



**European and Mediterranean Workshop on Climate Change Impact  
on Water Related and Marine Risks  
Murcia, 26 – 27 October 2009**

**Title: "Our World. Your Move: How the Red Cross & Red Crescent  
Movement helps to ameliorate and prevent the effects climate change  
has on people and communities across the Mediterranean  
Presented by: the Centre for the Cooperation in the Mediterranean**

***Climate change is no longer just an environmental issue; it is a social,  
economic and humanitarian challenge***

**The role of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement**

Climate change is a critical problem for the human development of our generation. This phenomenon affects all the countries of the world, without exception. Therefore, it is difficult for states, civil society and individuals to escape their responsibilities towards the planet and towards present and future generations. The Mediterranean region, in particular, does not escape from the weather upheavals and their effects on health, food security, economy and population movements. This situation calls for the action of the concerned actors, either official or from the civil society. Regarding civil society, in which the RC/RC<sup>1</sup> Movement plays a relevant role, it is necessary to prevent and minimize the consequences of global warming and stress the importance of education and rising of awareness regarding environmental protection.

The environment degradation and the climate change are important factors in the explanation of disasters as well as other emergency situations which mostly affect the "poorest of the poor". This special vulnerability requires from the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement priority attention in order to carry out the Federation's humanitarian mandates of "preventing and alleviating suffering", "improving the lives of vulnerable people" and "empowering communities".

- The humanity, especially the poorest of the poor, face an increased burden due to the rise in disasters and the scarcity of resources induced by multiple factors such as environmental degradation and climate change, contributing to poverty, migration, health risks and aggravated risk of violence and conflict.
- People depend on their environment, and a damaged environment not only makes social development impossible but also increases inequality among different groups, leading to extreme poverty.
- 60% of all population movements are caused by natural disaster. This speaks for the importance of natural risk management and the preparation of the National Societies to relieve and adequately respond to such situations.

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<sup>1</sup> RC/RC = Red Cross and Red Crescent



The Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, the world's largest and best known humanitarian organization is made up of 186 national societies. There is growing awareness within the RC/RC Movement that the National Societies will increasingly be confronted with the impacts of climate change and extreme weather events. In 2006 the IFRC<sup>2</sup> published the World Disaster Report highlighted that:

1) there is a definite increase in the number of weather related natural disasters and 2) that the number of people affected by natural disaster has tripled in thirty years.

The XXXth International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent, held in November 2007 in Geneva, concluded with the commitment of 1500 representatives of the International Movement of the Red Cross and Red Crescent and the States party to the Geneva Convention, to reinforce their collaboration within the field of humanitarian action. It was agreed that a joint approach would be needed to tackle the humanitarian consequences of four main challenges, one of them being environmental degradation and climate change.

It was decided that communitarian actions and the measures to prepare for the prevision of disasters needed to be expanded, as well as risk reduction, in order to better protect the most vulnerable to the consequences of disasters.

Examples of disaster risk reduction activities undertaken by the RC/RC Movement are:

- the construction of flood shelters on higher ground and strong early warning systems, to protect against cyclones and inundations
- the cultivation of mangrove forests to protect dykes against tidal waves
- the planting of trees and the construction of dams to protect the land against strong winds and sand-drift or salt-water intrusion
- water catchment systems against droughts
- first aid trainings and disaster drills

Other important elements are those of raising awareness amongst the affected populations and advocacy at local and international levels. The International RC/RC Movement is addressing both of these strands of action.

In a global context, the International RC/RC Movement has launched the campaign 2009 "Our world. Your move" which is an excellent example of how the values of solidarity and volunteering may help us to overcome the situation of increasing vulnerability faced by millions of human beings today around the world. "**Our world. Your move**" campaign urges people everywhere to address the humanitarian challenges, facing their communities, and to reach out, make a move, and better the world. The effects of Climate Change are one of the main challenges. Initiated in 2009, the campaign is jointly led by the IFRC and the ICRC<sup>3</sup>, and currently involves 107 National Societies worldwide. The aim is to continue the campaign through to 2011.

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<sup>2</sup> IFRC = International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

<sup>3</sup> ICRC = International Committee of the Red Cross



## The Climate Center

At a worldwide level, the IFRC together with the Netherlands Red Cross has set up the Red Cross/Red Crescent Climate Center in an effort to support interested parties initiatives in helping reduce people's vulnerability to climate risks. The Climate Center, formed in 2002 and located in The Hague, hopes to **address the humanitarian consequences of environmental problems**, such as the increase of natural disasters, the spreading of insect-borne diseases, decrease in crop yield and global sea level rise.

The Red Cross /Red Crescent Climate Center is a reference centre of the Movement helping to understand and address the humanitarian consequences of climate change. Its activities are based on four pillars: Awareness, Action, Advocacy, and Analysis.

The Climate Centre assists National Societies and the IFRC through:

- 1) Climate risk assessment: assessing priorities and planning follow up
- 2) Addressing the consequences: integrated climate change in programmes and activities
  - Disaster Management
  - Community based disaster risk reduction
  - Health and Care
  - Food security
  - Water and sanitation
  - Migration and conflict
- 3) Raising awareness
- 4) Establishing and enhancing partnerships
- 5) International advocacy: shaping the global response to climate change
- 6) Documenting and sharing experience and information

## The Center for the Cooperation in the Mediterranean

At the Mediterranean level, the Centre for the Cooperation in the Mediterranean for the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, supported by the Spanish Red Cross, is the Permanent Office created for the follow up of the resolutions of the Mediterranean Conference of the Red Cross and the Red Crescent National Societies. The Mediterranean Conference is formed by a total of 25 National Societies (NS) all located in the Mediterranean area and amounting to a number of 7 million RC/RC volunteers all around the region.

The CCM<sup>4</sup>, created in 2006, has the mission to:

-Facilitate the monitoring of the agreements and resolutions of the RC/RC Med Conference.

-Encourage interaction between the Mediterranean National Societies and promote exchanges of experiences related to the subjects of interest for the Mediterranean area (migrants, climate change and environment, principles and values and youth) that contribute to reaching the goals of the RC/RC International Movement.

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<sup>4</sup> Centre for the Cooperation in the Mediterranean for the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

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Climate change being one of the key focus of action for the RC/RC Movement (as explained above) and consequently for the Mediterranean Conference, the CCM has the aim to spread awareness about the challenges posed by climate change in the region, to promote the searching for innovative and creative answers, and to look for synergies among actions focused on improving preparedness and response amongst populations living in the Med area. Some of the planned actions to improve the current environmental situation address water scarcity, sustainable consumption, desertification and deforestation, public health, amongst others. In order for these to be successful mobilisation of public support is a crucial subject.

To achieve these goals the CCM works hand in hand with the IFRC, RC/RC National Societies, and the Climate Center to assist and promote the collaboration between the SSNN in the Mediterranean as well as other relevant stakeholders and organize activities responding to these needs of action.

**Some examples of actions being undertaken by the CCM are:**

**- Seminar for the North of Africa – 2008**

“Sustainable Environment, Climate Change and Movements of Population”, Mehdia, Morocco, from the 28th to the 31st of March 2008  
Organized with the Morocco Red Crescent the main objective of the event was focalized on the consequences of climate change, such as the desertification or the movements of population, can have on the poorest populations of North Africa; and the necessity that the National Societies of the Red Crescent prepare the community for these consequences. –video of 4’-

**- Awareness raising Campaign in Algeria – 2009**

As a result of the previous seminar the Algerian Red Crescent together with the CCM designed an awareness campaign for schools all around the country. The campaign started in December 2008 with the preparation of the contents and dissemination materials and lasted until July 2009. The campaign included: the training of trainers at national level, training of leaders at wilaya level, intervention in educational centers, actions within the community, actions of reforestation with the students, contests at wilaya level and actions with media of communications. The project counts on different diffusion materials, such as posters, pamphlets and informative panels and counts on the support of the Ministries of Environment and Agriculture.

**- Mediterranean Youth Camp “Atlantis IV” – Serbia 2008**

The International Youth Camp Atlantis that was held in Serbia in 2009 had climate change as one of its main agenda items. Topics that were discussed in particular were community preparedness and disaster response. These kinds of events involving youth are especially important as they allow the younger generations to obtain knowledge and awareness of the current environmental challenges and the possible solutions. Furthermore, it trains those who will be the actors of tomorrow and in some cases already today, to be proactive, to work in a team and to think cross culturally.

**- Mediterranean Youth Camp “Atlantis V” – Morocco 2009**

Due to the good results of the workshop on climate change held in Atlantis IV and the interest of the Morocco Red Crescent to pursuit the action on this subject the Atlantis V, organized by the CCM together with the Morocco Red



Crescent has been fully focused on environmental issues and climate change. 69 volunteers from 14 National Societies of the region participated in it during the first week of August.

Five thematic workshops were organized during the seminar: sustainable consumption, disaster risk reduction, how to make a video on climate change, how to design an awareness campaign and leadership training (empowering youth to be agents of behavioral change for their National Society and local community). – video of 4’.

**- Photos Contest for Youth in the Mediterranean: Environment and Climate Change – April 2009**

Youth, whom the future depends on, play an important role in raising awareness toward the promotion and protection of the environment, and amongst other actions, through the promotion of innovative ideas with the goal of fighting climate change.

In the framework of the European Year of Creativity and Innovation and the priorities of the RC/RC International Movement, the CCM organized this photos contest for youth. It had the objective of giving youth an opportunity to express themselves creatively and show their vision of the environment and climate change in its multiple dimensions. The winner has been invited to participate in Atlantis V in Morocco and a selection of the best pictures has been show during the camp.

**- International Symposium on Climate Change in Barcelona – 2010**

In June next year the National Societies of the Red Cross and the Red Crescent will be holding an International Seminar focusing on Climate Change, Water and public health throughout the Mediterranean, being organized by the CCM. Its aim is for all actors to acquire more knowledge and skills regarding environmental threats in this region. Through analysis, capacity building and awareness raising the National Societies will be better prepared to help those most vulnerable to be affected by natural disasters.

**Some actions undertaken by Mediterranean RC/RC National Societies**

**“Environment Program” – Lebanon Red Cross**

Objectives

1. To spread a correct environmental conduct among the LRC volunteers and personnel, and among the local communities to reduce environmental problems.
2. To reduce the forest fires in Lebanon by 30%, and to spread awareness among the children and young adults.

Activities

1. Awareness training for youth centers on how to have environment friendly centers
2. Develop awareness material for children on saving water in collaboration with the French Red Cross.
3. Develop awareness material on dangers of forest fires to children and young adults



### **“Climate in Action” Programme – Italian Red Cross**

#### Objectives

1. Respond to the needs of the territory reducing local and social - economic vulnerability. (“Strategy of adaptation”)
2. Sensitisation of the population to prevent and reduce emissions/releasing
3. Encourage the culture of international cooperation

#### Activities

1. Training of RC volunteers
2. Creation of a Network
3. Workshops for experts and volunteers
4. Creation and distribution of a “Kit Climate”
5. Development of a cooperation project

### **“Climate Change awareness campaign” – Algeria Red Crescent**

#### Objectives

1. Raising awareness on the consequences of climate change
2. Improve good practices of Algerian youth regarding environment protection
3. Improve good habits regarding water consumption
4. Strength capacities of Youth section of the Algerian Red Crescent regarding environmental programs and community risk reduction and preparedness

#### Activities

- Responsible use of water
- Awareness Raising campaign in schools
- Strengthening youth leadership
- Re-forestation programme
- Training campaign in collaboration with universities

### **“Environmental Volunteer Programme” – Spanish Red Cross**

#### Objectives

- training talks
- prevention of natural disasters
- and awareness campaigns

#### Activities

- Responsible use of water
- Awareness Raising campaign in schools
- Strengthening youth leadership
- Re-forestation programme
- Training campaign in collaboration with universities



## **Conclusion**

Even though we have presented numerous movements, actions and activities focused on Climate Change and Environment protection, it is clear that further actions will need to be taken now and in the future in order to better prepare the populations in the Mediterranean region to face natural disasters and the related adverse effects ahead. So far a lot has been done to mobilise individuals, the RC/RC National Societies, the CCM and the IFRC, among others. However, possible points to focus on for the future are the need for the creation of national and international partnership and operational alliances, the setting up of focus regional groups in order to enhance emergency plan and training and continued awareness raising actions toward community and volunteers.

It has become evident that National Societies should effectively collaborate and create alliances with community-based organizations, civil society, governmental and non-governmental agencies and establish partnerships with organizations involved in the environment protection programmes, be them governmental, non-governmental or international and advocate governmental agencies. As well as continue undertaking awareness rising campaigns on Climate Change, its negative impacts on the vulnerable groups, as well as its causes, and what action plans are to be implemented on the basis of what a National Society can do.

9<sup>th</sup> of September 2009

Centre for the Cooperation in the Mediterranean