

# Disaster risk reduction:

## *A way of building safer communities*

### Summary

In its Global Agenda (2006–2010), the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies sets itself four ambitious goals. Reducing disaster risk is explicitly mentioned as a key strategy to achieve these goals. The Safer Communities initiative aims to make disaster risk reduction an integral part of all programming and to promote an integrated approach to addressing disaster risk. The initiative is in line with the International Federation's commitment to implement the Hyogo Framework for Action 2005–2015, adopted by the World Conference on Disaster Reduction in Kobe, Hyogo, Japan in January 2005.

### Delivering Strategy 2010: A Global Agenda for the International Federation

#### Our Global Goals

- *Goal 1: Reduce the numbers of deaths, injuries and impact from disasters.*
- *Goal 2: Reduce the number of deaths, illnesses and impact from diseases and public health emergencies.*
- *Goal 3: Increase local community, civil society and Red Cross Red Crescent capacity to address the most urgent situations of vulnerability.*
- *Goal 4: Reduce intolerance, discrimination and social exclusion and promote respect for diversity and human dignity.*

#### Our priorities – scaling up our response where needs are greatest

*The collective focus of the Federation over the next five years will be to:*

- *Improve our local, regional and international capacity to respond to disasters and public health emergencies.*
- *Scale-up our actions with vulnerable communities in health promotion, disease prevention and disaster risk reduction.*
- *Significantly increase our HIV/AIDS programming and advocacy.*
- *Renew our advocacy on priority humanitarian issues, especially on fighting intolerance, stigma and discrimination, promoting disaster risk reduction.*





All photos: International Federation

## Background

The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies is a leading humanitarian organization which has been working to prevent and alleviate human suffering for over 85 years. Through its core areas of work in disaster management, health, organizational development and the promotion of humanitarian values, the International Federation's 185 member National Societies are making a significant contribution to reducing the vulnerability of people living in some of the most hazard-prone areas of the world.

The importance of disaster risk reduction was highlighted in the Agenda for Humanitarian Action adopted at the 28th International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent in Geneva in December 2003. At the conference, the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and states party to the Geneva Conventions committed to a plan of action to reduce vulnerability to the risk and impact of natural disasters. This commitment has since been reiterated in the International Federation's Global Agenda, which calls for increased action with vulnerable communities to reduce disaster risk.

The International Federation also fully supports the conclusions of the World Conference on Disaster Reduction and continues to work through its member National Societies and in partnership with the United Nations, governments, donors and civil society to meet the objectives of the Hyogo Framework for Action, which was the key outcome of that conference.

To reduce disaster risk, the International Federation has three main strategies: to strengthen the preparedness and capacities of communities so that they are in a better position to respond when a disaster occurs; to promote activities and actions that mitigate the adverse effects of hazards; and to protect development projects such as health facilities from the impact of disasters.

## Some approaches to disaster risk reduction

While continuing to promote disaster preparedness and disaster mitigation, the International Federation is launching an initiative that will use advocacy, alliance building, awareness raising and knowledge sharing to advance its work in the specific area of disaster risk reduction, which in turn will contribute to building safer communities.

### Programme integration to address vulnerability and disaster risk

There is a growing recognition that strengthening resilience to disasters is not the exclusive preserve of disaster managers but a necessary component of all emergency and development programming. Communities/households with sustainable livelihoods, good levels of health care and access to a strong and accountable civil society are less susceptible to hazards and faster to recover. Reducing vulnerability and disaster risk, therefore, needs to be tackled from a variety of angles through integrated and mutually supportive programmes. The Safer Communities initiative will identify and promote practical examples of such integrated programmes, building on the work already being carried out at the policy and practice levels by the National Societies in the Americas.

#### Example

*In the village of Janashakti in Nepal, the sub-district branch of the Nepalese Red Cross has supported the community in reducing the impact of monsoon flooding. A vulnerability and capacity assessment has helped ensure community ownership of the project; the construction of a small footbridge has provided safe access of the population to schools, markets and productive land when the water is high; the creation of a community emergency fund has enabled a rapid response to disaster and provided financing for health promotion; and the protection of wells has reduced the incidence of water-borne diseases.*

### Mainstreaming disaster risk reduction in policy and practice

Ensuring that risk assessment and risk analysis are carried out as a matter of course in humanitarian and development programming is essential to reducing future risk and protecting development gains. The Safer Communities initiative will both contribute to policy development (e.g. by providing input to the new disaster-management and recovery policies) and influence practice by supporting activities such as cross-sectoral workshops and the sharing of experiences through case studies and exchange visits.

#### Example

*During the joint needs assessment and subsequent action planning conducted in July 2006 in the aftermath of the Jogjakarta earthquake, steps were taken to reduce disaster risk in the early recovery phase. The Indonesian Red Cross concluded agreements with two universities which supplied 80 volunteers to advise the affected population on the safe clearance of rubble and the construction of hazard-resistant temporary shelter.*



International Federation



Olav A. Saltnes/Norwegian Red Cross

## Promotion of the Hyogo Framework for Action

Raising awareness of the Hyogo Framework for Action and understanding its implications for the organization are crucial if the International Federation is to harness its full potential to reduce vulnerability and disaster risk. The Safer Communities initiative will promote the Hyogo Framework for Action through dissemination and training and the sharing of good practices in working with governments, the UN and non-governmental organizations to establish national disaster risk reduction platforms and processes.

### Example

*Building on the Plan of Action stemming from the XVII Inter-American Conference, the National Societies of the region developed a continental disaster risk reduction strategy based on the Hyogo Framework for Action. Among other things, this has led to a better-coordinated approach to risk reduction in the region.*

## The Hyogo Framework for Action: 2005–2015

*In the wake of the December 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami, the 2nd World Conference on Disaster Reduction was held in January 2005 in Hyogo, Japan.*

*The conference adopted the Hyogo Declaration, which committed governments to the development and implementation of the Hyogo Framework 2005–2015 ('Building the resilience of nations and communities to disasters'). This global action plan contains five priorities:*

- *Ensure that disaster risk reduction is a national and local priority with a strong institutional basis for implementation.*
- *Identify, assess and monitor disaster risks and enhance early warning.*
- *Use knowledge, innovation and education to build a culture of safety and resilience at all levels.*
- *Reduce the underlying risk factors.*
- *Strengthen disaster preparedness for effective response at all levels.*

*The International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (ISDR) will work with national governments and civil society in the development and implementation of the framework.*

### The ProVentio Consortium

*The International Federation hosts the ProVentio Consortium. This is a global coalition of governments, international organizations, academic institutions, the private sector and civil society organizations dedicated to increasing the safety of vulnerable communities and to reducing the impact of disasters in developing countries.*

*For more information about ProVentio, visit its web site at:  
<http://www.proventionconsortium.org>*

### For more information, please contact:

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

**Disaster Preparedness and Response Department**

P.O. Box 372

CH-1211 Geneva 19 - Switzerland

Telephone: +41 22 730 42 22

Telefax: +41 22 733 03 95

E-mail: [secretariat@ifrc.org](mailto:secretariat@ifrc.org)

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