



Climate change and the Red Cross and Red Crescent

November 2015

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Saving lives, changing minds.

 International Federation
of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) is the world's largest volunteer-based humanitarian network. With our 190 member National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies worldwide, we are in every community reaching 160.7 million people annually through long-term services and development programmes, as well as 110 million people through disaster response and early recovery programmes. We act before, during and after disasters and health emergencies to meet the needs and improve the lives of vulnerable people. We do so with impartiality as to nationality, race, gender, religious beliefs, class and political opinions.

Guided by *Strategy 2020* – our collective plan of action to tackle the major humanitarian and development challenges of this decade – we are committed to saving lives and changing minds.

Our strength lies in our volunteer network, our community-based expertise and our independence and neutrality. We work to improve humanitarian standards, as partners in development, and in response to disasters. We persuade decision-makers to act at all times in the interests of vulnerable people. The result: we enable healthy and safe communities, reduce vulnerabilities, strengthen resilience and foster a culture of peace around the world.

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BUILDING CLIMATE RESILIENCE

A Red Cross Red Crescent commitment to our shared humanity

The Red Cross Red Crescent recognizes that climate change is the ultimate 'threat multiplier' in the 21st century.

In the course of their work with vulnerable communities, our staff and volunteers have been increasingly confronted by the destructive and often lethal impacts of extreme weather events brought by climate change. They have been accompanying, and responding to the needs of, millions of people affected by extreme weather events, climate related displacements and conflicts over scarce natural resources. From their experiences, climate change has been identified as the most serious challenges of this and future generations.

A humanitarian worldwide contribution to climate resilience since 2007

In 2007, the international Movement of the Red Cross and Red Crescent, together with 194 governments participating in the 30th International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent, adopted a resolution to address the humanitarian consequences of climate change. Since then, a wide range of initiatives and programmes have been carried out, contributing to climate change mitigation and adaptation at community level, with a focus on disaster risk reduction and resilience building to climate related crises.

This contribution and efforts to climate resilience have been grounded into the largest humanitarian network in the world comprised of:

- 190 National Societies, 160,000 local units and over 16 million active volunteers – with unparalleled reach at community level.
- More than 110 million people reached by disaster response and early recovery programmes (2013)

- Nearly 160 million people reached by long term services and development programmes (2013)
- Disaster risk reduction projects were implemented in 121 countries, benefitting 31.2 million vulnerable people (2014).
- Informal education and awareness raising have been carried out by National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies to increase the context-specific understanding of climate change, its adaptation and mitigation at local communities.

From local action to global advocacy

Efforts have also been made to influence the global climate change agenda through targeted advocacy and humanitarian diplomacy, for example, through the participation in the annual United Nations Climate Change Conference – also known as “Conference of the Parties” (COP) – which includes policy-making at ministerial level. Red Cross and Red Crescent advocacy efforts have been expanded, and built from, the participation at national and local platforms on climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction.

In the lead-up to COP 21 and beyond, the Red Cross and Red Crescent is making a call:

- To achieve a legally binding and universal agreement on climate, with the goal of keeping global warming below 2 degrees Celsius.
- To take decisive and bold action across sectors and commensurate investments for both mitigation and adaptation/disaster risk reduction, with a greater focus on vulnerable and at-risk communities.
- To provide more direct support to local and national actors, with a greater recognition to their role and ability to equip people and communities with the capacity to anticipate, reduce the impact of and withstand shocks from actual and expected climate change and variability.

- To engage in the ‘**One-Billion Coalition for Resilience**’, an initiative convened by the IFRC and Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies to enable, by 2025, at least one billion people around the world to take active steps towards reducing the risk that affect their life and their vulnerability in the face of adversity.

This is the Red Cross Red Crescent commitment to take resilience strengthening, including climate resilience, to the next level by inviting individuals, households, communities, governments, organizations, businesses, and regional and global entities to join this Coalition and commit to:

- Bring about lasting change and improved resilience in communities and the lives of at least one billion people
- Engage in meaningful partnerships with shared goals, resources, capabilities and successes
- Expand advocacy to improve the investment, infrastructure, frameworks and policies needed to ensure sustainable impact

Fighting climate change is a long term effort that must be made jointly. Governments have the obligation to educate and raise the awareness of their people. People need and have the right to know the effects of climate change on their lives, for current and future generations, and act on it! National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, through their auxiliary role, can bring together governments, communities and partners to maximize the impact of this joint action.

Introduction

At least 75 per cent of disasters are caused by hazards associated with weather, climate or water. In the course of providing humanitarian support alongside public authorities, National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies have acquired considerable experience of responding to such crises. In 2012 alone, they provided assistance to more than 5.4 million beneficiaries across the world. Since more than half of these operations were responding to hydro-meteorological and climate-related disasters, many National Societies now mainstream climate change in their risk reduction programming.

At the [UN Climate Summit](#) in September 2014, the Secretary General of the [International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies \(IFRC\)](#) pledged that by the end of 2015 the IFRC would be assisting communities in at least 40 high-risk countries to make better use of climate information – to reduce risks, prepare for and respond to disasters, and increase public understanding of the effects of climate change.

In addition, beside its '[One Billion Coalition for Resilience](#)', the IFRC announced recently that it will promote a culture of preparedness and awareness among its 17 million volunteers, especially in the priority areas of agriculture and food, disaster risk reduction, health, and water.

National Societies face many challenges (see *Table 1*). Some are common to all mainstreamed issues (such as gender and disaster risk management): achieving organisation-wide horizontal integration; developing appropriate institutional functions and adequate capacity; creating a trained pool of staff. Others are more specific to climate change: interpreting and explaining the issue; its broad nature, including mitigation of greenhouse gases as well as adaptation; and its newness and rapid evolution.

Table 1. The top five challenges for National Societies

1. Integrating climate change into community-based programmes.
2. Developing partnerships with non-traditional partners.
3. Maintaining a pool of staff and volunteers trained in climate change.
4. Explaining climate change to the public, particularly at community level.
5. Coping with the new demands that climate change imposes.

From experience, we know that we can overcome challenges and achieve common goals by working together. Along the way, National Societies play an essential role by assisting their governments to address both the root causes of climate change as well as its humanitarian consequences. Partnerships between governments and National Societies help generate action that is community-based, relevant, tailored to local needs, and achieves meaningful results.¹

More needs to be done. To enhance our partnerships, increase the impact of our climate change interventions, and inspire more engagement, we have brought together

1. See also Elhadj As Sy's 6 January 2015 [address](#) to the Intergovernmental Board on Climate Services, the governing body of the [Global Framework for Climate Services](#), in which the IFRC is a partner.

here some of the success stories of National Societies. This briefing will be shared with governments and other partners at the 32nd International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent in 2015 in Geneva. It highlights the progress the Red Cross Red Crescent has made in tackling climate change, sets out the commitments we made in 2007, and suggests how we can work with communities even more effectively in the future to reduce the risks they face and address the challenges that climate change presents.

Commitments by governments and National Societies

In the course of their work with vulnerable communities, staff and volunteers from the Red Cross and Red Crescent are increasingly confronted by the destructive and often lethal impacts of climate change. The need for intensified humanitarian action is beyond doubt.

In 1999, at the 27th International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent, the IFRC recognized the link between climate and humanitarian action and agreed to study 'the future impact of climatic changes on the frequency and severity of disasters and the implications for humanitarian response and preparedness'.

In 2003, governments and the Movement broadened their areas of commitment when they gathered at the 28th International Conference. Resolution 1 stated:

States are strongly encouraged to prioritize and provide resources to implement comprehensive disaster risk reduction measures, including measures to address issues relating to climate change and variability. National Societies will increase their cooperation with States and experts in the area of climate change in order to limit the potential negative impact on vulnerable populations. In so doing, they may draw on the recommendations outlined in the report 'Preparedness for climate change' as requested by the Plan of Action of the 27th International Conference in 1999.

In the run-up to this conference, the IFRC and the Netherlands Red Cross jointly established the Red Cross Red Crescent Climate Centre, which has supported National Societies in many of the efforts listed in this overview, in close partnership with the IFRC Secretariat.

In 2007, [Resolution 1](#) of the 30th International Conference agreed to address the 'humanitarian consequences of environmental degradation and climate change'. Its eight commitments remain highly relevant today and are set out below:

We are resolved to (1) *work with partners* to (2) *raise awareness* of these serious humanitarian concerns, including their causes, and to (3) *provide humanitarian assistance* to the most vulnerable people, in particular those in affected developing countries.

We will capitalize on the community base of National Societies to (4) *decrease the vulnerability* of communities where environmental hazards and degradation are severe and adaptive capacity is low.

“We reaffirm that preparedness for disaster is a key element in the management of response, and we will seek to improve individual and collective capacity to (5) *respond swiftly* to humanitarian challenges induced by environmental degradation and climate change.

“We are resolved to (6) *ensure that environmental degradation and adaptation to climate change* are integrated, where relevant, in disaster-risk reduction and disaster-management policies and plans. We will seek to (7) *mobilize* the necessary human and financial resources to implement them, giving priority to actions for the most vulnerable people.

“We acknowledge the commitment of States to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) as the core mechanism for addressing climate change at the global level, and we affirm that aspects of the Movement’s work (8) *support and complement* elements of the UNFCCC.²

Eight governments (Australia, Belgium, Japan, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, Poland and Thailand) and at least 40 National Societies from Asia and the Pacific, Africa, the Americas and Europe, as well as an observer organisation, made voluntary [pledges](#) to help implement this resolution, including by adopting risk reduction strategies and climate change adaptation measures.

In 2009, the IFRC General Assembly adopted [Strategy 2020](#), which called on the Movement to scale up disaster risk reduction and climate change mitigation by various means, including by ‘advocacy and social mobilization’. To enhance its implementation and engage governments in joint action, a workshop on ‘[Climate change: putting vulnerable people first](#)’ was organized at the 31st International Conference in 2011. The participants agreed that ‘the changing nature of risk and changes in the social environment (urbanisation, population growth) brings forward the need to reconsider the Red Cross Red Crescent position, mandate and/or functions in order to be able to address new, complex vulnerabilities that need to be considered within a development planning framework (not only humanitarian)’.

To operationalize the climate change-related objectives of *Strategy 2020*, the IFRC developed a *Plan of Action: Climate Change 2013-2016* which has three main pillars: (1) to strengthen organisational capacity on climate change; (2) to mainstream climate change in Red Cross Red Crescent policies, programmes and operations; (3) to promote climate change advocacy, public awareness and partnerships.

2. The commitments have been abridged and numbered for this Briefing. Emphases are added.

The role of National Societies and IFRC

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As recognized auxiliaries of their governments, National Societies have provided key support to public authorities in many areas and have played important roles in national decision-making forums, thereby contributing to the implementation of internationally-agreed agendas, supported by the IFRC. The community-based structure of National Societies is a vital asset whenever it is necessary to address climate change and risk reduction from the base. For example, the popular mothers' clubs established by several African National Societies have built excellent links between communities, households and individuals, and have successfully implemented a variety of programmes, some of which focus on environmental degradation and climate change.

Climate change interventions raise public awareness and develop the capacity of National Societies to use climate information, engage in policy dialogue, and build partnerships with ministries, technical agencies, and local, regional and international organisations. National Societies participate in the annual United Nations climate change conference alongside the IFRC, to highlight challenges at community level, including the need for resources, making sure that international climate action and finance reach vulnerable people.

For the IFRC, partnerships have been a vital element of initiatives to address climate change effectively. In addition to working with local communities and governments, National Societies have collaborated with a wide range of partners to assist the most vulnerable to cope with climate change impacts.

The IFRC has developed numerous tools, guidelines and training materials to help National Societies incorporate changing risk patterns in their work, make better use of scientific information, strengthen their humanitarian diplomacy, and mainstream environmental considerations.

Recent tools include the IFRC's [e-learning course](#) and its guidance for National Societies on how to engage with [national adaptation plans](#) and carry out climate-sensitive vulnerability and capacity assessments ([VCA](#)).

Both the [Climate Training Kit](#) and '[Minimum Standards for local climate-smart disaster risk reduction 2.0](#)' became available in 2014 and many National Societies have already put them to use.

The IFRC's concept of [early warning early action](#) has been successfully operationalized in many disaster-prone countries and has saved thousands of lives. It is currently complemented by 'forecast-based financing', a tool for funding action ahead of disasters (see *Case Study 5* below).

Climate knows no borders. IFRC's many partners, who provide climate information and advocate for a collective and community effort to tackle the effects of climate change, include the [African Centre of Meteorological Application for Development](#), the [Comité Permanent Inter-Etats de Lutte contre la Sécheresse dans le Sahel](#), and the [World Meteorological Organisation](#). In 2007 the IFRC [started a partnership](#) with Columbia University's International Research Institute for Climate and Society ([IRI](#)) to supply forecasting and monitoring products to help Red Cross Red Crescent disaster managers prepare for and respond to disasters. It is now a digital '[map room](#)'.

If science plays an irreplaceable role in climate response, public understanding is primarily shaped by risk. Using simple forms of explanation and making good use of social media, the Red Cross Red Crescent has been working with vulnerable communities across the globe to enhance their understanding of the uncertainties and threats generated by global warming, helping people to prepare for the surprises inherent in a changing climate.

Red Cross and Red Crescent volunteers have witnessed environmental degradation at first hand and made clear that it is a disaster risk which has immediate effects on the lives and livelihoods of those they serve. The IFRC and its member National Societies promote environmental values and practices mainly through public education activities and disaster risk reduction and resilience building programmes. They are also exploring how to reduce the environmental impact of humanitarian interventions by mainstreaming environmental considerations in relief and recovery operations and taking action to reduce carbon consumption and their own ecological footprints. The [Green Recovery and Reconstruction Toolkit](#) was developed by the American Red Cross in partnership with the World Wildlife Fund to promote environmentally sustainable recovery programmes. [Quantifying Sustainability in the Aftermath of Natural Disasters](#) (QSAND) was recently developed by the IFRC in cooperation with Building Research Establishment Limited (BRE) to promote sustainable approaches to relief, recovery and reconstruction after a natural disaster.



Case studies – and the commitments made by governments and the Movement in 2007



The following eight case studies highlight the involvement of the IFRC and National Societies in the climate issue. Each is informed by the commitments listed in Resolution 1 of the 2007 International Conference. The first three commitments are grouped, as they were in the original resolution.

**Commitments
1,2 and 3**

‘We are resolved to work with partners to raise awareness of these serious humanitarian concerns, including their causes, and to provide humanitarian assistance to the most vulnerable people...’

Animating climate issues in the Pacific

In 2013 an alliance of agencies in the Pacific, including the Red Cross, produced two short animation films that link climate science with decision-making and preparedness in the region.

The Pacific Adventures of the Climate Crab overviews climate processes, impacts and possible adaptation measures in the wider Pacific region.

Klaod Nasara (‘where clouds meet’ in Bislama) focuses on similar topics in Vanuatu and has been produced in Bislama, English and French. It centres on the humanitarian impacts of El Niño and La Niña and encourages people to take early action to prepare for climate variability. The islands of Vanuatu, which experience very dry and very wet conditions, can be severely affected.

Both films are accompanied by resource toolkits which facilitate dialogue and action.

The project was implemented by the Australian Bureau of Meteorology, the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation, the [Australian](#) and [Vanuatu](#) Red Cross, the Climate Centre, the SPC-GIZ Climate Change Programme, and the Vanuatu Meteorology and Geohazards Department. Fourteen Pacific island states contributed.

Stakeholders in the production meet in Vanuatu’s capital, Port Vila, to discuss storyboards for *Klaod Nasara*. Photo: Ula Majewski/Vanuatu Meteorological Services.





Promoting adaptation in Bangladesh

Bangladesh is world famous for its cyclone preparedness programme. The programme has saved countless lives over the years and is regarded as a model of community-based early warning. But the country faces a wide range of climate impacts in addition to cyclones: river-bank erosion, waterlogging, temperature extremes, excessive rainfall, landslides. All of these increase people's vulnerability.

Traditional practices and local knowledge have reduced some of these impacts, but the 'random intensity of hazards due to climate change', as a Bangladesh Red Crescent Society newsletter put it, poses major challenges.

The 'Building Community Resilience through Climate Change Adaptation' programme improved knowledge management and minimized gaps in traditional practices. It was implemented between 2011 and 2014 by the Bangladesh Red Crescent Society (BDRCS), with technical support from the IFRC, and was funded by the Canadian Red Cross.

Vulnerability and capacity assessments were undertaken to make sure that communities set the priorities for climate adaptation. The programme also made full use of the National Society's risk-reduction expertise.

As part of the programme, the BDRCS developed an adaptation strategy and set up a new climate knowledge centre to raise awareness and showcase its work. Community-based early-warning systems were strengthened in collaboration with the Bangladesh authorities and meteorological service.

Highlights included a boat design capable of protecting fishermen in rough seas, a project that facilitated community-owned seed banks, and climate-resilient shelters.

The project's five thematic areas – communications, advocacy, integration of climate change into existing work, assessing community risk, and partnership – were agreed at a regional workshop. The programme was integrated in the BDRCS' disaster risk management strategy for 2010–14.

Bangladesh Red Crescent developed an adaptation strategy and established a new centre for climate knowledge to raise awareness and showcase its work. Photo: BDRCS via Canadian Red Cross.



Andreas von Weissenberg/Finnish Red Cross

The Senegal basin: ‘two birds with one stone’

The IFRC’s [Sahel regional office](#) oversees the Senegal river basin initiative – a cross-border programme that helps National Societies in Guinea, Mali, Mauritania and Senegal to withstand climate impacts and promote healthy lives and livelihoods in vulnerable communities.

Three vulnerability and capacity assessments were conducted in each of the four participating countries, to identify emerging hazards, coping mechanisms, and household capacities.

Taking a holistic overview made it possible to implement activities that address the challenges communities face, increase safety and resilience, and improve environmental sustainability.

In the words of an International Federation report, the vulnerability and capacity assessments helped ‘kill two birds with one stone’ in Senegal, because they generated an urban disaster risk reduction programme in Pikine and Guediawaye as well as a community early-warning system whose development brought community members, hydrologists and meteorologists, local authorities, and the Red Cross together round the same table.

[Senegalese Red Cross](#) volunteers distribute food vouchers in Tambacounda, the largest city in the east of the country. Millions of people in the Sahel region received emergency food and vouchers from the Red Cross in 2012 after drought destroyed crops. Photo: Suomen Punainen Risti/Finnish Red Cross.

Commitment
4

‘We will capitalize on the community base of National Societies to decrease the vulnerability of communities...’

For many years National Societies have initiated and supported community-based projects to build resilience. Recently these efforts have focused increasingly on managing changes in risk patterns, including unpredictable cropping seasons, climate variability, and extreme weather.

At least one hundred National Societies have implemented climate initiatives that concentrate on vulnerable communities in small island states, cities, arid and semi-arid regions, and drought- and flood-prone areas.

Strengthening Vietnam's typhoon coast

Vietnam is exceptionally disaster-prone, having a long typhoon coast that stretches for hundreds of kilometres. With support from the IFRC, the [Viet Nam Red Cross Society](#) has been involved in community-based disaster risk management for two decades. Its programmes include forestry and defensive coastal mangrove plantations.

The mangrove programme covers nearly 9,000 hectares in 10 provinces, about 7 per cent of all mangroves in Vietnam, and helps to protect some 350,000 people from sea surges.

The mangroves also contribute to mitigation because they will sequester some 16 million tons of carbon dioxide by 2025. Local people say that aquaculture and marine life have also benefited. Spin-offs include beekeeping during the mangrove flowering season.

Many challenges had to be overcome to bring the mangroves back to life. A major issue was that it was unclear which government agency would manage them. However, nearly 60 communes received training in mangrove management and livelihoods between 2011 and 2013. The training covered disaster risks, climate impacts, and how to strengthen resilience.

Volunteers from the Haiphong branch of the Viet Nam Red Cross Society inspect mangrove plantations visible behind them on the coast. Close to 9,000 hectares of mangrove plantation protect some 350,000 people from sea surges, and have improved aquaculture and livelihoods. Photo: Yoshi Shimizu/IFRC.



Commitment
5

‘We will seek to improve individual and collective capacity to respond swiftly to humanitarian challenges...’

Demands on the humanitarian system are certain to increase because of climate change, and the Red Cross Red Crescent is improving its preparedness and response mechanisms, including enhanced use of weather and climate information. Using medium- and longer-term weather and climate projections to drive practical disaster preparedness remains challenging, but the *early warning early action* model is now well established and is being extended with a second wave of ‘forecast-based financing’ pilots.

National Societies support a potential paradigm shift in preparedness worldwide

In 2015 Germany's [Federal Foreign Office](#) and [Red Cross](#) published a six-point action plan for humanitarian adaptation to climate change. The plan centres on new forecast-based financing pilots in up to six high-risk countries, which initially include Bangladesh, Mozambique and Peru.

The plan emphasizes that climate risks are combining with 'unplanned urbanization, limited food supplies, poorly managed natural resources, population growth and extreme poverty' to create major challenges for the humanitarian sector, especially when funds for humanitarian assistance cannot be raised quickly.

Scientists are now able to determine the probability of extreme weather events for specific regions up to about six months in advance. Operationalizing this information can improve humanitarian response and strengthen risk reduction in countries, regions and communities.

One of the main features of the German plan is a new dialogue platform. Meteorologists, climate scientists, humanitarian actors and donors will work together, under an IFRC umbrella, to make better use of weather and climate data during humanitarian emergencies.

The new financing mechanisms are elements in a paradigm shift that will improve preparedness. The Foreign Office is not only providing conventional emergency assistance but financing based on indicators, allowing humanitarian partners to respond promptly to short- and medium-term as well as seasonal threats on a 'low-regrets' basis.

The [Togo](#) and Uganda Red Cross Societies led an [earlier initiative](#) to develop forecast-based financing in 2012. With technical assistance from the Climate Centre, it was funded by the German [Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development](#) through the German Red Cross.

The Togolese Red Cross has piloted a groundbreaking initiative that links early warning with early financing. Slow financing often cramps prompt humanitarian action. This programme uses forecast-based thresholds to trigger financing and action before disasters strike. Togo's National Society has 35,000 active volunteers and is widely respected for its reach and achievements. The volunteers here are discussing lessons learned from floods on the Mono river. Photo: Janot Mendler de Suarez/Climate Centre.



Commitment
6

'We are resolved to ensure that environmental degradation and adaptation to climate change are integrated, where relevant, in disaster-risk reduction and disaster-management...'

Activities such as tree planting and agro-forestry not only help to mitigate climate change: they enhance local livelihoods, improve food security, reduce disaster risk, combat desertification, harness synergies between adaptation and mitigation, and contribute to development goals.

The IFRC has therefore called on governments and development agencies to prioritize tree planting and agro-forestry in their mitigation programmes. Action to reduce deforestation is crucial to sustainable climate responses, and National Societies have been implementing new forest conservation programmes to achieve both adaptation and mitigation objectives.

Partners for Resilience in Guatemala

The Partners for Resilience alliance in Guatemala ([PfR](#)), including the [Guatemalan Red Cross](#), helped unite the Ministry of the Environment and Natural Resources, the Executive Secretariat of the National Coordinator for Disaster Reduction, and the National Council for Protected Areas in a new 'strategic inter-institutional agenda' to reduce the vulnerability of rural communities.

The programme applies an integrated approach that blends disaster risk reduction with adaptation and ecosystem management and restoration. It is set to become a core component of tools to develop and harmonize joint learning.

For the environment ministry, for example, the agenda will assist it to implement parts of the country's climate change framework law. It will also underpin future collaboration to preserve biodiversity.

PfR has reached a wide range of beneficiaries in Guatemala. Communities have shared knowledge and tools for responding to disaster, and learned to recognize the importance of ecosystem conservation and restoration.

PfR has now distributed nearly 500 fuel-efficient stoves, reforested 12 hectares of degraded land with native species, and helped hundreds of families to adopt permaculture (sustainable agriculture): these examples illustrate, alliance members say, how PfR strengthens human capital.

The PfR is composed of the Netherlands Red Cross (lead agency), CARE Nederland, Cordaid, Wetlands International, and the Climate Centre, who work with nearly 50 local partners in nine countries.

Youngsters take part in a PfR-coordinated planting for reforestation. This photo won equal second place in PfR's photo competition at the 2013 global work conference in The Hague. Photo: Andres Galvez/Netherlands Red Cross.



Commitment
7

‘We will seek to mobilize the necessary human and financial resources...’

Our humanitarian diplomacy has encouraged international donors to allocate resources to help communities adapt to the risks posed by changes in climate. The European Commission, international development banks, and development ministries increasingly support dedicated climate programmes. They also consider climate concerns when they support food security, water and sanitation, and disaster management.

Mobilizing resources for risk reduction

In 2013 the IFRC extended its relationship with Zurich Insurance. The IFRC and Zurich have made a five-year commitment to improve community-based flood resilience.

The [Zurich Flood Resilience Programme](#) models effective community flood-resilience at scale, helping to shape the agenda of policy-makers and donors. It is an integral element of the wider Zurich Flood Resilience Alliance that groups other community-based programmes, specialist expertise, and research.

The IFRC is the largest partner, providing global reach and facilitating access to communities.

Strong partnerships between National Societies, the IFRC and Zurich are being developed around the world to enhance resilience at community level, alongside mitigation, assessment, knowledge and advocacy.

To date we are working in two countries: Mexico and Indonesia. In partnership with the Mexican Red Cross our teams are implementing flood resilience projects in more than 20 communities on the Usumacinta River in Tabasco State, where repeated floods affect the lives and livelihoods of thousands of families.

In Indonesia, a joint team composed of the Indonesian Red Cross, the IFRC and Zurich Indonesia is working on flood resilience on the Ciliwung, Bangawan Solo and Citarum rivers. The programme is improving coordination of river management and strengthening early warning.

The Flood Resilience Alliance has been expanded to include research and NGO partners, not least the Wharton School and the International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis and Practical Action.

In 2014, the 'Momentum for Change' initiative of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change selected this programme as an exemplary Lighthouse Activity.

Red Cross workers on a river in Mexico, where the IFRC and other agencies are working with the Zurich Flood Resilience Programme. Photo: Zurich Insurance Group.



Commitment
8

‘We affirm that aspects of the Movement’s work support and complement elements of the UNFCCC.’

The IFRC led the Inter-Agency Standing Committee’s task force on climate change from 2008 to 2010, promoting the integration of adaptation in humanitarian action and ensuring that agencies make their technical expertise available to states engaged in the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change process.

In national and international policy arenas, both National Societies and the IFRC secretariat have scaled up their advocacy on behalf of the most vulnerable groups in society.

Effective advocacy has enabled the IFRC, supported by governments with the same concerns, to make the views of the most vulnerable heard, and so influence the outcomes of major international and regional policy-making fora, such as the Hyogo Framework for Action (HFA), the Sendai Framework, the Bangkok Declaration of the Asian Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction, and the Samoa Pathway adopted by Small Island Developing States.

Our last case study is an extract from the joint statement by the IFRC and the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change during the 2015 World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction (WCDRR) at Sendai, Japan. It highlights the value of the Red Cross Red Crescent Movement’s daily interaction with communities when promoting low-carbon, climate-resilient development.

The Red Cross Red Crescent: a model for global advocacy and mobilization supported by local action

The IFRC works with its 189 member National Societies to address the causes and consequences of climate change at scale, in the context of national climate change strategies. By involving and empowering people and their communities, the IFRC ensures that these strategies materialize on the ground, combining adaptation and mitigation of climate change, a global threat, with concrete local action.

The sustained and trusted presence of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies in local communities, and their involvement with community members in day-to-day activities, is a formidable asset when promoting low carbon, climate-resilient development and protecting development gains.

The IFRC and its members have a long track record of public awareness and education, both of which are crucial components of a strategy to promote environmentally sustainable living. By spreading environmental values and best practices through education programmes, awareness campaigns and other sources of information, the IFRC and National Societies have contributed to climate friendly behaviour and important interventions such as tree planting and care, solid waste management, food waste minimization, and recycling. The IFRC will continue to mobilize its extensive network of National Societies and over 17 million active volunteers so that everyone becomes involved in meeting the climate change challenge.

From distribution of clean cooking stoves, to teaching the value of natural capital, via implementation of climate-safe development, Red Cross Red Crescent volunteers are a powerful force with potential to deliver crucial health and socio-economic benefits to communities

that are hardest hit by climate change.

National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies are also reducing greenhouse gas emissions. In Viet Nam, for example, where the Red Cross has been planting and protecting mangrove forests since 1994 (see Case Study 4), mangrove plantations are the first line of defence against rising waters and destruction caused by typhoons or storm surge; but they are also carbon sinks that will help to reduce emissions and ultimately achieve climate neutrality (the point at which global emissions are balanced by the planet's ability to absorb them).

Similarly, the Kenyan Red Cross Society and the IFRC recently launched the Sustainable Environment Restoration Programme together with the Kenyan Ministry of Environment, Water and Natural Resources. This ambitious programme will plant and care for 2.5 billion trees by 2018, restore river basins, run environmental education in schools, manage solid waste, and generally tackle environmental degradation and climate change.

These are just two examples. By building on the synergies between disaster risk reduction, climate adaptation, and emission reduction, the IFRC can deliver benefits to communities who are among the most vulnerable to climate change. The UN Framework Convention on Climate Change has recognized that the initiatives highlighted here are models of global mobilization for Red Cross and Red Crescent members, which encourage more National Societies to work with their governments to develop and implement ambitious national action plans.

IFRC's Secretary General, Elhadj As Sy, moderates a working session on technological hazards at the World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction, where a joint statement with the UNFCCC highlighted the role that Red Cross Red Crescent staff and volunteers can play in promoting low-carbon, climate-resilient development in communities. Photo: Tetsuro Chiharada/UNISDR.



Challenges and ways forward

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Working together, with governments and partners, for a sustainable future

Climate change is a global problem with local impacts. This implies that we need urgently to improve our management of extreme weather events, by improving risk reduction and climate change policies, strengthening climate-informed disaster risk reduction programmes, introducing effective early warning systems, and enhancing disaster relief. In addition, longer term strategies need to be put in place to promote more environmentally sustainable livelihoods.

Future challenges that National Societies have mentioned frequently include the integration of climate change in existing community-based programmes, working with non-traditional partners, maintaining a pool of staff and volunteers trained in climate issues, communications, and overall capacity (see *Table 1*).

Many of these challenges require long-term investment and renewed commitment. To retain the capacity to cope effectively with a changing and variable climate, the Movement will need to continually reassess needs and trends as climate change deepens, design its programmes in conjunction with local communities, and work in partnership. We must find innovative new ways to strengthen capacity and exchange knowledge on climate-risk management, advocacy and awareness raising, and develop new partnerships inside and outside the Movement. Facilitated by governments, we must make space available for stakeholders (including disaster managers and health practitioners) to understand each other's work, and must enhance our ability to achieve better development by delivering effective climate change programmes in communities.

A [report](#) compiled for the G7 countries recognized that climate change is the ultimate 'threat multiplier'. It represents a global threat to security in the 21st century. Since security is vital to development, it is essential to address climate change to achieve stability. With increasing effort and effective partnerships, including cooperation with Red Cross Red Crescent National Societies, we can together prepare ourselves to deal with the challenges ahead and make progress towards achieving sustainable development for everyone.

The Fundamental Principles of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement

Humanity The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, born of a desire to bring assistance without discrimination to the wounded on the battlefield, endeavours, in its international and national capacity, to prevent and alleviate human suffering wherever it may be found. Its purpose is to protect life and health and to ensure respect for the human being. It promotes mutual understanding, friendship, cooperation and lasting peace amongst all peoples.

Impartiality It makes no discrimination as to nationality, race, religious beliefs, class or political opinions. It endeavours to relieve the suffering of individuals, being guided solely by their needs, and to give priority to the most urgent cases of distress.

Neutrality In order to enjoy the confidence of all, the Movement may not take sides in hostilities or engage at any time in controversies of a political, racial, religious or ideological nature.

Independence The Movement is independent. The National Societies, while auxiliaries in the humanitarian services of their governments and subject to the laws of their respective countries, must always maintain their autonomy so that they may be able at all times to act in accordance with the principles of the Movement.

Voluntary service It is a voluntary relief movement not prompted in any manner by desire for gain.

Unity There can be only one Red Cross or Red Crescent Society in any one country. It must be open to all. It must carry on its humanitarian work throughout its territory.

Universality The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, in which all societies have equal status and share equal responsibilities and duties in helping each other, is worldwide.

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