

Climate change

key messages

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 International Federation
of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

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

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 development. 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.

2. Current global humanitarian system cannot cope with 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. Greater efforts must be made to support rapid scale-up of adaptation through community-based risk reduction interventions.

3. 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 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.

To further support this focus on community action, 60 National Societies from developing countries have been involved in the preparedness for climate change programme. The programme goal is to increase National Societies' understanding of the risks of climate change and to assist in adaptation of their programmes to be more proactive in building local resilience.

5. 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.

6. The IFRC tackles the challenges of climate change

As part of a global endeavour to address the impacts of climate change, the IFRC and its 187 member National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, as auxiliaries to public authorities, are committed to bringing solutions to people at risk. The Federation-wide effort is guided by the organization's Strategy 2020, which reinforces the need to "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 Red Cross Red Crescent is working with communities across the globe to strengthen their ability to adapt to the challenges of climate change. There is a particular focus on disaster preparedness, disaster risk reduction, food security and livelihoods.



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