



# The IFRC and community resilience

## Communication guidance for National Societies

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The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) is the world's largest volunteer-based humanitarian network. With our 190 member National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies worldwide, we are in every community reaching 160.7 million people annually through long-term services and development programmes, as well as 110 million people through disaster response and early recovery programmes. We act before, during and after disasters and health emergencies to meet the needs and improve the lives of vulnerable people. We do so with impartiality as to nationality, race, gender, religious beliefs, class and political opinions.

Guided by Strategy 2020 – our collective plan of action to tackle the major humanitarian and development challenges of this decade – we are committed to saving lives and changing minds.

Our strength lies in our volunteer network, our community-based expertise and our independence and neutrality. We work to improve humanitarian standards, as partners in development, and in response to disasters. We persuade decision-makers to act at all times in the interests of vulnerable people. The result: we enable healthy and safe communities, reduce vulnerabilities, strengthen resilience and foster a culture of peace around the world.

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Cover photo: Cover photo by Niki Clark, American Red Cross, March 2015  
*Even though it was damaged by high winds and fallen trees, Tanghas Elementary School in Leyte, Philippines, sheltered some 20 families after Typhoon Haiyan. In partnership with the Spanish Red Cross, The American Red Cross provided funds to install hand water pumps, construct six new latrines, and repair classrooms. Approximately 130 students attend the school. Its five teachers all survived and returned to teach there. The children received backpacks full of supplies to start the new school year. The project contributed to education, water and sanitation, disaster risk reduction and community resilience.*

P.O. Box 303  
CH-1211 Geneva 19  
Switzerland  
Telephone: +41 22 730 4222  
Telefax: +41 22 733 0395  
E-mail: [secretariat@ifrc.org](mailto:secretariat@ifrc.org)  
Web site: [www.ifrc.org](http://www.ifrc.org)

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# Introduction

## 1. Purpose

The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) has developed this paper to support Red Cross and Red Crescent staff and volunteers in their communication and advocacy on community resilience. The paper explains the IFRC's definition of and approach to building community resilience, sets out key messages, and suggests how to communicate the rationale for promoting community resilience to a broad audience. The document draws on the IFRC's Framework for Community<sup>1</sup> Resilience and the strategy behind the One Billion Coalition for Resilience<sup>2</sup>.

The messages and evidence in this paper should inform discussions, plans and decision-making in national disaster risk reduction or disaster management platforms, policy forums, community consultations, and project design.

## 2. Community resilience: what do we mean?

### Resilience

The concept of resilience is rooted in the physical sciences. By extension, resilience refers to the ability of people and systems, including ecological and social systems, to adapt successfully to change. Resilience is required, and the capacity to be resilient exists, at many levels: in individuals, households, and communities, in local and national government, within organizations, as well as nationally, regionally and globally. National Society can contribute to resilience at all these levels.

The IFRC defines resilience as **'the ability of individuals, communities, organizations or countries exposed to disasters, crises and**

**underlying vulnerabilities to anticipate, prepare for, reduce the impact of, cope with and recover from the effects of shocks and stresses without compromising their long-term prospects'**.

### Community

The IFRC's Framework for Community Resilience defines a community as **'a group of people who may or may not live within the same area, village or neighbourhood, share a similar culture, habits and resources'**. Communities are **groups of people exposed to the same threats and risks, for example such as disease, political and economic dangers, or natural disasters**. Resilience is relevant worldwide, because all countries have communities that are vulnerable. The IFRC believes that resilient communities are the foundation of resilient nations. Its focus on communities enables the IFRC to benefit from National Societies' long and deep experience of supporting local communities.

### Holistic

A holistic approach means looking at the context in which communities live as a whole, not seeing them through the lens of a single sector. Communities are complex and dynamic and so are the challenges that they confront. Many different factors (including physical, human, financial, natural and social) can affect resilience, and they interconnect. Solutions must therefore be holistic and multi-sectoral. Strengthening community resilience means looking at how different factors affect each other, and the community, and at what a National Society can do to assist communities to reduce their vulnerability and strengthen their capacity.

### Why now?

In the past decade, humanitarian need has grown at a staggering rate. The number of

1 <http://www.ifrc.org/Global/Documents/Secretariat/201501/1284000-Framework%20for%20Community%20Resilience-EN-LR.pdf>  
2 <http://ifrc-media.org/interactive/one-billion-coalition/>

people who rely on humanitarian assistance has more than tripled while the cost of responding has increased five-fold<sup>3</sup>. Everything suggests that this growth will continue.

The humanitarian sector's response cannot be more of the same, because it will not be possible to mobilize enough resources to meet the growing demands and complexity of unanticipated events and enduring humanitarian crises. We need to take a longer view and to make more effective use of our collective resources to reduce need. To do this, communities must be better prepared for the risks they face.

It is also time to redefine success. Success within the humanitarian sector should no longer be defined in terms of the increasing number of people we reach, but in terms of the decreasing number of people who need us to reach them. The objective of future humanitarian action should be to preserve human dignity by helping people to anticipate, prepare for, respond to and recover from shocks and stresses in their lives and communities, so that they can thrive even in adversity. The case for resilience has grown over the past 20 years. A large body of evidence, reflecting economic, political, humanitarian and moral perspectives, confirms its importance.

The world of humanitarian action is now at a tipping point. New partnerships and funding are creating the conditions for a paradigm shift. Evidence shows that building resilience saves both money and lives by reducing the financial, administrative and resource costs of responding to crises. Through unprecedented collaboration and wise investment, we can reduce costs and need, and achieve a more resilient world in which fewer lives are disrupted or ended by disaster, conflict and disease.

### 3. Our approach and contribution

#### Our commitments

In a declaration adopted at the IFRC General Assembly in 2013, the IFRC made three commitments with regard to the post-2015 humanitarian agenda. It undertook to:

- Enable every community in high-risk areas to acquire the capacity to prepare for and respond to disasters.
- Have a volunteer in every community in which we work who is responsible for facilitating access to basic health services.
- Continue efforts to strengthen National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies as trusted partners and effective auxiliaries to their governments in humanitarian and development work.

As part of its efforts to pursue community resilience, IFRC convened the One Billion Coalition for Resilience (1BC), an unprecedented commitment by individuals, communities, organizations, businesses and governments to transform the state of resilience in the world. 1BC is a vehicle for realizing the potential of our collective networks to share resources and to effect change on a massive scale. It is an opportunity to drive a paradigm shift in humanitarian response, in which the measure of success is not the number of people we reach, but the number of people who do not need our support. The vision of the 1BC is a world where people are safer, healthier and can thrive, even in adversity. To realize this vision, the goal of the 1BC is to mobilize one billion people to take action to strengthen community resilience, everywhere.

We recognize and acknowledge the many current and recent efforts that seek to establish or reinforce global policy frameworks to improve the humanitarian state of the

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<sup>3</sup> [http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/WHDT2015\\_2Dec.pdf](http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/WHDT2015_2Dec.pdf)



world. From disaster risk reduction (Sendai, March 2015), via sustainable development (New York, September 2015), climate change (Paris, December 2015), and urban development (Quito, October 2016), to the High-Level Panel on Humanitarian Financing (November 2015), the Global Response to Health Crises (December 2015) and the World Humanitarian Summit (May 2016), the IFRC and 1BC have engaged in and contributed to a dialogue that emphasizes resilience.

### The IFRC's approach

The IFRC's Framework for Community Resilience (FCR) provides the rationale for all relevant activities (interventions, projects, programmes, etc.) at community level, while the One Billion Coalition for Resilience (1BC) provides the platform for action. National Societies contribute to 1BC by rolling out the framework and scaling up their work for community resilience. The FCR sets out the IFRC's approach to community resilience. Its three elements are presented below.

### 1) Assist communities as they adopt risk-informed, holistic approaches to address their underlying vulnerabilities

Taking a risk-informed approach means assessing past, present and future risks that confront a community, and then integrating prevention, mitigation, preparedness, response and recovery into plans, decisions, and action. If this approach is taken, emergency planning is less likely to be driven by shocks than by vulnerability, and development planning is less likely to be blind to disaster risk or climate change.

Strengthening community resilience is a process led and owned by communities. It is not something that National Societies can do for them, or bring to them. The design and implementation of programmes to strengthen community resilience should be people-led by community members, not service-led by any organization. People and communities always have capacities. The IFRC's role is to help boost these.

## What do communities want?

The people most likely to know how things around them work and how to improve their lives live in the communities in which National Societies work. To understand what resilience means for some of them, the IFRC studied community experiences during the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami, and in Latin America and the Caribbean. Summarizing what community members said, these studies<sup>4</sup> found that a resilient community:

1. Is knowledgeable, healthy and can meet its basic needs.
2. Is socially cohesive.
3. Has economic opportunities.
4. Has well-maintained and accessible infrastructure and services.
5. Can manage its natural assets.
6. Is connected.

IFRC continues to develop its understanding of what communities want in different regions and how lessons from one community can be used and replicated in others. Tracking the outcomes and evaluating the impact of programmes by National Societies and IFRC is therefore vital. The features of a resilient community identified so far represent general characteristics. However, the FCR assumes they can be applied in most communities.

<sup>4</sup> IFRC, *Understanding community resilience and program factors that strengthen them, A comprehensive study of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies' tsunami operation (2012)*.  
At: [http://www.ifrc.org/PageFiles/96984/Final\\_Synthesis\\_Characteristics\\_Lessons\\_Tsunami.pdf](http://www.ifrc.org/PageFiles/96984/Final_Synthesis_Characteristics_Lessons_Tsunami.pdf)

## Community-based health and community resilience in Ireland



Photo from Mountjoy Prison, Dublin, Ireland, FREE-IT Lifelong Learning Project, May 2014

The Irish Red Cross aims to strengthen community resilience by helping communities to be as healthy as possible. Ireland was the first country to introduce a community-based health and first aid in action programme in prisons. A partnership between the Irish Prison Service, the Irish Red Cross and the City of Dublin Education and Training Board led to a pilot project in 2009. Today the programme operates in all 14 prisons across the country.

Prisoners are the community in a prison; the volunteers are prisoners too. Groups attend weekly community-based health and first aid training sessions and undertake Red Cross volunteer training. More than 700 special status Irish Red Cross volunteers have been recruited in prisons since 2009 and the project directly benefits more than 4,000 prisoners every day.

Activities are identified during community assessment using a community-based health and first aid toolkit. The IFRC's Vulnerability and Capacity Assessment (VCA) toolkit helps identify potential dividers, such as religion, and connectors, such as sport.

Volunteers advocate on health issues, produce posters, and conduct surveys to monitor impact. As a result of the project, assaults have fallen, HIV testing has increased, mental health has improved, and first aiders have made more emergency interventions. These outcomes indicate that empowered volunteers have developed health care skills that strengthen the resilience of the prison community. The programme has won a number of awards, including one from the World Health Organization. (For further information and videos see the Irish Red Cross web site. At: [www.redcross.ie/cbhfa](http://www.redcross.ie/cbhfa).)

The FCR recognizes that every community and context is dynamic, complex and unique. This means that there are no ready-made solutions. The approach in any community must be individually tailored. It must also be monitored and evaluated to ensure that lessons are captured and applied.

Whether a National Society can contribute to the process of strengthening resilience in a community depends on:

1. The vulnerabilities and capacities of the community.
2. Its links and interaction with the external environment.
3. The value that a National Society can add.

The IFRC believes that strengthening community resilience cannot be achieved by one individual, department, organization or government alone. It believes that genuine resilience programming is holistic and multi-sectoral. A diverse coalition is required to understand and influence complex systems, even when the response is to a specific threat, such as a flood, a drought, or sexual and gender-based violence.

National Societies can contribute support in a variety of ways. They can:

- Convene a coalition of stakeholders with a common interest in building resilience.
- Assess context, vulnerability to specific threats, and capacity.
- Organize volunteer networks, through Red Cross and Red Crescent branches, to reach out to communities.



- Provide solutions that are: threat-specific but sensitive to larger, more holistic systems; appropriate; technically sound; effective and efficient; and sensitive to issues such as gender equality, cultural diversity, climate change, and the prevention of violence.
- Facilitate self-help solutions that mobilize a community's own resources.
- Improve a community's access to external support networks (government, the country offices of United Nations and other international agencies, civil society organizations) as well as to the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement.
- Involve communities in risk assessment, monitoring and evaluation.
- Enhance accountability to communities, government and other partners by providing regular reports, feedback, gender and diversity analysis, and information about programmes, services and activities.

## 2) Adopt a demand-driven, people-centred approach

Our approach puts people first. It is demand-not supply-driven. The FCR recognizes that strengthening community resilience means putting people in the driving seat. The IFRC enables individuals and communities to access what they need to improve their own lives rather than supply them with a generic package of resilience goods and services.

Our approach aims to make sure that people *remain* at the centre of decisions and actions that affect their future. Communities are dynamic; their priorities and leaders change. Programmes that strengthen resilience must also be flexible and adapt as differing priorities emerge within communities. Programmes must continue to respond to the objectives of people and to their concerns, reflecting changes within their community. Examples of actions that National Societies might take include:

### **Ensure community programmes are informed by assessments of needs and capacity.**

- Assess the vulnerability and capacity of communities.
- Prioritize needs that communities have chosen to address.
- Monitor and evaluate programme implementation.

### **Support community members to own processes that strengthen their resilience.**

- Involve community members in designing and implementing community resilience programmes.
- Assist community organization and ownership.
- Support communities to strengthen their capacity.

### **Work with Red Cross and Red Crescent volunteers in their own communities.**

- Engage with communities through local Red Cross and Red Crescent branches.
- Recognize the potential of volunteers and local branches to act as agents of change in the communities in which they live or are based.

### **Strengthen both formal and informal systems that foster an enabling environment for community resilience.**

- Support the development of *formal* systems (laws, codes, standards etc.) that, for example, strengthen disaster risk reduction or increase community representation in decision-making.
- Make use of *informal* systems (traditional customs, indigenous knowledge, etc.) to, for example, deliver climate and weather information.

### **Amplify community voices.**

- Collect testimonies and case studies that illustrate how policies and decisions affect the vulnerability of families, households, schools, etc.
- Share testimonies with public authorities.
- Raise community perspectives in government committees and decision-making fora.

## Community decisions and technical innovation in Colombia

The Colombian Red Cross prioritizes the development of resilient communities. The people it serves face inequality and poverty, are at risk from disaster and climate change, and have experienced decades of armed conflict.

Chocó is the poorest administrative region in Colombia and has the highest rainfall anywhere in the world. In 2010-2011 rain was almost constant, affecting more than 350,000 people. Most people living in Chocó belong to the country's Afro-Colombian minority.

With funding from ECHO and local government, the Colombian Red Cross - supported by the Netherlands Red Cross and the Norwegian Red Cross - began a 15-month programme to address disaster preparedness and meet immediate shelter needs. The project provided a range of disaster risk reduction activities in five communities. For the community at San José de la Calle, one option was to move to the nearest town. Their village on the banks of the Atrato river could only be reached by river. The village was cut off when the river flooded, and people were unable to access schools and livelihoods. But though life was hard, the community had land rights there, and chose to stay despite the threat.

The project built 80 new houses and a new communal walkway, a school, a community centre, a playground and a garden. Village lumberjacks cut local timber and villagers provided labour. The project adopted techniques tested in a neighbouring region to raise all structures on stilts. Skilled carpenters provided training to local craftspeople, helping to ensure that technical knowledge would remain in the community when the project ended. Members of the community now live 2.5 metres above river level. (For more information, see [www.sheltercasestudies.org/shelterprojects2011-2012.html](http://www.sheltercasestudies.org/shelterprojects2011-2012.html).)



*Raised house and communal walkway,  
San José de la Calle, Chocó, Colombia;  
Photo: Sandra D'Urzo, IFRC*

- Convene meetings that bring together public authorities and vulnerable populations.
- Conduct seminars and briefings for public authorities that bring information, data, testimonies and the experience collected by vulnerable populations to official attention.

### 3) Connecting communities: being available to everyone, everywhere, to prevent and reduce human suffering

The IFRC has 190 member National Societies, 60,000 local branches, and 17 million volunteers worldwide. The strength of National Societies lies in their ability to respond to local needs, their role as an auxiliary of national government, and their participation in a global federation. Their experience and their strong connection with local communities are central to IFRC's capacity to strengthen community resilience. They are the source of IFRC's expertise and comparative advantage.

National Societies take many forms of action to connect with their communities. For example, they may:

- Make sure that an inclusive approach is adopted at all levels, that welcomes, respects and values contributions by all members of society. Branches can mobilize local volunteers, including affected people, youth, women and girls, marginalized groups, etc. Local volunteers can be invited or appointed to sit on governance bodies.
- Partner with the community, civil society and public authorities. The unique role of National Societies as an auxiliary of government is of particular value in this context.
- Make use of different methods of communication (online, SMS, radio, newsletters, posters, branch and volunteer meetings, etc.) to connect with communities and community members in ways that are appropriate and accessible.

The 1BC aims to strengthen connectedness between partners. Through it, the IFRC, National Societies and other members of the coalition can interconnect, support kick-start initiatives, and break down obstacles to resilience using five tools:

1. **A digital ecosystem** for public engagement connects individuals, organizations, experts and governments to one another and to 1BC tools. It helps them to collaborate and take action, both to assess threats to resilience and design local solutions that strengthen resilience.
2. **A business continuity platform** provides a suite of tools and services for small and medium sized enterprises. They help to shorten the time enterprises need to recover from shocks, forge more resilient supply chains, promote stronger links with government and communities, and increase insurance cover against potential losses.
3. **A civil society organizations' partnership platform** assists 1BC partners to connect and share information with each other and communities by increasing visibility, transparency, accountability and capacity. It promotes more effective local partnerships by providing insights into local networks and community structures that can support efforts to build resilience.
4. **An advocacy platform** enhances the capacity of communities and partners to speak with one voice, increasing their ability to influence decision-makers and opinion leaders, and create or improve government policies, legislation or practices that promote resilience.
5. **An operations platform** brings together all the connections and learning of coalition members to map local risks, design local solutions, and implement community initiatives that address the risks that communities prioritize.



## 4. An enabling environment

### Is it enough?

The IFRC's understanding of community resilience has grown. The FCR provides guidance on how the IFRC and National Societies can combine their humanitarian concern to address specific and imminent threats with longer-term, sustainable approaches traditionally associated with development. But is this enough?

The enabling environment that community resilience needs is created by:

1. The commitment and engagement of communities.
2. Coordination and partnerships – the power of coalitions.
3. Finance.
4. Legal frameworks and policies.

The IFRC plays a significant role in strengthening these enabling factors through its communications, advocacy and humanitarian diplomacy.

## Communication for community resilience in Indonesia



West Sumatra is extremely vulnerable to natural hazards. In 2009, the IFRC contributed humanitarian assistance and coordination after two major earthquakes struck the region within 48 hours, triggering landslides and destroying at least four villages.

The region lies on the geological fault line that caused the Asian tsunami of 2004; earthquakes are a constant threat. The Indonesian Red Cross (PMI) helps communities to reduce their risks and increase their resilience. With support from the French Red Cross and Netherlands Red Cross, PMI initiated a programme on disaster risk reduction that targeted three communities in West Sumatra. Volunteers held focus group discussions to establish how different sections of the community communicate and what media they use.

Disaster risk reduction messages were shared in many different ways, via stickers, posters, television, radio and social media. Partnering with small shopkeepers and food stall owners encouraged the latter to display disaster risk reduction messages on their blinds and menus. At the centre of the campaign was a figure drawn by a local artist, representing a traditional character whose wisdom is respected by everyone in West Sumatra. PMI volunteers interviewed members of the community to monitor how effective disaster risk reduction campaign messages and media were and how well people remembered them. In 2011 the programme was expanded to include nine communities in three districts. (See [www.preventionweb.net/go/36358](http://www.preventionweb.net/go/36358).)



### Community commitment and engagement

Securing the engagement and commitment of communities is the key to strengthening resilience and sustaining development. This implies that everyone should be involved, including people from marginalized and excluded groups, who are of particular concern to the IFRC and whose voices must be heard when building community resilience. Potentially marginalized groups may include:

- Women and girls.
- Older people.
- People living with HIV.
- People with disabilities.
- Children and young people.
- People who have been trafficked or displaced.
- Refugees, displaced people and other migrants.
- People of a particular sexual orientation.
- Members of particular races, groups, castes or classes.

- Members of indigenous groups.
- Persons subject to harmful cultural practices.
- Other persons deprived of their human rights.

Communities are not targets, but they are the starting point of efforts to strengthen resilience. Capacity exists in every community, regardless of how poor it is: this capacity can be mobilized and organized by National Societies. The role of women should be strengthened, whether they are members of the community or members of Red Cross and Red Crescent teams and governance bodies, and evidence of this strengthening demonstrated. Building the capacity of local branches and units is vital because they form an integral part of the community and its civil society, enriching the social fabric of both.

## The commitment to an older community in Singapore

The Community-Led Action for Resilience (CLARE) programme, which started in January 2015, is part of the Singapore Red Cross contribution to community resilience.

The population in developed countries is ageing fast. After the Second World War, Singapore was a young society. Whereas in 1945 only 2.5 per cent of the population was older than 65, by 2000 at least 7 per cent were – and by 2030, one in five residents will be 65 or older. Strong social networks are important for good mental health. Yet many older people become isolated because of poor health or mobility or low income. The number of older people living alone in Singapore almost tripled between 2000 and 2015.

Through the CLARE programme, the Singapore Red Cross has made a commitment to older people. It is building the capacity of volunteers to give first aid to older people and use specialist equipment such as defibrillators. The Singapore Red Cross provides transport to medical appointments and offers a befriending service. It works with the Ministry of Social and Family Development and neighbourhood organizations that provide services for older people. CLARE volunteers work in the community they live in. Through this programme, the Singapore Red Cross wants to help older people to remain part of a connected, resilient community. (For more information, see <https://www.redcross.sg/our-services/community-services/community-led-action-for-resilience-clare.html>)



Befriending Mr de Silva. Photo: Singapore Red Cross, 2015

### Coordination and partnership – the power of coalitions

A resilient community possesses countless networks, systems, and feedback loops that coexist, overlap and interact. To support this complex system a sustained and active dialogue is required, involving as many members of the community as possible. Such coalitions represent an alliance of diverse partners, whose variety of opinions and experience is essential to success. Coalitions bring at least five distinct qualities to resilience-building:

- Strength in numbers. Coalitions project a united front, especially when they voice support for a controversial issue or bold ambition when advocating at global, national or local level.
- Visibility. Joining a coalition can increase the prominence of your effort.
- Contacts. Your partners can help you reach decision-makers and people with influence who can further your cause.
- Synergies. If organizations or individuals lack expertise on an issue, they can reach out to other coalition members who possess experience or expertise they lack. Synergies ensure that a full range of skills and competencies is reflected in your work.
- Shared workload. Cooperation with partners can lighten the demands on individuals or organizations and advance progress toward a shared goal, whoever performs the work.

## Partnership for community resilience in Denmark



The Danish Red Cross runs most of Denmark's accommodation centres for asylum seekers on behalf of the national government. For people living in these centres, it also provides access to health and education.

Outside asylum centres there is a gap in provision. Under Danish law, undocumented migrants cannot use government health services unless they need urgent medical treatment. Many undocumented migrants avoid government services in case they are reported to the police. But access to health services is a feature of resilient communities. Without it, individuals, their families and the wider community are all vulnerable.

Drawing on experience from the Norwegian Red Cross and Swedish Red Cross, the Danish Red Cross has set up two health clinics for migrants. With partners from the Danish Medical Association and Danish Refugee Council, it provides undocumented migrants with medical and dental treatment. The clinics' health professionals

(doctors, nurses, dentists, midwives and laboratory technicians) have become Danish Red Cross volunteers. All funding is provided by donations.

How do migrants find out about the clinics? Many undocumented migrants in Denmark earn a living from collecting and recycling tin cans, so labels about the clinics were stuck to cans and migrants were invited in their own language to text an SMS number for more information. More than 2,400 patients used the Red Cross clinics in the first three years. In 2012 Copenhagen city council awarded the clinic in that city a prize for voluntary service. (For further information, see [www.redcross.eu/en/Who-we-are/MEMBERS/Danish-Red-Cross/](http://www.redcross.eu/en/Who-we-are/MEMBERS/Danish-Red-Cross/).)





While a coalition can take many shapes, one organization or a partnership of several will usually act as its convenor. The convenor will call a first meeting with organizations interested in building resilience through a coalition.

### Finance

The IFRC believes current funding mechanisms offer short-term and unpredictable finance that cannot support community resilience appropriately. The process of building community resilience needs longer-term, flexible and predictable funding. For its part, the IFRC has decided to invest at least 10 per cent of any emergency appeal in resilience work.

To secure flexible, predictable multi-year funding for building resilience, the IFRC and National Societies need to engage in

proactive communication and advocacy with governments, the private sector and other partners. They should gather evidence demonstrating that early action to manage risk and address chronic vulnerability is more cost effective than support for crisis response alone. Cost benefit analyses by 11 National Societies have shown that on average community-based disaster risk reduction programmes save USD 16.55 for every dollar spent.<sup>5</sup> Joint accountability mechanisms should ensure that funding is spent on priorities that communities have identified.

### Legal framework and policies

A community-based approach does not mean that the IFRC and National Societies focus their attention only at the community level. Nevertheless, to achieve sustainable and widespread change, community

<sup>5</sup> At: <https://fednet.ifrc.org/en/resources/community-preparedness-and-risk-reduction/disaster-risk-reduction/resilience/cost-benefit-analysis/>

## Finance for community resilience in Kenya

More than 80 per cent of Kenya's land area is arid or semi-arid, and climate change has caused temperatures to rise. These areas are home to nearly one third of Kenya's population and 70 per cent of its livestock. Pastoralist communities in Kenya suffer chronic food insecurity and consistently experience high rates of malnutrition that are above international emergency thresholds.

In 2010-2011, nearly 4 million people in Kenya were affected by prolonged drought and were in urgent need of water, health services and nutrition. Together with partners in telecommunications, banks and the media, the Kenya Red Cross launched a funding campaign called Kenyans for Kenya (K4K). The campaign capitalized on its private sector partnerships and combined social media outreach with traditional fundraising methods.

The K4K steering committee planned to invest some of the funds raised in longer-term livelihood programmes that would enable people to produce their own food despite climate change and drought.

After four weeks, donations totalled more than one billion Kenyan shillings (nearly 11 million US Dollars) - twice the original target. Kenya Red Cross and its partners invested more than 300 million Kenyan shillings in longer-term projects on food security and livelihood improvement. These are expected to significantly reduce dependency on emergency food aid and to strengthen community resilience in the future. (For more information, see the K4K archive at [www.kenyaredcross.org/index.php/kenyans-for-kenya](http://www.kenyaredcross.org/index.php/kenyans-for-kenya).)



Muhammed Emil: "The earth is now barren and can no longer grow. It has not rained for four years."

Photo: Jakob Dall/Danish Red Cross.

perspectives should inform all other levels of decision-making (local, national, regional and global).

Laws and policies define the roles and responsibilities of public and private organizations and individuals in building more resilient communities, and can ensure that communities are involved in decision-making processes that will affect them.

National Societies' auxiliary role provides them with unique opportunities to influence law and policy-making. In many countries, for example, National Societies have a legally mandated seat on disaster

risk management committees. The auxiliary relationship also provides National Societies with the standing to ensure that government focuses at all levels on strengthening community resilience, and that this concern is reflected in local and national laws, policies, codes, strategies and programmes.

The IFRC's research has demonstrated that legal preparedness for disasters reduces risks and saves lives. The IFRC encourages governments to review and strengthen legislation that relates to disaster risk management, and to meet international standards.<sup>6</sup> For example, the

## Support for a legal framework in the Seychelles



*Red Cross Society of Seychelles and IFRC representatives at a workshop on the Disaster Risk Management Act in Seychelles*

In January 2013, Cyclone Felleng caused landslides and severe flooding in the Seychelles. The IFRC supported the Red Cross Society of Seychelles in providing emergency relief on the main island, Mahé, and on La Digue.

For the Seychelles government, the floods were a wake-up call. The country remained highly vulnerable to tropical cyclones, floods, storm surges, landslides, and tsunamis, and the risk of such disasters is exacerbated by climate change and rising sea levels. Cyclone Felleng highlighted several needs: to improve disaster readiness; strengthen flood management law and building codes; and streamline the legal framework for humanitarian assistance.

The Red Cross Society of Seychelles, with support from the IFRC Disaster Law programme, provided support to the government in these areas. Representatives of the Seychelles National Society and IFRC took part in a workshop and suggested how to make the legal framework a stronger tool for disaster risk reduction, preparedness and response. In August 2014, the Seychelles adopted a new Disaster Risk Management Act.

The new Seychelles legislation incorporated many of the recommendations contained in the Guidelines for the Domestic Facilitation and Regulation of International Disaster Response and Initial Recovery Assistance. The new law establishes procedures to request, offer, accept and terminate international assistance. The Red Cross Society of Seychelles' role as auxiliary to the government in humanitarian activities was reaffirmed.

The Red Cross Society of Seychelles is now a member of the committee that advises the government on matters relating to disaster risk management. Two other committees, the Vulnerability Assessment Committee and the National Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction, demonstrate the new Act's intention to improve disaster risk reduction as well as address the relief phase of emergencies.

6 See, for example, ICRC, *Guidelines for the Domestic Facilitation and Regulation of International Disaster Relief and Initial Recovery Assistance (30IC/07/R4 annex)*, at: <https://www.icrc.org/eng/assets/files/red-cross-crescent-movement/31st-international-conference/idrl-guidelines-en.pdf>; and IFRC, *Checklist on Law and Disaster Risk Reduction – An annotated outline (2015)*, at: <http://drr-law.org/resources/The-Checklist-on-law-and-DRR-Oct2015-EN-FINAL.pdf>

cost of relief operations can be reduced significantly, as can delays, if special custom and immigration procedures are introduced after disasters.

When reviewing the enabling legal framework, it is important to consider all relevant laws. To address disaster risk reduction, for example, governments must look not only

at laws on disaster management but also at laws on climate change, land use and planning, agriculture, environmental and resource management, and building codes. If the legal and policy framework addresses risks holistically, this can help to create a strong enabling environment for building community resilience.

## Humanitarian diplomacy and community resilience

For the IFRC, humanitarian diplomacy means persuading decision makers and opinion leaders to act in the interests of vulnerable people, and respect the Fundamental Principles. Humanitarian diplomacy can include advocacy, communications, negotiation, formal agreements and other measures.

To develop a successor to the Hyogo Framework for Action, the global plan to strengthen resilience, the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNISDR), governments and other organizations collaborated in several regional meetings.

The 2014 Asia Ministerial Conference for Disaster Risk Reduction, held in Thailand, involved 4,000 participants, including delegates of governments and non-governmental organizations from 50 countries. More than 25 National Society representatives attended and IFRC organized discussions and workshops.

Building community resilience was a major theme of the conference. The briefing paper on community resilience was developed by the IFRC's Asia Pacific regional office in consultation with ten regional governments,

the UN, non-governmental organizations, and academic institutions. It included case studies from many National Societies across the Asia Pacific region, reflecting the experience of their communities, staff and volunteers. The paper was endorsed and its recommendations were reflected in the Bangkok Declaration. Recommendations were subsequently included in the new global framework, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030, developed at the Third UN World Conference in Japan in 2015.



Promoting legal preparedness to protect communities, 2014 Asia Ministerial Conference for Disaster Risk Reduction. Photo: IFRC



## Key messages

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The key messages below draw on the Framework for Community Resilience and on IFRC's work for community resilience. They are designed to support Red Cross and Red Crescent staff and volunteers in their communication and advocacy on community resilience.

### 1. We put people first

Strengthening community resilience is a process led and owned by communities. It is not a process that a National Society can do for, or bring to, a community. The people most likely to know how to improve the lives of communities are those with whom National Societies work. Programmes that strengthen community capacity and resilience must recognize that the action we take is complementary to resilience-building by communities themselves.

Both the design and the implementation of programmes must be led by communities. The process should be linked to action by local governments and other local organizations and campaigns. It should respect language, tradition, culture and techniques, and the principle of Do No Harm.

### 2. We look beyond immediate action to secure long-term gains

Strengthening community resilience does not happen overnight. It requires long-term engagement and investment. The IFRC looks beyond immediate action to long-term gains and sustainability.

Providing emergency and life-saving interventions while working to strengthen resilience is at the core of our approach. Our aim is to address the causes of vulnerability and to prepare for and respond

to disasters and crises, while protecting develop gains and ensuring that vulnerable populations have the opportunity to thrive, even in adversity.

### 3. We leave no-one behind: we draw on everyone's ability

We recognize the diversity within communities and that women, girls, men and boys have abilities and priorities. People are sometimes excluded from community activities because of their gender, age, race, caste, religion, immigration status or disability, for example. We reject such exclusion: it disregards rights, roles, wisdom and capacity. Excluding such populations from discussion of needs and solutions will exacerbate vulnerability.

The voices of all groups must be heard and heeded when decisions are made about actions that affect them. In particular, the role of women should be acknowledged and strengthened and evidence of such strengthening collected and analysed. National Societies and their partners will make sure that they communicate with vulnerable groups and that vulnerable groups participate meaningfully in decisions that concern them. This ensures that the voices of vulnerable groups are valued, and that their views, needs and abilities are incorporated in community resilience programmes.

### 4. We build the capacity of National Societies

To strengthen community resilience, it is vital to build the capacity of National Societies, and particularly the capacity of local branches and volunteers. Local branches and volunteers of all ages are an integral part of the communities they

serve. To build capacity, it is also important to include community voices, including the voices of women, volunteers and vulnerable groups, in Red Cross and Red Crescent governance bodies.

## 5. We will work through the One Billion Coalition for Resilience

A holistic, multi-sectoral approach is required to tackle vulnerability, improve community resilience, and mitigate specific threats. Successful programmes build coalitions across sectors, work in concert (not competition) with others, exploit the connections, learning and support provided by the five platforms of the 1BC, and apply shared measures of success.

## 6. We speak out - and listen

We communicate and advocate with our different partners in different ways, using appropriate messages, media, language and forums. We know that the communities we work with want to speak out too, and we seek to improve two-way communication. We develop channels that allow all sectors of the community to tell us what they want and give feedback. We support communities' own campaigns.

## 7. We monitor results and share them with stakeholders

We ensure that activities intended to strengthen community resilience are clearly identified, consolidated and tracked. In particular, initiatives that build resilience should monitor and record:

- The number of people that join such activities and actions that builds resilience.
- The number of people that become more aware of local risks and local solutions.
- Changes in the community's capacity to mitigate specific threats.

## 8. We value our partners

No organization can build community resilience on its own. We work to strengthen resilience with partners of all kinds – communities, community-based organizations, local and national governments, official and civil society organizations, knowledge and reference centres, universities, and the private sector.

We call on other organizations, including non-governmental organizations and organizations outside the humanitarian sector, to join 1BC to help drive a paradigm shift in humanitarian action and transform community resilience across the world.

## 9. We work with the private sector to share expertise and resources

The IFRC and its members will work with private sector partners for mutual gain, leveraging the resources of each to promote communities that are more resilient - economically, socially and environmentally.

## 10. We work with academic institutions to build local and global knowledge

We call on academic institutions to focus their research, teaching and expertise on topics that relate to community resilience in order to share and increase the sum of local and global knowledge.

## 11. Support the IFRC's investment in community resilience

The IFRC has decided to invest at least 10 per cent of all emergency appeals in our work on community resilience. But this is not enough. Community resilience pro-

grammes require flexible, multi-year funding. We need long-term support from government and private sector donors if we are to help communities all over the world.

The need is urgent. We call on donors to ensure that we can adequately finance our role, enabling us to support the communities with which we work on a larger scale, more predictably and more sustainably.

Prevention is better than cure. When we invest in relief alone, we cannot guarantee that communities will ever fully recover their dignity and rights. We know that support for preventive action that manages risk and addresses chronic vulnerability is ultimately more effective and efficient than support for crisis response alone.

## 12. We acknowledge the primary responsibility of government

States are primarily responsible for preventing disasters and reducing the risk of disasters in their territories.<sup>7</sup> We call on governments to enact and enforce relevant local and national laws and implement appropriate policies and strategies. Legal preparedness saves lives, reduces risk and vulnerability, and will contribute to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

## 13. Empower communities so that they can participate fully in resilience activities

We call on governments to empower communities and enable them to participate fully in planning and decision-making, as well as access appropriate expertise and secure adequate resources to build resilience. We ask governments to recognize the rights, capacities, needs and vulnerabilities of every person in the community without discrimination and to promote

inclusive participation in decision-making, community resilience and equitable development.

## 14. Work with the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement

We call upon governments to use fully the auxiliary role of National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies when they implement plans and priorities for community resilience in line with fundamental humanitarian principles.

<sup>7</sup> United Nations, *Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030, Section III: Guiding Principles*. [www.preventionweb.net/files/43291\\_sendaiframeworkfordren.pdf](http://www.preventionweb.net/files/43291_sendaiframeworkfordren.pdf)

## Annex

# Community resilience: our history

“National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies have been doing resilience work for decades, it is at the heart of what National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies do, day to day.”<sup>8</sup>

Community resilience has been part of the IFRC’s work throughout its history. Since its creation, the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement has been guided by humanitarian principles and values that mandate National Societies to help individuals and communities both to prepare for and overcome adversity and disaster.

Co-founder Gustave Moynier, speaking in 1875, stated that *foresight* was one of the Movement’s basic working principles and asked members to make preparations during peacetime for possible war.

By 1965, the Fundamental Principle of Humanity had confirmed the IFRC’s wider role in protection and assistance. The IFRC’s job was to protect life and health, by preventing and alleviating suffering due to injury or illness, discrimination, inequality and poverty, or natural or technological disasters.

In 1984 the Swedish Red Cross published a study titled **Prevention Better Than Cure**. This played a key role in guiding community-based disaster preparedness programmes, a forerunner of approaches to resilience.

The Preamble of the **IFRC Constitution**, revised in 1987, stated: “We are committed to protecting human dignity and to improving the lives of vulnerable people by mobilizing the power of humanity”.

In 1994, the **Code of Conduct for The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and NGOs in Disaster Relief** affirmed that “Relief aid must strive to reduce future vulnerabilities to disaster as well as meeting basic needs”.<sup>9</sup>

In 1999 the IFRC’s **Disaster Preparedness Policy**, highlighted in Strategy 2010, recognized that disaster preparedness is a link between emergency response, recovery and development. The first guide to vulnerability and capacity assessment was developed.

In 2003, the **Agenda for Humanitarian Action**, adopted at the 28th International Conference, affirmed a plan of action to reduce vulnerability to disaster impacts and risks.

The 2004 **World Disasters Report** adopted the title From Risk to Resilience and stated: “Local knowledge, skills, determination, livelihoods, cooperation, access to resources and representation are all vital factors enabling people to bounce back from disaster”.<sup>10</sup>

In 2005, the IFRC supported the Hyogo Framework for Action and adopted its own Global Agenda that includes an emphasis on reducing disaster risk.

<sup>8</sup> IFRC, *The way forward for community resilience*, 5 November 2014. At: <http://www.ifrc.org/fr/nouvelles/nouvelles/common/the-way-forward-for-community-resilience1-67484/>

<sup>9</sup> IFRC and ICRC, *The Code of Conduct for The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and NGOs in Disaster Relief*. At: <http://www.ifrc.org/en/publications-and-reports/code-of-conduct>

<sup>10</sup> IFRC, *World Disasters Report 2004: From risk to resilience – helping communities cope with crisis*. At: <http://www.ifrc.org/publications-and-reports/world-disasters-report/wdr2004>



In 2006-2008, the IFRC developed the **Vulnerability and Capacity Assessment** training manuals and toolkit.

In 2007, the 30th International Conference 'Together for Humanity' recognized the growing disaster burden due to climate change and resolved to integrate climate change adaptation in disaster risk reduction.

In 2008 and 2009, **global community resilience forums** of National Societies were held in Oslo, Norway.

In 2009, the IFRC published its first **Framework for Community Safety and Resilience**. The 2009 IFRC Council of Delegates endorsed a policy on migration that recognized the need to strengthen the resilience of migrants in their communities of origin and in their host countries.

In 2010, **Strategy 2020** reaffirmed the IFRC's role in helping communities to foresee and prepare for natural and technological disasters, and respond to, manage and recover from them. It set out the Red Cross and Red Crescent's contribution to sustainable development through community resilience.

In 2011, the **Global Community Resilience Forum**, held in Damascus, Syria, discussed the rollout of the Framework for Community Safety and Resilience.

In 2010-2013, research on community resilience in the Asia Pacific region, Latin America and the Caribbean made it possible to identify the characteristics of resilient communities and successful community resilience programmes.

Delegates at the 2013 IFRC General Assembly called for renewed global efforts to tackle persistent and rising inequality which excludes many people from the benefits of development and undermines their resilience to disaster and adversity.

Representatives from 79 National Societies attended the **2014 Global Community Resilience Forum** in Cali, Colombia. With partners from international and private sector organizations, the IFRC issued a public declaration that pledged to create a One Billion Coalition for Resilience. The forum also issued recommendations to the IFRC, which emphasized the need to enhance the scale of programmes, increase funding, and strengthen communication and advocacy.

In 2015, the IFRC contributed to development of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030, launched at the Third UN World Conference in Japan, and to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in New York.

In December 2015, the IFRC officially launched the **One Billion Coalition for Resilience** at the 32<sup>nd</sup> International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent.

The **World Disasters Report 2016 - Resilience: Saving lives today, investing for tomorrow** specifically focuses on resilience and calls for increased investment, better indicators and a renewed focus on collaboration and partnerships to bring about change in affected communities.



# 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 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 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.

**Further information is available from:**

**International Federation of Red Cross  
and Red Crescent Societies**

P.O. Box 303

1211 Geneva 19 Switzerland

Email: [secretariat@ifrc.org](mailto:secretariat@ifrc.org)

[www.ifrc.org](http://www.ifrc.org)  
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