

Module 2c: Community resilience and climate Frequently asked questions



Frequently asked questions

Introduction

There are a lot of questions around climate change, climate change adaptation, and how to incorporate these concepts into Red Cross Red Crescent work, particularly at community level. The Frequently Asked Questions section below is designed to provide answers to some of the common questions in relation to practical climate change adaptation. If you have comments or your questions are not addressed in the document below, please e-mail them to: climatecentre@climatecentre.org, mentioning FAQ-Module 2c.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. What are “no-regrets measures”?

These are measures that will be of use regardless of how climate change plays out. In many locations, there is high uncertainty about the precise changes that global climate change will cause in local weather. In such a case, no-regrets measures that focus on strengthening overall resilience and reducing vulnerability should be considered. These measures may not necessarily be targeted at a specific hazard, but help to increase resilience to shocks at large – for instance by strengthening community livelihoods and capacities.

2. Can we only work in locations which are confronted with hydro-meteorological (weather-related) hazards?

In many locations, communities face a multitude of hazards, including geological and man-made ones. It is important that the National Society is able to deal with all risk-generating processes, even though some of these may not be climate-related. Building overall resilience of communities through no-regrets measures (see above) contributes to enhanced protection whatever the hazard may be. It is also important to note that geological or man-made disasters can often be worsened or affected by climate-related ones. For instance, in post-earthquake Haiti, even the light rain events caused flooding due to blocked drainage systems, and certainly the rains enhanced vulnerability to disease with so many people homeless and living in tents.

3. Should DRR/CCA activities be mainly focused on structural (hard) or non-structural (soft) interventions?

This is not either/or – you should do whatever is most useful in the local context. The most effective DRR and CCA interventions at the community level often combine “soft” interventions such as sensitization, early-warning systems and preparedness training with

“hard” small-scale risk-reduction measures, like building dykes, drainage and/or irrigation systems, storm-resistant houses, terracing, etc. It is important to recognize that at-risk communities will usually request structural measures, even low-scale interventions, to complement non-structural measures. Increasingly the Red Cross Red Crescent is called upon to play an advocacy role on behalf of the most vulnerable and intervene with the local authorities to provide durable and more large-scale protection measures.

When hard measures are included, they should be designed with new extreme events in mind – seek inputs from national Hydro-met services on likely weather extremes in coming decade, and seek technical advice on reasonable levels of ‘climate-proofing’ the infrastructure projects.

4. How to develop effective awareness raising measures on CCA?

For CCA sensitization efforts and trainings to be effective they need to directly involve communities, be made context specific, and integrated into other sensitization efforts. One-off climate workshops and lecture style trainings are often ineffective in getting the desired results. (See also Module 3c: Communications.)

Awareness raising efforts should not focus on climate change as a general issue but should directly relate to the specific vulnerabilities and realities of the area. Rather than going into a lot of complexity about greenhouse gases, for example, it is much better to base them on people’s understanding of climate, such as floods or experiences of changing seasonality. It is also important to incorporate traditional or ancestral knowledge on climate issues when developing sensitization material for use at community level. In communities where there are low reading-skills, oral training that makes use of drawings has proved very effective, as well as innovative communications tools like participatory video and games.

It is also found that awareness raising at the community level is most effective when external partners are involved and when the creative capacity of Red Cross Red Crescent volunteers (including youth) is applied to designing communication messages, so that these are culturally sensitive, appealing, and short and simple. It is always a good idea to run these messages by the Climate Centre or a local climate expert to ensure messages are scientifically sound, focused on CCA and not overly sensationalized. Communities have their own learning processes, CCA awareness raising activities should understand how to integrate in those processes.

5. How can we facilitate learning about climate-related issues between communities?

Peer-to-peer and community-to-community learning are often very effective ways to share knowledge and information on climate issues. This can be done through exchange visits or through innovative approaches, such as participatory video. A good example is the video [“Farmer-to-farmer learning in a changing climate”](#). The use of video should not only be seen as a means to exchange experiences and information, but can also contribute to enhanced commitment and motivation of communities in engaging in climate adaptation activities.

6. How to effectively link community health work with CCA?

This could be realized through a greater engagement of Movement health colleagues or Ministry of Health staff in the programme, as well as through seeking advice of the Climate Centre. Think through the health implications climate change might have on the populations you serve and get the advice of health experts to assess which of these are of highest concern. It’s not always just the most commonly talked about health risks such as vector-borne diseases (like malaria). It is important also necessary to consider broader health risks associated with extreme events, heatwaves and impacts on water resources or food security. Please take a look at the fact sheet and Recommended Reading in the Module 2d: Health, WASH and climate.

7. What do we mean by long-term, medium-term and short-term forecasts?

- Long-term forecasts tell us what is likely over decades and centuries.
- Medium-term forecasts tell us what is likely over the coming months or season.
- Short-term forecasts, commonly known as weather forecasts or alerts, tell us what to expect in the coming week, days and hours.

8. Should CCA activities mainly focus on longer-term climate trends, or also incorporate medium-term forecasts and short-term weather alerts?

Climate change projections are often given for the years 2050, 2080 and 2100. They provide an idea of how warm, wet/dry we currently expect the climate to be by then. However, just because these projections give us an idea of how things are likely to be different in the second half of this century, this doesn't mean our experience of climate change will be a direct and gradual progression towards these projections. There are likely to be surprises along the way and natural climate variability still has an influence. For example, if the long-term projection is for drier conditions, but naturally occurring La Niña events tend to bring your country floods, then you'll want to make sure you are preparing for the right risk on the right timescale. Furthermore, a common climate change projection is for increased frequency and severity of things like droughts and floods. Droughts and floods occur on shorter-timescales, so a good CCA strategy would be to closely monitor climate and weather forecasts on medium and short-term timescales in order to anticipate extreme events.

Finally, much of Red Cross Red Crescent planning and programmes happen on shorter timescales, so using forecast information closer to the timescale on which you work also makes sense. The ability to manage climate and weather-related risks in the short and medium term is an excellent first step at becoming more resilient to changing climate risks in the future. For more information on monitoring forecasts and taking action across timescales, see Module 2a Early Warning Early Action and Forecast-based Financing.

9. Do I need to consider climate change in selecting an appropriate DRR/CCA project site?

The Climate Centre does not advise National Societies to seek long-term climate change scenarios (generated from computer models) as criteria for DRR/CCA site-selection at the community level. We recommend staying focused on the most vulnerable communities and the risks they now face – helping vulnerable communities become more resilient to current risks and any changes in risk they may be currently experiencing. This approach makes a difference for communities today and also helps them become more resilient to impacts from climate-related changes in the future. It's a combination of getting good at managing current weather and climate risks, in an effort to become more resilient to climate and weather risks in the future.

In addition to the criteria referred to in the [IFRC EVCA guidance on how to do a VCA](#), you may also consider:

- What are the existing climate risks?
- Are there any observed changes in weather in a specific community that make them

more vulnerable?

As a general rule, it is important to develop a well-defined selection criteria, apply a participatory and consultative process, and carry out a thorough field assessment. National Society headquarters need to develop a set of general site-selection criteria which are properly communicated and clearly explained to the branches concerned. It is suggested that a technical officer with good knowledge of DRR and climate issues at the headquarters level be involved in the selection and the assessment of the locations.

10. How can the community risk-reduction plan become climate-smart?

The steps in the EVCA and the Roadmap to community resilience (see Recommended reading) should lead to the community drafting (aided by facilitators, where needed) their “community resilience actions plan” with prioritised hard and soft measures that people will invest time and resources in implementing – as well as measures that may require assistance from other agencies. Compared to a standard community risk-reduction plan (i.e. the classical approach not considering changing risk patterns) the plan needs to at least consider the questions:

- Are the observed trends likely to be caused by changing weather patterns, or are there other obvious or likely causes that we need to consider’?.
- What are our options if the observed trends continue?
- How have we managed disaster situations and hardship so far? Can we build on that experience to face even greater challenges or do we need to think differently?
- Where and how can we find the expertise and support to consider realistic options and alternatives?

There's no blueprint for how to incorporate the answers into the community plans. But being more aware of the likely changes in risks may lead to improved planning – not business as usual – and a range of different strategies such as focused awareness raising, long-term adjustments in livelihood opportunities and diversification, improving and reinforcing critical community infrastructure (schools, dykes, wells, roads) and houses, better disaster preparedness planning and warning systems, etc. The point is to avoid “business as usual” and seek external advice and information to make better plans. (See also discussion on no-regrets measures above)

In the Recommended reading see the [‘Minimum Standards for local climate-smart disaster risk reduction](#) which provides key guidance for communities and the organsiasatins supporting them in resilience building.