

Climate Change Conference

COP16 Cancún |

29 November – 10 December 2010 |

advocacy toolkit



International Federation
of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

Red Cross Red Crescent climate change key messages

1. Climate change is increasing disaster risk for millions of the world's most vulnerable people.

Climate change is not a future threat: it is a key driver of disasters now. The frequency and intensity of floods, storms and droughts is increasing and the average number of people affected by climate-related natural disasters is estimated at 243 million per year. Scientific evidence indicates that this trend will continue at an accelerated pace.

Those suffering most from this growing uncertainty are the poorest and most vulnerable, living in risk-prone countries. These people lack the resources to adapt to, or cope with, the rapidly changing climate patterns and thus stand to lose what little socio-economic development they have achieved.

2. The current global humanitarian system cannot cope with any increased demand.

A further increase in the number of disasters will overwhelm national and global disaster management systems. Humanitarian organizations must address this challenge by increasing disaster response and preparedness at all levels – local to global.

3. Improving safety and resilience through early adaptation action.

Any global climate change agreement must include disaster risk reduction, disaster preparedness, and response as part of its risk management approach. Strengthening resilience and preparedness is the first line of defence for the vulnerable in many risk-prone countries. We are already facing some of the effects of climate change, and have early warning of its future impact. For this reason, enhanced action on adaptation is needed to help avert or reduce the worst humanitarian consequences of climate change.

4. Local action is the key to adaptation.

If adaptation to climate change is to be efficient, humanitarian organizations must focus on supporting local community adaptation and coping strategies. Red Cross Red Crescent data clearly indicates that most disasters are small and confined to relatively small geographic areas. The Red Cross Red Crescent, with its outreach and network at grass roots level, is already working with communities to address this challenge.

5. *We have solutions and the ability to implement them.*

Evidence suggests that adaptation efforts need to be linked to broader development progress. Climate change is an additional strain that exacerbates other risk factors affecting development progress, such as environmental degradation, urbanization, access to water and sanitation and increased risk of disease. Climate change adaptation should build on and enhance many of the solutions already developed to address these risks.

For example, Red Cross Red Crescent public hygiene campaigns have improved primary healthcare in thousands of villages and cities. Work with local health workers to help identify risks related to climate change, such as the spread of dengue and malaria, enables them to be better equipped to target risk groups and to take preventative measures.

Cyclone preparedness programmes in Bangladesh and Mozambique have saved hundreds of thousands of lives. These programmes can be expanded to address the increased risk of heavy storms and floods. Similarly, we are already integrating climate information into our humanitarian planning and communicating the impact of climate change to local communities.

As part of a global endeavour to address the impact of climate change, 186 National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and their local branches, as auxiliaries to public authorities, are committed to bringing these solutions to people at risk.

6. *International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies commitment to tackle climate change*

In November 2009, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) adopted its Strategy 2020 and committed to continue tackling climate change.

To quote Strategy 2020, “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 to modified environments – and mitigation – environment-friendly behaviours that also reduce the extent of global warming which causes climate change. The IFRC will contribute to mitigating the progression of climate change through advocacy and social mobilization to promote sustainable community development that optimizes communities’ carbon footprints. This means using energy more efficiently to reduce the impact of the way we live on the environment in terms of the production of greenhouse gases. We exemplify this through the way we conduct our own business throughout the IFRC”.