

# PROACT NETWORK UPDATE

## July 2009

### MISSION STATEMENT

“ProAct Network helps vulnerable communities improve resilience to disasters, climate change and humanitarian crises, through sustainable environmental management.”

### ABOUT PROACT

ProAct Network, a Swiss-based environmental NGO, was established in 2007. As of 1 April 2009, its headquarters is in Nyon (VD) – visitors are most welcome!

ProAct works with a small core staff, giving preference to developing a global network of technical partners – agencies and individuals – with whom we work.

Priority themes in our workplan are:

- \* environmental management in relation to human displacement;
- \* climate change adaptation;
- \* disaster risk reduction and risk management; and
- \* conflict prevention and reduction in relation to the use of natural resources.

ProAct works to support a range of UN agencies, humanitarian and development aid-focused NGOs, government agencies and local community structures engaged in environmental management.

Find out more on [www.proactnetwork.org](http://www.proactnetwork.org)



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### PROACT GROWS

ProAct has been busy since our last update in April.

Our Annual General Meeting took place during this period, allowing our Executive Committee to reflect on past activities and to re-inforce the foundations of ProAct's future development. In 2008, ProAct established contracts with 15 different organisations.

ProAct has identified and plays a crucial role at the interface of humanitarian relief and environmental management. In order to fulfill this role we are in the process of developing an ambitious work programme for the remainder of 2009 and beyond. As part of this strategy we are also expanding our global membership. Profiles of current members, associates and other partners are displayed on our website at the following address:

[www.proactnetwork.org/proactwebsite/index.php/members-a-associates](http://www.proactnetwork.org/proactwebsite/index.php/members-a-associates). Please do contact us if you would be interested in collaborating with our network.

Aside from ongoing projects and institutional developments, ProAct participated in two major global events in June: the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction and the Humanitarian Youth Forum. Summary reports of both events are given on page 3 of this Update.



## STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT OF THE LIBERIAN FOREST SECTOR

As Liberia emerges from civil conflict there is much pressure on natural resources to kick-start the economic development of the country. Historically, the forest sector – traditionally dominated by commercial forestry – has played an important economic role in Liberia. Post-conflict reforms in the forest sector have reconstituted the commercial forestry sector and have additionally sought to ensure that conservation and community forest management play equal roles in Liberia’s future forest management.

Against this background of a rapidly expanding forestry industry, an expanding protected area system and increased awareness of community-based forest management and community rights, the World Bank commissioned a Strategic Environmental Assessment of the forest sector. The study was facilitated by IUCN – International Union for the Conservation of Nature – who also provided additional funding for this research, the Sustainable Development Institute in Liberia and ProAct Network. In-country work started in October 2007 and concluded with a national SEA workshop in November 2008.

Key components of the project included a final scoping report that established the baseline context in the forest sector and determined the approach to be adopted for the assessment phase. In addition to consulting with stakeholders in Monrovia, a regional consultation process was undertaken in conjunction with work being done for the Community Rights Law in Liberia that would determine community rights and access to forests in Liberia. This included seven regional workshops for eight counties, 29 informal grassroots level meetings, four meetings each with women and youth groups, and 16 town-hall style meetings. A case study report was also compiled that evaluated on-the-ground contexts in three locations in Liberia chosen to reflect intersectorial aspects of forest management: the areas of Butter Hill, Kpayaquelleh, and Dulay. The project concluded



with a national SEA workshop in Monrovia that was attended by a cross-section of stakeholders including the Forestry Development Authority, the Environment Protection Agency, other government agencies, NGOs, private sector, donor agencies and members of the Liberian Forest Initiative, as well as participants from civil society in the eight counties that featured in the regional consultation process.

The assessment report concluded with a strategic action plan that identified priority actions in the four areas in which situation assessments had been undertaken: environmental, social, economic, and legal and institutional. These priority actions were identified in the context of contributing to the stated policy of integrating the “3Cs” – the commercial, conservation and community aspects – of forest management in Liberia.

For further information on ProAct’s work in Liberia, please contact [grant.wroe-street@proactnetwork.org](mailto:grant.wroe-street@proactnetwork.org)

*Liberia’s vast and diverse forestry resources are one of the country’s greatest assets, yet the capacity to manage these resources in a sustainable manner is seriously lacking. The Strategic Environmental Assessment of the forestry sector is one of several activities seeking to address this shortfall.*

## ENVIRONMENT AT THE GLOBAL PLATFORM FOR DISASTER RISK REDUCTION

The bi-annual Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction took place in Geneva from 16-19 June 2009 under the auspices of the International System for Disaster Reduction.

For the first time, the “environment” featured prominently on the agenda of this important global disaster risk reduction (DRR) event, with a high-level roundtable on ecosystem management for DRR and climate adaptation held on 17 June. This was further strengthened by a call to use environmental management approaches in the overall Chair’s summary of the Global Platform.

ProAct and other partner organisations of the ISDR Partnership for Environment and Disaster Risk Reduction (PEDRR) organised a joint special event on 16 June with the title “Investing in ecosystems management for sustainable livelihoods and disaster reduction: Challenges and solutions”. The event was well attended and concluded by highlighting five key recommendations:

1. It is important to look for quantifiable, science-based evidence demonstrating the benefits of ecosystems for disaster risk reduction.
2. We need to engage with other development and humanitarian communities working on issues such as DRR, climate change, sustainable development, poverty reduction and biodiversity, amongst others, so that we can engage more effectively as a collective with policy-makers.
3. We need to develop more effective communication tools and strategies to raise public awareness and facilitate informed policy decisions.
4. We need to maximise the involvement of local communities in ecosystem management and DRR.
5. Ecosystems provide an important opportunity for reducing risk but may not be the only method for engagement. Other approaches will have to be taken into account to maximise an effective DRR response.

ProAct has adopted these recommendations and looks forward to contributing to the improvement of DRR responses through future projects and partnerships.

For further information on ProAct’s climate and DRR programmes, please contact [nina.saalismaa@proactnetwork.org](mailto:nina.saalismaa@proactnetwork.org)

## CLIMATE ISSUES AT THE GLOBAL HUMANITARIAN FORUM YOUTH MEETING

The Global Humanitarian Forum (GHF) organised an international Youth Forum entitled “Young Adults for New Results” from 17-19 June 2009 in Geneva, Switzerland.



*Over 100 young people from around the world attended the Forum together with high-ranking GHF leaders Mr Kofi Annan and Mr Walter Fust.*

The main sessions included sharing experiences on the human impact of climate change, a simulation of UNFCCC negotiations, and brainstorming on climate change mitigation and adaptation projects.

As a stakeholder in climate change adaptation and working for ProAct Network as an intern and project assistant, David Loserian joined the forum with other young people to provide local-based testimonies of the human impact of climate change.

The main output of the Youth Forum was the formulation of five projects proposed by the participants for further follow-up and implementation. David chose to be involved in the “Alternative Green Algae-based Energy Initiative”. The project proposes to produce biofuel extracted from algae in a carbon neutral process from cultivation to extraction, transportation and use in engines. The Forum also provided a useful space to share experiences and to narrate personal encounters of the impacts of climate change in different countries and communities. The final outcome of the Youth Forum was the Copenhagen Manifesto, with participants’ expectations of the COP 15 in Copenhagen.

The follow-up for the Youth Forum and further development of the five priority projects will take place through an e-platform set at the Forum’s website: [www.youthforum2009.org/](http://www.youthforum2009.org/)

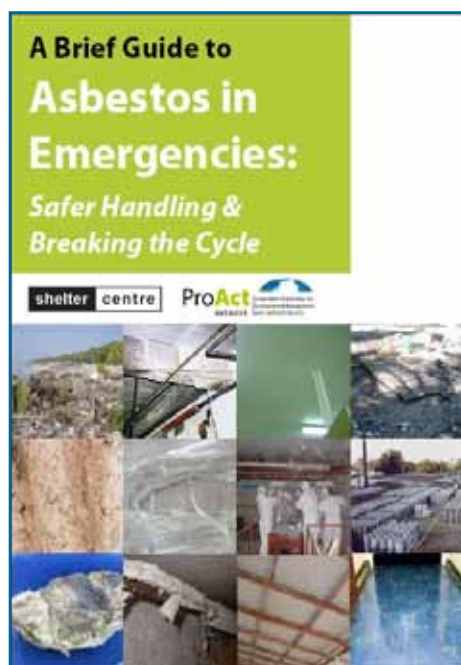
For further information regarding the Youth Forum please contact [david.loserian@proactnetwork.org](mailto:david.loserian@proactnetwork.org)

## ENVIRONMENTAL GUIDANCE TO FIELD WORKERS ON EMERGENCIES AND SIMILAR SITUATIONS

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 detailed technical manuals to find the most appropriate solution.

In collaboration with the Shelter Centre and other partners, ProAct has developed two short technical booklets and accompanying training modules to provide quick and accessible guidance to field practitioners.



**“Asbestos in Emergencies: Safer Handling & Breaking the Cycle”** provides basic background information on asbestos and its associated health risks, and key recommendations for both minimising the risks of dealing with asbestos and avoiding all future use of asbestos-containing materials in post-disaster transitional settlement and reconstruction operations.

These two booklets and accompanying training modules are available at:

[www.proactnetwork.org](http://www.proactnetwork.org)  
[www.sheltercentre.org](http://www.sheltercentre.org)

For more information, please contact  
[karen.walker@proactnetwork.org](mailto:karen.walker@proactnetwork.org)



**“Management of Building Waste Materials in Emergencies”** highlights key issues and priorities of disaster waste management in different settings and provides simple examples of re-use and recycling of building waste materials in transitional settlement and reconstruction operations and outlines key camp closure considerations.

### NEXT UPDATE

The next update will be produced in October 2009. Contributions from partners and colleagues within the Network are most welcome. Please send any information you would like to have included in the next Update to [nina.saalismaa@proactnetwork.org](mailto:nina.saalismaa@proactnetwork.org). Deadline for receipt of text is Wednesday 30 September. Thank You.

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