



## People- centRED approach:

Strengthening local-  
to-global capacities



**RED CROSS**  
EU OFFICE

# People- centRED approach:

## Strengthening local-to-global capacities

Our sincere appreciation goes to everyone who contributed to the development of this publication.

To order copies, please contact [international@redcross.eu](mailto:international@redcross.eu)

The Red Cross EU Office is a membership office representing the 27 National Red Cross Societies in the EU, the Norwegian Red Cross, the Icelandic Red Cross and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), towards EU institutions and stakeholders.

The opinions expressed in this publication do not necessarily represent the official policy of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), or of individual National Societies.

© February 2023, Red Cross EU Office

All rights reserved.

Cover photo:

The IFRC painted a mural to show the contribution that migrant and local women have made in the fight against COVID-19 in different areas in Lima, Peru, April 2021.

© IFRC

# Contents

<b>FOREWORD</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>KEY RECOMMENDATIONS</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>CHAPTER 1 – ENSURING ACCESS TO HEALTH</b>	<b>12</b>
a. Strengthen health systems with a focus on epidemic preparedness	13
b. Ensure access to health in fragile contexts and hard-to-reach areas	14
c. Empower women and girls’ health and well-being	15
d. Safeguard mental health and psychosocial well-being	16
e. Innovation fostering participation in community healthcare	18
<b>CHAPTER 2 – ADDRESSING THE IMPACTS OF CLIMATE CHANGE</b>	<b>20</b>
a. Prepare the communities before a disaster strikes	21
b. Adapt to life in a changing climate	22
c. Address compounding risks to ensure community resilience	23
<b>CHAPTER 3 – STRENGTHENING LIVELIHOODS FOR INCLUSIVE SOCIETIES</b>	<b>26</b>
a. Guarantee physical, economic and social access to food	27
b. Promote social inclusion of marginalised groups	28
c. Empower and improve the livelihoods of women and girls	29
d. Guarantee sustainable socioeconomic development	30
<b>CHAPTER 4 – SUPPORTING COMMUNITIES AFFECTED BY DISPLACEMENT</b>	<b>32</b>
a. Secure the provision of basic services and reduce aid dependency	33
b. Bolster resilience and promote inclusion	34
c. Promote social economy and inclusive entrepreneurial ecosystems	35
<b>CHAPTER 5 – CREATING AN ENABLING ENVIRONMENT FOR SOCIETAL CHANGE AND HUMAN DEVELOPMENT</b>	<b>38</b>
a. Enhance laws and regulations to prepare, protect and respond to emergencies	39
b. Change social norms to fight against discrimination and exclusion	40
c. Foster inclusive societies through formal and non-formal education	41
<b>CONCLUSION</b>	<b>43</b>
<b>SOURCES AND FURTHER INFORMATION</b>	<b>46</b>
Programmes illustrated in this publication	46
Endnotes	50

# Foreword

---

**Mette Petersen**  
Director of the Red  
Cross EU Office

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic represents an unprecedented challenge, increasing poverty and inequalities, and disrupting public health and food systems. According to the World Bank,<sup>1</sup> the pandemic dealt the biggest setback to the fight against global poverty since 1990 and stalled progress on the Sustainable Development Goals. High indebtedness in many countries has increased development needs, as have rising food and energy prices – fuelled in part by the war in Ukraine and climate shocks. The world’s poorest communities bore the steepest costs of the pandemic. Their income losses were twice as high as the world’s richest, and global inequality rose for the first time in decades. In the face of these increasing global challenges and scarce resources there is a need for actors engaged in building resilience to increase their effectiveness and work together.

The International Red Cross and Red Crescent (RCRC) Movement’s mission is to save lives, prevent and alleviate human suffering, thereby contributing to maintaining and promoting human dignity and peace in the world. For more than 175 years the RCRC has been present within communities and at global level to prepare and adapt ahead of future shocks and improve the resilience of the populations they are an integral part of. Their permanent presence in country through local branches, and their role as first responders to humanitarian crises, represents a continuous nexus implementation approach that blurs the distinctions between short- and long-term goals and

objectives. As auxiliary to public authorities, National Societies have a unique role to interact with their governments at all levels to support the people who need it the most. To ensure long-lasting development, solutions must be built on multi-sector responses based on local needs. National RCRC Societies with their community-level presence through volunteers and staff play a key role in identifying humanitarian-development needs and ensure that the affected populations are involved in decision-making and implementation. Furthermore, as actors in the field, they are best placed to work with communities on longer-term and locally led development. The RCRC can therefore play a key role in supporting global efforts to address these global development challenges in line with international agreements.

This publication provides very concrete and operational examples of how National RCRC Societies and the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) work worldwide across silos to protect people in need and promote positive change for humanity, based on our humanitarian values and the Fundamental Principles.<sup>2</sup> The RCRC works daily through a dynamic local-to-global network to best serve communities and stand ready to improve long-lasting partnerships with the EU, Member States and like-minded organisations to place resilience as a central objective of humanitarian assistance and development aid.

---

“  
*As actors from the field, National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies are well placed to work with communities on long-term and locally led development.*”

# Key recommendations

Through their unique role,<sup>3</sup> National Red Cross and Red Crescent (RCRC) Societies with the support of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) are present before, during and after crises. Guided by IFRC's Strategy 2030<sup>4</sup> and building on its unique volunteer network, unparalleled community-based expertise and the RCRC Fundamental Principles, particularly those of independence and neutrality, National RCRC Societies and the IFRC collectively tackle the major humanitarian and development challenges of this decade.

By including, protecting and engaging individuals, families and communities, and helping them develop their knowledge and capacities to find local solutions to local challenges, the RCRC contributes to long-term development and lasting and inclusive peace. Active members of their communities, RCRC volunteers and staff are key drivers in fostering community resilience.

This booklet showcases the RCRC's added value in strengthening the resilience of communities, and the variety of activities carried out to respond to the biggest challenges of our time, in line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development<sup>5</sup> and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs),<sup>6</sup> and in strengthening the humanitarian-development nexus.



Red Cross volunteer Kang Song Ok grows vegetables in a greenhouse in South Hamgyong province, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, to give them to vulnerable community members, September 2019.

© Mirna Helenius/Finnish Red Cross

This publication puts forward the following key recommendations:

### **To empower community resilience**

---

- » Implement effective long-term solutions that build local capacities and address underlying vulnerabilities, allowing for an effective humanitarian-development nexus.
- » Support systemic approaches that address challenges transversally and consider all different impacted fields and affected populations, as well as work with different actors and across silos.
- » Actively engage and enable local actors, communities and civil society organisations (CSOs) to drive the processes through context-based and bottom-up solutions, allowing them to prepare, coordinate and improve systems to become more resilient and reduce the impacts of crises.

### **To ensure access to health:**

---

- » Promote effective understanding, ownership and implementation of programmes within local communities, through constant attention and coordination with all different stakeholders, and giving priority to mainstreaming health and well-being across sectors and in all policies.
- » Ensure access to care services for all, and ensure stable and sustainable community health systems accessible to the most vulnerable populations and the people left furthest behind.
- » Invest in a community health workforce and relevant actors to increase the sustainability of local health systems, including through capacity building, risk communication, preparedness, surveillance and tracing, health literacy and awareness-raising campaigns to ultimately reinforce decentralised local health structures and strengthen community resilience.

### **To address the impacts of climate change:**

---

- » Promote an integrated and multi-sector approach to development, climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction, including a multi-risk approach that prepares communities to better respond when facing the consequences of climate change, as well as to recover before they are impacted again.
- » Bolster climate change adaptation and ensure that the most vulnerable countries to climate risks receive the support they need, including through investing in local actors, and reaching the last mile.
- » Support innovative approaches that help reduce the impacts of climate change using integrated communication systems, such as anticipatory and early action, to help communities prepare for hazardous climate-related events.



## **To strengthen livelihoods for inclusive societies:**

---

- » Address discrimination and socioeconomic inequalities and promote programmes that boost income-generating activities, as well as ensure that all groups, especially the most marginalised, have access to proper resources and services, leaving no one behind.
- » Ensure that livelihoods assets are protected, strengthened, diversified and restored for long-lasting community resilience, allowing vulnerable communities to take an active role in building their own resilience and have opportunities to thrive.
- » Enhance local and sustainable agri-food production by investing in equitable partnerships to increase food access and availability, bolster nutrition, improve farmers' livelihoods and create inclusive and gender-sensitive job opportunities.

## **To support communities affected by displacement:**

---

- » Ensure a route-based approach to address individual needs along migratory trails, while working with and for migrants and local communities towards sustainable, inclusive and long-lasting solutions.
- » Ensure equal and effective access to essential services for people on the move irrespective of their legal status and with a particular focus on hard-to-reach groups and locations while addressing additional vulnerabilities by working with and for host communities.
- » Promote multi-sectoral approaches including cooperation between humanitarian-development-peace actors, donors and governments.

## **To create an enabling environment for societal change and human development:**

---

- » Ensure a bottom-up approach where local authorities, communities and CSOs can share their local know-how and co-create mechanisms that will better withstand shocks, face adversity and allow for a quicker recovery.
- » Recognise, including through dedicated policies and legal frameworks, the added value and key roles played by local actors and ensure meaningful participation and engagement in the decision-making, implementation and monitoring processes of all development and humanitarian programmes.
- » Promote a greater degree of localisation across sectors and beyond humanitarian interventions through long-term investments and structured engagement with local actors, communities and CSOs for long-lasting and sustainable development.





Two Sierra Leone Red Cross Society volunteers are smiling at each other, April 2021.

© IFRC



# Introduction

Over time, humanity has constantly developed mechanisms to protect itself, its communities and its livelihoods in the face of challenges and crises. The communities that fare best in overcoming these crises are those which are prepared to absorb shocks and capable of adapting and putting in place effective resilience<sup>7</sup> mechanisms, while making fundamental changes to ensure long-term prospects. From an operational perspective, crises like the COVID-19 pandemic and the conflict in Ukraine have further highlighted the need for a systemic approach which considers all different impacted fields and affected populations, as well as the importance of working with different actors and across silos.

But crises are complex, and communities are diverse. It is crucial to approach challenges transversally and ensure that the most acute needs within the communities are addressed and prevented in the long run. The humanitarian-development nexus approach should enable context-based and bottom-up solutions, where local communities and organisations can prepare, coordinate and improve systems to become more resilient and reduce the impacts of crises. The RCRC works across the humanitarian-development nexus and implements principled action, representing key contributions to resilient and peaceful communities. Community-based resilience work, such as the provision of essential services, disaster preparedness and reinforced protection at local level, often involves inclusive approaches that contribute to managing and dissipating local tensions. The RCRC engages those people most impacted by global challenges and helps address their most pressing needs, reaching people effectively and in a non-discriminatory and equitable manner.

While development and humanitarian needs are increasing all over the world – including due to the impacts of climate change as demonstrated by the Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) published in 2022<sup>8</sup> – financial support is not increasing fast enough to keep up with rising demands. In line with the key ambitions of the Grand Bargain to increase the effectiveness and efficiency of the humanitarian system by reinforcing the role played by local and national responders, it is essential to increase coordination with local actors and their active participation. Local actors have a distinct comparative advantage by being strongly established at the very local level and thus well placed to respond and reduce the impact of future crises. It is also essential to ensure policy coherence and programming across silos, implementing the localisation agenda beyond humanitarian settings and promoting equitable partnerships between international and local actors.



Uganda Red Cross Society volunteer Karungi Shamillah conducts community-based surveillance, educating communities about Ebola while also alerting authorities and taking care of people with signs of the virus in Majada, April 2021.

© Corrie Büttler/IFRC

The first chapter of this publication focuses on Red Cross and Red Crescent (RCRC) work within communities to address health challenges and ensure access to essential services, while the second chapter explores responses to the impacts of climate change on local communities. The third chapter highlights activities strengthening livelihoods to ensure inclusive societies. Present in communities around the world, RCRC staff and volunteers are also close to the communities who have fled conflicts, persecutions and/or disasters, or are on the move in search of a more sustainable life. The fourth chapter describes how the RCRC is supporting displaced and host communities to reduce suffering and during conflicts. Finally, the fifth chapter explains how the RCRC Societies leverage their local community connections and their auxiliary role to engage with public authorities, advocating for laws and policies that protect populations. Through practical examples, this booklet highlights the RCRC's efforts to empower communities, build on their capacities and help bring about long-lasting positive change in people's lives.

The European Union (EU) and its Member States are key decision makers whose policies and programming impact heavily on communities worldwide. IFRC and National RCRC Societies' partnerships with the EU and its Member States are essential as often objectives and ambitions meet. The partnerships translate these ambitions into concrete actions on the ground, generating positive and long-lasting impacts within local communities. This booklet focuses on the work of the National RCRC Societies and the IFRC outside the EU<sup>9</sup> and how this relates to EU priorities and external action. Engaging key partners such as CSOs and international organisations is among the commitments made by the EU in the implementation of its external priorities. In this regard, the RCRC encourages the EU to support and enable local actors, CSOs and communities to drive the processes of their resilience building. And it is committed to continuing exchanges with EU representations around the world to identify means of working together and leaving no one behind.

# Ensuring access to health

1.



With support from the European Commission's Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (DG ECHO), communities in Somalia are being vaccinated against COVID-19, June 2022.

© Rita Nyaga/IFRC

Health inequities are caused by adverse socioeconomic and environmental circumstances, such as lack of access to healthcare (including mental health), education and information, poor working conditions, unemployment and low-income levels, or be further worsened by age, gender and cultural background. These inequities have significant social and economic costs, both to individuals and societies. Health inequity is a fundamental social justice issue, affecting the morbidity and mortality rates of a country and impeding development and sustainable growth.

Addressing the wider determinants of health over a longer and more sustainable perspective can eradicate inequities. In recent years, National Red Cross and Red Crescent (RCRC) Societies have focused on tackling developing health threats, including emerging and re-emerging epidemics, addressing the impacts of climate change on health, and changing security contexts which can breach the right to health.

### **a. Strengthen health systems with a focus on epidemic preparedness**

As underlined in the European Commission and European External Action Service Joint Communication on the Global Gateway,<sup>10</sup> the COVID-19 pandemic has revealed weaknesses of, and the wide discrepancy in, healthcare systems around the world. Supporting communities in preventing and controlling diseases, reducing risk, and contributing to basic health services is essential to strengthen health systems and ensure medical technologies can reach local populations, especially those most marginalised and at risk. When the COVID-19 pandemic first struck, the RCRC took actions around the globe to deliver responses at local level, including with EU support. In many countries, RCRC volunteers and health staff were among the first responders and played a crucial role in supporting health authorities in various aspects of preventing,

containing and screening for the virus, with the support of the IFRC. Promoting a local response through National RCRC Societies and scaling up remote support were crucial while lockdown and travel restriction measures were in place.

Building on a similar approach, in **the Gambia**, the Spanish Red Cross and the Gambian Red Cross work to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 and strengthen the overall healthcare system. They strengthen national efforts for COVID-19 prevention, surveillance, detection and response action through improving the capacity of health, lab and emergency response staff. At the same time, to address the socioeconomic impacts of the crisis, they provide a safety net to 10,000 vulnerable people.

On the other side of the Atlantic Ocean, since 2020, the French Red Cross in **Guyana, Suriname and French Guiana**, in cooperation with the local National RCRC Societies, other partner National RCRC Societies and with the support of the EU, health organisations and health and educational authorities, has been helping to prepare the populations to respond to epidemics of infectious diseases affecting the region, such as dengue, chikungunya, zika and COVID-19. Their work aims to improve prevention and increase the preparedness of target populations through raising awareness in schools and communities, including by training school teams and National RCRC Societies staff and volunteers. In addition, the RCRC works to strengthen the fight against epidemics by consolidating regional cooperation mechanisms. This regional cooperation reinforces the links and interactions between the RCRC Societies of the partner countries, allowing for the optimisation of capacities for emergency preparedness and response in the area.

Health challenges extend far beyond addressing epidemics and ensuring medical manufacturing capacities. The RCRC works to promote physical, mental and societal



health by supporting primary healthcare, disease prevention and the provision of clean water and sanitation facilities. Leveraging the experience of working with vulnerable communities throughout the world, the RCRC strengthens capacities to respond to the challenges of both communicable and non-communicable diseases.<sup>11</sup>

In **Burkina Faso**, the Belgian Red Cross and the Burkinabe Red Cross Society implement a community-based health programme related to nutrition, health and water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH). Volunteers and community-based health workers raise awareness on essential family practices for nutrition to support parents in addressing malnutrition in children, referring patients to health centres for treatment if necessary. This supports the implementation of the Burkinabe ministerial policy on Integrated Management of Childhood illnesses at the community level. The project targets 165,000 people living in the Burkinabe cities of Mangodara, Dedougou and Gaoua. The RCRC works on maternal and child health issues and on essential hygiene practice by promoting hand washing, use and maintenance of latrines and treatment of drinking water, rehabilitating health centres, and providing and ensuring maintenance of quality equipment. Running since 2017, this work has been extended to include a

“  
*The end of an epidemic is the beginning of this community preparing to resist in case of another. Thus, the Red Cross will always be alongside communities.*”

**Grégoire Mateso**, President of the Red Cross of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, on the end of the 13<sup>th</sup> Ebola outbreak

community-based epidemic surveillance component based on learnings from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Furthermore, in the region, the IFRC and the Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (Africa CDC) collaborate to strengthen community resilience and response to public health emergencies at community level. The aim is to ramp up locally led pandemic prevention and response – beyond COVID-19 – including testing support to countries, community mobilisation and advocacy against vaccine wastage. The partnership includes actions for engaging community health workers in risk communication and community sensitisation, surveillance activities for early case identification, contact tracing and facilitated referrals for testing and continuum of care.

## **b. Ensure access to health in fragile contexts and hard-to-reach areas**

The RCRC promotes a wider needs-based approach to health, focusing on the people most in need, and special emphasis is placed on supporting vulnerable communities to increase control over their health and its determinants, including in complex contexts. A key priority of the RCRC's work is mainstreaming health and well-being while addressing other challenges, such as climate change,<sup>12</sup> food security and livelihoods, people on the move, and protracted crises. In fragile contexts, where maintaining a minimally functional health system is difficult, the IFRC and National RCRC Societies strengthen health facilities to ensure services can be provided and reach the populations they serve, before, during and after a crisis. This includes supporting local governments in adopting and reinforcing policies and laws protecting the provision of medical care in time of crisis.

In **Palestine**,<sup>13</sup> the Swedish Red Cross and the Palestine Red Crescent Society

provide access to timely and quality pre- and post-emergency hospital care to reduce direct and indirect consequences of the ongoing conflict in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Their action supports the whole trauma chain, from providing community-based first aid to ensuring ambulance service and post-hospital care. Trained community volunteers, organised in community awareness committees at local level, provide first aid, first response, health awareness and post-hospital care to 40,000 people per year. Given the very different contexts between urban and rural areas, the respective communities identify the priorities and topics to be addressed through vulnerability and capacity assessments. Using health activities as entry points to enhance community self-reliance and resilience, the committees support communities to take charge of their own health. Considering the local context, psychological first aid and psychosocial support are also integrated in the action.

In **Afghanistan**, the Finnish Red Cross works in close cooperation with the Afghan Red Crescent and the IFRC to support long-term community-based health programmes. Their actions focus on community-based

health and WASH activities, especially in rural Afghanistan and hard-to-reach areas. Public health structures work under immense pressure, as needs are high and access to basic services is severely limited or inexistant due to multiple factors, including conflict and insecurity. In this context, the RCRC works through a multi-sector approach which includes awareness raising and promoting community health, with a strong focus on first aid and public health emergency management. In 2021, a key milestone was improving the availability of clean water and hygiene measures in 13 schools in the country, in cooperation with the Afghan health ministry, with a specific focus on menstrual hygiene which supports girls' schools attendance. Accessible toilets, hand washing facilities and drinking water systems have made life easier for more than 18,300 pupils and teachers.

### **c. Empower women and girls' health and well-being**

In many countries, the RCRC works to protect women and girls' mental, physical and social health, including through sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV)

The Afghan Red Crescent, supported by the IFRC, is working to bring safe drinking water, boys and girls toilets, and handwashing stations to communities across Afghanistan, September 2022.

© Meer Abdullah Rasikh/IFRC





prevention and access to appropriate sexual and reproductive health services. The 'Resolution on sexual and gender-based violence'<sup>14</sup> adopted by the International RCRC Movement and the states parties to the Geneva Conventions at the 32nd International Conference of the RCRC in 2015, commits to working with states to fight SGBV before, during and after conflicts, disasters and other crises. The Resolution also calls on states, with the support of the National RCRC Societies in their country, to ensure that survivors have access to healthcare services, psychosocial support, legal assistance and socioeconomic support.

In the Sahel region, the French Red Cross and the National RCRC Societies in **Mauritania, Mali** and **Niger**, work to improve access to sexual and reproductive health for girls and women by strengthening the quality of inclusive public health services and promoting women's autonomy in exercising their right to health. This is done in three ways: improving the supply of quality services and respectful treatment, mobilising the community to increase the impact of the programme, and reducing social dynamics that negatively affect women's health, with special attention to gender-based violence. This project, implemented with the support of the French Development Agency (Agence française de développement), is based on a collaborative approach that brings together the local National RCRC Societies and authorities, academia, the private sector and local actors to address social norms on SGBV and sexual and reproductive health.

As part of their long-term programme in several African countries, the Finnish Red Cross emphasises sexual and reproductive health and fights against SGBV in its work. In **Kenya**, with the Kenya Red Cross Society, they have established community-led groups – such as mother and father clubs and youth networks – and ensure training and technical support for volunteers and health workers. It also works with mobile health clinics to provide knowledge and

services on mother and child health, nutrition, adolescent pregnancy, menstrual hygiene and prevention of harmful practices. In **Sierra Leone**, with the Sierra Leone Red Cross Society, they apply an innovative technique called 'situational judgement tests' to better understand the local social norms and practices and adapt their interventions to those. These scenario-based multiple-choice questions, combined with focus group discussions, support recommendations and programme adjustments to improve messaging, entry points and audience segmentation for social norms and behavioural change.

#### **d. Safeguard mental health and psychosocial well-being**

People affected by natural or man-made hazards are at higher risk of facing mental health and psychosocial tolls, due to the complexity of their living conditions which can increase the risk of experiencing post-traumatic stress disorders, anxiety, depression and other symptoms of distress, as well as increased levels of alcohol and drug use. During the COVID-19 pandemic, a significant increase has been registered in the demand for mental health support,<sup>15</sup> while stigma and discrimination against people with mental disabilities and/or tolls remains. The RCRC's work emphasises the importance of mental health and psychological well-being, particularly of vulnerable groups and in fragile contexts.

The IFRC Psychosocial Support Reference Centre<sup>16</sup> supports National RCRC Societies and partners worldwide to understand, respond to and use evidence-based practices to meet the psychosocial needs of vulnerable groups.<sup>17</sup> In their auxiliary role to public authorities, National RCRC Societies support their governments in honouring international commitments such as investing in public health plans for community-based mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) action,

Bangladesh Red Crescent Society volunteers and staff provide psychosocial support to people who have fled Myanmar and now live in makeshift camps after severe flooding hit Cox's Bazar, 2019.

© Kick Stokvis/IFRC



including through strengthening local and community resilience.

Thanks to projects like the EU-funded FOCUS project, led by the IFRC Psychosocial Support Reference Centre, the RCRC aims to better understand the critical dimensions of integration for migrants and refugees in host communities, focusing on psychosocial and social factors. In collaboration with the Austrian Red Cross, the Danish Red Cross and the British Red Cross, academic and private sector partners, policies and existing practices are mapped and field studies in country of departure, transit and arrival are carried out to support policy development and programme design as well as to develop a practical approach to dynamic integration by collecting case examples and providing implementation guidance.

Since the escalation of the conflict in **Ukraine** in February 2022, the mental health and psychosocial well-being of affected populations has been a priority for the Danish Red Cross and the Ukrainian Red Cross Society. To reduce the consequences of the conflict on affected populations, the RCRC developed a cross-regional network of psychosocial support practitioners delivering services such as recreational

activities for internally displaced children, awareness-raising campaigns on stress and loss management – including with and for children – relief services, distribution of psychosocial support kits and the provision of online psychological first aid training.

Lately, due to the large-scale movement of people from Ukraine to neighbouring countries, National Red Cross Societies in **Czechia, Hungary, Poland, Romania and Slovakia** have joined forces to offer MHPSS services to more than 300,000 people from Ukraine, in complementarity with the ongoing programmes in the country. Funded by the EU and with technical assistance from the IFRC, the IFRC Psychosocial Support Reference Centre and other partner National RCRC Societies, the project connects vulnerable people with mental health professionals and volunteers speaking Ukrainian and other needed languages using various platforms such as helplines, mobile outreach and in-person group activities and materials.

According to the World Health Organization,<sup>18</sup> climate change is also causing stronger and longer-lasting impacts on people's mental health and psychosocial well-being. As illustrated by the RCRC Climate Centre,<sup>19</sup> the

IFRC Psychosocial Support Reference Centre and the Netherlands Red Cross,<sup>20</sup> solastalgia, eco-anxiety, depression and feelings of being overwhelmed and powerless are a myriad of ways in which climate change impacts people's mental health. As climate change becomes a mental health emergency, the RCRC is increasingly collaborating with climate professionals and mental health and social care experts to develop strategies to respond effectively. These strategies consist of enhancing risk communication plans, including information on building inner resilience and positive coping strategies; scaling up capacity for MHPSS services such as community cohesion and engagement, psycho-education awareness-raising activities, and (peer) spaces for young people to express their fears; and providing mental health resources and self-care training to medical staff and first responders.

### e. Innovation fostering participation in community healthcare

When epidemics strike, affected people need to be isolated early and effectively to limit the spread of the disease. To keep health facilities open to the population and to avoid public distrust in the official health system and academic medicine, it is essential to prevent contamination of health personnel. Building on lessons learned and capacities developed in the follow-up responses to the Ebola outbreaks across several countries in **West Africa** (Democratic Republic of the Congo, Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone), the IFRC and National RCRC Societies have adapted messages and activities to the context of COVID-19. The RCRC shared vital information in public places, on community radio stations, on social media and through messaging apps.

The use of social media and digital channels in healthcare can primarily spread awareness, bolster prevention and improve communication between health workers and people affected. Social media is also

“ *During the COVID-19 pandemic, the use of social media helped us not only to be able to give information, but also to know people's main concerns and doubts, and this allowed us to be able to address those information gaps.* ”

Mariela Miranda, Head of Communications at the Bolivian Red Cross

one of the most cost-effective distribution tools for healthcare information and for fighting misinformation. National RCRC Societies, supported by the IFRC, develop digital strategies on presenting messages in an educational way, and sharing videos where volunteers provide advice on different topics such as how to use personal protective equipment (PPE) and how to adopt healthy lifestyle patterns.

The Belgian Red Cross, to facilitate access to first aid training to local communities in **sub-Saharan Africa**, in collaboration with National RCRC Societies in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Mozambique, Rwanda, Tanzania, South Africa and Zimbabwe, implements blended learning technologies on first aid to adapt tools to the local contexts. These digital solutions allow the RCRC to extend its reach and facilitate the integration of first aid preparedness by the targeted communities. The online component of the training reduces the time required for in-person participation and allows the focus to remain on the practical exercises to be prepared for the final certification. The mobile app used to deliver the training helps to collect data on first aid response, and to assess the relevance of the practice.

---

Despite major progress in global health and well-being in the past few decades, new threats such as urbanisation, emerging infectious diseases, climate change, high numbers of people on the move, lack of access to safe water and mounting healthcare costs are increasing risks to global health, preventing millions of people from accessing essential health services. To increase sustainable community health systems, community health actors and workforces should be supported: this includes increasing capacity building at community level, through engaging local actors and reinforcing decentralised local health structures. These must be stable, sustainable and capable of meeting the health needs of the entire population, including the most vulnerable people, employing a multi-sector, integrated and participatory approach to health issues.

In their roles as auxiliaries to public authorities, National RCRC Societies promote capacity building for the establishment, maintenance and continuous improvement of national and community-based health systems, while addressing the reduction of non-medical factors that influence health outcomes and negatively impact on health. For the RCRC, it is imperative that everyone, everywhere has access to care services, including the most vulnerable populations and those people left furthest behind.<sup>21</sup> Investing in local health workforces is key to meet this objective, including through ensuring community engagement and risk communication, preparedness, surveillance and tracing, health literacy and awareness-raising campaigns.

---

## 2.

# Addressing the impacts of climate change



Aseged of the Ethiopian Red Cross Society stands in the catchment of a water-spreading weir near Shebele Woreda, Jijiga, Somali region, June 2022.

© Amanuel Sileshi/IFRC

Storms, floods, droughts and heatwaves are on the rise due to climate change and expected to continue to increase over the coming years. Thereby, the countries least responsible for carbon emissions disproportionately face the most widespread consequences of climate change. The IPCC's 2022 report highlights the impacts climate change will have on the already increasing needs of vulnerable communities. Climate and environmental crises exacerbate existing vulnerabilities and inequalities and affect all dimensions of life, such as physical and mental health, access to food and water, economic security, stability and peace.

In countries where systems to manage these risks are weaker, humanitarian assistance and development cooperation actors are called on to fill the gaps. National Red Cross and Red Crescent (RCRC) Societies are at the forefront of supporting communities to mitigate the impacts of climate change and witness the consequences of limited planning for compound risks, in an overburdened humanitarian system, and the loss of hard-won development gains. As recognised by the European Green Deal,<sup>22</sup> the global challenges of climate change and environmental degradation require a global response. The climate will continue to change and to create significant stress, therefore strengthening action on prevention and preparedness, climate change adaptation and resilience building is crucial.

## **a. Prepare the communities before a disaster strikes**

Response to disasters is at the core of the RCRC mandate and reduction of disaster risks has been a key focus in recent decades. In the face of climate change and its humanitarian consequences, preparing communities for weather-related events is an increasing priority for the RCRC.<sup>23</sup> To reduce the impacts of climate change and leverage existing work to prepare for and recover from disasters, the RCRC aims

at building value-added partnerships to strengthen action at the local level.

In this context, the Finnish Red Cross collaborates with the Finnish Meteorological Institute to focus on the 'early warning early action' value chain. Together, they have implemented numerous capacity-building projects with local hydro-meteorological institutes around the world to reach local communities. In **Malawi**, with the Malawi Red Cross Society, they reinforced community outreach aspects of the early warning services already in place. The partnership allowed for the piloting of a methodology for a joint feasibility study, leading to joint capacity building in the **Eastern Africa region** to co-develop weather, climate and early warning products with national hydro-meteorological agencies and National Red Cross Societies from Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Tanzania and Kenya. In **Nepal**, the programme contributed to strengthening weather and early warning services and their links to community-level early warning early action, including through workshops organised with the RCRC, disaster management and hydro-meteorological actors.

**Viet Nam** is regularly confronted by coastal hazards, including typhoons, sea-level rise and flooding, and is recognised as particularly vulnerable to extreme weather events, being highly affected both in terms of fatalities and economic losses. The mangrove restoration initiative carried out by the Viet Nam Red Cross Society with the support of the IFRC aims to reduce disaster risk by addressing the loss of coastal protection in the country. This initiative further enhanced communities' livelihoods. With support from national and local authorities, the creation of mangroves in over 100 communities and the protection of around 100km of dyke lines have had a positive impact on reducing the impacts of disasters and further strengthening the resilience of communities by ensuring the acquisition of additional income for coastal



communities such as from aqua culture products and honeybee farming.

To leave no one behind, prioritising countries that are most at risk and have the lowest capacities to respond to the negative impacts of climate change is crucial. In **Sudan**, the Swedish Red Cross works with the Sudanese Red Crescent to strengthen communities' resilience through increasing the knowledge and skills of more than 130,000 people in mitigating, preparing for and responding to natural hazards. In this programme, raising awareness on the need for communities to adapt to the changing climate goes hand in hand with strengthening the early warning systems in case of disasters. Community disaster response teams ensure that households are ready to take appropriate action according to the risks they might face. Communities also work to decrease the impacts of climate-induced disasters through identifying and implementing small-scale mitigation activities such as terracing, constructing small embankments, stabilising riverbank, and planting home gardens and shelter belts.

## **b. Adapt to life in a changing climate**

Around the world, many communities are already facing the consequences of climate change. To build their resilience and enable these communities to adapt to the challenges they face, RCRC work has to integrate the changing climate and promote a better environment. The report "*Working with Nature to Protect People: How Nature-based Solutions Reduce Climate Change and Weather-Related Disasters*"<sup>24</sup> published by the IFRC and WWF in 2022, highlights how nature-based-solutions – actions that protect, sustainably manage or restore an ecosystem to address societal challenges – have been identified as unique and effective ways to support disaster risk reduction (DRR) and climate change adaptation, while also contributing to improvements in health

**“The construction of terraces is one of the activities that has been done on the island. It is about 1 kilometre, and it has a direct impact on the protection of homes and farms from floods.”**

**Alsaïd Lotfi Sharfi,**  
Volunteer supervisor at the  
Sudanese Red Crescent

and well-being, food and water security, and greenhouse gas emissions reductions.

While over 3.3 billion people live in places that are highly vulnerable to climate change, nature-based-solutions could reduce the intensity of climate and weather-related hazards by 26% and provide developing countries with valuable protection against the economic cost of climate change. Intervening in communities' natural environments, to protect, sustainably manage and restore ecosystems, helps to regulate and mitigate hazards, enabling communities to control their exposure and reduce their vulnerability. These actions can eventually contribute to more supportive local and national policies that, together with increased investment and appropriate funding mechanisms, are key to contributing to long-lasting resilience.

A key focus of the RCRC's work is to build on and support the capacities, knowledge and expertise of local actors, authorities and communities, and to support their leadership, including local actors. The need for increased valorisation of ecosystem services is part of the RCRC nature-based approach to DRR and climate adaptation, in particular in the field of sustainable agriculture, forest resilience, biodiversity and the water cycle. Ecosystem-based adaptation and nature-based-solutions can



offer cost-effective approaches to climate-smart, sustainable development while also contributing to climate change mitigation efforts.

The IFRC and National RCRC Societies support the efforts of rural and urban communities to restore natural ecosystems, expand climate-smart and green livelihoods, and build household resilience. This is implemented by supporting diversification of agri-food systems, improved rural and urban production, self- and paid employment, and entrepreneurship.

In **Ethiopia**, the Netherlands Red Cross is working with the Ethiopian Red Cross Society and other partners, thanks to the financial support of the EU, to scale up eco-DRR interventions and promote their large-scale implementation. In the Somali region, the RCRC aims to enhance the resilience of over 44,000 people. Three masonry check dams were built for restoring farm and grassing lands, with the local population being involved through a cash-for-work scheme. Rainwater harvesting was introduced in the communities and enabled through underground tanks which benefit around 630 households in the dry season. Finally, a tree nursery was established for multi-purpose tree species such as fruits and fodder to restore rangelands and degraded ecosystems. The trees will also contribute to enhancing food security and income-generating activities. Overall, some 16 hectares of land have been restored and protected.

In **Niger**, the French Red Cross and the Red Cross Society of Niger have been experimenting with forecast-based actions with local farmers to strengthen community resilience, which is affected by recurring periods of food and nutritional insecurity. This approach, implemented with the support of the British Red Cross, allows for early anticipation and response actions, based on disaster and meteorological forecasts. The objective is to take advantage of the time-window between the warning

of an upcoming potential disaster and its actual occurrence to carry out early actions that will allow the population to anticipate the impending event while protecting their lives and livelihoods.

### **c. Address compounding risks to ensure community resilience**

---

Compound risks are predicted to increase due to climate change, thus deepening vulnerabilities and moving the global community further away from achieving sustainable development. Local communities hardly recover before they are hit again by disasters. Livelihoods are being lost, food insecurity is worsening, health indicators are eroding, and displacements are widespread. In 2020 alone, 11 countries in Africa simultaneously issued IFRC emergency appeals due to floods while also dealing with the COVID-19 response and food insecurity.

In **Sudan**, to reduce these risks, the Sudanese Red Crescent, with the Netherlands Red Cross, Danish Red Cross, Spanish Red Cross and Swedish Red Cross, works to improve natural resource management. It is supporting more than 90,000 members of local agro-pastoralist communities to strengthen the running of key resources, including communal forests and rangelands. Climate-smart livelihood techniques such as working with fast-maturing seed varieties and training for female pastoralists help to adapt traditional livelihoods to climate change impacts. Irrigation channels are also rehabilitated, and water points retrofitted with solar systems to ensure a more stable water supply for people, animals and agriculture. The construction of subsurface dams and improved terracing aims to increase water harvesting, reduce drought risk and strengthen the livelihoods of local communities in the face of climate change impacts.

To preserve and rehabilitate the natural resources that communities depend on, in **Mali** the Belgian Red Cross and the Mali Red Cross work towards avoiding overexploitation of forests by setting up forest brigades, reducing the pressure on wood resources by improving fire stoves, and promoting the benefits of forest products in villages by supporting agroforestry and village plantations. They strengthen practices to increase and diversify agricultural production and to secure small-scale livestock for more than 21,000 members of the most vulnerable families, also through solidarity depots managed by the local community. Furthermore, activities to promote best practices can also serve to raise awareness within communities to detect potential threats like malnutrition.

In **Mozambique**, the French Red Cross and the Mozambique Red Cross Society work with the support of the French Development Agency (Agence française de développement). They aim to prevent, mitigate, prepare for and respond to hazards – notably flooding – and strengthen local actors' capacities to address increasing emerging needs. Protecting biodiversity is at the heart of their work, which combines traditional DRR mechanisms with nature-based solutions and climate micro-finance. To do so, the RCRC integrates nature-based

solutions into enhanced vulnerability and capacity assessments with the National Institute for Disaster Management, through four locally based DRR committees. With the consortium partners, the traditional DRR approach is complemented by protection, restoration and sustainable management of mangrove ecosystems, climate change adaptation, eco-DRR activities and a Conservation Trust Fund which aims to build the financial resilience of the targeted communities.

A global approach supporting resilience is critical to protect the lives and dignity of the most vulnerable people, prioritising support to communities already facing the consequences of climate change, responding, adapting and preparing for future shocks. Worldwide, the RCRC Climate Centre supports the IFRC and National RCRC Societies' work in reducing the impacts of climate change and extreme weather events on vulnerable people by providing guidance and tools, and fostering the exchange of experience, training and technical back-up.

“  
*I live in an area that is prone to flooding due to its proximity to the Zambezi River. Thanks to the ECO-DRR project, we have been trained to rescue people in case of emergency, including through flood prevention, mitigation and preparedness plans, indication of evacuation routes and safe locations.*  
”

Volunteer at the Mozambique Red Cross Society

---

Communities should always be at the heart of the measures taken to mitigate and adapt to a changing climate. A multi-risk approach should be promoted to prepare communities to better respond when facing the consequences of climate change, as well as to recover before they are impacted again. The preparedness approach becomes even more necessary as crises become more complex, with natural hazards increasingly overlapping with themselves and conflicts, man-made threats and unprecedented biological hazards. Governments and donors cannot afford to miss the opportunity to support climate change adaptation worldwide, while ensuring that the most vulnerable countries to climate risks receive the support they need.

It is vital to ensure that climate finance instruments prioritise the most affected contexts, including under loss and damages mechanisms, and support locally led adaptation efforts at national and local levels, such as building early warning systems, preparedness and alternative financing structures. Using innovative approaches that are efficient in reducing the impacts of climate change, such as anticipatory and early action, is also essential to reduce the impacts of rapid and slow-onset events. Finally, it is of utmost importance to ensure actions reach the last mile, through supporting local actors, like National RCRC Societies, to ensure no one is left behind. In the face of climate change, this will strengthen transformations in social, economic and environmental institutions, as well as in the behaviour of individuals and households.

---

The Bangladesh Red Crescent Society and the IFRC conduct community consultation sessions with women, school students and teachers in the flood-affected communities in Tangail, Bangladesh, October 2019.

© Bangladesh Red Crescent Society and IFRC



3.

## Strengthening livelihoods for inclusive societies



Volunteers and nutritionists from the Venezuelan Red Cross support community members on Nutrition Day, April 2022.

© Venezuelan Red Cross

The disastrous impact of public health crises, conflicts and climate change on water and food provision, social security, population movement and urbanisation, have stalled the response to the world's biggest challenges. Unemployment is increasing worldwide, reducing the income of the poorest families and preventing millions of children from going back to school. Labour protection is decreasing while inequality and gender violence are worsening. In its external action, the EU promotes a spending target of 20% of official development assistance (ODA) for human development, sustainable growth and jobs. However, growth alone does not always guarantee a meaningful impact on inclusive and sustainable livelihoods.<sup>25</sup>

A multi-sector approach is needed to ensure access to food and social services for all, while promoting gender equality and empowerment of minorities to lead productive and prosperous lives. With the technical and operational expertise of the IFRC Livelihoods Centre,<sup>26</sup> the Red Cross and Red Crescent (RCRC) Societies work systematically to improve people's capacity to generate and maintain their means of living, enhance their well-being and that of future generations, while contributing to their empowerment, personal dignity and safety.

## **a. Guarantee physical, economic and social access to food**

Livelihood support generates a positive impact in the empowerment of individuals, ensuring self-sufficiency and breaking with dependency dynamics. In **Venezuela**, the IFRC, with the financial support of the EU, coordinates support and relief for 35,000 migrants, displaced people and indigenous communities, and 17,000 members of vulnerable peri-urban and rural communities to guarantee and increase people's access to sustainable food and water. Meanwhile, partners provide healthcare, nursing and psychosocial

support services, including the delivery of free medicine, as well as protection services along the migration route through the Humanitarian Service Points.<sup>27</sup> Particularly, they aim to reduce the food insecurity affecting different countries,<sup>28</sup> targeting chronic and/or acute food needs through reinforced nutrition, access to water and to essential products such as seeds and fertilisers for diversified agricultural production. The RCRC also supports productive initiatives through technical expertise, vocational training and seed capitals for start-up initiatives, enhancing collective participation for development.

The Red Cross Society of the **Democratic People's Republic of Korea** (DPRK) works with the Swedish Red Cross in DPRK to improve food security of more than 20,000 vulnerable community members. It builds the capacities of local actors to implement sustainable and local food production, providing them with an opportunity to grow a broader range of crops for improved nutritional status. To improve the stability of food intake and communities' resilience to disasters, activities are also implemented such as the planting of woods and fruit trees to reduce erosion and landslides as well as building dykes to prevent floods from destroying homes and farmland.

In **Honduras**, where rural communities depend on rainfed agriculture as their main livelihood, the Italian Red Cross and the Honduran Red Cross work to strengthen and diversify livelihoods and support the establishment of income-generating activities and micro-enterprises. Pig breeding, fish farming, horticultural and honey production help to diversify from the traditional coffee production. Such endeavours have been essential in strengthening rural communities' capacities to better face the shocks of climate change, and in promoting new livelihood opportunities. Furthermore, by improving the hydro-sanitary conditions of the environment, project partners

are also promoting healthy families and communities.

The Spanish Red Cross works with the Ecuadorian Red Cross in **Ecuador** to improve food security and the livelihoods of 550 community members affected by COVID-19 through collaborative urban ecological gardening. They enhance the population's income generation by strengthening their food production and marketing capacities, including through developing social economy circuits at local level. In addition, their work also contributes to promoting healthy food lifestyles and addressing the socioeconomic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the most vulnerable people.

## **b. Promote social inclusion of marginalised groups**

Social protection is key to reduce inequality, promote social cohesion and facilitate access to decent working and living conditions. It increases productivity and employability by enhancing human capital and allowing investment in productive assets; raising household incomes, consumption and savings; boosting aggregate demand; and enhancing people's resilience in the face of shocks and structural transformations. Although social protection systems mostly depend on national authorities, the RCRC implements strategies in coordination and cooperation with local, national and international stakeholders to ensure that the most vulnerable groups are not left behind. Effective and efficient social protection systems strengthen a country's capacity to manage crises and disasters in a more predictable and sustainable way.

The Danish Red Cross and the Nepal Red Cross Society in **Nepal** work to empower over 9,000 persons with disabilities by ensuring they have access to services and information. They support persons living with disabilities and their families to develop more resilient livelihoods, and set up networks for learning, sharing and

elaborating collective advocacy towards local authorities. The specific needs of persons with disabilities and their families are identified to then build their confidence and improve their socioeconomic status. This is done by providing livelihood training and micro-credits to start small ventures or acquire assistive devices such as wheelchairs, toilet chairs, hearing aids and crutches. By organising health camps and training doctors in the area, access to quality health services and support to disability detection are improved. The project also promotes specific consideration to include persons with disabilities in the communities' DRR and disaster risk management plans.

In **Palestine**, the Italian Red Cross works with the Palestine Red Crescent Society to enhance the services provided to children and young people with disabilities. By strengthening the local capacities of teachers to provide quality education, rehabilitation and psychosocial activities to children and youth with disabilities in the West Bank region, their well-being and opportunities are increased. Sign language interpreting, digitalisation and use of technology in the learning processes (such as establishing IT rooms and improving the e-learning platform) are used to reinforce effectiveness and inclusiveness and build the capacity of medical and educational staff.

The Italian Red Cross also works with the **Kenya** Red Cross Society in Kenya where, given the increase of drug abuse in recent years, they opened a rehabilitation centre for people with drug disorders. The centre aims to provide access to health and social protection, and to support people to fully reintegrate into their communities. This work includes reducing social stigma within the communities of origin through awareness and communication campaigns. The facility has now become a landmark in the country, and more than 5,000 people have been helped through its health and outpatient services. In addition to offering



counselling services, the project has contributed to reducing the impact of drug abuse through the active involvement of the community and a series of awareness-raising campaigns, while promoting the social and labour reintegration of people formerly addicted to drugs into their communities.

In **Armenia** and **Georgia**, the Armenian Red Cross Society and the Georgia Red Cross Society, with the support of the Austrian Red Cross and the Austrian Development Agency, ensure good living conditions and dignity for around 160 older people in need, including persons living with disabilities. In collaboration with the local authorities, the RCRC enables age-friendly environments that encourage active, inclusive and healthy ageing through moments of leisure, knowledge sharing and intergenerational dialogue as well as digital capacity building for enhanced in-person and online connections between people. These activities improve the quality of residential and home care standards and services, as well as the health and living conditions and the social inclusion of the older people in need. The programme also involves providing professional care services, strengthening local staff and volunteers and informal caregivers' competencies, and improving infrastructure.

### **c. Empower and improve the livelihoods of women and girls**

When livelihoods are at risk and social protection is not guaranteed, women and girls are disproportionately affected. They play a vital role as agents of change and their full, equal and meaningful participation and leadership at all level of decision-making is critical for sustainable development, social and economic justice, and peace.

In the **Democratic Republic of the Congo**, the Red Cross of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Belgian Red Cross, with the support of the Belgian Development Agency

(Enabel), are creating 'Mothers' Clubs' – mutual support groups empowered to help almost 400 members and find long-lasting solutions to the challenges faced by women. They primarily improve women's access to health by using their valuable role within the communities to raise awareness on hygiene and sexual and reproductive health and working in close contact with local health structures. But the ultimate objective of these clubs is to create self-sufficient self-help groups of women, capable of designing and implementing small income-generating activities, such as motorised mills for grinding maize and cassava, that ultimately serve to set up solidarity funds to help each other in times of adversity. The Mothers' Clubs also work like small local banks: they can lend money to pre-finance children's schooling or the start of a small business, with the club being repaid when the mothers start earning back.

In **Kyrgyzstan**, the Italian Red Cross and the Red Crescent Society of Kyrgyzstan are working to empower women and girls in vulnerable communities. By promoting healthy lifestyles and establishing models that incentivise the reinforcement of capacities through networking competency, vulnerable households can access

“ *It was here that I saw a sewing machine for the first time. At first it was very difficult for me, but now I am more confident: they have always supported me in this and helped me buy a sewing machine. I think I will also be able to sell the clothes and try to save money through the earnings.* ”

Rahima, 17, participating in Red Crescent Society of Kyrgyzstan vocational training





The Red Crescent Society of Kyrgyzstan and the Italian Red Cross run a sewing course for women in Kyrgyzstan, March 2017.

© Daniele Aloisi/IFRC

sustainable means of living and incomes, enhance self-esteem, and ultimately increase overall community well-being. This is promoted through raising awareness on diseases, first aid training and prevention of SGBV, alongside the development of professional sewing skills and related income-generating opportunities. Through this vocational training coupled with some basic business management courses, women have been able to open their own sewing workshops with the help of peer-women from their communities, and/or join already existing ones. They sell their products to local markets and earn enough to improve their quality of life, and that of their families, households and communities.

#### **d. Guarantee sustainable socioeconomic development**

The impacts of crises such as conflicts, natural hazards and health crises represent unprecedented challenges, increasing poverty and socioeconomic inequalities, and disrupting public health and food systems. Economic and social disruption affect millions of people and particularly the most vulnerable individuals and groups due to

lack of access to quality social protection and regular working conditions.

Refugees who suffer from protracted crises, for example in **Türkiye** which hosts the largest number of refugees worldwide, are often particularly vulnerable. Since April 2020, the IFRC and the Turkish Red Crescent, with the financial support of the EU, have been implementing emergency social safety nets which provide support to more than 1.5 million refugees. But with the civil war in Syria entering its 12th year, the approach has switched from a humanitarian emergency response to strengthening longer-term resilience. The programme now offers learning and vocational opportunities and employment referrals through the Turkish Red Crescent's community centres in coordination with potential employers and public institutions, which can lead to income generation and increase employability in the labour market.

In **Colombia**, the Spanish Red Cross and the Colombian Red Cross work to support sustainable income generation and the socioeconomic inclusion of vulnerable people, especially those affected by violence. In the city of Bucaramanga, the RCRC works to improve and facilitate access to

fundamental rights for around 21,000 people who are suffering violations of their rights and need protection. In response to newly emerging vulnerabilities caused by the COVID-19 crisis, the RCRC has been fostering individual and community protection and inclusion mechanisms to improve access to services and sustainable processes of economic and social inclusion towards the restitution of rights. The work is driven through community centres managed by the Colombian Red Cross, offering safe spaces and facilitating access to social services for people in need.

The Spanish Red Cross also works with the Philippine Red Cross and EU support in **the Philippines** to mitigate the impacts of the COVID-19 crisis. First, they support the health system in containing the pandemic

through providing health services as well as prevention and surveillance measures. Furthermore, they aim to mitigate the socioeconomic impact on the most vulnerable people affected by the pandemic and to improve social cohesion and resilience by promoting voluntary service. They focus on around 5,000 households whose livelihoods have been affected by the pandemic and who need further protection with a special focus on rural women, youth and persons with disabilities. Through these actions, the health system for preventing, detecting and assisting COVID-19 cases is strengthened while the socioeconomic impacts of COVID-19 on the most vulnerable groups are mitigated, and the local capacity to respond to future shocks and crises is enhanced.

---

No country in the world is prepared and resilient enough to absorb the long-term impacts of crises. Sustainable livelihoods increase the resilience of people and communities, reducing their vulnerability to disasters, food insecurity and poverty, while contributing to their empowerment, personal dignity and safer and more resilient communities. Livelihoods and socioeconomic support generate a positive impact in the empowerment of individuals, making them drivers of their own development, ensuring self-sufficiency and breaking with dependency dynamics. Sustainable livelihoods are one of the key components to enhance resilience and a determinant factor for promoting social inclusion.

The IFRC and National RCRC Societies are best placed and can play a major role given their presence and knowledge at the community level by raising awareness and easing access to socioeconomic inclusion for the most marginalised groups. Through their local-to-global network, National RCRC Societies remain committed to work collaboratively with people, communities and relevant stakeholders, identifying needs to be addressed and enhancing links with public and private services such as social protection and health systems, entrepreneurship and social economy. By building and promoting local and sustainable programmes that support food security and livelihoods, other benefits to the communities such as supporting the reduction of poverty, better community health and enhanced equality within communities can be extended.

---

4.

## Supporting communities affected by displacement



IFRC Field Officer Butaina talks with Ahmet and Naime who fled Syria with their four children in 2014 after a bomb hit near their home in Aleppo and now live in Gaziantep, Turkey, June 2021.

© Corrie Butler/IFRC

Conflict and violence, poverty and lack of social protection, food insecurity, disasters and the effects of climate change: these are some of the causes that lead to the displacement of populations, within their home country or beyond, both temporarily and in the long term. Most of the time, people flee their home countries due to a combination of factors. Ensuring respect for the dignity and rights of people on the move and their access to essential services and assistance is fundamental. This should always take precedence over migration containment and other border management priorities. Support to people on the move should not be made conditional on the capacity and/or willingness of partner countries to collaborate in migration control.<sup>29</sup> This not only compromises the delivery of principled assistance but can also prevent access to life-saving activities by people who need it the most, potentially causing them to lose trust in the independence, impartiality and neutrality of actors like the Red Cross and Red Crescent (RCRC).<sup>30</sup>

The RCRC works globally with and for asylum seekers, refugees, internally displaced persons (IDPs), migrant workers, stateless persons and other people on the move, providing assistance to them wherever they are on their journeys, regardless of their legal status and based solely on their needs. This implies the delivery of essential services along major migratory routes and in displaced communities, supporting durable solutions that enable affected people to rebuild their lives and livelihoods. Engaging with local and national authorities and communities hosting displaced populations to promote understanding and social inclusion is equally fundamental.

### **a. Secure the provision of basic services and reduce aid dependency**

In Northern **Uganda**, the German Red Cross and the Uganda Red Cross Society work

with 29,000 South Sudanese refugees and host populations – half of them women – to improve their living conditions and ensure self-help capacities with regard to food security and nutritional stability. Improved access to food is achieved by increasing local production for self-consumption and by selling essential items at lower prices while promoting more efficient use of fuel for cooking and appropriate means of preserving and storing food after harvest. They strengthen the capacities of 200 local RCRC volunteers and staff to provide needs-based assistance to refugees, for instance through building technical expertise in operating procedures for voucher-based assistance in settlement settings. Through this work and reinforced advocacy and visibility actions, project partners aim to expand the recognition by the local authorities and communities of the Uganda Red Cross Society's mandate to work in fragile contexts.

In Central America, the National Red Cross Societies and the IFRC work to reduce the vulnerabilities of people on the move in **El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Panama** by providing protection and assistance while reducing stigma and discrimination. Through promoting inclusion and working directly with host communities, local authorities and key actors, their work mitigates the adverse effects of population

“  
*We were given the opportunity to learn how to make pizza and it was an unforgettable experience. Everything the Red Cross teaches at the school is for the good and that helps me not to get discouraged.*”

Salvadorean internally displaced student, 17

movement. They organise awareness actions to foster community resilience, health fairs to ensure promotion of and access to health, first aid and risk reduction training in schools, and activities addressing SGBV prevention, protection, inclusion and migrants' needs. Participatory methodologies such as 'Friendly Neighbourhoods' and community multi-stakeholder safe spaces are also implemented to foster dialogue and inclusion through community engagement and accountability.

## **b. Bolster resilience and promote inclusion**

The Danish Red Cross and the South Sudan Red Cross work to reduce the aid dependency

of communities affected by displacement in **South Sudan**. Through their multi-sectoral work addressing health, disaster and protection risks, 34,000 IDPs, returnees, host communities and RCRC volunteers affected by the conflict in the region are able to strengthen their resilience. They aim to bolster communities' capacities to be active civil society actors and prepared for and respond to natural hazards and local conflict-related threats. To do so, the RCRC works at two levels: at institutional level, they develop essential operational plans and response mechanisms, and at local level they reinforce capacities for dialogue and non-violent dispute resolution. The objective is to put in place long-lasting protection mechanisms supporting local actors towards stronger and inclusive decision-making and



Lebanese Red Cross disaster management volunteers are distributing latrine kits to Syrian refugees residing in informal settlements in Haouch El-Rafqa, Lebanon.

© Clara Mohtar/Austrian Red Cross



operational structures. Furthermore, to reinforce the personal and social resilience of children towards the fragile context they are living in, mental health and psychosocial support services are offered at local level and mainstreamed throughout all activities.

In **Lebanon**, the Austrian Red Cross and the Lebanese Red Cross jointly enhance access to better health and hygiene conditions for both the Lebanese community and the Syrian community displaced due to the conflict. This work focuses on improved operational and environmentally sustainable WASH facilities, as well as sustainable access and improved hygiene practices in multiple public schools. The activities have reached more than 2,300 people through providing household water tanks and latrines in informal settlements, water quality testing, rehabilitation of bathrooms and drinking water stations in schools and primary healthcare centres, as well as environmentally sustainable energy sources like solar panels. Experience has proved that community involvement in the programme design and implementation, but also in the exit strategy, strengthens the ownership of the programme which is a crucial element for a successful and sustainable response.

### **c. Promote social economy and inclusive entrepreneurial ecosystems**

To support RCRC practitioners working worldwide in different migration and displacement contexts, the IFRC Livelihoods Resource Centre and the Danish Red Cross issued the Guidelines: *Livelihoods in Migration and Displacement contexts*.<sup>31</sup> These illustrate how supporting livelihoods' diversification with employment, income generation, vocational training and non-formal education opportunities is essential as often migrants cannot resume their livelihoods and need support to reorient or diversify their sources of income.

Following the Rohingya refugee crisis, the German Red Cross and the National RCRC Societies of **Bangladesh** and **Myanmar** help host communities, refugees and IDPs to build their resilience and protect their livelihoods through activities like distributing start-up cash-grants and providing vocational training and material for income-generating activities. Furthermore, communities are empowered to respond and cope with disasters and crises through preparedness activities, which also target schools in the refugee camps in the area.

The German Red Cross also supports the Egyptian Red Crescent Society in **Egypt** to eliminate the physical, social and financial barriers to access health and psychosocial support services and to provide livelihood opportunities for people on the move (coming from the sub-Saharan region and neighbouring countries) and their host communities. Their work includes livelihood skills building such as sewing and make-up vocational training, training on self-employment and waged employment to help enter the labour market, and providing seed funds to support the launch of businesses. This work is implemented through six community hubs located in areas with high concentrations of migrant and refugee populations. Since the COVID-19 outbreak,

“ *I attended one of the most important sessions in my life about social inclusion with people from other countries, including South Sudan and Ethiopia. It changed a lot of my attitudes and we learned how to overcome street violence.* ”

A Sudanese woman interviewed in an Egyptian Red Crescent Society community hub



these hubs also serve as vaccination points for migrants, refugees and other vulnerable people, supporting the Egyptian Ministry of Health and Population with the vaccination campaign.

In **Montenegro**, the Italian Red Cross and the Red Cross of Montenegro have been working since 2020 to support migrants' employment prospects through educational and vocational activities, helping them to become more competitive in the labour market. They have established business incubators for the Roma and Egyptian population in Camp Konik near the capital city Podgorica. The RCRC supports employment in diverse sectors and professions such as carpenters, hairdressers, beauticians, tailors and electricians. In addition, project partners work with migrants who are unemployed by providing vocational training and psychosocial and legal support.

The Ethiopian Red Cross Society with the support of the Danish Red Cross in **Ethiopia**

implements activities to support vulnerable returnees in their reintegration process at individual and community levels. Assistance is related to promoting access to livelihood opportunities, specifically through savings groups which are crucial for the economic and social reintegration of returnees. By promoting economic, social and cultural solidarity among communities, enabling returnees with access to savings, credit and micro-insurance as well as opportunities to diversify and improve their businesses, savings groups are also promoting connectedness and social cohesion among host communities and returnees. The project's evaluated impact shows that savings groups have become a space for sharing experiences and improving individual financial literacy. Equally important, group members reported that their self-esteem has increased thanks to their participation in the groups.

---

Providing equal and effective access to essential services for people on the move irrespective of their status, while addressing additional vulnerabilities by working with and for host communities, should be a priority. Support to migration programmes should interact more directly with mobile populations, with special focus on strengthening access to hard-to-reach locations and hard-to-reach categories of people on the move (depending on context, this may include survivors of human trafficking or migrants in transit, for example). Because the root causes of population movement are various and interconnected and transcend national boundaries, multi-sectoral approaches are key, including cooperation between humanitarian-development-peace actors, donors and governments. In this context, the RCRC applies a strictly principled approach, undertaken on the basis of the needs of people on the move and host communities.

---



A woodworker builds furniture following his vocational training by the Red Cross of Montenegro and the Italian Red Cross in Camp Konik, Montenegro, February 2021.  
© Red Cross of Montenegro

# 5.

## Creating an enabling environment for societal change and human development



The Kenya Red Cross Society, in partnership with government authorities, is engaging young people in preventing, detecting and responding to disease outbreaks in Narok county, Kenya, October 2019.

© Corrie Butler/IFRC

As actors fully rooted in their communities, National Red Cross and Red Crescent (RCRC) Societies' staff and volunteers support people before, during and after crises. Therefore, the legal frameworks they operate in have a direct influence on their mandate. The RCRC aims to shape laws and policies to ensure human development and necessary societal change, as anchored in the IFRC's Strategy 2030,<sup>32</sup> which contributes to the implementation of international and regional commitments. The RCRC can play a key role in supporting global efforts in line with international agreements such as 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development together with the Sendai Framework for DRR,<sup>33</sup> the 2015 Paris Agreement,<sup>34</sup> and the New Urban Agenda.<sup>35</sup>

As auxiliaries to public authorities and through regular interaction with their governments, National RCRC Societies have a privileged space to efficiently support people who need it the most. Building on the wide network to ensure institutional and societal development of National RCRC Societies around the globe, it is a priority of the RCRC to be entitled to play the auxiliary role, and to secure this space by ensuring that effective laws and policies are in place in areas of concerns. Domestic laws should always specify National RCRC Societies' roles and responsibilities in key sectors such as health, disaster risk management, migration and social welfare. Building on its work with communities, the RCRC engages with authorities and local stakeholders to improve and secure an enabling environment for societal change and human development. This engagement is a prerequisite to shape legal frameworks contributing to reach global commitments and ensure sustainable and community-based resilience.

## **a. Enhance laws and regulations to prepare, protect and respond to emergencies**

Without a strong legal basis, preparedness and response activities can be uncoordinated

and ineffective, often delaying urgent help to people in need. Over the past 20 years, in partnership with National RCRC Societies, the IFRC has been working in more than 95 countries to develop, strengthen and implement disaster laws and policies, and is a global leader in disaster law technical advice, research and resources. IFRC Disaster Law work focuses on ensuring that disaster laws and systems are climate smart, coherent and coordinated. The RCRC works across sectors to avoid siloed approaches to eliminate gaps, conflicts and duplications, and improve domestic laws in support of relevant international agreements.

In the South-West Indian Ocean, an IFRC Disaster Law team collaborates with the French Red Cross Regional Platform for Intervention in the Indian Ocean (Plateforme d'intervention régionale de l'Océan Indien – PIROI <sup>36</sup>) and local National RCRC Societies to assess legal preparedness for international disaster assistance in **Comoros, Mayotte and Réunion, Madagascar, Mauritius, Mozambique, Seychelles and Tanzania**. The outcomes are used to support key stakeholders in the region to reinforce their national legal frameworks for disaster preparedness, in line with international standards, and strengthen the design of a regional strategy to facilitate and regulate cooperation in international assistance.

Early warning systems and crisis prevention need to be rooted in reality and directly linked to the resilience of communities, ensuring implementation of local know-how and a needs-based approach. **Uganda** lacked a legal framework to manage climate change interventions, an obstacle in translating the identified policy priorities into actions. Throughout the drafting process of the Uganda National Climate Act (August 2021), the Netherlands Red Cross and the Uganda Red Cross, within the consortium Partners for Resilience, supported its much-needed adoption. They trained members of the national parliament and the local governments on integrated risk management to ensure an appropriate application of

“*The climate change challenges we face as a country outweigh the adequacy of our actions. This Act is timely in making determined efforts to deal with the climate crisis and will provide the country with institutional arrangements for implementing and coordinating climate change measures in Uganda.*”

**Rachel Kyoziira, Cordaid Programme Manager, Resilience, and Country Lead at Partners for Resilience Uganda**

this framework at national and community level. Furthermore, they strengthened the influencing capacity of organisations, media, local authorities, vulnerable groups and indigenous communities so they could make their voices heard in the process.

To minimise the negative impacts of climate-related hazards and strengthen the resilience of affected populations, the German Red Cross and the Pakistan Red Crescent Society build the capacities of national and local authorities involved in disaster risk management and implementing climate change mitigation and adaptation measures at community level in **Pakistan**. In cooperation with the IFRC, they also aim to establish a roadmap for the development of a disaster law in Pakistan and to enable the Pakistan Red Crescent Society to play an important role as auxiliary to the public authorities in climate-sensitive disaster risk management.

The Finnish Red Cross and the IFRC in **Myanmar**, together with the Myanmar Red Cross Society, implement a multi-level approach to secure people's understanding of health and disaster threats. While working with the townships to identify and implement

priority measures in relation to their disaster management plans, they increase individual and family preparedness by ensuring access to information and early warning as well as providing training and basic equipment. This long-term investment in local preparedness – especially through the Myanmar Red Cross Society's local branches – was evidenced recently in the response to the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. This was thanks, for instance, to the prepositioning of aid supplies in hard-to-reach areas and more than 2,000 volunteers trained in emergency response across the country.

## **b. Change social norms to fight against discrimination and exclusion**

To ensure long-lasting development through multi-sector responses based on local needs, solutions have to be built with all the relevant actors. To reflect these considerations in local legislation, local actors like National RCRC Societies' staff and volunteers play a key role in identifying the most pressing needs. The RCRC aims to ensure the participation of affected populations in decision-making processes, advocate for transparency and accountability, and contribute to strengthening the link between development, humanitarian assistance and peacebuilding. By being present within communities, local actors are best placed to identify those specificities and work towards reducing underlying vulnerabilities.

Inequality and discrimination experienced by women intensifies with age. In **Serbia**, the Austrian Red Cross and the Red Cross of Serbia have empowered 200 older women by raising awareness on SGBV and providing them with information on where to turn to for help in case of abuse. At the same time, the Red Cross promotes knowledge and awareness on violence against older women among 200 care staff and volunteers, challenging social norms and the behaviour of the general public towards violence against older women. Sharing information

The Salvadorean Red Cross Society holds a session with survivors of violence to influence protection legislation in San Salvador, June 2021.

© Salvadorean Red Cross Society



on existing violence renders it visible, which is a key step to initiating a change in society. This is complemented by involving decision makers who shape policy processes on SGBV reporting to improve the legal context and expand the change in social norms.

In **Central America**, the Spanish Red Cross is working with the local National RCRC Societies and authorities to improve the situation of displaced communities with the support of the Spanish Development Agency (Agencia Española de Cooperación Internacional para el Desarrollo – AECID). They aim to enhance governance and protect the access to rights of almost 200,000 migrants and displaced people who have experienced violations of their rights. By strengthening the public institutions' capacities to implement protection mechanisms, they assist migrant and displaced populations. Furthermore, this work allows for reinforcement of civil society's role in advocating for migrants' rights, and for addressing the causes and impact of migration.

The Netherlands Red Cross in **the Philippines**, with the EU's support, works

with the Philippine Red Cross to provide more effective and inclusive aid. The capacities of the Philippine Red Cross are strengthened to provide localised, inclusive and effective services to the most vulnerable individuals and communities, enabling community resilience and local ownership in preparation and response to natural hazards. Two regional hubs of the Philippine Red Cross were established to generate real-time evidence-based data systems and build technical and operational capacity in the areas they cover. Once established, the regional hubs will operate in cooperation with regional and local stakeholders. These stakeholders will be mapped and analysed, and relevant actors (both governmental and non-governmental) will be engaged around creating a supportive and inclusive coordination network.

### **c. Foster inclusive societies through formal and non-formal education**

When people lack access to quality education, or when their learning is disrupted by disasters and crises, it can have a dramatic



impact on their physical and mental well-being, affecting the life prospects of entire generations. The RCRC fosters equal access to formal and non-formal learning environments for children and youth, especially in rural areas and for the most vulnerable groups.

Worldwide, the RCRC and partners have developed public awareness messaging and games-based curricula to educate and inspire youth to act in their communities to respond and adapt to the changing climate, including on habitat-related risks in urban areas. These initiatives aim to support young people to acquire skills through designing integrated community-based resilience programmes which meet the particular needs and aspirations of children and youth.

The Malawi Red Cross with the support of the Finnish Red Cross, the Danish Red Cross, the Icelandic Red Cross, the Italian Red Cross and IFRC, strives to alleviate social and economic pressure on women and girls in local communities. Particularly, menstruation taboos and lack of access to menstrual hygiene materials prevent girls and women from participating in school, work and social activities in many communities in **Malawi**.

In 2021, the Finnish Red Cross launched a first impact assessment and participants, including RCRC staff and volunteers, reported that removing societal and infrastructural barriers to menstrual hygiene for girls in schools produced the most significant change as access to menstrual products incurs a heavy cost for girls, increasing economic pressure on families. Providing school-aged girls with menstrual pads and delivering education on menstrual hygiene alleviates some of this pressure, preventing girls and families from having to resort to early marriage.

Moreover, sport is a powerful way to address youth isolation and exclusion, and to prevent violence. In **Argentina, Uganda, Myanmar** and **Iraq**, the RCRC invests in football as an educational and social tool for sustainable resilience and peace, while providing small grants to the over-a-thousand young participants to run social change projects within their communities. This IFRC initiative supports National RCRC Societies in delivering sustainable, non-formal peace education in communities through meaningful youth engagement – inclusive of their young volunteers – and peer-to-peer approaches.

---

In line with their own commitments to support and enable CSOs,<sup>37</sup> international policy-makers such as the EU and Member States need to recognise and support the key role of local actors. It is essential to ensure a high degree of CSO participation and engagement in the decision-making, implementation and monitoring phases of all development and humanitarian programmes. Furthermore, in line with international commitments made by the development and humanitarian aid community and donors,<sup>38</sup> a greater degree of localisation is needed across sectors through long-term investment and structured engagement with local CSOs for long-lasting development. This will enable predictable, long-term partnerships, reducing the dependence on external, transitory actors while empowering communities to respond to their needs and build their resilience.

---

# Conclusions

Protracted crises, competition over scarce resources, population movement, and the growing effects of climate change are just some of the factors making development cooperation work increasingly challenging. As inequalities continue to rise, implementing effective long-term solutions that build capacities and address underlying vulnerabilities is ever more important. This should be achieved through concrete actions that connect with communities and improve their daily lives. For that, it is key to ensure access to health, address the consequences of climate change, strengthen livelihoods and social protection systems, support populations affected by displacement and enable local actors to develop long-lasting solutions. The EU can play a leading role in promoting sustainable development worldwide and bringing support across sectors.

Global policy frameworks that improve the overall social and economic well-being of people in need will reverberate across a variety of health outcomes, help to achieve better population health and health equity, and lower health costs. But although policy-making is necessary, it is not sufficient to tackle all the determinants of health disparities. The EU should promote effective understanding, ownership and implementation of programmes within local communities, through continuing attention and coordination with all different stakeholders, and giving priority to mainstreaming health and well-being across the other EU priorities.

Failing to address all dimensions of climate change will bring about increasingly frequent and extreme climate and weather-related risks. It is widely acknowledged that developing countries will be hit hardest, and that the most vulnerable communities will suffer the most. The EU should ensure an integrated and multi-sector approach to development, climate change adaptation and DRR. All the EU's external actions and international partnerships should be risk-informed, avoid increasing greenhouse emissions, and mainstream the 'do no significant harm' principle.<sup>39</sup>

Reducing poverty and empowering the most vulnerable people should also remain at the core of EU external action policies and programmes. Inequality severely hampers individual and social human development. Older persons, people with disabilities, and poor and socially marginalised people who lack access to decision-making structures, resources and social justice are

often left behind. The EU ought to actively fight discrimination and inequality, as well as ensuring that all groups, especially those most in need, have access to the resources and services offered by its programmes, including those engaging the private sector and financial institutions

No country can address migration and displacement on its own. States must protect the safety, dignity and well-being of migrants, refugees and displaced persons, regardless of their legal status, and make sure they have access to essential services. In reviewing and implementing the European approach to migration, the EU should ensure a route-based approach<sup>40</sup> to address individual needs along migratory trails. It should do this while working with and for migrants and local communities towards sustainable, inclusive and long-lasting solutions, in line with the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration<sup>41</sup> and the Global Compact on Refugees.<sup>42</sup>

Community actors, such as National Red Cross and Red Crescent (RCRC) Societies, play a significant role in building sustainable development and contributing to international partnerships. Their on-the-ground experience is key to ensuring that programmes address existing needs and are implemented accordingly. Resilience is built and strengthened by local actors. The EU should ensure a bottom-up approach where communities and CSOs can put their local know-how to use and set up mechanisms that will better withstand shock, face adversity and allow for a quicker recovery.

The growing needs and limited resources to respond to compounding crises are of great concern as communities face constant threats, stressing the need to increase investments in prevention, preparedness and anticipatory approaches to reduce disaster impacts. Especially during the COVID-19 pandemic, National RCRC Societies have demonstrated their ability to lead the response and ensure community engagement and support. However, they have faced challenges in accessing the necessary political and financial support to implement their mandate and address compounding crises.

The IFRC and its 192 National RCRC Societies around the world are well-positioned at national level and within communities to reach the most inaccessible areas and vulnerable people. They are uniquely placed as key humanitarian-development actors,

supporting vulnerable communities before a disaster strikes, providing relief as first responders during emergencies, and building capacities and promoting inclusive communities after crises hit. National RCRC Societies, with a permanent presence in their countries, have the capacity, experience and know-how to break the silos between short and long-term goals and act at local, national and global level.

This is the added value of the RCRC: the people-centred, inclusive and non-discriminatory approach and the interconnectivity of its actions. National RCRC Societies' unique role complemented by the IFRC global network leads to a continuous humanitarian-development nexus approach implementation, aiming to promote the empowerment of local communities to act as agents of change for sustainable and long-lasting development.



The Mozambique Red Cross, supported by the French Red Cross and the IFRC, has distributed emergency materials to over 2,300 people in Buzi community who were isolated when Cycone Idai struck Mozambique, March 2019.

© Corrie Butler/IFRC

# Sources and further information

## Programmes illustrated in this publication

### **Austrian Red Cross:**

in Armenia, Working2gether (W2): Working together for quality care, well-being and dignity; in Georgia, Working together for professional home care in Georgia, [www.rotekreuz.at/pflege-international](http://www.rotekreuz.at/pflege-international) (in German).

in Serbia, Empowerment of older women: preventing violence by challenging social norms in Serbia and Austria (EmPreV), [www.redcross.org.rs/en/news/exhibition-open-your-eyes-world-elder-abuse-awareness-day](http://www.redcross.org.rs/en/news/exhibition-open-your-eyes-world-elder-abuse-awareness-day)

in Lebanon, Improved and Sustainable Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) for Syrian refugees and host communities in Lebanon, Baalbek-Hermel, [www.rotekreuz.at/news-knotenseite/news-41](http://www.rotekreuz.at/news-knotenseite/news-41)

### **Belgian Red Cross – Rode Kruis Vlaanderen**

in sub-Saharan Africa: First aid blended learning with a first aid application, [www.rodekruis.be/brc/what-do-we-do/first-aid/first-aid-blended-learning](http://www.rodekruis.be/brc/what-do-we-do/first-aid/first-aid-blended-learning)

### **Belgian Red Cross – Croix Rouge de Belgique:**

in Burkina Faso: Community based Health programme in Burkina Faso, <https://action-internationale.croix-rouge.be/les-crises-oubliees> (in French).

in Democratic Republic of the Congo: Mothers Club, <https://action-internationale.croix-rouge.be/2019/03/07/journee-internationale-des-femmes-la-croix-rouge-de-rdc-se-dote-dune-politique-genre-diversite> (in French).

in Mali: Strengthening community resilience in Koulikoro and Tominian, Mali, <https://action-internationale.croix-rouge.be/la-solidarite-internationale/volontaires-solidaires/mali-2/> (in French).

### **Danish Red Cross:**

in Ethiopia, Savings Groups Key Activity for Returnees in Ethiopia, [44272704-c844-1d6a-c5d6-0f68baf4036d](https://www.livelihoodscentre.org/44272704-c844-1d6a-c5d6-0f68baf4036d) (livelihoodscentre.org)

in Nepal, Empowered Persons with disabilities in an Inclusive Community (EPIC), [www.rodekors.dk/om-os/eu/program-i-nepal](http://www.rodekors.dk/om-os/eu/program-i-nepal) (in Danish).

in Sudan, Integrated Community Resilience Project (ICR), [Psychosocial support for South Sudanese refugees in Sudan | Red Cross \(rodekors.dk\)](https://www.psychosocialsupport.org/south-sudanese-refugees-in-sudan) (in Danish).

### **Finnish Red Cross:**

in East Africa, Improving SHR and GBV in Kenya, [www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fpsyg.2022.866551/full](https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fpsyg.2022.866551/full)

in Afghanistan, Community-based health programme (CBHP).

in Myanmar, The Urban Risk and Resilience Programme. <https://reliefweb.int/report/myanmar/climate-smart-and-inclusive-urban-programs>

**French Red Cross:**

in Guyana, Raising Expertise Mobilisation and Participation to strengthen epidemics control in the Guiana Shield (REMPART Epidemic), [Projet REMPART, une approche communautaire dans la lutte anti-vectorielle - WorldConference](#) (croix-rouge.fr) (in French).

in the Sahel, Regional program on gender and health in Sahel (PROGRESS) in Mauritania, <https://fr.calameo.com/read/002546479eaa4e9e1f60c?page=1> and Mali, <https://fr.calameo.com/read/002546479b684cd2a9754> (in French).

in Mozambique, Strengthening ecosystem, community and economic resilience to climate change, [www.croix-rouge.fr/Nos-actions/Action-internationale/Rechercher-un-programme/LA-CROIX-ROUGE-FRANCAISE-EN-MOZAMBIQUE](http://www.croix-rouge.fr/Nos-actions/Action-internationale/Rechercher-un-programme/LA-CROIX-ROUGE-FRANCAISE-EN-MOZAMBIQUE) (in French).

in Niger, Forecast-based financing for drought, [www.youtube.com/watch?v=Mhk3mo6-o8g&t=4s](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Mhk3mo6-o8g&t=4s) (in French).

**German Red Cross:**

in Bangladesh and Myanmar: Strengthening the resilience of host communities, refugees and displaced population through disaster risk management and livelihood intervention and Strengthening the response capacities of the National Societies in Bangladesh and Myanmar. [www.drk.de/en/aid-worldwide/where-we-work/asia/bangladesh-humanitarian-aid-for-refugees](http://www.drk.de/en/aid-worldwide/where-we-work/asia/bangladesh-humanitarian-aid-for-refugees) and [www.drk.de/hilfe-weltweit/wo-wir-helfen/asien/myanmar](http://www.drk.de/hilfe-weltweit/wo-wir-helfen/asien/myanmar) (in German).

in Egypt: Supporting communities – Health for All, <https://www.drk.de/en/aid-worldwide/where-we-work/middle-east/egypt-supporting-communities-with-health-care-and-employment-opportunities/>

in Pakistan: Climate Advocacy and Coordination for Resilient Action (Phase II), <https://prcs.org.pk/climate-change-and-disaster-risk-reduction>

in Uganda: Increasing the importance and capacity of the Uganda Red Cross Society (URCS) as a national aid organisation supporting the refugee response in Northern Uganda – Phase II, [www.drk.de/en/aid-worldwide/where-we-work/grc-international-aid-in-africa/uganda/supporting-refugees-in-uganda-fighting-food-insecurity](http://www.drk.de/en/aid-worldwide/where-we-work/grc-international-aid-in-africa/uganda/supporting-refugees-in-uganda-fighting-food-insecurity)

**IFRC:**

COVID-19 outbreak, [www.ifrc.org/emergency/covid-19-outbreak](http://www.ifrc.org/emergency/covid-19-outbreak)

Education, [www.ifrc.org/education](http://www.ifrc.org/education)

in Argentina, Uruguay, Myanmar and Iraq, Uniting through the power of Football, [www.ifrc.org/uniting-through-power-football](http://www.ifrc.org/uniting-through-power-football)

in Colombia, The Monarch Butterfly Programme in Colombia, <https://reliefweb.int/report/colombia/colombia-population-movement-mdrco014-operation-update-no-7>

in Türkiye, Emergency Social Safety Nets, [www.ifrc.org/emergency-social-safety-net-essn](http://www.ifrc.org/emergency-social-safety-net-essn)

in Ukraine, [www.ifrc.org/article/healing-invisible-scars-ukraine-conflict-ifrc-and-european-union-launch-mental-health](http://www.ifrc.org/article/healing-invisible-scars-ukraine-conflict-ifrc-and-european-union-launch-mental-health)

PSS Centre, FOCUS Project, <https://focus-refugees.eu/about>



### **Italian Red Cross:**

in Honduras, <https://cri.it/2019/12/03/pracc-il-progetto-della-croce-rossa-che-aiuta-le-comunita-rurali-dellhonduras-ad-adattarsi-al-cambiamento-climatico/> (in Italian).

in Kenya, <https://cri.it/cosa-facciamo/cooperazione-internazionale/progetti/africa-orientale-kenya> (in Italian).

in Kyrgyzstan, <https://cri.it/cosa-facciamo/cooperazione-internazionale/progetti/central-asia-and-caucasus-kirghizistan> (in Italian).

in Montenegro. Programme Business incubators for Roma and Egyptian population, <https://cri.it/2021/02/20/un-futuro-per-minoranze-in-montenegro> (in Italian).

in Palestine, <https://cri.it/cosa-facciamo/cooperazione-internazionale/progetti/medio-orientale-nord-africa-palestina-4> (in Italian).

### **Netherlands Red Cross:**

in Sudan, Strengthening Local Communities Resilience to Climate Change in River Nile, Northern and Kassala States, <https://redcross.eu/latest-news/livelihoods-at-risk-adapting-to-climate-change-in-sudan>

in the Philippines, Enhancing Capacities of the Philippine Red Cross to Provide More Effective and Inclusive Aid through Establishment of Regional Hub, [www.rodekruis.nl/nieuwsbericht/iati/partners-for-resilience-philippines](http://www.rodekruis.nl/nieuwsbericht/iati/partners-for-resilience-philippines)

in Uganda, Uganda National Climate Bill adopted by Parliament, and turned into action, [www.partnersforresilience.nl/en/news/108/parliament-of-uganda-passes-the-climate-change-bill-2020-it-is-now-an-act](http://www.partnersforresilience.nl/en/news/108/parliament-of-uganda-passes-the-climate-change-bill-2020-it-is-now-an-act)

### **Spanish Red Cross:**

in Central America, Restitution of rights of migrant and displaced population affected by violence in Central America and Mexico, [www2.cruzroja.es/que-hacemos/actividad-internacional](http://www2.cruzroja.es/que-hacemos/actividad-internacional) (in Spanish).

in Colombia, Support for sustainable income generation and socioeconomic inclusion of vulnerable women and men in Bucaramanga, [www2.cruzroja.es/que-hacemos/actividad-internacional/proyectos-echo/dg-echo-colombia-2020?inheritRedirect=true](http://www2.cruzroja.es/que-hacemos/actividad-internacional/proyectos-echo/dg-echo-colombia-2020?inheritRedirect=true) (in Spanish).

in Ecuador, Urban ecological gardening to promote food security and recovery of livelihoods for Covid-19 affected population in Quito, [www2.cruzroja.es/que-hacemos/actividad-internacional](http://www2.cruzroja.es/que-hacemos/actividad-internacional) (in Spanish).

in the Gambia, Support and strengthen the public health and socioeconomic systems to reduce the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, [www2.cruzroja.es/-/la-respuesta-internacional-de-cruz-roja-frente-al-covid-19?inheritRedirect=true](http://www2.cruzroja.es/-/la-respuesta-internacional-de-cruz-roja-frente-al-covid-19?inheritRedirect=true) (in Spanish).

in the Philippines, Philippine Red Cross' support to reduce the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and foster the public health system and socioeconomic development in BARMM, [www2.cruzroja.es/web/cruzroja/-/filipinas-contrato-aca2020418643-apoyo-de-cruz-roja-a-la-reduccion-del-impacto-de-la-pandemia-de-covid19](http://www2.cruzroja.es/web/cruzroja/-/filipinas-contrato-aca2020418643-apoyo-de-cruz-roja-a-la-reduccion-del-impacto-de-la-pandemia-de-covid19) (in Spanish).

**Swedish Red Cross:**

in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK), implements the Improved Nutritional Status through Strengthened Technical Capacity (INSTEC), <https://www.rodakorset.se/en/var-varld/har-arbetar-vi/nordkorea/access-to-food-in-dprk/> (in Swedish).

in Palestine, providing access to timely and quality pre- and post-emergency hospital care, <https://www.rodakorset.se/en/var-varld/har-arbetar-vi/palestina/access-to-healthcare-in-palestine/> (in Swedish).

in Sudan, strengthen communities' resilience, <https://www.rodakorset.se/en/var-varld/har-arbetar-vi/sudan/disaster-preparedness-in-sudan/> (in Swedish).



# Endnotes

1. For more information please visit: <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/immersive-story/2022/10/05/covid-19-dealt-a-historic-blow-to-poverty-reduction#:~:text=The%20COVID%2D19%20pandemic%20brought,extreme%20poverty%20in%20the%20period>
2. For more information, please visit <https://www.ifrc.org/fundamental-principles>
3. National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies are neither governmental institutions nor wholly separate non-governmental organisations (NGOs). Their relationship to the authorities in their country is defined by their role as 'auxiliaries' and by the Fundamental Principles of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement. This auxiliary role can be described as "a specific and distinctive partnership, entailing mutual responsibilities and benefits, based on international and national laws, in which the national public authorities and the National Society agree on the areas in which the National Society supplements or substitutes public humanitarian services," see: [www.ifrc.org/auxiliary-role](http://www.ifrc.org/auxiliary-role)
4. For more information, please visit: [www.ifrc.org/strategy-2030](http://www.ifrc.org/strategy-2030)
5. For more information, please visit: <https://sdgs.un.org/2030agenda>
6. For more information, please visit: <https://sdgs.un.org/goals>
7. Resilience is the ability of an individual, a community or a country to cope with, adapt and recover quickly from the impact of a disaster, violence or conflict. Resilience covers all stages of disaster, from prevention (when possible) to adaptation (when necessary) and includes positive transformation that strengthens the ability of current and future generations to meet their needs and withstand crises (European Commission, Resilience & Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus: Factsheet, [https://civil-protection-humanitarian-aid.ec.europa.eu/what/humanitarian-aid/resilience-and-humanitarian-development-peace-nexus\\_en](https://civil-protection-humanitarian-aid.ec.europa.eu/what/humanitarian-aid/resilience-and-humanitarian-development-peace-nexus_en))
8. IPCC, Sixth Assessment Report: The numbers behind the science. 2021 and 2022. [www.ipcc.ch/assessment-report/ar6](http://www.ipcc.ch/assessment-report/ar6)
9. For more information on our work inside the EU, read the RCEU publications: 'RED ALERT': Managing disaster risks in Europe, 2020, <https://redcross.eu/latest-news/red-alert-managing-disaster-risks-in-europe>; Red Cross Approach: Combatting Homelessness in Europe, 2022, <https://redcross.eu/positions-publications/red-cross-approach-combatting-homelessness-in-europe>; and Red Cross Approach: Caring for older people in age-friendly communities, 2022, <https://redcross.eu/positions-publications/red-cross-approach-caring-for-older-people-in-age-friendly-communities>

10. European Commission and European External Action Service, Joint Communication on The Global Gateway, 2021, [https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/priorities-2019-2024/stronger-europe-world/global-gateway\\_en](https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/priorities-2019-2024/stronger-europe-world/global-gateway_en)
11. IFRC, IFRC Health Policy, 2017, [www.ifrc.org/sites/default/files/2021-10/health-policy-en.pdf](http://www.ifrc.org/sites/default/files/2021-10/health-policy-en.pdf). Non communicable diseases remain the major causes of death worldwide: World Health Organization, The top 10 causes of death, 2020, [www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/the-top-10-causes-of-death](http://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/the-top-10-causes-of-death)
12. Climate change is one of the greatest threats to public health: IFRC, Reducing the Health and Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) impacts of Climate Change, 2021, [www.climatecentre.org/downloads/files/RCRC\\_IFRC%20Health%20and%20Water%20Sanitation%20and%20Hygiene%20%28WASH%29%20V1%202021-2.pdf](http://www.climatecentre.org/downloads/files/RCRC_IFRC%20Health%20and%20Water%20Sanitation%20and%20Hygiene%20%28WASH%29%20V1%202021-2.pdf)
13. This designation shall not be construed as recognition of a State of Palestine and is without prejudice to the individual positions on this issue.
14. International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, 32nd International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent, Resolution on Sexual and gender-based violence: joint action on prevention and response, 2015, [https://rcrcconference.org/app/uploads/2015/04/32IC-AR-on-Sexual-and-gender-based-violence\\_EN.pdf](https://rcrcconference.org/app/uploads/2015/04/32IC-AR-on-Sexual-and-gender-based-violence_EN.pdf)
15. World Health Organization, COVID-19 disrupting mental health services in most countries, WHO survey, 2020, [www.who.int/news/item/05-10-2020-covid-19-disrupting-mental-health-services-in-most-countries-who-survey](http://www.who.int/news/item/05-10-2020-covid-19-disrupting-mental-health-services-in-most-countries-who-survey)
16. Reference centres provide specialised knowledge and services to members of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement. Based all around the world, each offers expertise on specific humanitarian and development issues. For a full list of IFRC Reference Centres please visit: [www.ifrc.org/reference-centres](http://www.ifrc.org/reference-centres)
17. International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, Policy on addressing mental health and psychosocial needs, 2017, [www.ifrc.org/sites/default/files/MHPSS\\_Movement\\_policy\\_FINAL\\_EN.pdf](http://www.ifrc.org/sites/default/files/MHPSS_Movement_policy_FINAL_EN.pdf).
18. World Health Organization, Mental health and climate change: policy brief, 2022. <https://app.mhpss.net/?get=286/9789240045125-eng.pdf>
19. See note 14 (on reference centres).

20. Red Cross Red Crescent Climate Centre, IFRC Psychosocial Support Reference Centre (see <https://pscentre.org/who-we-are/mission-and-strategy>) and Netherlands Red Cross. Climate change and mental health, factsheet, 2022, [https://ctk.climatecentre.org/downloads/modules/training\\_downloads/NLRC\\_RCC\\_Climate%20Change%20and%20Mental%20Health%20Factsheet%20Final.pdf](https://ctk.climatecentre.org/downloads/modules/training_downloads/NLRC_RCC_Climate%20Change%20and%20Mental%20Health%20Factsheet%20Final.pdf)
21. IFRC, IFRC Health and Care Framework 2030, 2020, [www.ifrc.org/document/ifrc-health-and-care-framework-2030](http://www.ifrc.org/document/ifrc-health-and-care-framework-2030)
22. European Commission, A European Green Deal, 2021. [https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/european-green-deal\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/european-green-deal_en)
23. IFRC, Disaster risk management policy, 2021, [www.ifrc.org/document/disaster-risk-management-policy](http://www.ifrc.org/document/disaster-risk-management-policy)
24. IFRC, Working With Nature to Protect People, 2022, [www.ifrc.org/document/working-nature-protect-people](http://www.ifrc.org/document/working-nature-protect-people)
25. European Commission Directorate-General for International Cooperation and Development – DG DEVCO (now Directorate General for International Partnerships - DG INTPA), Strategic Plan 2020-2024, 2020, [https://commission.europa.eu/system/files/2020-10/devco\\_sp\\_2020\\_2024\\_en.pdf](https://commission.europa.eu/system/files/2020-10/devco_sp_2020_2024_en.pdf)
26. See note 14 (on reference centres).
27. Global Disaster Preparedness Center, Humanitarian Service Points Toolkit, <https://preparecenter.org/toolkit/humanitarian-service-points-toolkit>
28. The countries included in the Red Cross response are: Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Curaçao, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Guyana, Mexico, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Trinidad and Tobago, Uruguay and Venezuela.
29. See also European Parliament, Report on human rights protection and the EU external migration policy, 2021, [www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/A-9-2021-0060\\_EN.html#title1](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/A-9-2021-0060_EN.html#title1)
30. RCEU, Protecting the humanitarian space to access and support migrants, 2021, <https://redcross.eu/positions-publications/protecting-the-humanitarian-space-to-access-and-support-migrants>

31. IFRC Livelihoods Resource Centre and the Danish Red Cross, Guidelines: Livelihoods in Migration and Displacement contexts, 2022, [www.livelihoodscentre.org/-/guidelines-livelihoods-in-migration-and-displacement-contexts](http://www.livelihoodscentre.org/-/guidelines-livelihoods-in-migration-and-displacement-contexts). Informed by years of lessons learned from the RCRC Movement's work in livelihood support in different fragile settings, the guidelines include potential impacts on livelihood assets of migrants and displaced persons, response options, cross-cutting issues such as community engagement and accountability, protection, gender and inclusion and social cohesion, and case examples.
32. For more information, please visit: [www.ifrc.org/strategy-2030](http://www.ifrc.org/strategy-2030)
33. For more information, please visit: [www.undrr.org/publication/sendai-framework-disaster-risk-reduction-2015-2030](http://www.undrr.org/publication/sendai-framework-disaster-risk-reduction-2015-2030)
34. For more information, please visit: <https://unfccc.int/process-and-meetings/the-paris-agreement/the-paris-agreement>
35. For more information, please visit: <https://habitat3.org/the-new-urban-agenda>
36. French Red Cross, Indian Ocean Regional Intervention Platform, <https://piroi.croix-rouge.fr/?lang=en>
37. OECD, DAC Recommendation on Enabling Civil Society in Development Co-operation and Humanitarian Assistance, 2021, <https://legalinstruments.oecd.org/Instrument%20s/instruments/OECD-LEGAL-5021>
38. Among others, the Grand Bargain, the European Commission communication on the engagement with Civil Society in external action, the European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid, and the European Consensus on Development
39. For more information please visit: [https://commission.europa.eu/system/files/2021-10/2021\\_02\\_18\\_epc\\_do\\_not\\_significant\\_harm\\_-\\_technical\\_guidance\\_by\\_the\\_commission.pdf](https://commission.europa.eu/system/files/2021-10/2021_02_18_epc_do_not_significant_harm_-_technical_guidance_by_the_commission.pdf)
40. The IFRC understands the route-based concept as a fundamental complement to the overarching migration approach of the RCRC Movement, which is based on needs, informed by rights and bound to the Movement's Fundamental Principles. A route-based approach informs a deeper understanding of the humanitarian and protection needs of migrants by analysing the vulnerabilities arising from the geographical and human dimensions of migration routes and their interactions with vulnerabilities factors related to a migrant's profile and status. This allows the IFRC and National RCRC Societies to better assist and protect vulnerable migrants and to adapt their interventions to fast-evolving operational realities.



41. International Organization for Migration – UN Migration, Global Compact for Migration, 2018, [www.iom.int/global-compact-migration](http://www.iom.int/global-compact-migration)
42. UNHCR, The Global Compact on Refugees, 2018, [www.unhcr.org/the-global-compact-on-refugees.html](http://www.unhcr.org/the-global-compact-on-refugees.html)

# About the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement

The International Red Cross and Red Crescent (RCRC) Movement works to prevent and alleviate human suffering wherever it may be found. It is composed of National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). The RCRC Movement is grounded in seven Fundamental Principles: humanity, impartiality, neutrality, independence, voluntary service, unity and universality.

The IFRC is an international organisation which supports RCRC assistance following natural hazards and man-made disasters in non-conflict situations. Its mission is to improve the lives of vulnerable people, working with National RCRC Societies in responding to catastrophes around the world. Its relief operations are combined with development work, disaster preparedness programmes, health and social activities, and the promotion of humanitarian values.

With the 192 National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies composing its network, the IFRC reaches over 160 million people each year. National RCRC Society volunteers and staff are part of the communities they serve, present before, during and after disasters strike. They are uniquely positioned to prepare and respond to various types of hazards as a global network of local actors who act fast, engage communities, adapt to local needs, and maintain access to the most vulnerable people. National RCRC Societies also support the public authorities in their countries as independent auxiliaries to the public authorities in the humanitarian field. On the request of a National Society, the IFRC and Red Cross Societies in the EU provide expertise and resources to support other National Societies in responding to local needs and strengthening their own capacities. Through cooperation and partnerships, they contribute to better address global challenges and develop innovative ways of working.

# The Fundamental Principles of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement

## Humanity

---

The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, born of a desire to bring assistance without discrimination to the wounded on the battlefield, endeavours, in its international and national capacity, to prevent and alleviate human suffering wherever it may be found. Its purpose is to protect life and health and to ensure respect for the human being. It promotes mutual understanding, friendship, cooperation and lasting peace amongst all peoples.

## Impartiality

---

It makes no discrimination as to nationality, race, religious beliefs, class or political opinions. It endeavours to relieve the suffering of individuals, being guided solely by their needs, and to give priority to the most urgent cases of distress.

## Neutrality

---

In order to continue to enjoy the confidence of all, the Movement may not take sides in hostilities or engage at any time in controversies of a political, racial, religious or ideological nature.

## Independence

---

The Movement is independent. The National Societies, while auxiliaries in the humanitarian services of their governments and subject to the laws of their respective countries, must always maintain their autonomy so that they may be able at all times to act in accordance with the principles of the Movement.

## Voluntary service

---

It is a voluntary relief movement not prompted in any manner by desire for gain.

## Unity

---

There can be only one Red Cross or one Red Crescent Society in any one country. It must be open to all. It must carry on its humanitarian work throughout its territory.

## Universality

---

The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, in which all Societies have equal status and share equal responsibilities and duties in helping each other, is worldwide.