the most vulnerable, especially in affected developing countries
- improving preparedness and response
- integrating adaptation to climate change into disaster risk reduction and disaster management policies and plans
- mobilizing resources and building capacity
- complementing and providing input to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).¹

What is ‘Preparedness for Climate Change’?

The Red Cross Red Crescent ‘Preparedness for Climate Change Programme’ (PfCC) was developed by the Climate Centre in 2006 and implemented in collaboration with the International Federation. It offered the opportunity for National Societies to engage in incorporating climate change into their operations. This was achieved through participation in a flexible four-step process with the objective of learning and raising awareness about country-specific climate change risks, analysing those risks in the context of their country’s own vulnerabilities, and developing strategies to prepare and minimize the consequences of climate change for vulnerable communities. The overall goal of the programme is to reduce the vulnerability of people in developing countries to the risks of climate change.

The four steps included:

1. Organizing a workshop on the risks of climate change
2. Assessing the risks of climate change in the country and the priorities and programmes of the National Societies through a background document. It also included the production of communication materials based on these risks.

¹ 30th International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent, Resolutions and declarations, November 2007, www.ifrc.org/meetings/statutory/intconf/30th/index.asp

Disaster risk reduction and climate change integration

Efforts to integrate climate change considerations into disaster risk reduction programmes are too numerous to list. Some good examples have been seen in Uganda, where the Red Cross Society supported community based volunteers in the construction of fuel efficient cook stoves and the planting of thousands of trees, in a country with one of the highest deforestation rates in the world, this will help to increase natural buffers against a more uncertain future – likely to include more extreme floods, droughts and food insecurity. They also guided the construction of flood resistant shelters in response to the community's desire to address increased flood risk and anticipated increased occurrence of extreme rainfall events. Activities by the Ethiopia Red Cross such as terracing, eyebrow and micro basins, trench construction and the seedling planting already seem to be paying off as degraded land is showing signs of recovery. And the Colombia Red Cross decided through a participatory process that relocation of a coastal community - away from frequently flooded areas – was the best option in their climate smart disaster risk reduction programme. Regional efforts are exemplified in Asia where groups of National Societies met to learn more about considering climate change and DRR in sub-national trainings.

3. Capacity building for climate resilient programmes through exchanging experiences with other National Societies and partners in a regional workshop that incorporated climate change
4. Developing climate resilient plans and programmes

Which National Societies participated in the programme?

The table below demonstrates which sixty four National Societies participated in the 'official' PfCC programme. In addition to this, many more National Societies have also been involved in the programme through engaging in training opportunities, undertaking it through additional funding channels and even being involved in pilot projects which informed the development of the programme. This indicates that the real number of National Societies involved totals nearly half of the International Federation's membership.

National Societies involved in the Preparedness for Climate Change programme*

Phase 1	Kenya (x)	Phase 2	Nepal (x)
2006–2009	Kirgizstan	2009–2011	Papua New Guinea
Antigua and Barbuda (x)	Kiribati	Angola (x)	Rwanda (x)
Argentina (x)	Laos (x)	Armenia (x)	Sudan (x)
Bahamas (x)	Madagascar (x)	Bangladesh (x)	Suriname (x)
Bolivia	Malawi (x)	Bhutan	Syria
Burkina Faso	Mauritius	Cameroon	Tajikistan (x)
Burundi	Nicaragua (x)	Cape Verde	Turkmenistan (x)
Colombia (x)	Philippines (x)	Chile (x)	Yemen
Cook Islands (x)	Seychelles (x)	Dominican Republic (x)	
Costa Rica (x)	Solomon Islands (x)	East Timor (x)	
El Salvador (x)	St Kitts and Nevis (x)	Fiji (x)	
Ethiopia	Tanzania (x)	India (x)	
Gambia	Thailand	Mali	
Grenada (x)	Tonga (x)	Mexico (x)	
Guatemala (x)	Trinidad and Tobago (x)	Micronesia (x)	
Guyana	Uganda (x)	Mongolia (x)	
Honduras (x)	Uzbekistan	Morocco (x)	
Indonesia (x)	Zimbabwe	Myanmar (x)	
Jamaica (x)		Namibia (x)	

*An 'X' indicates that the National Society completed all steps of the programme.

Villagers in Ebinat, near Gondar, Ethiopia, one of the places where the Netherlands Red Cross has been working to combine disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation as part of the 2008–10 Pledge Project. Interventions in Ethiopia were mainly agricultural, focusing on small-scale irrigation and conservation. (Photo: NLRC)





Young women among the 400 Red Crescent volunteers in Syria who helped residents plant nearly 40,000 trees in the desert areas of Ahasakka and Deir Ezour in response to drought conditions. (Photo: Hosam Faysal/IFRC)

Training and education

Adjusting school curricula to incorporate disaster risk reduction and climate change has been a major investment many National Societies around the globe have made over the past few years. In Latin America for example the National Societies joined forces to create education materials together. Many National Societies in Latin America even obtained additional funding to gear up their work on education campaigns. This has led to numerous youth initiatives and knowledge raising activities at community level. German and Danish Red Cross Societies have conducted trainings for staff and delegates around the world in how to consider a more hostile climate in their programmes. A climate training kit is currently under production by the Climate Centre and will be available online as a resource package for colleagues to adapt to their contexts.

What did PfCC achieve?

The results of two independent evaluations demonstrated that as a result of the PfCC programme, new partnerships were developed. Almost all the National Societies formed new or enhanced partnerships with government agencies, NGOs, meteorological institutions, and universities. Partnerships were initiated through workshops, collection of information from new sources, and joint projects such as development of community based early warning systems. Collaboration with existing partners has also been enhanced, driven by the growing need to share knowledge, and information, coordinate efforts and unite resources to increase preparedness and minimize risk.

How does PfCC relate to the IC commitments?

The Preparedness for Climate Change programme assisted National Societies in addressing their International Conference commitments and also coincided with a surge in global awareness of the issue of climate change. In order to measure the inclusion of climate change into regular programmes of Red Cross Red Crescent a team of volunteer researchers were engaged. This team analysed thousands of International Federation zonal, regional and national general appeal (not emergency appeal) documents from 2003-2011 for the occurrence of key search terms, including the terms 'climate change' and 'global warming'. What follows is an overview of the findings of this work.

How were the documents researched?

All appeal documents were arranged according to country, region and zone levels and then searched manually using Adobe for key terms. These key terms were recorded in an Excel spreadsheet database. Some constraints included the fact that for some years and countries, documents were simply not available. For this reason, in the graphs that follow, you will find that rather than simply listing the number of times a key term was found, the percentage of documents the key terms were found was chosen.

What do the findings show?

It is not possible to attribute the occurrence of terms in appeal documents to just one event or programme, but these graphs demonstrate that 2007 was a key year. More widely it came after the release of Al Gore's film 'An Inconvenient Truth', the release of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's Fourth Assessment Report and coincided with the development of the 'Bali Action Plan' in international climate negotiations. This plan highlighted the need for action on adapting to the unavoidable

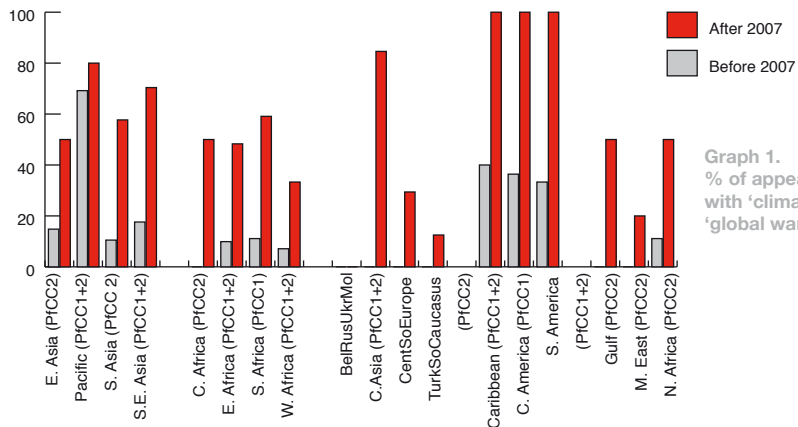


Arifin Hadi, head of disaster management at the Indonesian Red Cross, gives a television interview about climate issues on the roof of the National Society's Jakarta headquarters. Indonesia participated in the first phase of PFCC and continues to be a major contributor to risk-reduction work in the Asia-Pacific region. (Photo: NLRC)

impacts of climate change. This was reinforced by the International Conference commitments on climate change made by the Red Cross Red Crescent Movement, which created a further foundation for action on the issue.

Below in a series of graphs we can see that there was considerable difference in the appearance of 'climate change' and 'global warming' terms in the appeal documents of the International Federation after the 2007 International Conference. The graphs demonstrate increases in the adoption of the issue within Red Cross Red Crescent across all zones simultaneously and also coinciding with the roll out of the Preparedness for Climate Change programme.

Graph 1 below clearly shows that across zones, appeals contained 'climate change' or 'global warming' terms significantly more after the 2007 milestone. The percentage of reports that mention the terms has more than doubled in all the zones.

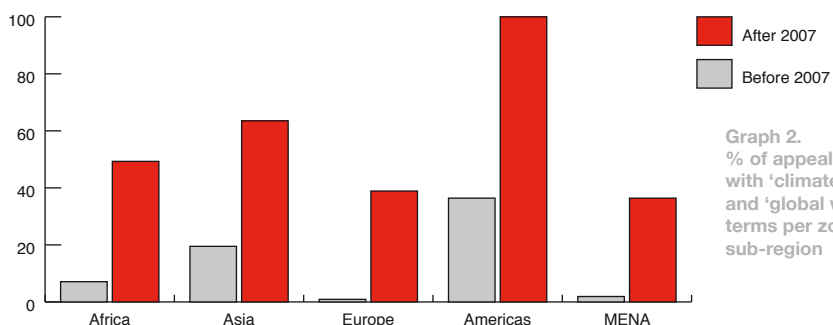


Graph 1. % of appeal documents with 'climate change' or 'global warming' terms

Communicating climate change

Through the Preparedness for Climate Change programme, sixty-four National Societies undertook various forms of awareness raising on climate change. This included awareness raising of staff and volunteers, and to those external to the organisation such as partner organisations as well as the wider public. Messages demonstrated the humanitarian implications of climate change in the country and what action can be taken to address it through risk reduction and reducing emissions. National Societies found that creativity was key to communicating climate change and examples included brochures, banners, posters, drama shows, games, merchandise, cartoons, films, radio programmes, fans, media dissemination, books, colouring pages... and more!

Graph 2 below demonstrates that within the Asia Pacific zone, East, South and South East Asia are using climate change and global warming terms three times as much as they did before 2007. In other regions such as Central Africa, Europe and Middle East the percentage of documents with the key terms increased from non-existent to about 50%. (This increase coincides in regions where the Preparedness for Climate Change programme was implemented).



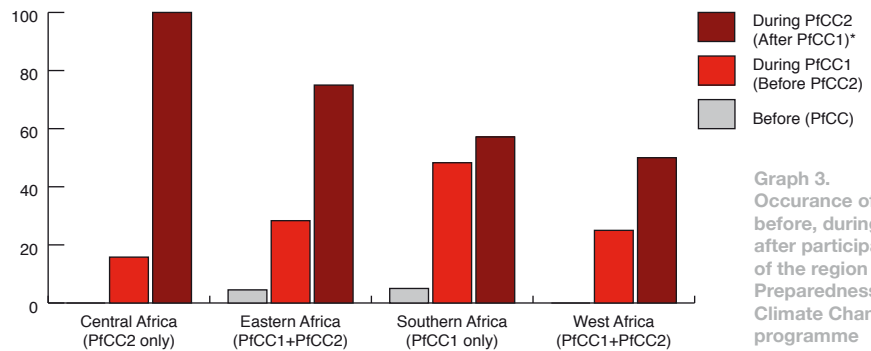
Graph 2. % of appeal documents with 'climate change' or 'global warming' terms per zone and sub-region

Considering climate variability in disaster management

Addressing natural climate variability is a good step towards dealing with a more severe future. Tuvalu and Kiribati are exposed to the impacts of El Niño (wetter period) and La Niña (drier period). Taking these predictable impacts on board, the Federation Pacific office issued a La Niña tailored for Pacific Red Cross Societies. Upon receiving early warning of the impending La Niña and possible dry conditions, Tuvalu and Kiribati Red Cross contacted their local meteorological office, the National Disaster Management Office and the Water Authorities. As a result they received weather updates, updates on water supply and established partnerships with key stakeholders for collaboration. Since the only water sources in Tuvalu come from rain and sea, Tuvalu Red Cross initiated public awareness campaigns on its regular national radio spot - encouraging people to save water, advice on how to boil water and be conscious of hygiene (as diarrhea is often a problem during drought periods when people have less water to wash their hands). During the drought situation that eventuated, Tuvalu Red Cross worked closely with government including water, agriculture and disaster management departments and volunteers have been distributing water to affected households.



A Wetlands International defensive mangrove-plantation off the coast of Flores, Indonesia – part of the Netherlands inter-agency Partners for Resilience programme that includes the Red Cross Red Crescent.
(Photo: Wetlands International)



Graph 3. Occurrence of terms before, during and after participation of the region in the Preparedness for Climate Change programme

In the Africa zone, Preparedness for Climate Change (PfCC) phase one was implemented in 12 countries and phase two was implemented in seven countries. Graph 3 illustrates that the percentage of documents using the key terms increased in all regions. The sample size of documents after PfCC1 and during PfCC2 is low (2-7 per region) but the trend shows that the usage of the term will continue to remain high.

Where to from here?

It is obvious that the 2007 International Conference and the PfCC programme had a profound impact on the awareness and acceptance of climate change as a humanitarian concern. However the Red Cross Red Crescent knows that awareness is not enough. Colleagues around the world are asking how they can practically integrate climate change considerations into their regular work, be it in disaster management, community based risk reduction, health and care, communications, advocacy and partnerships for example. The Early Warning, Early Action approach highlighted in the 2009 World Disasters Report (especially chapter 3) is a good example of how climate information – across a range or timescales – can be systematically integrated in Red Cross Red Crescent work. There are some frontrunners within the Red Cross Red Crescent and lessons learnt can already be shared. It will be key to build upon these previous experiences for implementing more climate smart projects and also to share approaches that can reduce the impact of climate change upon the most vulnerable people.

There remains much work to be done to gear up and continue to decrease vulnerability to climate variability and change, and to mobilize the necessary funding to do so. The Climate Centre will continue to support the Red Cross Red Crescent Movement as it strives to achieve the goals of the 2007 International Conference Commitments and Strategy 2020 in the coming decade.

Mobilization of Resources and climate change adaptation funding

So far, it has proven difficult for National Societies in development countries to get access to new climate change-related funding sources; this will require sustained policy dialogues with their governments. However, many Partner National Societies did manage to secure funding for climate change adaptation (or are in the process of applying). Examples are Finnish Red Cross funding from the Nordic Climate Fund to support the Malawi and Mozambique Red Crosses in climate-smart disaster risk management, Austrian Red Cross policy activities in Eastern Europe, community-based adaptation research in the Solomon Islands and more general scaling up of climate-smart disaster risk management in the Pacific by the Australian Red Cross, and a EUR 40 million climate-smart disaster risk reduction program coordinated by the Netherlands Red Cross. Many more are in the pipeline.

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