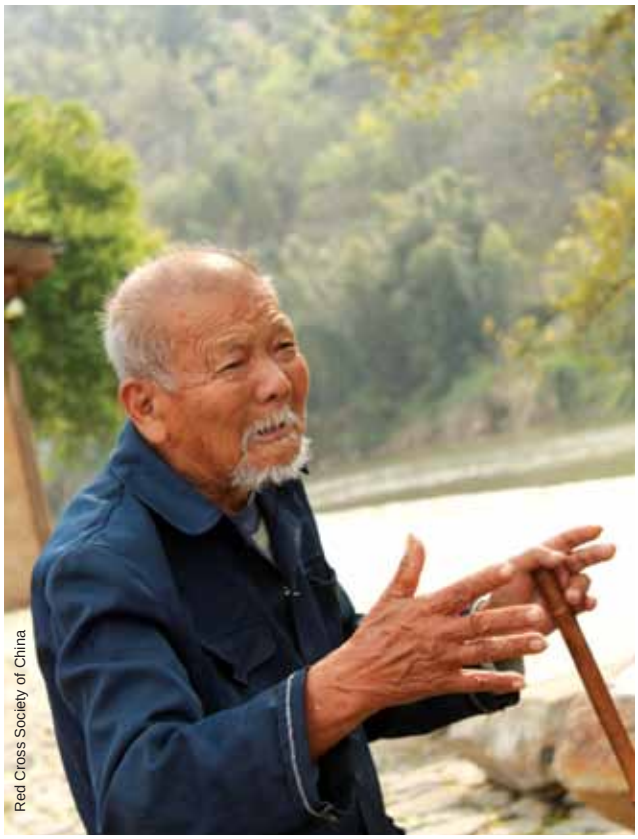
Case Study

Spotlight on China – the convergence of disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation in practice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Packed into a Fujian province hotel room for two days, representatives from the Red Cross Red Crescent and the Chinese government met, for the first time, as a group. What was unusual about this meeting was the convergence of government departments including those responsible for agriculture, health, climate change, and disaster management, as well as the meteorological office, with Chinese Red Cross counterparts from village up to provincial level. One experience that all participants share in common is the changes to climate that are occurring in Fujian province of China.

And there are many. From increased intensity of rainfall, hotter temperatures and heatwaves, more 'super typhoons' and increasing landslides, the group identified that they all had the same concern – how to deal with a more demanding climate?

To set the scene, presentations were given on the concept of climate change and current climate trends by Red Cross Red Crescent and meteorological representatives, followed by summaries of the interaction of climate with agriculture, health and disaster management. Using an 'Early Warning Early Action' template (provided below), with the scenario of heavier rainfall and landslides, participants split up into groups of health, disaster management and agriculture, to discuss actions that can be taken across different timescales such as years, months, days and hours, ahead of a given event, using climate information that is available. They discussed systems, expertise and actions already in place that could be used to deal with these changes in climate, then asked themselves, what could they do more of, differently or better? Actions considered community level right up to provincial level.

Some of the actions brainstormed in the exercise included defining more clearly roles and responsibilities for various tasks, further dialogue and cooperation between government departments with Chinese Red Cross, intensifying preparedness measures around landslide prone areas with communities, increase in pest control measures after flooding, creating community contingency plans for flooding, preventative health messages before a disaster rather than only post disaster, protection of crops such as strengthening banana trees through use of stakes, training of communities, reassessing infrastructure for its level of tolerance, conducting simulation drills, and updating communication systems and people's understanding of them.

It was identified that community needs and priorities could be gleaned from the use of participatory engagment via conducting a Red Cross vulnerability and capacity


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assessment. This could be combined with available outside resources and expertise to enable targeted assistance to those that are most vulnerable.

The meeting concluded with discussion around continued cooperation and agreement on next steps. Participants agreed that they walked away from the meeting having a better understanding of disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation, each other's roles, cooperation opportunities, as well as measures to collectively address problems that vulnerable communities face. The most important phase of the year-long project will now begin, which includes community engagement and implementation of small risk reduction projects.

This two-day seminar hosted by the Fujian Red Cross in Fuzhou 27-28 July 2010, is part of the project "Disaster Risk Reduction and Integrated Climate Change Adaptation – a National Model for a Community Context in the People's Republic of China", implemented by the Chinese Red Cross with funding from the Finnish Red Cross.

Experts from the IFRC Climate Centre and IFRC's regional office in Beijing are contributing with technical knowledge throughout the project implementation.

Timescales exercise

Below is the template and questions that were used during the meeting by participants divided into agriculture, disaster management and health related groups. The groups sought to brainstorm actions that could be taken using various sources of information, different lead times and actions at all levels to reduce climate risk. The scenario used was based on a presentation by the meteorological office and disaster management experts who are observing changes in the frequency and intensity of heavy rainfall events, and thus landslides.

Groups answered each of the questions below in the table provided.

1. What are the impacts of the scenarios on communities? (think about things like livelihoods, agriculture, health, infrastructure, water etc.)
2. What are we already doing that helps address these impacts?
3. What else can we do more of, differently or better?
4. What information sources are available to us at different times – how can it reach the community level?

Timeframe Scenario	Question 1	Question 2	Question 3	Question 4
Years Increased risk of heavy rainfall due to climate change; landslides becoming more frequent.				
Months Wet season / typhoon season approaching.				
Days Ground is saturated; high water levels upstream; forecast of continued rainfall; high risk of floods.				
Hours Flood water moving to affected areas; landslides being reported.				

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