

IFRC: understanding a unique role

Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement: who are we?

The Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement is made up of 190 National Societies, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). The Movement is neutral and impartial and provides protection and assistance to people affected by disasters and conflicts.

National Societies. There are 190 Red Cross and Red Crescent National Societies with 160,000 local branches and 12 million volunteers. Each National Society is an independent, impartial and neutral organization, that carries out a range of humanitarian and development activities and programmes. As auxiliaries to the public authorities in the humanitarian field, they have a **status and access** that most other organizations do not. Rooted in local communities, they benefit from the **trust** of communities like no other.

IFRC. Those 190 National Societies come together to form the IFRC- the world's largest humanitarian network. The IFRC is comprised of all National Societies and their **Secretariat**. The IFRC Secretariat in Geneva, along with five regional offices and more than 50 offices around the world, works to *inspire, encourage, facilitate and promote at all times all forms of humanitarian activities by National Societies, with a view to preventing and alleviating human suffering, and thereby contributing to the maintenance and promotion of human dignity and peace in the world.* The IFRC carries out relief operations to assist victims of disasters, and combines this with development work to strengthen the capacities of its member National Societies.

ICRC. The ICRC is an impartial, neutral and independent organization whose exclusively humanitarian mission is to protect the lives and dignity of victims of war and internal violence and to provide them with assistance. During situations of conflict, the ICRC is responsible for directing and coordinating the Movement's international relief activities. It also promotes the importance of international humanitarian law and draws attention to universal humanitarian principles.

The strength of the **Movement** is in its network. National Societies are present before crises and remain long after, and their volunteers come from the very communities they support. Together the components of the Movement support one another to deliver vital services for local to global impact. The Movement works with governments, donors and other humanitarian and aid organizations to assist vulnerable people around the world.

Role of the IFRC Secretariat

The IFRC Secretariat (Secretariat) works to strengthen and accompany National Societies, supporting them to be strong, relevant, accountable and sustainable local organizations that have the means to deliver vital services according to the needs of their communities. The IFRC Secretariat's field delegations assist and advise National Societies with relief operations and development programmes and encourage regional cooperation. The IFRC Secretariat:

- **supports National Societies to develop their capacities**
- **coordinates and mobilizes relief assistance for international emergencies**
- **represents National Societies in the international field**

How does this make a difference?

Supporting capacity development. Strong National Societies are more effective at saving lives, reducing suffering, and safeguarding the dignity of vulnerable people.

Promoting local response is not just about giving money to local organizations. It is about ensuring that local organizations, like National Societies, have the capacity to operate effectively over the long-term to improve the lives of those most in need. The Secretariat is uniquely positioned to provide timely and relevant support to National Societies.

Towards more effective programming, the Secretariat provides training on a range of issues including disaster and epidemic preparedness, logistical and surge training, education on community resilience, shelter awareness, and community engagement and accountability. Many of these are 'train the trainers' workshops, which creates a multiplier effect. For example, in 2017, 22 Futures and Foresight workshops were facilitated with leaders from approximately 100 National Societies. The Secretariat also provides guidance and technical assistance. For example, by providing guidance and standards for constructing temporary shelters after a disaster, the Secretariat supports National Societies to provide safe, effective and culturally appropriate shelter for families affected by crises.

The Secretariat works with National Societies to assess their capacities and strengthen areas needing attention including governance structures, financial and reporting capacities and programmes for volunteer retention. This strengthens not only capacity but transparency and accountability.

There is an enormous wealth of experience and knowledge within the IFRC network. The Secretariat works also to facilitate assistance among National Societies to support learning and joint programming. In 2017 there were some 800 partnerships between the 190 National Societies.

Co-ordinating international disaster management. Coordination during disasters is the key to effective support that avoids duplication. The Secretariat stands by National Societies during crises, deploying expertise, releasing emergency funds and launching Emergency Appeals. When disasters or emergencies surpass local capacity, IFRC can call upon the full reach and potential of its network.

For our National Societies, coordinated support from the Secretariat may include procurement and supply chain management; the promotion of the use of shared needs assessments, analysis, operational planning and monitoring for large-scale operations and long-term engagement in a country to increase efficiency and transparency; and the setting of guidelines and humanitarian standards. This ensures that the IFRC can target its response to where it is most needed and will be most effective, and that it has the resources and tools to do so.

Representation and influence. The Secretariat plays an advocacy role on behalf of National Societies, promoting our global commitment to resilience. The Secretariat develops global guidance and tools for use at local, national and international levels, helping to achieve consistency, high quality standards and accountability- giving voice to the needs and concerns of the world's most vulnerable in global discussions.

Through the Disaster Law Programme, the Secretariat supported National Societies to influence 13 new laws and policies on disaster management in 2017. Currently, over two dozen National Societies are engaged in legislative advocacy with their authorities, a process for which the Secretariat developed new advocacy training materials. In 2017, IFRC made the case for building small island resilience in the face of climate change during the COP 23 in Bonn and has been invited by the Fiji presidency of the UNFCCC to organize a "Talanoa Dialogue" approach to humanizing climate debates in 2018.

The humanitarian relief / development divide

Made up of the communities they serve, National Societies are present before, during and after crises. They support local communities to reduce risks and strengthen their resilience to shocks. They provide lifesaving support in emergencies and help communities to recover. They provide vital health services, including preventative; work with communities to ensure sustainable access to clean water; provide shelter to those who have lost their homes in disasters; help communities develop livelihoods and much more.

In this way, the Red Cross Red Crescent bridges what many consider to be a divide between the needs of humanitarian assistance and those of development. At the IFRC, we support National Societies throughout the continuum, providing assistance where and when it is needed, regardless of how that assistance is categorized.

Areas of IFRC's work

In 2017, the IFRC's support to National Societies centred on eight thematic *areas of focus* (*disaster risk reduction; shelter; livelihoods; health; water, sanitation and hygiene; social inclusion; culture of non-violence and peace; and migration*). For National Societies and the Secretariat to achieve results in these areas, the Secretariat has identified four underlying *strategies for implementation* where it provides support to ensure that the necessary conditions are in place to ensure effective support to the most vulnerable. Simply put, the areas of focus describe **what** we do, while the strategies for implementation describe **how** we do it.

Areas of focus

Areas of focus represent the thematic areas where National Societies have agreed to partner through the IFRC, and where consolidated results will be measured.

1. Disaster risk reduction

Disaster risk reduction is a component of the continuum of disaster preparedness and response, and is therefore incorporated in different ways in the other areas of focus. However, there are also disaster risk reduction-specific activities that are undertaken by National Societies and supported by the IFRC. These activities include contingency planning, particularly at community and household level, the establishment of appropriate early warning and risk management systems, and community-wide awareness raising and engagement. The consideration of the increased risks and vulnerabilities due to climate change is also a key part of this work.

2. Shelter

Shelter is crucial in many disaster response operations. Disasters can also facilitate access to resources and institutional support to address underlying risks. In the IFRC Secretariat's support to National Societies, the provision of shelter assistance after a disaster is an opportunity to ensure that the shelter risks of affected households are reduced through direct assistance and awareness-raising. This requires rethinking shelter disaster response to include consideration of broader longer-term shelter and settlement issues including housing land and property rights, adaptation to climate change, sustainability and urbanization.

3. Livelihoods

Disasters often threaten or wipe out the livelihoods of survivors. For many households, short-term economic and social vulnerability will be increased and their ability to cope with future shocks may

also be eroded. When livelihoods are sustainable, vulnerable people can better cope with and recover from stresses and shocks, maintain or enhance their capabilities and assets, and support other livelihoods locally and more widely, without damaging the natural resource base.

Depending on the specific requirements, our recovery assistance aims to prevent further damage and loss, repair essential infrastructures (e.g. houses, schools, health and community facilities etc.), and restore services in a participatory, inclusive, accountable way that does no harm. A particular area of focus will be the promotion of food security.

4. Health

To decrease mortality and morbidity, National Societies deliver relevant, effective and sustainable health programmes and services (including first aid) for and with vulnerable people at scale. The IFRC works with National Societies to deliver integrated community health and care services and to strengthen national health systems both in developmental and emergency contexts. It supports National Societies in designing, implementing and evaluating the systems that are needed to respond to community health issues, vulnerabilities and risks. These systems are designed to be scalable, sustainable, equitable, adaptable and cost-effective.

5. Water, sanitation and hygiene

Equitable and affordable access to water and sanitation is a human right. Lack of access to water and sanitation and poor hygiene practices are among the principal causes of death and disease worldwide. Inadequate or non-existent access can also lead to losses in productivity and form a major barrier to development. Water, sanitation and hygiene are crucial to human dignity and are vital elements of preventative and public health.

National Societies contribute to global development goals by ensuring the availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all, while paying special attention to the specific needs and circumstance of women and girls and those in vulnerable situations.

Large scale flagship projects in selected countries will demonstrate the value of strengthening National Societies' systems to deliver a variety of complementary and sustainable community health, water, sanitation and hygiene promotion and risk reduction services and activities.

6. Social inclusion

The Movement has always promoted respect for human dignity and diversity, and sought to address all forms of stigma, discrimination, and marginalization, guided by its Fundamental Principles and humanitarian values. Its target group is whoever is the most vulnerable in the communities served. Vulnerability knows no geographic limits. Its patterns often follow inequality and discrimination, whether on the basis of gender, age, sexual orientation, migrant status, ethnicity, health status, disability, homelessness or other reasons, generating marginalization and exclusion.

No-one should find themselves excluded from the social safety nets necessary to ensure safe, healthy and dignified lives. The IFRC will focus its support to National Societies in particular on the integration of disadvantaged, marginalised and excluded people into their communities. Emphasis will be placed on fostering respect for diversity while tackling stigma and discrimination.

Results will be achieved in this area through direct advocacy and programmatic efforts which seek to ensure access to services, and foster change of mind-sets and behaviour based on prejudice, fear and ignorance towards respect for human dignity.

Youth and volunteers will be a central focus of our work. Youth are truly the voice of our present and future; attitudes and values shaped now are the best assurance for genuine, effective and sustainable change and peace for our future generations.

7. Building a culture of non-violence and peace

Violence, in particular gender-based violence, is often the silent disaster within a disaster. The addressing of the specific needs and protection issues of women and children (who are often in

situations of particular precariousness and vulnerability) will be further prioritized as well as addressing violence, including gender-based violence and child protection, in times of emergency and crisis.

Over the next five years, the work of the Red Cross and Red Crescent to tackle sexual and gender-based violence will be guided by the resolution proposed for adoption at the 32nd International Conference (IC). One of the key operational supports to this resolution will be to further implementation of the IFRC's Minimum Standard Commitments to Gender and Diversity in Emergency Programming.

8. Migration

Particular focus will be placed on supporting the needs of people leaving their homes in search of a more secure and stable environment. Protracted crises, environmental degradation, human rights abuses, and poverty are some of the factors that have led to more people being forcibly displaced today than at any time since the Second World War. Unfortunately, uninformed and prejudiced narratives obscure the complexity of this phenomenon, leading to discrimination, division, xenophobia and hatred.

The Red Cross and Red Crescent has a trusted and vital role to play in meeting immediate needs and insisting on principled humanitarian action to protect the dignity and well-being of vulnerable migrants. In partnership with other relevant organizations at the international, regional and community levels, all efforts will be made to meet the particular needs of vulnerable people along the full migration path from countries of origin, transit and destination. In parallel, we will continue to combat the prejudice this phenomenon is provoking, through balanced and informed communications and advocacy that facilitates support for this work from communities and institutions.

Update to the IFRC Plan and Budget 2016-2020

In the context of increasing the effectiveness and credibility of the IFRC, the **Plan and Budget** has been updated and sets out how the IFRC will contribute to the achievement of Strategy 2020 by promoting partnerships for more resilient communities.

The budget required to implement the updated plan is results-based and expressed in terms of the strategies for implementation and areas of focus. The Plan and Budget update includes a resourcing plan describing the resource development approach that the IFRC will take to attract the resources required to achieve the targeted results.

The final part of the Plan and Budget is a results matrix ensuring that the work of the IFRC will be monitored and measured. This will allow the IFRC to demonstrate the outcomes and, where possible, the impact of its work with National Societies.

Two modifications have been made in the thematic areas of focus and will take effect in 2018:

1. Area of focus 3, Livelihoods, was renamed as Livelihoods and Basic Needs to reflect the growing importance of cash programming in the IFRC's work with National Societies and affected communities. Cash programming is also encouraged as an operational modality for all other areas of focus.
2. Area of focus 6 (Social Inclusion) and Area of Focus 7 (Culture of non-violence and peace) were merged into one Area of Focus called Protection, Gender and Inclusion. This represents a more comprehensive approach to addressing inclusion and protection issues in programmes and operations, based on a gender and diversity analysis.

Strategies for implementation

The Strategies for Implementation cover the critical functions to enable National Societies to implement programmes.

SFI 1. Strengthen National Society capacities and ensure sustained and relevant Red Cross and Red Crescent presence in communities

Strengthening of National Societies is one of the key priorities of the IFRC. The core of the IFRC's approach to this area continues to lie in accompanying National Societies on their own journeys of institutional development and strengthening. The provision and/or facilitation of technical expertise, as well as growing the resources made available to National Societies to catalyse the change desired, is critical. Full advantage has been taken of the Grand Bargain and its focus on strengthening local and national actors. Continued attention will be given to supporting innovation, including trialling innovative finance approaches. Both the long-term viability of National Societies and their relevance today depends on their volunteers and particularly the way they engage young people. As such, the focus will remain on these two areas, while further work will be undertaken to take full advantage of the knowledge and learning found in the IFRC network and the growing National Society data capacity.

SFI2: Ensure effective international disaster management

One of the central functions of the IFRC is to ensure effective coordination along the continuum of our work. The IFRC facilitates and ensures that platforms are in place for effective coordination of the work of National Societies in emergency preparedness, disaster response and recovery.

SFI3: Influence others as leading strategic partners

In an increasingly crowded humanitarian space, IFRC's ability to position itself as a critical strategic partner, to shape and influence global humanitarian debates and to mobilize greater and more diverse resources, is and will continue to be crucial.

SFI4: Ensure a strong IFRC that is effective, credible and accountable

In addition to ensuring the necessary coordination mechanisms, the ability to implement its Plan and Budget depends on an effective IFRC, seen as relevant and credible, representing and working towards the collective interests of the membership, as well as providing it with relevant and valued services. IFRC has now streamlined the management structure and established an effective matrix management with a unified "One secretariat" approach. Fundamental elements of an effective IFRC are the facilitation of support to governance mechanisms, and the establishment of the regulatory and policy framework which the membership wishes to develop for itself. These elements further the opportunities for National Societies to ensure their mutual accountability and risk management.

Cross-cutting priorities:

IFRC's strategic approach is underpinned by several cross-cutting activities:

- Organizational development: working with National Societies around the world to attain sustainable organizational capacity to serve local communities.
- Community engagement and accountability: recognizing local people and communities as leaders and equal partners in humanitarian action.
- Local innovation: driving new knowledge, ideas and solutions to humanitarian challenges.
- One Billion Coalition: a global network of new partnerships to support stronger communities where people can survive and thrive, even in the face of adversity.
- Excellence in operations: delivering quality results, rapidly, respectfully and efficiently.

Spotlight on Knowledge and Learning

In addition to the areas listed above, the IFRC and its member National Societies work to support one another, sharing and developing knowledge and expertise. A number of resources have been developed and are managed to support National Societies in specific areas of their work.

Networks and Centres: The IFRC and National Societies come together to exchange experiences and develop joint approaches. Some of these networks have a formal agreement with the IFRC to provide specific services to members at a global level (Resource Centres), and others provide bilateral services to National Societies as required (Regional Centres).

For example, the IFRC was one of the first organizations to ring the alarm bell about the catastrophic number of traffic deaths and injuries at the global level, and their dramatic consequences on people and livelihoods. To address this, the IFRC, the World Bank and the British Government's Department for International Development (DFID), decided to create the Global Road Safety Partnership (GRSP) to bring together governments and governmental agencies, the private sector and civil society to urgently address road safety issues, especially in low- and middle-income countries, where 85% of traffic deaths and injuries occur, and where numbers continue to increase. The Global Road Safety Partnership has become the IFRC's reference centre on road safety, to facilitate access by all National Societies to road safety global expertise.

Resource centres: Centres are housed within National Societies, but offering services to other National Societies or the Secretariat at a regional or global level. They allow National Societies to access the accumulated knowledge and expertise of the members of the IFRC, providing opportunities for National Societies to increase their capacity in a variety of technical areas.

The current Federation Resource Centres are:

- **Psychological Support (PSP) Centre** hosted by the Danish Red Cross
- **Climate Change Centre** hosted by the Netherlands Red Cross
- **Livelihoods Resource Centre** hosted by the Spanish Red Cross
- **Global Disaster Preparedness Centre**, hosted by the American Red Cross
- **Global First Aid Reference Centre**, hosted by the French Red Cross

Regional centres are housed in National Societies and while they do not carry out a formally delegated function of the International Federation, they do provide bilateral services to National Societies as required. Some examples are

- **Reference Centre on Volunteering – Europe**
- **Reference Centre for Disaster Community Education – Americas**
- **Reference Centre for Disaster Preparedness - Americas**

Conclusion

The IFRC is the world's largest humanitarian network, with reach that is truly local to global. We work to support vulnerable communities in a way that is effective, consistent and relevant. Our network is the epitome of localization in humanitarian assistance- rooted in communities, supported globally, provide lifesaving assistance to even the most remote communities. Support to the IFRC is not just support to one organization, but to a network, known and trusted all over the world.