

# PROACT NETWORK UPDATE

## September 2008

### MISSION STATEMENT

“To provide a service that will influence, support and enable timely and appropriate strategies and programmes to help prevent disasters from occurring, to guide organisations on how to adapt to climate change and reduce their environmental footprint, and to promote early and sustainable environmental recovery to affected communities to ensure that neither peoples’ livelihoods nor the environment are unnecessarily impaired during subsequent recovery and rehabilitation.”

### ABOUT PROACT

ProAct Network, a Swiss-based environmental NGO, was established in 2007. Its headquarters is in Tannay, just outside Geneva. Visitors are most welcome!

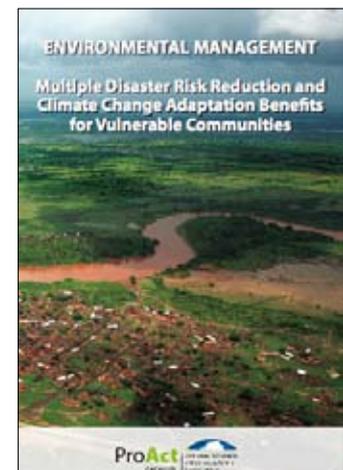
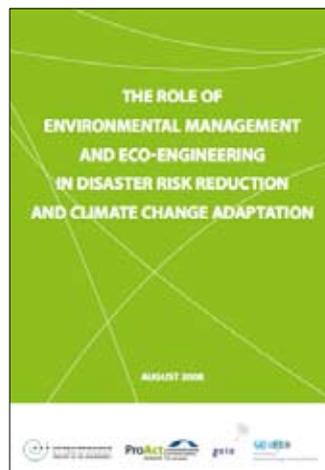
Our aim is to function with a small core staff but to develop and help support a global network of specialist partner agencies and individuals. Priority themes in our workplan are:

- \* environmental management in relation to human displacement;
- \* climate change;
- \* disaster risk reduction and environmental disaster recovery; and
- \* conflict prevention and reduction in relation to natural resource use.

ProAct works to support a range of UN agencies, humanitarian and development aid-focused NGOs, as well as national and local governments.

### ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT, DISASTER RISK REDUCTION AND CLIMATE CHANGE ADAPTATION

A growing body of evidence is slowly starting to demonstrate that environmental management has a potentially important role to play in reducing many of the risks posed by natural disasters. As research captured in a recent ProAct publication – *The Role of Environmental Management and Eco-engineering in Disaster Risk Reduction and Climate Change Adaptation* – demonstrates, ecosystems act as natural, dynamic barriers that protect vulnerable communities as well as local biodiversity. Such measures are, in addition, cost-efficient, create an ability to enhance livelihoods and have the added benefit of providing a positive greenhouse gas impact, compared with hard engineered alternatives.



As part of our ongoing work in promoting environmental management as a means of disaster risk reduction (DRR) and climate change adaptation (CCA), ProAct hosted a special event at the International Disaster and Risk Conference in Davos, Switzerland in August. The conference was attended by over 1,000 participants from 100 countries and sought to examine – from an interdisciplinary perspective – the different risks currently facing societies.



ProAct’s event was well attended and provided a platform for many of the contributors to the report – as well as some additional experts – to present their findings in person. In discussing the report’s findings, a panel comprising representatives from the Inter-American Development Bank, CIDA, the Ministry of Environment (Finland), CARE International, IUCN and UN/ISDR concluded that:

- ★ while DRR can be seen as a no regrets approach to climate change adaptation, environmental management is a no regrets approach to DRR, as it brings multiple environmental, economic and social benefits;
- ★ we need to communicate the potential and opportunities of environmental management in disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation to policymakers, practitioners and stakeholders, which requires identifying the obstacles that prevent such approaches from currently reaching the poor;
- ★ there is a clear need to develop and adapt technical guidelines and standards for more widescale application of environmental management for disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation. Practitioners and decision-makers in conjunction with an effective knowledge management, dissemination and technical backstopping are key elements of the system; and
- ★ new solutions are often not needed: instead we need to disseminate and adapt existing technologies and promote and support best practices of environmental management in relation to disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation.

- Case Studies contained in the report address the following:
- Tropical Coastal Ecosystems as Coastal Defenses
  - Disaster Mitigation and Prevention Through Restoration of Littoral Vegetation, Sri Lanka
  - Strengthening Decision-making Tools for Disaster Risk Reduction, Pakistan
  - Slope Stability: Benefits of Forest Vegetation in Central Japan
  - Quantifying the Protective Capacity of Forests against Snow Avalanches, Switzerland
  - Managed Re-alignment and the Re-establishment of Saltmarsh Habitat, UK
  - Ecosystem Services of a Floodplain with a Preserved Hydrological Regime, Czech Republic
  - West Arnhem Fire Management Agreement, Australia
  - Jordan Valley Permaculture

A series of commissioned case studies offers practical and proven approaches for environmental management and eco-engineering in DRR and CCA that can, in large, be tailored for different situations. Case studies are available at [http://www.proactnetwork.org/media/download/CCA\\_DRR\\_reports/casestudies/em.report.annex.pdf](http://www.proactnetwork.org/media/download/CCA_DRR_reports/casestudies/em.report.annex.pdf)

Research for this publication was intended as an initial phase of work. Subsequent phases – now being developed within the Network – relate to a study of the financial barriers to accessing and using funding opportunities for CCA and the development and support of practical projects that help deliver and apply many of the observations and recommendations in the report. For further information, please contact Nina at [nina.saalismaa@proactnetwork.org](mailto:nina.saalismaa@proactnetwork.org)

ProAct would like to acknowledge the inspiring work of the contributors to this report and looks forward to continued collaboration. Special thanks also to the Ministry of Environment, Finland, for a financial contribution to this work and the secretariat of the UN International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (ISDR) for its support and technical input.



Kerstin Stendahl,  
Ministry of Environment, Finland



Peter Bebi  
SLF, Switzerland



Sam Hettiarachchi,  
University of Moratuwa, Sri Lanka

## FUEL-EFFICIENT STOVE PROGRAMMES, DARFUR

The demand on fuelwood has been greatly exacerbated by the concentration of displaced people in camps, settlements and many urban centres across the three Darfurian states. Woodlots have been devastated and natural vegetation degraded. Tree stumps and roots have been dug up to fuel cooking fires. As a result, environmental degradation has taken a firm grip in many areas.

Dozens of humanitarian organisations acted quickly to try and stop the inevitable degradation from happening, but how effective have these been? Many tried to introduce fuel-efficient stoves as part of their humanitarian support, but how co-ordinated was this approach and has it been beneficial to families and communities?

To assess the effectiveness of the many different stove types being used – but particularly to examine the effectiveness, or not, of the different approaches proposed and supported by different organisations – a recent review was undertaken to extract lessons from the past three years of interventions, with a view to improving consistency, coverage and overall support of fuel-efficient programmes in Darfur.

With funding from UNEP, FAO and UNFPA, and in a partnership with CHF International, ProAct undertook the review on behalf of the Darfur Fuel-efficient Stove Working Group. Led by Mr Eugene Cole, the work involved an initial desk study and a subsequent field mission to North, South and West Darfur. Working with a core team of 50 women and men selected from the communities, dozens of meetings were held over a six-week period with hundreds of other community representatives, women and men.



Gathering data from users of fuel-efficient stoves in Darfur.

In a nutshell, while the review found wholesale support for the FES programme at all levels of engagement, a number of issues need to be urgently addressed from a programmatic point of view. Many of these are “big picture” issues, such as inadequate planning, poor co-ordination, an almost total lack of monitoring and project evaluation and poor investment in longer term sustainability and uptake of fuel-efficient stoves. Such issues range from how the FES programmes are perceived from an institutional perspective, to practical issues such as stove users not being given the opportunity to actually source the materials required to construct a stove, which seriously limits the uptake of this technology if the current programmes stop or falter and/or when people are finally able to return home.

The final report will be available shortly on ProAct’s website. Several follow-up actions to promote this work and help implement its recommendations are currently being discussed in Sudan. If interested, please contact Grant at [grant.wroe-street@proactnetwork.org](mailto:grant.wroe-street@proactnetwork.org)



## CO-OPERATION ON HUMAN HEALTH AND BIODIVERSITY (COHAB)

Highlighting the many links between disaster prevention and management and biological diversity was high on the agenda of the COHAB 2 meeting in Galway, Ireland, earlier this year. The event was attended by 170 delegates from over 70 countries and included representatives of United Nations agencies, governments, NGOs and inter-governmental organisations, academic institutions, health and environmental practitioners, students, community representatives, and indigenous community leaders. The conference aimed to improve dialogue and collaboration in the fields of biodiversity, and human health and well-being, and highlighted practical cross-sectoral and holistic approaches to addressing common issues.

Conference discussions explored recent research on the links between health and biodiversity, with case studies of action programmes and policy experience under three key thematic areas - Disaster Prevention, Relief and Recovery; Food Resources, Diet and Nutrition, and Emerging Infectious Diseases. Related developments in international and regional policies on biodiversity, public health and the U.N. Millennium Development Goals were considered, including the outputs and impacts of the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment and recent reports of the Inter-governmental Panel on Climate Change.

ProAct was honoured to be invited to Co-Chair a two-day workshop on Disaster Risk Reduction and Biodiversity with the Convention on Biological Diversity, an event which brought together practitioners and managers from around the globe. Recommendations from a series of working groups will shortly be available on ProAct's website.

For more details on the COHAB Initiative, please see <http://www.cohabnet.org/>

## PROACT'S POSITION(S)

In order to provide clarity, priority and focus to our work ProAct has started to develop a small series of institutional policy papers that set out our position on key issues relevant to our work. Each is intended to provide succinct statements of the main issues relating to that topic, detail the underlying principles we believe that should be borne in mind and set out the main areas of our work.

ProAct's position papers will hopefully provide a common starting point for members and partners of the Network as we seek to draw in other expertise and build firm links with other like-minded partners. A position paper on Climate Change Adaptation and Disaster Risk Reduction is now available and can be downloaded from [http://www.proactnetwork.org/media/download/PAPolicies/drr\\_caa\\_policy\\_paper.pdf](http://www.proactnetwork.org/media/download/PAPolicies/drr_caa_policy_paper.pdf)

The next paper – currently under preparation – will focus on issues surrounding environmentally induced displacement. Additional suggestions related to our Mission are welcome.

## INSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

ProAct is pleased to announce that it has signed a separate Memorandum of Understanding with CARE International and Disaster Waste Recovery. CARE International is a global confederation of 12 national member organisations working in 70 countries. The principal areas of ProAct's collaboration with CARE International include: providing environmental support to the IASC Cluster System;

- \* environmental management in situations of human displacement;
- \* disaster response, prevention and risk reduction;
- \* climate change (primarily at the institutional and community levels); and
- \* the refinement and development of environmental management tools, approaches and practices.

Disaster Waste Recovery (DWR) provides waste management support to organisations and communities affected by disasters and conflicts. The principle areas of collaboration between ProAct and DWR will include:

- \* waste assessment and planning and management from a social and environmental perspective;
- \* the provision of waste management and disaster recovery support to war-torn and disaster stricken areas; and
- \* the provision of technical support in relation to disaster preparedness and response, specifically in relation to solid and liquid waste materials.

Additional information on both organisations can be found on, respectively,

<http://www.care-international.org/> and  
<http://www.disasterwaste.org/>

## FORTHCOMING PUBLICATIONS

Humanitarian and relief workers are often overwhelmed during and immediately after an emergency. Decisions – many of which may be life-threatening or saving – need to be taken in a hurry, and may not always be based on sound judgment or advice. People may not have the experience, or be able to access information quickly enough, to act in the safest and most appropriate manner. They will also likely not have time to read through technical manuals to find the most appropriate solution.

In collaboration with the Shelter Centre and other partners, ProAct is developing a series of short technical booklets and accompanying training modules to provide help environmental guidance to field workers in emergencies and similar situations. The first two titles in this series are Asbestos and Disaster Waste Management.

The final draft version of these publications will be presented for an additional round of peer review at the next Shelter Meeting, to be held in November 2008 in Brussels. For additional information, please contact Karen at [karen.walker@proactnetwork.org](mailto:karen.walker@proactnetwork.org)

## ADMIT

AdMit is a new initiative on the voluntary carbon market that contributes to existing solutions to climate change mitigation by incorporating adaptation. It enables buyers in industrialised countries who would like to take care of the impacts of their unavoidable emissions to voluntarily invest in projects that enable victims in poor countries to adapt to climate change impacts. Mitigation, equally important to addressing climate change, is realised through the efforts of buyers to reduce their own emissions as well as through AdMit projects that have mitigation elements in addition to adaptation.

AdMit is an initiative co-ordinated by the International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED) and the new economics foundation (nef). ProAct participates in the AdMit Consortium and provides environmental and disaster risk reduction expertise to ensure that the AdMit standards meet environmental sustainability and disaster risk reduction criteria.

## NEXT UPDATE

The next update will be produced in December 2008: contributions from partners and colleagues within the Network are most welcome. The next issue will focus on Strategic Environmental Assessments, and will include a report on ProAct's work in support of the forestry sector in Liberia.

Please send any information you would like to have included in the next Update to  
[grant.wroe-street@proactnetwork.org](mailto:grant.wroe-street@proactnetwork.org)

Thank You.

For additional information on ongoing projects please visit our new website at [www.proactnetwork.org](http://www.proactnetwork.org)

