

The Red Cross Approach to Resilience

02 April 2014



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

Our Principles

We are guided at all times by our Fundamental Principles:

- Humanity
- Impartiality
- Neutrality
- Independence
- Voluntary Services
- Unity
- Universality

Since its creation, the Red Cross has been guided by a clear set of humanitarian principles and values that aims, in one way or another, to effectively contribute to building resilience.

IFRC's Strategy 2020 asserts that our specific contribution to sustainable development is through strengthening community resilience.

To meet these ambitions the Red Cross is developing guidelines and trainings for the formulation and implementation of community resilience projects.

The Red Cross has a unique auxiliary role to the Public Authorities. It is composed by a vast net of grass root volunteers integrated in their communities. Its universal presence and its neutrality provide them a unique capacity to work in fragile contexts. For all these reasons, the Red Cross has a comparative advantage to support community resilience in Fragile States. The guidelines and trainings under development are taking this advantage into consideration.

A Broad Definition

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

Resilience is not just the immediate ability to respond to negative events but rather a process of positive adaptation before, during and after adversity. As any adaptation process it requires a long term commitment.



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

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It also highlights the interconnections between preparedness, relief, and recovery to build longer-term, sustainable outcomes. It is therefore a multi-sectoral process that involves multiple actors requiring strong coordination.

Resilience can be strengthened at different levels: individual, household, community, Government (local or national) and finally regional and Global levels.

The characteristics of safe and resilient communities

1. Being knowledgeable and healthy (physically as well as psychologically). It has the ability to assess, manage and monitor its risks. It can learn new skills and pass on experiences.
2. Being organised. It has the capacity to identify problems, establish priorities and act.

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

Fact Sheet

The Red Cross Approach to Resilience

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3. Being connected. It has relationships with external actors who provide a wider supportive environment, and supply goods and services when needed.
4. Having infrastructure and services. It has strong housing, transport, power, water and sanitation systems. It has the ability to maintain, repair and renovate them.

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

5. Having a sustainable livelihood. It has different economic activities and choices which provide food, health, income, shelter and other tangible assets. It has the capacity to cope with and recover from disasters and maintain or enhance its capabilities.
6. Being able to manage its natural assets. It recognises their value and has the ability to protect, enhance and maintain them.

The role of Red Cross to strengthen resilience

Promoting resilience at community level

The Red Cross focuses their activities at the community level as it is the most useful unit of resilience. It is also at this level where Red Cross volunteers are present and engaged. Volunteers in communities have a good understanding of their underlying vulnerabilities, capacities and needs, as well as the local and national systems which affect the communities' resilience. The Red Cross is part of its community at all levels - local, district/regional and national systems. The Red Cross, with volunteers living in their communities and as auxiliaries to the local and national public authorities, has a unique opportunity to contribute to strengthening community resilience.

Promoting resilience at national level

Due to its auxiliary role to the public authorities and its presence in the communities, the Red Cross is in a unique position to play an advocacy and advisory role on resilience. The Red Cross can transmit the needs and aspiration of the communities on policy, social protection systems, infrastructure, laws and governance issues needed to create an adequate environment for resilience at national level.

Promoting resilience in Fragile States

The Red Cross is present in more than 189 countries with a net of community based volunteers. The neutrality has been a distinctive part of the Red Cross identity since its creation in 1863; the Red Cross does not take sides in hostilities or engage at any time in controversies of a political, racial, religious or ideological nature. This worldwide presence and the recognition of its neutral status, grant the Red Cross an access to groups and areas that no other organization has in conflict or unstable situations. For this reason the Red Cross is in a unique position to promote resilience in Fragile States.



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

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Fact Sheet

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Our call

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

Our Practice

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

The Red Cross approach to support community resilience

1. Put people first: Whatever external actors do to strength resilience is only complementary and assisting communities in their own efforts.
2. Respect local ownership: Community ownership has a direct impact on the success and sustainability of programs. Communities need to be consulted in the earliest stages of the project design to ensure that their needs are met. Community ownership has to be linked with local government and actors to avoid dependency or substitution.
3. Cross sector assessments, planning and implementation: To address vulnerability and improve resilience it is necessary to understand the diverse underlying causes of vulnerability. This is unlikely to be achieved through a sectorial approach.
4. Prioritize the most vulnerable: Community resilience can only be achieved if their needs are the priority of the programs.
5. Inclusion of marginalized or disadvantaged groups: These groups are vulnerable as a result of their limited voice in decision-making processes. Specific actions have to be taken to ensure that their views are incorporated into any analysis and taken into consideration by their communities.
6. Build Red Cross capacity: This is particularly vital at grass root level as they form part of the community.
7. Long-term perspective: Providing emergency action while focusing on long term resilience is the basis of the "twin track" approach promoted by the Red Cross.
8. Working in partnership: Community safety and resilience cannot be achieved by a single actor.
9. Strengthen the unique role of the Red Cross in its auxiliary role with governments and authorities to achieve impact at scale.

The Red Cross tools and guidelines that support community resilience

In order to apply community resilience approach the Red Cross has developed the following guides and tools:

- IFRC Framework for Community resilience (2008). [Access document.](#)
- The Road to Resilience. Bridging relief and development for a more sustainable future (2012). [Access Document.](#)
- Characteristics of a Safe and Resilient Community. Community Based Disaster Risk Reduction Study. ARUP International Development (2011). [Access document.](#)
- Predictable and long-term funding mechanism
- Technical Guidelines to align sectorial programmes and approaches to resilience strengthening, when appropriate
- Organisational development for large scale resilience strengthening
- A resilience research and learning agenda

The Red Cross EU Office

November 2013

OUR MISSION

To mobilise support for Red Cross work for the most vulnerable

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

28 National Societies in the European Union and Norway form part of the world’s largest humanitarian network, and employ over 250,000 staff. They also engage well over one million volunteers, and have more than eight million members. The Red Cross EU Office represents their interests, as well as those of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), before the European Union (EU) and its institutions.

We work to increase Red Cross influence on European Union policy, legislation and practice so as to improve the humanitarian situation of the most vulnerable, and aim to increase EU resources for our work at home and abroad in order to maximise the reach and scope of our global network through a coordinated approach.

We also serve our members on EU-related issues, by monitoring the legal framework in which they operate, promoting information and knowledge sharing, and providing capacity building and a tailored approach to technical support.

Our activities span across four areas:

1. Disaster and Crisis
2. Development Aid
3. Asylum and Migration
4. Social Inclusion

OUR VISION 2020:

‘The Red Cross is a unique and trusted partner to the EU institutions in terms of policy dialogue and programming. It speaks with a common voice and acts in the interest of vulnerable people across the European Union and around the world’.



In line with its “Agenda for Change”, future EU development aid spending should target countries that are in the greatest need of external support where these resources can really make a difference. This includes fragile contexts, in which the Red Cross can make an important contribution when public services have collapsed.

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Development Aid

We support Red Cross Societies in all aspects of their relations with EU institutions regarding their development programmes in areas such as food security and nutrition, water and sanitation, health, disaster preparedness and risk reduction, climate change and migration. We monitor EU development issues that are relevant to the priorities of the Red Cross Red Crescent Movement. At this crucial time, when priorities regarding post Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) are being discussed, we also advocate for a fair and sustainable approach to development by the European Union and its Member States that puts vulnerable and poor people first, addresses the underlying causes of vulnerability, and builds resilient communities and civil society capacities.

1. Our members include Austrian Red Cross, Belgian Red Cross, British Red Cross, Bulgarian Red Cross, Croatian Red Cross, Czech Red Cross, Danish Red Cross, Estonian Red Cross, Finnish Red Cross, French Red Cross, German Red Cross, Hellenic Red Cross, Hungarian Red Cross, Italian Red Cross, Irish Red Cross, Latvian Red Cross, Lithuanian Red Cross, Luxembourg Red Cross, Malta Red Cross, Netherlands Red Cross, Norwegian Red Cross, Polish Red Cross, Portuguese Red Cross, Romanian Red Cross, Slovak Red Cross, Slovenian Red Cross, Spanish Red Cross, Swedish Red Cross and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies.



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