

# A PARTNERSHIP TO SAVE LIVES



 International Federation  
of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

 The International Research Institute  
for Climate and Society

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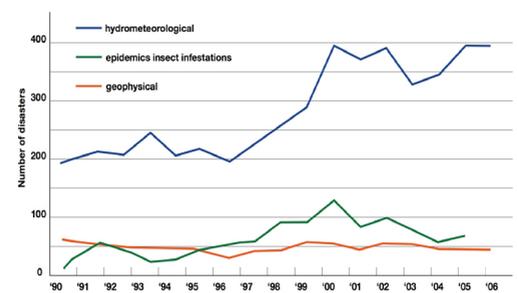
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In the past two decades, the annual number of humanitarian disasters has more than doubled, with the bulk of the increase coming from weather-related disasters. A changing climate coupled with changes in land use and population patterns means more people will be living in locations vulnerable to storms, droughts, floods and other climate risks. Recognizing this, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and the International Research Institute for Climate and Society are working together to use climate information and forecasts in innovative ways that will improve disaster preparedness and response capabilities.

The IRI's partnership with the International Federation—the largest humanitarian organization in the world, with tens of millions of volunteers—provides an enormous opportunity for improved early warning and early action at global and local levels.

Over the last 11 years, the IRI has developed a variety of tools to better understand, anticipate and respond to climate and weather events and their socioeconomic impacts. The IRI will apply its expertise in climate risk management to help the International Federation identify areas that are especially vulnerable to climate-related disasters. The International Federation, through its vast on-the-ground network, will also have an improved ability to predict and target help where it is most urgently needed, allowing for more effective assistance to victims. The development and integration of new tools for better-informed disaster preparedness and response is at the heart of this collaboration, which was fostered by the Red Cross/Red Crescent Climate Centre. As an initial effort, some of these tools will be combined on a single platform and tailored to meet the needs

Annual number of natural disasters



(from the Red Cross/Red Crescent Climate Guide)

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Bangladeshi villagers watch a disaster awareness and preparedness program. Shehab Uddin/Drik/British Red Cross

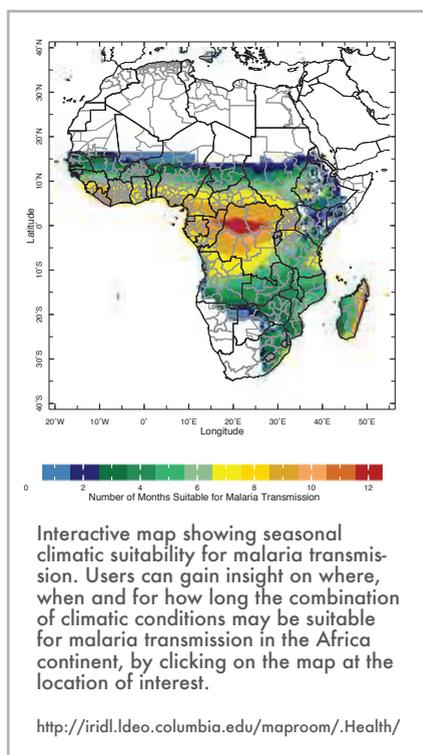
of the International Federation. With growing concern about the impacts of climate change, these tools will be of increasing relevance to disaster relief efforts in the future.

Health is one area which can benefit immediately from new tools, such as the Malaria Early Warning System. Developed by the IRI, the World Health Organization and partners, MEWS incorporates vulnerability assessment, seasonal forecasting, climate and environmental monitoring and health surveillance. It is already being used operationally in Africa, where the information is integrated into epidemic prevention and control. The IRI is also working on similar systems for epidemic meningitis, Rift Valley Fever, cholera and other diarrheal diseases, all of which have direct relevance to the International

Federation's health operations. Such tools will be used to enhance the International Federation's community-based response.

The partnership is also well positioned to use improved models for climate anomalies and extreme weather forecasts. This could be vital for early warning and response measures as both extremes and anomalies present particularly complicated conditions for disaster response.

The IRI's strengths in climate science and climate risk management give the International Federation a sound scientific basis from which to make critical decisions despite the uncertainties, thus improving the possibilities to move from disaster response towards 'early warning=early action'. In turn, the International Federation's massive global network of community based responders allows the IRI to achieve its mission of helping vulnerable societies around the world manage climate related risks.



## About the Institutions

The International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies provides immediate assistance to people in the context of disaster preparedness and response. The International Federation is the world's largest humanitarian organization, comprising 186 member Red Cross and Red Crescent societies, a Secretariat in Geneva, over 60 delegations and millions of volunteers to support activities around the world. Its mission is to improve the lives of vulnerable people by mobilizing the power of humanity.

The International Research Institute for Climate and Society (IRI) helps stakeholder groups from the global to the local scale to better manage climate related risks and opportunities, through the best use of scientific knowledge and information. Building on a multidisciplinary core of expertise, the IRI works directly with partners to translate scientific information into useful and actionable information given the specific decision making context. The IRI is a WHO Collaborating Centre for Climate Sensitive Diseases. It was established as a cooperative agreement between NOAA and Columbia University, and is part of The Earth Institute.