

# Climate Change Conference

COP17 Durban | 28 Novembre to 09 December 2011 |

advocacy toolkit



## ***Red Cross Red Crescent climate change key messages***

### **Commitment of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC)**

Following the commitments made in 2007 at the 30<sup>th</sup> International Conference by 186 National Societies and 194 States party to the Geneva Conventions to address the humanitarian consequences of climate change and environmental degradation, the IFRC has provided its support to local communities through its member National Societies. As auxiliary to public authorities the National Societies contribute to mitigating the progression of climate change through advocacy and social mobilization to promote sustainable community development that reduces their communities' carbon footprints.

This Federation-wide effort, has been guided by its 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."

**With its expertise in disaster preparedness and risk reduction, and the unique auxiliary roles of National Societies, the Red Cross Red Crescent remains committed to supporting governments in the implementation of the Cancún Adaptation Framework (adopted in December 2010 during CoP 16), which acknowledges disaster risk reduction and provides references for enhanced action on adaptation.**

#### Rationale:

#### ***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 217 million per year. Scientific evidence indicates that this trend will continue at an accelerated pace.

Poor people living in risk-prone areas, mostly in developing countries, are suffering the most as they lack the resources to adapt to, or cope with, the impacts of a changing climate.

#### ***2. Climate change is already affecting lives and livelihoods of local communities***

Climate change is contributing towards the exacerbation of existing vulnerabilities and people's ability to sustain their sources of livelihood, especially in poor and under-developed countries. In order to counteract these trends, climate adaptation and mitigation activities including efforts designed to reduce greenhouse gas emissions need to go hand in hand with long term investment in sustainable agriculture, peace building and poverty alleviation. Efforts must also be made to focus on strategies including wider use of safety nets, women's empowerment, improved access to markets and management of ecosystems and natural resources. Activities on all fronts are needed to address one of the most important challenges of our time, namely how to guarantee the global food and nutrition security of present and future generations.

#### ***3. 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.

#### *4. An integrated approach to community safety and resilience*

Successful adaptation strategies must incorporate risk reduction and preparedness activities and actions supporting climate resilient livelihoods, while addressing simultaneously other drivers of vulnerability including environmental degradation, poverty and ill-health. To ensure community safety and resilience we need to adopt an integrated approach which addresses resilient livelihoods, risk reduction and the underlying causes of vulnerability and food insecurity.

#### *5. Improving safety and resilience through early adaptation action*

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 impacts. For this reason, enhanced action on adaptation is needed to help avert or reduce the worst humanitarian consequences of climate change.

#### *6. 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.

#### *7. Empowering communities through knowledge*

Public awareness and public education for disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation enables communities to identify hazards, take action to reduce their vulnerability and empowers them to participate in reducing future risks by turning available knowledge into specific local action. The Red Cross red Crescent is committed to strengthening its public awareness and education outreach on climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction as an economic and lasting investment, at scale, to reduce risks and vulnerability.

#### *8. We have solutions and the ability to implement them.*

To be successful adaptation efforts need to be linked to a broader sustainable development agenda. Climate change is an additional strain that exacerbates existing processes affecting development progress, such as environmental degradation, unplanned urbanization, access to resources and water scarcity and increased risk of disease. Therefore climate change adaptation should build on and enhance many of the solutions already developed to address these risks.

For example, 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.

In drought stricken Kenya a youth project has raised awareness in the Kwale community on causes and effects of climate change and ways in which they could adapt. With the help of the young RCRC volunteers, communities improved their early warning and preparedness systems, updated the community disaster response plan and strengthened food security through promotion of modern farming methods. Through the project, the young volunteers also contributed to environmental conservation, improvement and better access to clean, safe and affordable water. For the Kwale communities, the result is that they have been able to withstand the Horn of Africa crisis better than many others.

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.