

Red Cross/Red Crescent
Climate Guide



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Foreword

When the International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent first discussed climate change in 1999, few were convinced that humanitarian organizations really needed to worry about it. In those days people considered it an environmental issue; at most a potential risk for the distant future, a scientific debate. When the Climate Centre was established in 2002, we realized its humanitarian implications but thought of climate change primarily as a gradual rise in risks – one we should start preparing for.

Much has changed since then. Not only is the world now convinced that climate change is real, but Red Cross/Red Crescent staff and volunteers also see it happening before their eyes, hitting the most vulnerable people sooner and harder than we had ever expected.

There is little discussion of whether climate change is an issue of concern to the Red Cross and Red Crescent. Instead it has turned to how we can best address the humanitarian consequences.

With this Climate Guide for the Red Cross and Red Crescent we aim to share the experiences of more than 40 National Societies who, in the last five years, have started to address climate change in their work. Their experiences are as diverse as our planet's weather and as wide-ranging as the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement itself. Yet many similarities shine through. Climate change is new for all of us. We all need an open mind to learn and establish new partnerships. But instead of doing something entirely new and different, we should base our responses on what we already do best, integrating the changing risks in our efforts to serve the most vulnerable people.

Rather than only documenting these experiences, this guide also aims to provide advice. Of course we could not tell every single National Society exactly how the risks are changing and what do to about them. We know much less about your countries and the vulnerable groups they contain than any individual

staff person or volunteer. So instead of providing you with answers, we hope to help you to start asking the right questions about how climate risks affect you and how to address them, and then offer some guidance on how to find the answers yourselves. We have tried to provide step-by-step approaches that can and should be tailored to your circumstances.

Please read this guide as an account of the first round of experiences and approaches. We are just beginning, and many aspects remain to be more fully addressed: food security, migration and conflicts, the balance between quality and the ability to scale up, and last but not least the consequences for the mobilization of volunteers.

This guide is primarily written for the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement. But as a growing number of humanitarian and development organizations begin to address the impacts of climate change, we are of course happy to share our experiences and views.

There is a lot of work to be done, and fast. Climate change is with us and is making our humanitarian work more difficult. Things are expected to get worse. We will have to be smart and efficient: our aim should be not just to keep up with the changes, but to stay ahead of them. We look forward to working with all of you in shaping the humanitarian answers to the climate challenge.

*Red Cross/Red Crescent Climate Centre
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Guide to the guide

This guide begins with the basics about climate change: the scientific consensus, the humanitarian consequences, and the general implications for the Red Cross and Red Crescent.

This is followed by six thematic modules: Getting started, Dialogues, Communications, Disaster management, Community risk reduction and Health and Care. Each module begins with a background section with real-life Red Cross/Red Crescent experiences and perspectives, followed by a “how-to” section with specific step-by-step guidance. Further information, and updates of the information in this guide, can be found on the Climate Centre website www.climatecentre.org.

Some key messages appear frequently across this guide. This was done on purpose to ensure that separate modules can be read as stand-alone reference materials.

All information from this guide is available on www.climatecentre.org, including updates and links to relevant documents and sources of information, checklists, templates and best practice examples.

Red Cross/Red Crescent Climate Guide

2	Foreword	91	Community risk reduction
3	Acknowledgments	98	Community risk reduction: How-to guide
4	Guide to the Guide	106	Case Study: Nicaragua
5	Contents	115	Health and Care
9	Climate Change: the Basics	122	Health Care: How-to guide
10	Scientific consensus: the impact of climate change on the risk of natural disasters	128	Glossary
15	Rising disaster impacts	132	Acronyms
17	Addressing the humanitarian consequences: a call to action	133	Sources
18	Six components of good climate risk management	134	Annex: regional impacts of climate change
23	Getting Started		
28	Getting Started: How-to guide		
34	Case Study: Indonesia		
41	Dialogues		
48	Dialogues: How-to guide		
55	Communications		
62	Communications: How-to guide		
70	Case Study: Africa		
77	Disaster Management		
84	Disaster Management: How-to guide		
			List of boxes
		10	IPCC and the scientific consensus
		14	The greenhouse effect
		16	Reducing greenhouse gases
		20	What the Climate Centre can do for you
		21	Funding for climate risk reduction
		50	El Niño and seasonal forecasting
		64	What communities need to know about climate change
		65	Relating weather events to climate change
		66	Examples of communication strategies used by National Societies working on climate change