


April 2008

Consultation on Proposals for a Scottish Climate Change Bill: British Red Cross Response

Summary

- i. The British Red Cross welcomes the opportunity to contribute to this consultation document. We have responded to questions on which we have experience or expertise.
- ii. The impact of climate change is a humanitarian issue as much as it is an environmental, political and economic one. We are likely to see an increase in the frequency and intensity of extreme weather events, whilst changing weather patterns and melting glaciers are threatening precious water resources.
- iii. As a result of this, the people hit hardest by the effects of climate change are the world's most vulnerable – the elderly, sick and poorest people in the poorest countries.
- iv. The Red Cross works with communities to prepare for and become resilient to major incidents and emergencies.
- v. Extreme weather events cannot be prevented but they do not have to lead to devastating or catastrophic emergencies. The key is to be willing to invest in community resilience building and risk reduction – in public health initiatives, community preparedness and emergency planning.
- vi. Internationally, the number of weather-related disasters has doubled from approximately 200 in 1995 to 400 in 2006. Despite the number of people being killed by natural disasters falling, the number affected is increasing. We are now at the point where four percent of the world's inhabitants lose their belongings, houses and livestock each year as a result.
- vii. We know from the UK Climate Impacts Programme (UKCIP) that there are some specific risks for communities in the UK from climate change including increased flood risk. Parts of the UK are vulnerable to fluvial, coastal, pluvial and urban flash flooding. UKCIP says "*the risk of major disasters caused by gales and coastal flooding is likely to increase significantly*".¹
- viii. It now seems likely that governments and humanitarian organisations throughout the world, including the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, will be increasingly called upon to respond to the impacts of climate-related emergencies. The effects of these emergencies can be  ened through designated programmes for building community resilience in adapting to the effects of climate change.

¹ www.ukcip.org.uk

Background on the British Red Cross

1. The British Red Cross helps people in crisis, whoever and wherever they are. We are part of a global network that responds to conflicts, natural disasters and individual emergencies. We enable vulnerable people in the UK and abroad to prepare for and withstand emergencies in their own communities, and when the crisis is over we help them to recover and move on with their lives.
2. The British Red Cross is part of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, which comprises:
 - > The International Committee of the Red Cross
 - > The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, and
 - > 186 National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies worldwide.
3. As a member of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, the British Red Cross is committed to, and bound by, its Fundamental Principles. These are: humanity, impartiality, neutrality, independence, voluntary service, unity and universality.
4. As an auxiliary to the UK Government, we work in support of the emergency services at major incidents, such as natural or man made disasters, and support people during smaller emergencies, such as fires. Responding to emergencies is a core part of the work of the British Red Cross.
5. The British Red Cross has a long history of supporting vulnerable communities – both in preparing for and responding to emergencies, whether in the UK or internationally, regardless of the cause of those emergencies.
6. In November 2007, at the 30th International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent, 186 Red Cross and Red Crescent societies and more than 190 States acknowledged the threat posed to vulnerable communities by climate change and agreed to increase efforts to protect those most vulnerable to its impacts.
7. The Red Cross/Red Crescent Climate Centre supports National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies to reduce the loss of life and the damage done to the livelihoods of people affected by the impacts of climate change and extreme weather events. This centre is based in The Netherlands and is funded by the International Federation of the Red Cross (IFRC).

Response of the British Red Cross to the Consultation

30. Are there any provisions to help Scotland adapt to the impacts of climate change, which should be included in the Scottish Climate Change Bill?

We have answered this section in three parts:

- (a) The work we are currently doing to prepare for the potential negative impacts of climate change;
- (b) The work we will be doing in the future if we do not address the negative impacts of climate change now; and
- (c) The provisions we believe should be included in the Scottish Climate Change Bill to help the people of Scotland adapt to the impacts of climate change.

A. What we are currently doing

- > In countries across South Asia, the Caribbean and Africa, the British Red Cross is supporting the work of sister national societies in a number of ways including hurricane and flood preparedness work, food security and community health. Much of this work will help communities adapt to new climate related hazards.
- > Internationally, a recent example of the value of risk reduction and disaster preparedness played out in Bangladesh in December 2007, when Cyclone Sidr hit the region. Thousands of Red Crescent volunteers, using bicycles and megaphones, travelled around the threatened communities and helped evacuate hundreds of thousands of people from the path of the cyclone and into shelter. These actions had a real impact. In 1991, when a similar storm hit Bangladesh, more than 100,000 people were killed. This time, 3,000 people died. This is still unacceptable, but the value of risk reduction could not be clearer. Cyclones in this region are common, and not necessarily as a result of global warming. The key point however, is sharing knowledge about risk reduction and resilience that could be applied to areas where extreme weather events could become more frequent as a result of global warming.
- > Closer to home, the Red Cross has already responded to increased flooding, both in the summer floods of 2007, and in Northern Scotland, where we have scaled up our capacity with 2 flood rescue boats, a rescue hovercraft and associated equipment along with a swift water rescue trained flood response and rescue team
- > The British Red Cross also supports the Red Cross/Red Crescent Climate Centre based in the Netherlands².
- > Through this centre, a "Climate Change Scoping Study" was commissioned by the British Red Cross, part of which involved investigating the effects of climate change on one international and one UK programme. The case studies chosen were in

² Please see the Climate Centre website for additional information: www.climatecentre.org/

Bangladesh and Northern Scotland, two geographical areas already experiencing an increase in the frequency and intensity of weather-related emergencies, in this case flooding. Programmes in both countries focussed on our ability to respond and adapt to the impacts of climate change.

- > The Climate Change Scoping Study assessed how climate change related to and could be factored into Red Cross activities in Northern Scotland. The study was conducted through a review of scientific literature and semi-structured interviews with staff and volunteers in Scotland during the last week in January 2008³.

- > The study focused on:
 - (i) The extent to which Red Cross activities in Northern Scotland are sensitive to climate change;
 - (ii) Whether current activities can be adapted to take climate change into account;
 - (iii) How adaptations can be undertaken to minimise future risks and costs associated with climate change.

- > Plans are in place to extend '*community resilience*' projects in three communities in Flotta, Rousay, Egilsay and Wyre on the Orkney Islands and Waternish on Skye that have self-identified themselves as vulnerable. Previous projects have been piloted on Glenelg and the Island of Foula, one of Scotland's remotest inhabited islands. These will primarily involve providing local communities with first aid/emergency medical equipment, survival equipment and training people in first aid and survival/coping techniques. It is important to stress that community resilience building is much more than just first aid but a process of facilitating and enabling the community to map both vulnerability and potential hazard from severe weather related incidents.

- > Across the UK, the Red Cross commissioned a study to see the size of the carbon footprint generated by all of our operations and have tasked an expert agency to look at ways to reduce the footprint.

B. What we will be doing in the future if the people of Scotland don't adapt or reduce the impact of climate change

- > The main hazard increases for the UK will be heat waves and flooding. Storm surges and more extreme storms are also likely.

- > For example, heavy downfalls could become more frequent. By the 2080s, heavy downpours that are experienced once every two years on average may become between 5 percent and 20 percent, which could increase the instances of flash flooding⁴.

³ The study took place in 2008 and involved 5 days in Scotland (January 23rd – 28th), 1 day preparation and 1 day report production and review.

⁴ Website: www.ukcip.org.uk

- > The significant weather pattern changes over the last five years have increased the importance of adaptation and resilience measures for many remote communities across Northern Scotland.
- > The consequences of weather related emergencies are exacerbated by people's inability to cope, because they either do not have sufficient emergency preparedness or do not know what to do once an emergency has occurred.
- > If we do not adapt and build community resilience to potential disasters, particularly flooding in Northern Scotland, we will see more vulnerable people who do not have the ability to withstand emergencies or recover quickly, and this could stretch Red Cross volunteer networks.
- > Specifically, in Northern Scotland the impact on the provisions of services by the Red Cross may:
 - i. See increased demand for flood response/rescue support through the deployment of the flood response and rescue team;
 - ii. See increased demand for support to the Scottish Ambulance Service where the SAS cannot reach casualties due to flooded road conditions;
 - iii. Be less able to maintain uninterrupted transport for crisis care services;
 - iv. Have more requests to provide assistance to vulnerable people cut off from Category 1 responders;
 - v. See increased demand for psycho-social services for depression and mental health problems associated with flooding;
 - vi. Have a greater demand for first aid related to sunstroke and heat in outdoor summer events.
- > Internationally, climate change will bring more and different emergencies, affecting all aspects of how the Red Cross implements emergency response, ranging from an increase in relief operations to a need for more and better risk reduction and resilience, as well as designated funding. Examples include:
 - i. Changing disease patterns resulting from the impacts of climate change. This will require adjustments in programmes to address health risks and promote health and care at the community level.
 - ii. Climate change being a major threat to food security, particularly in Africa, and this will need to be addressed in food-security programmes, both through enhanced relief and better prevention.
 - iii. Research by the Intergovernmental Panel of Climate Change shows that droughts may last longer, flooding more severe, hurricanes more intense, and the potential that millions of people could be displaced as a direct consequence of climate change. All this will have an impact on our disaster preparedness, response and recovery programmes around the world.

C. The provisions we believe should be included in the Scottish Climate Change Bill to help Scotland adapt to the impacts of climate change

- > Adaptation to climate change is likely to benefit from experience gained in reaction to emergencies, specifically by implementing proactive climate change risk management adaptation plans.
- > During the Northern Scotland Climate Change Scoping Study, it was found that communities may not see themselves as vulnerable, and hence will not request support. Second, some communities appear to have the expectation that the Government and statutory authorities will have the capacity will assist them in the event of an emergency and hence they do not want to increase their resilience, if this will reduce government support (this point was also mentioned in relation to the people of Gloucester who complained about a lack of government help during the floods).
- > Pursuing the policy of enhancing community resilience is a useful means of starting the process of preparing communities for climate change. Research has shown that resilience tends to develop in communities that are willing and able to organise themselves to identify solutions to problems, to find information about the hazards they face and develop appropriate coping mechanisms in partnership with suitable organisations. A handbook produced for households, entitled 'Preparing for emergencies in the Highlands and Islands: A guide to civil contingencies and resilience' has been produced in a community project coordinated by the Highland Council. This handbook describes how to prepare for, and recover from floods, storms, cold, heat waves, flu, hazardous material exposure, fire, with information on evacuation, shelter, and communication. The Red Cross contributed to the planning of this resource.
- > Accordingly, quantifiable, predictable and adequate resources for funding of climate change risk reduction and adaptation measures should be provided for within the Bill in order to build the community resilience to deal with the consequences of global warming that leads to climate change. The Red Cross in Northern Scotland was a key contributor to the handbook as described above and in the absence of a further print run, the Red Cross considering the publication of 'Withstanding and recovering from Emergencies – a practical guide to community resilience'. We see this project as an example of what adaptation funding could provide for if resources quantified and signposted in Bill.
- > The implementation of these resources should be reflected through programmes that will prioritise the most vulnerable people, remembering that those who wouldn't ordinarily be labelled as vulnerable, may become vulnerable in the aftermath of an emergency (the Gloucester floods of 2007 is a good example of the changing nature of vulnerability).
- > The Red Cross believes the Scottish Climate Change Bill should be used to create a separate Scottish Committee on Climate Change (section 7.16) and that this

Committee would have the ability to consult with all levels of the community, including the voluntary sector, on the various aspects of adapting and responding to the affects of global warming leading to climate change.

- > A Scottish Committee on Climate Change would enable organisations like the Red Cross to highlight the humanitarian consequences of climate change and the impact this would have on the people of Scotland and internationally. Further, this committee could use our expertise in how the Scottish Government would monitor and measure success for resilience and adaptation within the community.

- > Once our internal carbon footprint study (as mentioned in the last point in part A of our response) was completed, we were surprised to learn that 58 per cent of our energy consumption was from Red Cross properties around the UK. The Government should consider the inclusion of schemes to make advice and funding available to voluntary organisations for adaptation work – in both the delivery of their services and internally such as reducing carbon emissions from buildings, (section 8.9). There is a scheme in England, which provides advice and guidance to voluntary organisations about these issues called Every Action Counts (www.everyactioncounts.org.uk).



In conclusion, the primary focus of British Red Cross work on climate change is on addressing and reducing the humanitarian consequences. We believe that there is much scope for the Scottish Climate Bill to address and reduce the risk of climate change if there are measures to ensure communities understand the risks and are supported to adapt and build resilience. We would welcome the opportunity to address the Transport, Infrastructure and Climate Change Committee about the issues we have raised in this consultation response.