

Red Cross/Red Crescent Climate Centre

Strategic Plan

2012 – 2015

Version 4, for board approval by e-mail
23 December 2011**Mission of the Red Cross/Red Crescent Climate Centre**

The Climate Centre supports the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and its partners in reducing the impacts of climate change and extreme weather events on vulnerable people.

Introduction

Based on the clear scientific consensus that climate change is already happening and influencing the risk of extreme weather, political and public attention for climate change grew tremendously in 2007-2009, generating major policy changes at various levels. However, the deception over the failure of the Climate Summit in Copenhagen in December 2009, the lack of political leadership since then, as well as the influence of so called “climate sceptics” has hindered further progress to address this major global problem. The recent outcome of UNFCCC COP 17 in Durban kept the international negotiation process alive, though the agreed timeline for negotiations towards a global commitment to reduce greenhouse gas emissions (2020) raises the fears that the threshold of 2 degrees global warming will not be met. Meanwhile climate change is continuing, along with growing greenhouse gas emissions. More and more impacts are unavoidable. Marginalised people in the poorest countries and regions will be hardest hit.

The Red Cross and Red Crescent has already been confronted with a sharp increase in weather-related disasters, and there is an urgent need to better manage the rising risk of extreme weather events, including through better early warning, enhanced disaster relief, increased efforts on disaster risk reduction and better and smarter programs in health & care, water & sanitation, and food security. In addition, there are rising concerns on the potential impacts of climate change on migration patterns.

Besides these operational challenges, the Red Cross and Red Crescent also needs to speak out for the most vulnerable, those who have contributed least to the problem but will suffer most. Measures to reduce the impacts of climate change are being implemented in the richest countries that can afford to do so, rather than for those people that need them most. Where new climate change adaptation financing is becoming available for developing countries, the Red Cross Red Crescent needs to be more proactive to ensure those resources really benefit the most vulnerable.

However, transfer of resources is not enough, we also need strengthening of human capacities to develop and implement climate risk reduction for the most vulnerable people. The Red Cross and Red Crescent must face up to that challenge, both internally and externally, building on our global movement with strong local presence – matching the scope of climate change: a global problem with local impacts.

In November 2007, the International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent expressed a clear concern about the humanitarian impacts of climate change, and a strong commitment to address them.

Commitments by the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement at the 2007 International Conference¹

The urgency of addressing the humanitarian consequences of climate change is evident and actions to address these risks need to be ambitious. As reflected in the declaration “together for humanity” the Movement has committed to **raise awareness** on climate change
provide humanitarian assistance
improve capacity to respond, including through better disaster preparedness
decrease vulnerability of communities most strongly affected
integrate climate risk management into policies and plans.
mobilise human and financial resources, giving priority to actions for the most vulnerable people

In November 2009, the General Assembly of the IFRC adopted Strategy 2020, which explicitly recognizes climate change as an area of work:
“A major driver of disaster risk is extreme weather events and environmental degradation, both of which have been linked to climate change. Recognizing that our understanding of the extent and impact of climate change will continue to evolve, we contribute to measures for adaptation – actions to reduce the vulnerability of communities (...).”²

Assessment of progress

The Red Cross Red Crescent has been serious in addressing the humanitarian consequences of climate change. Awareness of the issue has grown tremendously, and there has been great progress in establishing the need for action. The scale of the risks has been identified, along with practical entry points for activities (such as the early warning/early action approach). These approaches are recognized internationally, and also in sync with international policy developments on the humanitarian side, which call for a stronger focus on resilience, anticipation and innovation³.

However, the large-scale implementation that should follow such commitments and analysis is lagging behind, due to lack of human resources, financial resources, and possibly a lack of perceived urgency in the face of many other pressing concerns (whereas many of those pressing concerns could be addressed in integration with stronger climate risk management). Nevertheless, the growing number of efforts reflecting “climate-smart” programming, by individual national societies in their community risk reduction work and in larger programmes such as the EUR 40 million Netherlands Red Cross-led Partners for Resilience program, shows that the scope of activities is increasing.

¹ At the 2011 Conference, a formal workshop on Climate Change reaffirmed these

² Strategy 2020 also calls upon the IFRC to increase action on mitigation – reducing the emission of greenhouse gases. However, the Climate Centre will continue to focus on the adaptation side of these commitments, in light of the closer relationship of adaptation to the core mandate of the Red Cross and Red Crescent, the greater unique added value in terms of innovation and policy dialogues in that area, as well as the wide availability of advisory services regarding mitigation.

³ Humanitarian Emergency Response Review, DFID 2011

The Climate Centre has played a useful facilitating role in these developments, in particular through

- The international policy and analysis work, where the RC/RC is recognized as a global leader;
- The Preparedness for Climate Change programme which has helped 64 NSs in developing countries in their initial orientation on climate change;
- Support for several specific innovative pilot activities, many triggered through partnerships with other institutions; and/or
- The recruitment of young academics that can bridge practice and knowledge communities.

Innovations, such as the 2008 West Africa emergency preparedness appeal; participatory video approaches to help communities exchange innovative adaptation practices; and the use of games to stimulate thinking about early warning/early action across timescales, have not only had very useful impacts on the ground, but have also been inspiring to others and helped develop the current image of the Red Cross Red Crescent as leading in development of innovative practice in addressing changing climate risks.

The coming years will be the defining period in which the Red Cross Red Crescent needs to turn these commitments and initial successes into large-scale action (integrated into regular climate-sensitive programming, but going beyond business-as-usual). The increasing demand for accountability from both regular international donors and new climate financing will require the Red Cross Red Crescent to put its ambitions into practice, and make it more imperative to demonstrate the impacts of our efforts.

The Climate Centre: General approach

In the coming four years, **the Climate Centre will continue to support the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement in meeting the commitments made at the 2007 International Conference and the objectives of Strategy 2020, by contributing to strengthening the ability of all components of the Movement and other partners to understand and address the rising risks related to climate change, climate variability and extreme weather events.**

The climate change problem is still relatively new and technically complex, as is the set of skilful forecasts that can support anticipatory humanitarian decisions at different timescales. The evolving nature of useful science-based insights requires continued **raising awareness and building capacity** throughout the Movement, especially in individual National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies. Our focus is particularly on developing countries, which are most vulnerable to climate change.

However, our emphasis will shift more towards **support for capacity building and implementation** of climate risk management as an integral part of Red Cross/Red Crescent work (to address the observed lack of large-scale implementation of commitments). This capacity building and implementation is best provided in a decentralized manner, through existing structures, in particular support by the IFRC Secretariat and National Societies providing international aid. Hence, the Climate Centre focuses primarily on providing expert advice (including for formulation of proposals, workshops, publications, toolkits, and other capacity-building endeavours), links to the best knowledge institutes, and awareness of relevant policy dialogues. This will require a broader investment in a network of people that can support on-the-ground implementation, **providing technical climate risk management backup** for IFRC Secretariat and National Society staff (including DM, health, food security). This will be complemented by the **provision of guidance and tools, exchange of experiences, and training materials** (using a variety of platforms).

A particular emphasis is on the **development of innovative approaches** such as participatory video and games for learning and dialogue, designed to help develop and exchange new thinking.

The enhanced capacity needs to go hand-in-hand with increased resources to address the rising risks. The Climate Centre facilitates **access to climate-change related channels of funding**, generally not yet used by the Red Cross/Red Crescent, and **advocates for support to the most vulnerable people** in the international climate policy arena.

Finally, the Climate Centre supports **global planning, policy development, operations and communication work related to climate risk management**, particularly with the IFRC Secretariat, National Societies working internationally, and the ICRC.

In all of these efforts, we emphasize the need for **partnerships**, with governments, UN system, knowledge centres and civil society including the private sector. First of all to improve the quality of the programs of the Red Cross and Red Crescent, for example by cooperating with knowledge centres on early warning systems (a very effective way to deal with the increased risk of disasters), or by working with the private sector to implement risk reduction measures such as water tanks. Secondly, we need to work with partners to foster risk reduction beyond the scope of the Red Cross/Red Crescent, particularly with respect to development planning and government policies and programs that can either nurture or prevent the social construction of vulnerability to climate-related hazards. Thirdly we need partnerships to shape the global policy response to the risks of climate change, in particular in the context of the UNFCCC, as well as through multilateral and bilateral development organizations.

Areas of work

1. Capacity building and operational support

The Climate Centre will focus on practical support for implementation at regional and national level, working closely with and through existing support structures of the IFRC Secretariat and National Societies working internationally. We will in particular further strengthen helpdesks and networks; trainings and innovative approaches to foster change in thinking and practice. In this endeavour we will build on and connect with existing IFRC facilitated frameworks like DMIS, Fednet and on line learning platforms.

GOAL: Reduced impacts of climate variability and extreme events through enhanced use of climatic information and related expertise by Red Cross and Red Crescent

Expected outcomes

- Climate information (on a range of timescales) is better communicated, understood and used for disaster risk reduction, preparedness and response, food security and health-related operations and programmes;
- Climate Centre guidance and tools, exchange of experience, training and technical backup serve as key resources for the focal points and others dealing with climate risk management within the Movement;
- innovative approaches such as games and participatory video recognized as contributing to changing mindsets;

Achieving these outcomes will be documented by qualitative and quantitative surveys by 2015 of:

- How selected National Societies in disaster-prone countries have incorporated climate change and trends into their strategic plans;
- How National Societies working internationally have adopted climate change and trends into their programme support to disaster-prone countries;

- Statistics on downloads and user reports/feedback of climate centre resources from the website.

2. Mobilization of resources, including human resources

Resource mobilization will focus on three main areas of work:

1. Support to National Societies and the IFRC Secretariat to integrate practical climate risk management elements into regular projects/operations (“piggy-backing”), based on minimum standards of how to make these operations sufficiently “climate-smart”;
2. Support to National Societies in liaising with their national governments as part of the discussions on allocation of national climate change adaptation funding, with the National Society being a potential channel for implementation, especially focused on risk reduction for the most vulnerable groups;
3. Investments in university intern programs and other forms of partnerships with knowledge centres, leading to research and scientific capacities being more aligned to the humanitarian needs for climate risk management.

When involved in financial resource mobilization, in particular for poor and neglected countries and their National Societies, the Climate Centre follows established Movement procedures, including fully respecting the lead role of National Societies in relations with their respective government counterparts. The Climate Centre does not aim to be a separate channel for financing to developing country National Societies and would only channel such resources through its budget in case where it has been agreed that it has a strong comparative advantage (e.g. because of donor preferences). In such cases the Climate Centre will aim to use existing IFRC Secretariat and/or National Society channels.

GOAL: Mobilization of significantly increased financial and human resources for climate risk reduction, in particular for the poorest people in the poorest countries

Expected outcomes:

- The Climate Centre has supported at least 10 National Societies to secure new funding from national climate change adaptation related government sources;
- Mobilization of resources for Climate Centre core programs and budgets that support the Red Cross and Red Crescent, including build-up of reserve (35% of the budget by the end of 2015);
- Internship programmes have expanded to at least 5 universities, out of which 2 are in developing countries.

3. Humanitarian diplomacy: international and national climate policy

Our humanitarian diplomacy efforts will continue to support RC/RC representation in UNFCCC, but focus (even) more strongly on the donor community, including development banks, rather than only on UNFCCC.

We will support national societies, in close cooperation with the Federation Secretariat, where relevant, to increase or improve the policy dialogue with their government on climate risk related issues.

In addition, we will continue to follow the development of the Global Framework for Climate Services, including the parallel Climate Services Partnership.

GOAL: The humanitarian consequences of climate change and climate related risks are widely recognized and addressed.

Expected outcomes:

- Climate Centre recognized as a key resource for processes and ad hoc groups defining policy on global climate risk management issues, such as the Global Framework for Climate Services;
- Support to key National Societies and the Federation Secretariat for a strong network that facilitates efficient advocacy at national and international level.

4. Communication / awareness raising

GOAL: Significantly increased awareness within and outside the Movement about the humanitarian consequences of climate change and opportunities for better climate risk management.

Expected outcomes:

- Publications, videos, presentations and other awareness-raising materials capturing key experiences and guidance, are widely circulated among and utilized by Red Cross and Red Crescent staff and volunteers and the vulnerable communities they serve;
- Partnerships are established between components of the Movement and knowledge centers, civil society and media organizations working at the global and regional level to communicate the challenges of climate change and opportunities for adaptation and Early Warning Early Action;
- The Climate Centre is contacted regularly by at least 10 RC communication departments to advise on media advisories related to climate related events.

5. Analysis

GOAL: Capacity building, communications, and advocacy on climate related issues supported by high-quality analyses of knowledge and experiences on RC/RC climate risk management

Expected outcomes:

- Partnerships with knowledge centers at the global and regional level in order to tailor climate-related information, knowledge and methodologies to the needs and capabilities of the Red Cross and Red Crescent;
- Lessons learned documented by the Climate Centre are used to enhance new Red Cross and Red Crescent programs;
- Impact analyses that demonstrate the value of our approaches to integrate climate risk management, also supporting policy dialogues and resource mobilization.

6. Following new developments

The Climate Centre also has a role monitoring new relevant climate-related developments for the Red Cross and Red Crescent.

A recent example is the growing attention for geo-engineering, the option to deliberately modify the climate system to counteract the impacts of greenhouse gas emissions (for example by injecting sulphate aerosols in the stratosphere to bounce off sunlight), with potentially dangerous side-effects, including risks related to our lack of understanding of how the climate system will respond, but also the risk of distributional impacts (posing special risk to the most vulnerable). Building on its technical capacity, the Climate Centre is the only humanitarian organization meaningfully engaged in policy dialogues and publications addressing this rapidly growing topic.

Another example is the discussion about the role of nuclear energy (a bit further from the Centre's core mandate).

GOAL: Keep track of key international climate-related developments that affect the Red Cross and Red Crescent, and provide advice as appropriate.

Expected outcomes:

- New developments identified as they appear and brought to the attention of relevant stakeholders in the Red Cross Red Crescent.

Organizational setup

The Red Cross/Red Crescent Climate Centre is an independent foundation, established by the Netherlands Red Cross and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and based at the Netherlands Red Cross.

The board of the Climate Centre currently consists of one representative from the IFRC, one representative from the Netherlands Red Cross, and a President nominated by the Netherlands Red Cross. In relation to this strategy, it will be explored to add other Board members from within and possibly from outside the Movement as relevant.

The Climate Centre staff is a small group of people, most of them working part time, with a core group based in the Netherlands, with a mix of skills and expertise, including climate science and policy, advocacy, communications, and capacity building. In addition, the Climate Centre fosters a large network of practitioners in all parts of the Red Cross and Red Crescent (and even outside it) who somehow deal with climate change in their daily work, and also contribute to the work of the Climate Centre.

Annex 1: Observations 2002-2011

Summary of the evolution of climate change as a humanitarian issue within the Red Cross/Red Crescent and the role of the Climate Centre in the period 2002-2011

General

1. The humanitarian consequences of climate change are acknowledged and the Climate Centre is well established as the global reference centre on this subject within the Red Cross and Red Crescent.
2. The unique position of the Red Cross and Red Crescent, its worldwide network and presence at local, national, regional and global level is fully reflected in the activities of the Climate Centre.
3. Programs of the Climate Centre are well received. By the end of 2011, almost 70 National Societies in developing countries had participated in the Preparedness for Climate Change programme. More than 15 Partner National Societies address climate change either domestically or in the international programs. The Climate Centre has contributed to the development and implementation of a range of major programs (such as the EUR 40 million Netherlands Red Cross-led Partners for Resilience programme).
4. Because vulnerable people in developing countries will be hit worst by the impacts of climate change, the main focus of the activities of the Climate Centre is on developing countries.
5. Most of the RC National Societies in industrialised countries show an increased interest in climate change, and several are actively integrating climate into capacity building and programming. However, most have not taken up their potential role to mobilize new climate-related resources for climate risk reduction/adaptation in developing countries.

Integration in operations

6. Although climate change is increasingly acknowledged as an important humanitarian risk, the main challenge within the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement remains to address this risk in an operational manner. However, it is clear that climate change must not be seen as a new area of work, but that the notion of changing risks should be integrated into existing areas of work, such as disaster management, health and food security.
7. While gaining knowledge and experience on dealing with the rising risks, many National Societies have also built valuable new networks with in-country partners.

Advocacy

8. The Red Cross and Red Crescent has positioned itself in the international arena as a strong and trusted advocate for policies and measures to address the humanitarian consequences of climate change. The RC/RC Climate Centre is frequently invited to make presentations and facilitate sessions at global, regional, sectoral and national events on climate change organized by international organizations, governments and NGOs. Its feedback is also sought for the formulation of programs and policies.
9. The Red Cross Red Crescent has been very successful, partly through the ad-hoc IASC taskforce, in ensuring that key humanitarian concerns are reflected in the main UNFCCC texts on adaptation.
10. The emphasis of policy-making is shifting from the international policy (UNFCCC) to the implementation, through a wide range of financing mechanisms, many of which involve some role for developing country governments. The challenge is now to build capacity to engage with a wider range of non-traditional donors, including

Communication and media

11. The communication and media strategy of the national and international RC components regarding climate change is still weak – many opportunities to highlight climate-related messages in the context of, for instance, ongoing disasters or DRR are not yet taken. Media have not yet found their way to the RC on climate change related issues.

RC/RC Climate Centre finances and capacity

12. The RC/RC Climate Centre has a highly qualified and devoted core team and a growing number of active partners throughout the movement. However, despite some growth in the period 2007-2012, human and financial resources remain a bottleneck to respond to the rapid rise in demand for technical support.