

Contribution to the preparation of the European Commission Communication on Resilience

20 July 2012

Resilience

Our Principles

We are guided at all times by our Fundamental Principles:

Humanity
Impartiality
Neutrality
Independence
Voluntary Services
Unity
Universality

Recommendations of the National Red Cross Societies of the Member States of the European Union and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC)⁽¹⁾

The Red Cross ⁽²⁾ mission is “to improve the lives of vulnerable people by mobilizing the power of humanity”. Since its creation, the Red Cross Red Crescent Movement has been guided by a clear set of humanitarian principles and values that aims, in one way or another, to effectively contribute to building resilience.

To strengthen communities resilience, the Red Cross makes the following nine recommendations to the EU and its Member States:

1. Put people first
2. Respect local ownership
3. Ensure comprehensive cross-sectoral assessment, planning and implementation
4. Include the most vulnerable groups
5. Build Red Cross Red Crescent capacities
6. Incorporate a long-term perspective
7. Work in partnership
8. Strengthen the unique role of Red Cross Red Crescent National Societies as auxiliaries to governments and authorities to increase impact and scale.

The aim of this position paper is to present the Red Cross Red Crescent definition and perspectives on resilience and put forward recommendations to opinion leaders, decision makers and donors to support a shift towards a more comprehensive approach to resilience.

The Red Cross urges that a larger component of donors’ funding be allocated to building resilience towards sustainable development.



Health education is one of the major activities of Myanmar Red Cross volunteers where they meet with mine workers during lunchbreak to talk about HIV-prevention.

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Introduction

The IFRC Strategy 2020 describes both our engagement in life-saving activities during disasters and crises, and the importance we place on protecting livelihoods, strengthening recovery and enabling healthy and safe living in the longer-term. The Strategy thus emphasizes the role of the Red Cross Red Crescent (RCRC) in humanitarian actions to respond to immediate needs, as well as in addressing the underlying causes of vulnerability through development related activities. To meet the ambitions laid out in IFRC Strategy 2020, we are further developing and improving our programming and resilience approach by combining the humanitarian concerns caused by imminent threats, with the sustainable, and longer-term approaches and institutional strengthening that are traditionally associated with development.

1. Including the Norwegian Red Cross as members of the Red Cross EU Office.

2. Thereafter, ‘the Red Cross’ refers to National Red Cross Societies of the Member States of the European Union and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

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We strive to meet people's basic needs for health (physical and psychological), shelter, education, food, water as well as security. We make every effort to ensure that inequities are eliminated, and that human rights, human dignity, psychosocial wellbeing, sustainable livelihoods and local values are understood and respected. We are committed to ensuring that non-renewable resources, biodiversity and the environment are managed responsibly.

RESILIENCE:

is the ability of individuals, communities, organisations, or countries exposed to disasters, crises and underlying vulnerabilities to anticipate, reduce the impact of, cope with, and recover from the effects of adversity without compromising their long term prospects.

We address social and economic determinants at different interconnected levels – individual, community, national, regional and global. It is important to understand how an individual's wellbeing can have an impact on his/her ability to contribute to the development of the community in which he/she lives. Community development is dependent on government policies and market forces. These, in turn, are affected by regional and global governance, demographic trends, poorly planned and managed urbanization, environmental degradation, and climate change and pandemics, to name but a few.

What is Resilience?

We define resilience as the ability of individuals, communities, organizations, or countries exposed to disasters and crises and underlying vulnerabilities to anticipate, reduce the impact of, cope with, and recover from the effects of adversity without compromising their long term prospects.

The word ability is key to understanding resilience. It is a capacity that is based on different human, psychological, social, financial, physical, natural and political assets. The objective of strengthening of resilience is to increase this capacity to withstand the effects of adversity.

A comprehensive approach to resilience requires an understanding of the interconnectedness of these different levels and their links with regional and global levels.

The RCRC analysis often starts at the community level and focuses on community resilience. A comprehensive analysis requires understanding individuals and households and their resilience capacities within the community. In addition, we need to understand the external environment and its impact on the resilience of individuals and their communities. Interventions to strengthen resilience can be made on different levels and reinforce each other.

Another key aspect of the definition is the acknowledgement that individuals, communities, organizations and countries are exposed to disasters and crises, as well as underlying causes of vulnerability. The definition lists the different abilities of anticipating, reducing the impact of, coping with, and recovering from the effects of adversity. Resilience is therefore not just the immediate ability to respond to negative 'events', but rather a process of positive adaptation before, during and after adversity. At its core, the resilience approach is an attempt to protect development gains in the longer term and to reduce the dramatic declines in development caused by disasters and crises. For the IFRC, this highlights the overlapping nature of preparedness, relief and recovery work and the importance of bridging these with development work.

Our Practice

The Red Cross Red Crescent analysis often starts at the community level and focuses on community resilience.

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Our call

The Red Cross urges all EU Member States, the EU and their agencies to address vulnerability and improve community resilience at individual, family or community levels using a multi-sectoral and complimentary approach based on local vulnerability and capacity assessments.



'In Samoa on Manono island, residents like Tulei & Elena Faifai and community leaders work with the Samoa Red Cross Society to map out disaster and health risks. Villagers now know what to do if another tsunami occurs, thanks to exercises run by the Red Cross, which has also set up an early warning system using church bells and mobile phone messages', 2010

© Rob Few/IFRC

How can Resilience be Strengthened?

These principles further describe the Red Cross Red Crescent approach and perspectives in strengthening resilience

1. Put people first

Any humanitarian or development support must be based on the recognition that whatever action we take, is only complementary to the resilience building process of the individual, household or the community concerned. Therefore, we should focus on assisting them in their efforts to strengthen their own resilience.

2. Respect local ownership

It is important to focus on building local ownership, assets and capacity, as well as a link with local government and actors, and to avoid fostering dependency or substitution. Community ownership has a direct impact on both the success and sustainability of programmes. Communities need to be consulted in the earliest stages of programme inception, so as to capture their support and ensure that their needs are met.

3. Ensure comprehensive cross-sectoral assessment, planning and implementation

The starting point is to understand the diverse underlying causes of vulnerability, and disaster and crisis risks simultaneously. Addressing vulnerability and improving community resilience at individual, family or community levels requires a multi-sectoral (Health, Social Protection, Psychosocial Support, Climate Smart DRR, Livelihood, Food Security, WatSan, Environment, etc.) and complimentary approach based on local vulnerability and capacity assessments. This doesn't necessarily fit with a standardised sectoral way of working, but requires increased cross-sectoral cooperation and partnerships for programme implementation, as well as the integration of more tailor-made programming.

It is important for external stakeholders to build local capacities at all stages so that processes of analysis, planning and implementation can be community led, can be sustained and repeated without external support in the future. A community driven process will lead to more effective and realistic analysis, planning and action than those developed by outsiders. This needs to fully encompass all sectors in all contexts, be that relief, recovery or development.

4. Include the most vulnerable groups

Within any community there are groups who are marginalized or disadvantaged in some way and who may require particular attention to ensure that they are included. Groups are often excluded from participating on the basis of age, race, caste, gender, religion or other ethnic grounds. These groups are often particularly vulnerable as a direct result of their

limited voice in decision-making on the issues which affect them. They must be considered and specific actions taken to ensure that their views are incorporated into any analysis activities taking place in the community.

5. Build Red Cross Red Crescent capacities

Building the capacity of Host National Societies (particularly RCRC local branches and volunteers) is vital, as they form an integral part of the community and its civil society; enriching the social fabric of both.

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Our call

The Red Cross urges that a larger component of donors' funding be allocated to build resilience towards sustainable development.⁽¹⁾

1. "The Road to Resilience - Bridging relief and development for a more sustainable future", IFRC Discussion Paper, June 2012



'Providing emergency, life-saving interventions while focussing on long-term community resilience is at the basis of the "twin-track" approach promoted by the Red Cross.

© Yoshi Shimizu / IFRC

6. Incorporate a long-term perspective.

Strengthening resilience does not happen overnight and requires long-term engagement and investment. It is important to focus beyond immediate action and survival, on long-term gains and sustainability. Providing emergency, life-saving interventions while focussing on long-term community resilience is at the basis of the "twin-track" approach promoted by the RCRC. The aim of this approach is to address the underlying causes of vulnerability, and prepare for and respond to disasters and crises throughout the overlapping phases of disaster management, while linking closely to developmental programming.

7. Work in partnership.

It is important to recognize that the building of community safety and resilience cannot be achieved by a single actor. We can certainly make our contribution, but the systematic building of resilience can only be achieved through strong working partnerships among all stakeholders – from the communities themselves, to local and national governments, governmental and nongovernmental organizations, knowledge centers, universities and the private sector.

It is fundamental to create and broker relevant partnerships, and advocate for support, especially in areas which are not at the core of RCRC's expertise or mandate. The RCRC can play an important role in facilitating support from a range of stakeholders and in bringing them together. But much more needs to be jointly done to scale up best practices and lessons learnt.

8. Strengthen the unique role of the RC/RC National Societies as auxiliaries to governments and authorities to increase impact and scale.

A community-based approach does not mean that action should only be focused at the community level. Community perspectives should be fed up into all other levels of decision-making – local, national and global – to bring about sustainable and widespread change. The RCRC is uniquely placed to work with governments to develop and generate local and national level support for community-based programmes. This relationship is important in the context of increasingly ensuring that governments at all levels are focused on strengthening community safety and resilience and that this is reflected in local and national laws, policies, strategies and programmes. This type of working relationship with public authorities helps to identify the risks, vulnerabilities and capacities of people in need, from the national to the local level, as well as to find solutions for increasing community resilience.

Characteristics of a safe and resilient community

It is at the community level that disasters are felt and where resilience building measures can make the biggest difference. With numerous branches and volunteers Red Cross Red Crescent Societies have a strong presence at the community level and a rich experience and knowledge, generated from its various community-based programmes and projects.

A safe and resilient community...

1. ... is knowledgeable and healthy (physically as well as psychologically).

It has the ability to assess, manage and monitor its risks. It can learn new skills and build on past experiences.

2. ... is organized. It has the capacity to identify problems, establish priorities and act.

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Our call

Effective and sustainable development must prioritize Disaster Risk Reduction, because strengthening resilience to shocks is far less costly than responding afterwards.

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Resolution 4

The Red Cross Red Crescent requests States to establish or strengthen legal and policy frameworks for Disaster management and reduction (IDRL).⁽¹⁾

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1. In 2007, Resolution 4 of the 30th International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent adopted the "Guidelines for the domestic facilitation and regulation of international disaster relief and initial recovery assistance" (also known as the IDRL Guidelines).

3. ... is connected. It has relationships with external actors who provide a wider supportive environment, and supply goods and services when needed.
4. ... has infrastructure and services. It has strong housing, transport, power, water and sanitation systems. It has the ability to maintain, repair and renovate them.
5. ... has a sustainable livelihood. It has different economic activities and choices which provide food, health, income, shelter and other tangible assets. It has the capacity to cope with and recover from disasters and maintain or enhance its capabilities.
6. ... can manage its natural assets. It recognizes their value and has the ability to protect, enhance and maintain them.

Our Recommendations to Governments

•Risk reduction and the strengthening of resilience are critical to promoting sustainable development and should be part of the international development agenda beyond 2015 (post Millennium Development Goals). In this respect, we fully support the commitment made by governments the 4th High-level Forum on Aid Effectiveness held in Busan in 2011 to "...ensure that development strategies and programmes prioritise the building of resilience among people and societies at risk from shocks, especially in highly vulnerable settings such as small island developing states. Investing in resilience and risk reduction increases the value and sustainability of our development efforts."

•Governments should include Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) in their country development plans (and their development cooperation overseas when appropriate) and bring all stakeholders on board for its implementation. Effective and sustainable development must prioritize DRR, because strengthening resilience to shocks is far less costly than responding afterwards.

•Governments should ensure fair and lasting energy solutions that put vulnerable and poor people first and help cut greenhouse gas emissions. At the international level, this should include new financial and technical support for the efforts of developing countries to provide the full range of energy services needed to help pull people out of poverty. All actors involved must work in global and local partnerships to strengthen resilience, including enacting the necessary reforms of governance at all levels; to strengthen accountability and allow citizen monitoring of environmental and development performance.

•Governments should promote sustainable livelihoods by creating new opportunities such as irrigated agriculture, water resource management, livestock infrastructures, access to financial services, formal educational skills, and the use of new technologies, by assessing the risks and the capacities of communities.

•Governments should invest in community infrastructures and social services with a focus on education and access to primary health care to ensure that the next generation can live healthy, productive lives.

•Disaster laws facilitate the strengthening of resilience and community engagement. Governments are encouraged to establish and/or update relevant disaster management legislation so as to be prepared to facilitate and regulate any international disaster assistance they may require, in order to ensure that the people affected receive timely and effective relief.

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Our Recommendations to Donors

- Ownership, donor alignment and harmonization, as well as the management of results with mutual accountability, remain as relevant as ever. However, they are meaningless without the organised participation of local communities themselves. Their full engagement and contributions are key to progressing the resilience and sustainable development agendas.
- The twin-track approach must bridge the gap between humanitarian aid and development to focus on strengthening community resilience, good governance and an equitable distribution of public budgets and investments.
- Establish joint accountability mechanisms that ensure public, development and aid funding are directed and spent adequately, based on the priorities identified by communities.



'Philippines Red Cross runs disaster risk reduction education program in schools. Santulan Elementary School, Santulan Barangay, Malabon city, Metro Manila, Philippines. August 2013.

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Red Cross EU Office
Rue de Trèves 59-61 Trierstraat
1040 Bruxelles
Belgium
Tel: +32 (0)2 235 06 80
Fax: +32 (0)2 230 54 64
Mail : infoboard@redcross-eu.net
www.facebook.com/RedCrossEU
www.twitter.com/RedCrossEU



- Provide flexible and predictable multi-annual funding schemes to build resilience.
- Support early actions as they have proven to be highly efficient and cost effective for addressing chronic vulnerabilities and managing risks rather than crises.
- When resilience is framed as a critical part of development work, the basic humanitarian needs of vulnerable people cannot be forgotten. Both development and humanitarian initiatives must do no harm and must contribute to making people less vulnerable and prone to avoidable inequalities in the determinants of health and well-being.
- Ensure better coordination between various resilience initiatives to maximize impacts and synergies.

Conclusions

Opinion leaders, decision makers and donors are urged to support this shift towards a more comprehensive approach to resilience. A larger component of donors' funding should be allocated to building resilience towards sustainable development.

As one way of mobilising funds, the General Assembly of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent has decided to invest at least 10 percent of any emergency appeal in resilience work. We are counting on the support of donors to make this a reality.

About the Red Cross EU Office

The Red Cross EU Office represents Red Cross National Societies in the European Union, as well as Norway, and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), before the institutions of the European Union. It works to increase the influence of the Red Cross on European Union policies that have an impact on the interests of vulnerable people. The Red Cross EU Office provides support to its members by sharing information, building partnerships and facilitating access to EU funding.

For more information, please visit www.redcross.eu. You can also connect with us on www.facebook.com/RedCrossEU and www.twitter.com/RedCrossEU.