

Climate Change Conference

COP17 Durban | 28 Novembre to 09 December 2011 |

advocacy toolkit

 International Federation
of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

How to engage in the policy dialogue on climate change adaptation in your country?

Introduction

Policies and actions to support developing countries in adapting to the impacts of climate change have been developing in recent years – and accelerating since 2007.

Amongst the achievements made at the 16th meeting of the Conference of Parties of the UNFCCC Climate Summit (COP16) in Cancun are (1) the adoption of the Cancun agreement, (2) the establishment of an adaptation framework through which all countries were invited to develop their national adaptation plans and (3) the establishment of the Climate Green Fund that is expected to mobilize by 2020 US 100 billion annually for mitigation and adaptation in developing countries.

Climate change adaptation (CCA) programmes and policies have already been set in motion in many developing countries, often supported by UN agencies, bilateral donors or the World Bank. Civil society organizations are also developing and implementing CCA programmes and projects.

Climate change is likely to lead to more frequent and more intense weather extremes, resulting in disasters. Humanitarian organizations have much experience that can be used to address and reduce these risks. However, in many countries humanitarian agencies are not fully aware of, or engaged in, CCA policies and programme development.

Establishing the first steps in a dialogue with your government on CCA can be challenging. This document has been produced at the request of National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and IFRC staff worldwide to meet that need.

To help National Societies engage their governments in dialogue about CCA , some leading questions are listed below.

1. Does your country have a national climate change adaptation policy, or is it developing one?

In most countries, the leading ministry on climate change is the Ministry of Environment, Natural Resources or Energy. You can find contact information for the **national focal points of governments** on the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) website (<http://maindb.unfccc.int/public/nfp.pl>). This will tell you which Ministry you can contact to find out about the adaptation policy of your government¹.

Government focal points on climate change should have a clear picture of who is doing what in relation to climate change and may have produced documents on the topic in your country.

2. Who is the leading official in your government responsible for adaptation policies?

It is always helpful to establish good contact with the leading official(s) on a subject of interest; in this case the national adaptation policy. Formal means of communication such as letters, in which you explain the Red Cross Red Crescent position, are helpful, but with informal communication methods you can often get a better idea of the reasons behind a certain policy position. When you have a good relationship, it is also easier to ask questions on subjects that are not clear to you or to give informal suggestions on certain issues, notably the humanitarian consequences of climate change.

Try to find out what your government has published in terms of strategies and policies. Within the UNFCCC framework, some of the least developed countries have written a National Adaptation Programme of Action (NAPA)². Most countries submitted National Communications to the UNFCCC. Even though the main parts of these reports are about greenhouse-gas emissions (of less relevance for the Red Cross Red Crescent), they also describe the vulnerability of each country to climate change impacts in the coming decades³

If your government has an adaptation policy, go to question 4.

3. What do you do when there is no adaptation policy?

Contact the leading official and try to find out why the government does not have an adaptation policy. If they are in the process of drafting one, try to find out whether there is room for consultation, and if the Red Cross Red Crescent and other humanitarian and development agencies⁴ can participate. With many initial policy commitments, like the UNFCCC, consultation with civil society is common, so you can refer to this by way of example.

In a growing number of developing countries there are initiatives to set up so-called 'multi-stakeholder groups' on climate change, involving NGOs, government bodies, private sector, researchers and donors. Find out if such an initiative exists in your country and whether it is relevant for you to join.

¹ Please note that addressing **the causes** of climate change is commonly called '**mitigation**'. This is mostly about the reduction of greenhouse-gas emissions (it is easy to get confused because in the humanitarian sector we use the concept of 'disaster mitigation' - be wary of using this term when talking to people working on climate change). The Red Cross Red Crescent focus is on addressing **the impacts** of climate change, notably those leading to disasters, food insecurity and deterioration of health, commonly called '**adaptation**'.

² All NAPAs can be found on the UNFCCC website: http://unfccc.int/cooperation_support/least_developed_countries_portal/submitted_napas/items/4585.php

³ National Communications can be found on the UNFCCC website: http://unfccc.int/national_reports/non-annex_i_natcom/items/2979.php

⁴ We recommend that you look at working in partnership with like-minded organizations in this process, such as IASC-members in your country, or the national disaster risk reduction platform.

Be clear what the Red Cross Red Crescent and other humanitarian organizations can contribute to the national adaptation policy. In particular, community-based disaster risk reduction, early warning / early action approaches and health and care services can be good adaptation programmes when connected to climate change-related risks.

4. If your government has an adaptation policy, are the humanitarian consequences addressed?

Read through your government's adaptation policy and find out whether the humanitarian consequences of climate change are acknowledged and addressed.

Look for key words like: disaster risk reduction, early warning systems, community-based adaptation, most vulnerable people, food security, health, water and sanitation.

Decide whether the humanitarian consequences are adequately addressed. If you would like advice on whether or not the humanitarian consequences are sufficiently addressed in relation to the expected trends of risk occurrence in your country, do not hesitate to contact the helpdesk of the IRI-IFRC: ifrc@iri.colombia.edu

When you are positive that humanitarian consequences are being addressed, go to question 6.

5. What can you do if the humanitarian consequences are not adequately addressed in the adaptation policy of your country?

There are a great variety of national adaptation policies. It depends very much on the agencies and ministries that have been involved in developing the plans. For example, in many countries, water management, infrastructure and coastal protection or agriculture are key elements of the policy. It is not always clear what criteria are used to select sectors or regions for adaptation. Sea level rise is often overstated and extreme weather events understated as threats to coastal countries. In countries with a high cover of forests, forest conservation is often a key element of adaptation policies.

Often the 'hardware' (concrete, visible measures like seawalls) tends to dominate over the 'software' (like capacity building of the most vulnerable people, disaster risk reduction, and health programmes).

If you believe the humanitarian consequences are not being adequately addressed, find out the best ways to raise this concern. Contact the lead official in your government to get more information and find out the possibilities for including humanitarian concerns. A paper with concrete suggestions may be helpful at this stage - use successful examples from other countries in the region to make your case. Find like-minded organisations to work in partnership with.

6. What can you do if the government addresses the humanitarian consequences of climate change in its national adaptation policy?

Congratulations! You can now move to the most essential phase: implementation. Find out how the government and other agencies envision the implementation of the policy. This is often dependent on international funding which can be slow-moving. Tap into your contacts within the international network of the Red Cross Red Crescent to speed up the process.

Develop plans and programmes on how the Red Cross Red Crescent can contribute to the implementation of the adaptation policy. You may be able to mobilize your own resources, referring to the national adaptation policy. Much National Society work does occur at the branch level – involving local government in understanding and acting on climate change is important too.

Good luck!

For more information and support:

- The IFRC Zone DM Coordinator
- The IFRC Geneva Secretariat Senior Officer Climate Change
- The Red Cross/Red Crescent Climate centre: www.climatecentre.org or climatecentre@redcross.nl

On line resources:

- Red Cross/ Red Crescent Climate Guide: <http://www.climatecentre.org/site/publications/85>
- UNFCCC submissions: www.unfccc.org