A framework for community safety and resilience

In the face of disaster risk

Background

Disaster risk reduction (DRR) offers a major contribution to the building of safer, resilient communities. Central to this is the focus on communities and specifically communities that are at risk from regular and new disaster impacts. We know that we have been implementing DRR for some years now, but with the world becoming increasingly unsafe, it is important that we try to build on the foundations of previous endeavours and do more of what works and is effective. We also need to be more systematic in what we do as well as enhancing what we are doing to ensure that the basic objectives of safety and resilience are being addressed.

We are not necessarily concerned with a lot of new areas of work but rather with building on, enhancing and adapting what National Societies have already been doing and will continue to do in the future, looking for opportunities to make DRR action more effective and relevant to both existing and new disaster risks. Thus, the framework for community safety and resilience is concerned with what contributions the Red Cross Red Crescent can make in building community safety and resilience through a focus on disaster risk and its reduction. This framework has emerged from a widespread consultative process. At the National Society level, the framework was presented at five regional meetings for review and feedback. These regional meetings were held in Johannesburg, Katmandu, Penang, Panama and Rabat and were attended by over 70 National Societies.

Across the seven zones, a reference group was established to provide ongoing feedback on the framework reflecting National Society concerns. At the secretariat level the framework has been consistently under the scrutiny of a Global Alliance on DRR advisory group set up from among disaster management staff, while the disaster preparedness and risk reduction group of the Participating National Societies has also been regularly consulted. Suggestions and recommendations from all these groups have been incorporated into the framework.

Our global commitment

National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies have been implementing DRR for many years although it might not have been characterized as such. The 1980s saw new directions in programming with development-focused activities being implemented in Africa, Asia and Latin America, including community-based disaster preparedness.

This new approach later became enshrined in our global commitments. In 1999, a new disaster preparedness policy recognized disaster preparedness as the link between emergency response, recovery and development.

In 2003, the 28th International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent adopted Final Goal 3.1 of its Agenda for Humanitarian Action which acknowledges the importance of DRR and undertakes measures to minimize the impact of disasters on vulnerable populations.

Regional conferences in Algiers, Guayaquil and Singapore reinforced this focus. DRR is identified as a key action in achieving the goals of Strategy 2010, stating particularly that we should "scale up our actions with vulnerable communities in health promotion, disease prevention and disaster risk reduction."

The 30th International Conference in 2007 adopted the declaration "together for humanity" which stated the importance of ensuring that "environmental degradation and adaptation to climate change are integrated, where relevant, in disaster risk reduction and disaster management policies and plans."

The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (International Federation) also supports and resolves to work towards achieving the priorities of the Hyogo Framework for Action (HFA), adopted by the global community following the world conference on DRR held in Kobe, Japan in January 2005 (see below).

International Federation
of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

Objectives

This framework has the following principal goal:

To establish a foundation on which all Red Cross Red Crescent programmes, projects and interventions in DRR and all actions which contribute to the building of safe and resilient communities can be created, developed and sustained.

The use of this framework in programming for safety, resilience and DRR assumes support to National Societies through the following three strategic objectives:

1 the integration of DRR into policies, planning and longer-term programming
2 targeted disaster prevention, mitigation and preparedness activities and advocacy
3 the focused integration of DRR considerations into humanitarian response and disaster recovery

Linking what we do to the HFA

All the actions we take in the implementation of DRR projects and programmes will be linked to the five priorities of the HFA. This is important because the HFA is truly global and has been endorsed by most governments, international agencies and non-governmental organizations. We are a part of this global network and it is important, therefore, for us to positively address the HFA priorities which are:

1 To ensure that DRR is a local and national priority with a strong institutional basis for implementation.
2 To identify, assess and monitor disaster risks and enhance early warning.
3 To use knowledge, innovation and education to build a culture of safety and resilience at all levels.
4 To reduce the underlying risk factors.
5 To strengthen disaster preparedness for effective response at all levels.

However, the DRR actions that we take are to build safer and resilient communities. Incidentally, it is likely that most of what we do will be consistent with the HFA priorities.

The Global Alliance on DRR

The Global Alliance will be the principal instrument for increasing our work in DRR over the coming five-year period. The Global Alliance will focus on specific target National Societies and will give them high profile support to achieve agreed DRR goals, implemented according to the framework outlined in this paper and thus contributing to building community safety and resilience. The number of involved National Societies is likely to grow during the course of programme implementation.

The Global Alliance, with its objectives emphasizing the importance of implementation at the community level, can help us to promote our DRR, community safety and resilience agendas and bring them to the attention of the international community at regional and global levels, thus mobilizing support to enable us to achieve a major programme outcome. The Global Alliance, as a mechanism for the delivery of scaled-up DRR, will use the framework as its planning and programming guideline, along with all other programmes supporting an increase in our DRR work.

Focusing on building community safety and resilience in the face of disaster risk. In the International Federation we are promoting a common consensus around the building of safe and resilient communities. This concept was identified as a key strategic direction at the global meeting on DRR held in Costa Rica in November 2006 and reinforced as the central objective of the Global Alliance on DRR. It helps us to focus on households and communities and assists us in talking directly to the objectives of the Global Agenda.

Safe and resilient communities can be identified as having the following key characteristics:

- They understand the disaster risks that they face, they can assess and monitor these risks and can protect and make themselves safe to minimize losses and damage when a disaster strikes.
- They are able to do much for themselves and can sustain their basic community functions and structures despite the impact of disasters.
- They can build back after a disaster and work towards ensuring that vulnerabilities continue to be reduced for the future. More safety and resilience means less vulnerability.
- They understand that building safety and resilience is a long-term, continuous process that requires ongoing commitment. In the face of such unknown factors as the effects of climate change, or the degree of urban growth or environmental degradation, they understand that there is much that can be done to adapt to future problems and challenges by building on their current knowledge.
- They appreciate the fact that being safe and disaster resilient means that there is a greater chance of meeting development goals which, in themselves, will greatly add to safety and resilience.

There may be other characteristics that we should add particularly in a regional or national context but these are offered as a general set of characteristics that help to define community safety and resilience in many communities globally.

The key elements of the framework

The framework for community safety and resilience in the face of disaster risk is constructed from a number of interrelated components. The essential end result, a safe and resilient community, emerges as an outcome of the achievement of a number of interrelated development goals. This is reinforced by increasingly reduced loss of life, livelihoods and assets following a disaster and the ability to build back stronger afterwards. Reduced loss of life, livelihoods and assets are enabled by a greater awareness of hazards and risks, a greater capacity for disaster response and the establishment and maintenance of safe environments. The ability to build back stronger is enabled by having access to essential services, resolving the provision of basic needs, particularly among the most vulnerable, and the creation of an enabling environment. The elements that identify the Red Cross Red Crescent contribution to DRR as a key action in building community safety and resilience are as follows:

1 **Risk-informed humanitarian response.** The provision of relief and the satisfaction of immediate needs following a disaster, as well as follow-on recovery activities aimed at getting communities back on their feet, are undertaken in a way that works towards meeting longer-term risk reduction objectives. It is understood that humanitarian response to disaster and recovery following a disaster is the absolute imperative of National Societies. However, this is not an end in itself but a means to an end, with increased safety and resilience and decreased vulnerability as a consequence, implying a diminishing need to respond to disasters in the future.

2 **Country-specific mitigation, prevention and adaptation activities.** National Societies will be working with their own country-specific hazard profile and within their national socio-economic, environmental and political contexts, and with communities in both rural and urban situations. They will also be working within a mandate agreed to and supported by national governments and civil society generally. Support to community safety and resilience will include mitigation, prevention and adaptation projects targeted towards the reduction of risks from specific hazards.

3 **Sector-based programming to build across the disaster management spectrum.** National Societies may have ongoing sector-based programmes in, for example, health and care, water and sanitation and shelter. These sectors are important elements of effective community-based DRR programmes. With good coordination these sector-based contributions should work towards DRR objectives and the building of community safety and resilience. It is intended that each of the Red Cross Red Crescent sector-based programmes will offer guidance in supporting programming from response through to DRR and the building of community safety and resilience.

Core Red Cross Red Crescent cross-cutting components

These are considered to be components that are essential to every National Society in addressing community safety and resilience. We are conscious that there are aspects of our work that we do well and that are consistent with our overall principles and values, goals and objectives. We should seek to encourage all National Societies that commit themselves to community safety and resilience to demonstrate their commitment through the implementation of these core components, related to their specific national context and hazard profile and integrated into all activities aimed at building community safety and resilience. The core components are:

1 **Risk assessment and identification and the establishment of community-based early warning and prediction.** Activities that may grow from a vulnerability and capacity assessment (VCA) or from other assessment processes that may help communities to identify the risks that they have to face, building early warning for the short-term and predictive capacity in the medium to long-term particularly in the context of climate change.

2 **Community-based disaster preparedness.** Support activities aimed at building the capacities of communities in enabling them to organize and address specific disaster risks.

3 **Advocacy, education and awareness-raising.** Activities across the spectrum of Red Cross Red Crescent work that aim to build a greater consciousness of the risk factors faced by communities and the ways in which these can be addressed within a range of different programmes. Advocacy, education and awareness-raising can be aimed at communities, local and national governments, other organizations at different levels, the private sector and, of course, the staff

and volunteers of the National Societies themselves.

4 **A strong auxiliary relationship with local and national governments.** One of the unique positions of the Red Cross Red Crescent is its auxiliary relationship with governments. This relationship is important in the context of ensuring increasingly that government at all levels is focused on strengthening community safety and resilience in the face of disaster risk and that this is reflected within national laws, policies, strategies and programmes. In particular, National Societies should be encouraging their governments to develop and implement laws, policies and plans that promote DRR at the community level.

5 **Partnerships with international, governmental, non-governmental and community-based organizations.** It is important to recognize that the building of community safety and resilience in the face of disaster risk cannot be achieved by the Red Cross Red Crescent alone. We can certainly make our contribution but the systematic and ongoing building of safety and resilience can only be built upon strong working partnerships between all stakeholders – from the communities themselves, to local and national governments, governmental and non-governmental organizations and the private sector.

A list of possible areas of focus for each of these five core components is given in Appendix 1. These five core components, integrated across the programme areas of Red Cross Red Crescent activity, help to identify our brand in DRR and support the building of community safety and resilience. They help us to focus on activity areas within which we have the capacity and competence to deliver, which reflect our comparative advantages and which are consistent with the priorities of the Global Agenda. The focus on these core components as a central part of our work in DRR recognizes the importance of our considerable **network of volunteers** who will have a key role in the delivery of DRR as a contribution to building community safety and resilience, coming as many of our volunteers do from the vulnerable communities themselves. In addition, the capacity development that is a key part of the process of increasing the scale and scope of our DRR activities must have a heavy emphasis on building the capacity of branches as a major element of organizational development.

To truly identify the Red Cross Red Crescent approach to promoting community safety and resilience, we should look for National Societies that are implementing or supporting the core components integrated across their major programme or thematic areas, particularly those that relate to addressing country or hazard-specific DRR. It is likely that many National Societies will be involved with these areas already; therefore, we should concentrate on scaling up and expanding or enhancing existing programmes. This does not preclude support to new areas of work, provided that the National Society can demonstrate clearly the capacity to undertake such activity. In each case, National Societies should be encouraged to ensure that their planning and programming is integrated, seeking the linkages between the different core and country-specific components to promote common safety and resilience goals.
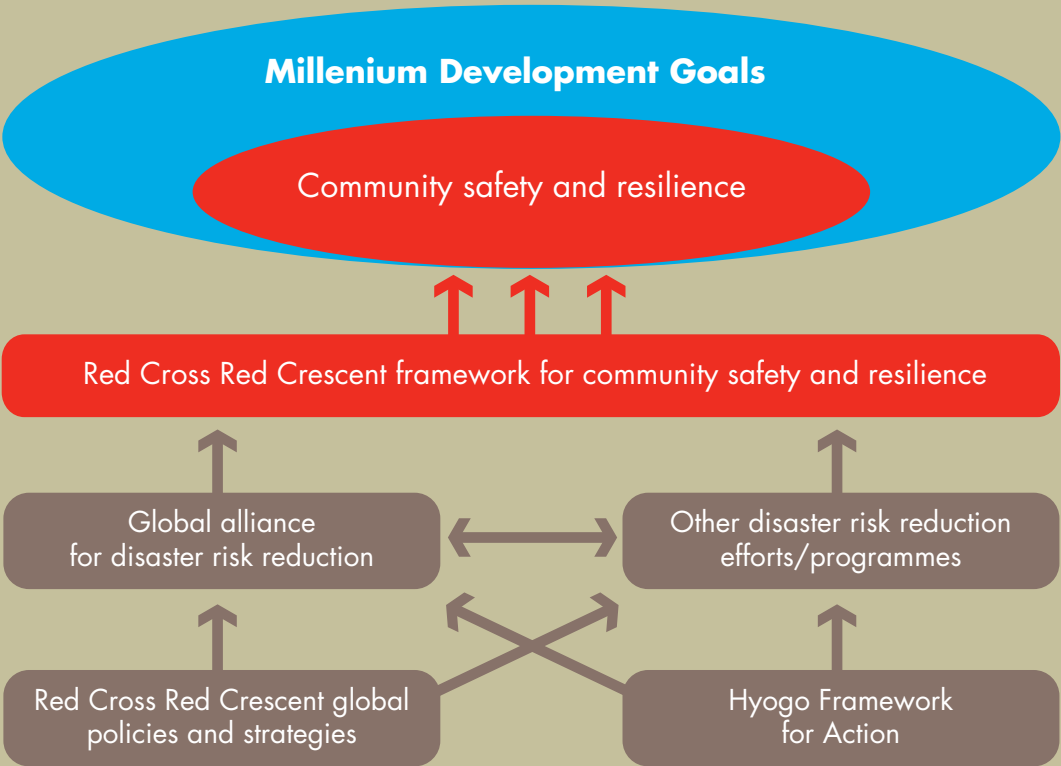
The tools in implementing programmes

Our National Societies already have many of the tools they need in implementing programmes to support community safety and resilience and DRR. However, they may not be oriented towards the achievement of community safety and resilience goals and there may be gaps that are identified as we continue to scale-up DRR action.

To achieve community safety and resilience goals we will need to ensure that our National Societies have:

- The ability and capacity to identify strengths and weaknesses with communities and to respond to community-driven priorities
- The ability to effectively use community knowledge and experience
- More robust and DRR focused VCA processes (VCA needs to provide input for assessing needs for effective DRR interventions)
- More exchanges of good practice and experience
- Better understanding of key legal and policy issues in DRR to strengthen humanitarian and development advocacy
- More developed skills in working with communities
- Better linkages and partnerships with others
- Better and more consistent technical support
- Consistent training opportunities
- Adequate financial and human resources to support sustainability
- A greater capacity to deliver DRR
- An active youth strategy
- A strong working relationship with local and national governments.

Red Cross Red Crescent support to the Millenium Development Goals – Building community safety and resilience

Millenium Development Goals

Community safety and resilience

Red Cross Red Crescent framework for community safety and resilience

Global alliance for disaster risk reduction

Other disaster risk reduction efforts/programmes

Red Cross Red Crescent global policies and strategies

Hyogo Framework for Action

Nepal Red Cross Society

Community people busy in vulnerability mapping and disaster preparedness training.

Risk assessment and identification and the establishment of community-based early warning and prediction

- Risk assessment and analysis including VCA
- Community empowerment for action
- Information management and dissemination for timely response and for developing medium- to longer-term programming to anticipate future risks
- Climate change and new hazards
- Advocacy for community action
- Construction of databases to inform programme baselines
- Developing links with preparedness
- Capacity-building for early warning.

Community-based disaster preparedness

- Building from the priorities of the VCA
- Developing preparedness at community and household levels
- Building community infrastructure
- Contingency planning
- Community organization through branches
- Establishing branch disaster response teams
- Climate change and new hazards
- Skills training
- Identification of target groups – schools, home, workplace
- Developing partnerships with knowledge centres
- Programming to link disaster preparedness with longer-term disaster risk reduction.

Advocacy, education and awareness-raising

- Knowledge and experience sharing
- Awareness-raising for community organizations
- Capacity development for National Society staff and volunteers and the community
- Climate change and new hazards
- Focus on schools
- Developing partnerships with knowledge centres.

Strong auxiliary relationships with local and national governments

- Support institution building – the inclusion of National Societies in national policies and plans
- Representation of National Societies on national platforms for DRR
- National Societies as advocates for the identification of community level delivery in national policies, strategies, plans and programmes
- Promotion of inclusive action at the local level with communities, National Societies, local governments and other stakeholders.

Partnerships with international, governmental, non-governmental and community-based organizations

- The promotion of local platforms for DRR
- The support of multi-stakeholder partnerships in programmes to promote community resilience
- Capacity development at all levels
- Knowledge-sharing at all levels
- Leadership in all aspects of promoting the cause of community resilience
- Advocacy for the Global Agenda and links with the HFA.

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