

The Global Alliance for disaster risk reduction

Building safer, resilient communities

The reason for our concern with disaster risk reduction is clear. For almost a century, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies has provided humanitarian succour to millions affected by disasters, be they triggered by natural or human-made factors. Our response has focused on delivering relief and, more recently, included recovery as the first steps in getting disaster affected communities back on their feet. We have also invested heavily in preparedness so that our member National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies have the capacity and resources to respond to disasters in a timely and effective manner.

In recent years, we have recognized that preparing for and coping with disasters is essential but not sufficient. With more than 200 million people affected every year, disaster losses continue to rise with grave consequences for the survival, livelihood and dignity of people, especially the poor. Of course, not all disasters can be prevented but their impact – and the risks that underlie them – can be reduced. If current trends continue, natural disasters could have a global cost of more than US\$ 300 billion a year by 2050. Many studies have indicated that **disaster risk reduction is highly cost-effective**: a dollar invested in disaster risk reduction can save two to ten dollars in disaster response and recovery costs.

Disaster risk is of global concern due to increasing vulnerabilities stemming from population growth, unplanned urbanization, environmental degradation, technological and socio-economic conditions including conflicts and competition for scarce resources, climate change, disease epidemics, poverty and pressure from development within high risk zones. These vulnerabilities combine with geological, hydro-meteorological and man-made hazards to increase disaster frequency and impact.

Successful climate change action rests on effective risk reduction investments, and we must do much more to tackle underlying disaster risks ahead of time. This is both a humanitarian imperative and a human development

necessity if we are to progress, protect and sustain achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.

How do we approach disaster risk reduction?

We are the world's largest voluntary network. Our 186 National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies are guided by a Global Agenda which includes the goals to reduce deaths, injuries and overall impact from disasters, and to increase local community, civil society and Red Cross Red Crescent capacity to address the most urgent situations of vulnerability. Among our explicit organisational priorities is the scaling up of action on disaster risk reduction.

Our comparative advantage is two fold: first, our National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies have recognized obligations and responsibilities to assist in, advise on, and advocate for disaster impact reduction, deriving from their privileged position as auxiliaries to their own governments. Second, they have millions of members and volunteers living in communities in every corner of the globe. Mobilizing the power of humanity to make the difference is at the heart of the International Federation's strategy on disaster risk reduction.

Our practical approach to risk reduction is founded on the fact that while high impact, high publicity disasters stimulate global advocacy and resource mobilization, it is the myriad smaller – and usually unreported – disasters here, there, and everywhere that, on aggregate, affect most people worldwide. Thus our approach to disaster risk reduction is driven by the way communities are affected and the requirements of the International Federation to serve them. We do this through *vulnerability and capacity assessments* that generate an understanding of the risks from the *hazards* that communities face, the social, economic and environmental factors that determine their *vulnerabilities*, and the *capacities* they can mobilize and strengthen to address these challenges.



Accordingly, **building safer and more resilient communities** is at the heart of the International Federation's approach to disaster risk reduction. This recognizes that it is the poorer communities that are the most vulnerable and hence suffer most from disasters. They also have the least capacity to cope, recover, and reduce risk. Furthermore, community-based approaches are crucial to build and sustain popular support for the consensus and cooperation that is necessary for national and international policies and actions essential in the race against time to combat climate change.

A disaster risk reduction focus implies that in responding to disasters, we consider implications that are well beyond the provision of immediate needs. We promote recovery that does not just return affected communities to the predisaster situation but also seeks to reduce their future vulnerabilities. We seek to build the resilience of communities to prepare for, respond to, and cope with the effects of future disasters. A disaster risk reduction focus means that we proactively look for opportunities to address future risks in the most hazard prone countries, even though such actions may not be immediately connected to specific disaster impacts. In all that we do in disaster risk reduction, we recognize that implementing comprehensive, interconnected

approaches in development as well as in disaster management can go a long way to creating the positive conditions for the effective reduction of disaster risks.

What do we aim to achieve?

The International Federation supports the **Hyogo Framework for Action (HFA) 2005-2015** adopted in January 2005 by the World Conference on Disaster Reduction held in Kobe, Japan. The HFA priorities are to:

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

Success of the HFA is critically dependent on implementation among communities that are repeatedly affected by disasters and it is here that National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies have a strong role to play. Thus, consistent with the HFA, **the purpose of this Global Alliance is to scale up the International Federation's effort in reducing disaster risks among the most vulnerable communities where National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies operate.** This will be done through mobilizing the International Federation's global, regional, national, and local capacities and mechanisms, especially for disaster preparedness and response, to progress *three programmatic outputs*:

- To increase community orientation in global and national disaster risk reduction policies and strengthen national and local institutions for disaster risk reduction.
- To encourage and support expanded community-based programming to identify and tackle disaster risks.
- To integrate enhanced community-centered disaster risk reduction measures as part of comprehensive disaster response management whenever this is applied.

These objectives will be bolstered by a *fourth enabling output*:

- Strengthening of National Society capacities to deliver and sustain scaled up programmes in disaster risk reduction.

It is important to only scale up those interventions that are of proven value. We can speak from our own direct

Chronology of Red Cross Red Crescent commitment to disaster risk reduction

- **1984**: Groundbreaking publication of Swedish Red Cross study "Prevention better than cure" stressing the importance of disaster prevention.
- **1980s**: New directions with development-focused activities in Africa, Asia and Latin America, including community-based disaster preparedness.
- **1999**: New disaster preparedness policy recognizes disaster preparedness as a link between emergency response, recovery and development.
- **2003**: The Agenda for Humanitarian Action adopted at the 28th International Conference affirms a plan of action that aims to reduce vulnerability to disaster impacts and risks.
- **2005**: The International Federation supports the Hyogo Framework for Action and adopts its own Global Agenda that includes an emphasis on reducing disaster risk.
- **2007**: Disaster management and recovery policies drafted, plus a disaster management strategy that places a major emphasis on disaster risk reduction.

and growing experience. Successful endeavours range from early warning systems in Mozambique and Bangladesh, protecting water sources and stabilizing critical public infrastructure in Nepal, earthquake resistant shelter in Indonesia, stabilising the coastline with massive mangrove re-plantation in Vietnam, family preparedness through community education in Central America, agricultural adaptation in drought-affected Lesotho, and land and water management measures to combat periodic flooding in the five countries sharing Lake Victoria.

These and many other examples of Red Cross Red Crescent community work add up to millions of dollars in averted disaster impact costs and lives and livelihoods protected. Many lessons have been learned from these

efforts. Additional analysis carried out by our own *Red Cross Red Crescent Centre on Climate Change and Disaster Preparedness* located in The Hague. Thus, the Global Alliance is concerned with building on our already established experience and enhancing existing knowledge and insights. However, we know that we must do much more than we have done already and that what we do must be done even better. To ensure that we are able to do this in a coordinated and collaborative way, this alliance will build strong partnerships internally among all elements of the International Federation, and externally with key stakeholders such as the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (ISDR), the World Bank and other significant international organizations and NGOs. We have to systematize our efforts as a predictable and accountable partner, and to demonstrate measurable results.

What will we do?

Our International Federation-wide **outputs** will be advanced through **core practical approaches adapted to specific country needs and circumstances**, the

results of which are measured by key indicators under the International Federation-wide *Performance and Accountability Tracking System*.

Key strategies

Purpose:

To scale up the International Federation's effort in reducing disaster risks among the most vulnerable communities where National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies operate.

Key indicators

- Numbers of communities benefiting from quality Red Cross Red Crescent disaster risk reduction programming and services.
- Expenditure (Swiss francs) of Red Cross Red Crescent disaster risk reduction programming and percentage of this spend compared to Red Cross Red Crescent disaster response and recovery programming.

Impact:

Contributing to overall HFA outcome: *substantial reduction of disaster losses, in lives and in the social, economic and environmental assets of communities and countries.*

Output 1: To increase community orientation in global and national disaster risk reduction policies and strengthen national and local institutions for disaster risk reduction.

- Consistent and effective National Society participation in National Platforms for Disaster Risk Reduction to promote community centred approaches through planning, sharing good practice and lessons learned, and advocacy for community action.
- Consistent and effective Secretariat participation in the global ISDR system including the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction to promote community centred approaches through sharing good practice and lessons learned, strengthened results management, and advocacy for community action.
- Disaster risk reduction issues are regularly featured in our annual flagship publication, the World Disasters Report.

- Number of National Societies participating fully as members of their respective National Platforms for Disaster Risk Reduction.
- Expenditure (Swiss francs) and percentage of national disaster risk reduction spending that goes on community centred actions at country level as determined from ISDR and World Bank data sources.
- World Disasters Report seen as authoritative forum for promoting community aspects of disaster risk reduction.

National outcome:

Advancing HFA strategic goal 1: *integration of disaster risk reduction into sustainable development policies and planning.*

Key strategies

Output 2: To encourage and support expanded community based programming to identify and tackle disaster risks.

- Consistent application of the International Federation Vulnerability and Capacity Assessment (VCA) methodology to identify and monitor current and future disaster risks in targeted communities linked to design of locally-specific disaster risk reduction solutions.
- Expanding public awareness of locally prevalent hazards, and promoting a practical culture of safety and resilience.
- Undertaking practical measures to protect or render safer critical community infrastructure (e.g. roads, drainage, schools, health centres) in relation to locally prevalent hazards.

Key indicators

- Number of National Societies using VCA routinely in developing action plans and programmes at branch and community level. Future risks, like those associated with climate change, are included.
- Proportion of population of targeted communities correctly aware of relevant risks and means of reduction, and taking practical action at household and community level.
- Number (percentage) of vulnerable small scale critical community infrastructure in targeted communities that has been made safer through practical action.

National outcome:

Advancing HFA strategic goal 2: *development and strengthening of institutions, mechanisms and capacities to build resilience to hazards.*

Output 3: To integrate enhanced community-centered disaster risk reduction measures as part of comprehensive disaster response management whenever this is applied.

- Community-based early warning systems linking them to national/regional early warning systems so as to enable communities to take timely action to protect their lives and assets where feasible.
- Strengthening community preparedness for disaster response (including logistics and pre-positioning for relief, training of first responders, rescue, shelter, health, first aid, watsan measures) by mobilizing resources and capacities at all levels within the International Federation, so as to reduce the immediate and secondary impacts of disasters when they strike.
- “Building back safer” by incorporating risk reduction measures in post disaster recovery programmes.

- Number of well-functioning early warning systems in targeted communities.
- Number of communities with well-functioning disaster preparedness arrangements.
- Number (percentage) of recovery programmes that include explicit objectives and activities and better planning for future risk reduction.

National outcome:

Advancing HFA strategic goal 3: *systematic incorporation of risk reduction approaches into the implementation of emergency preparedness, response and recovery programmes.*

Key strategies

Output 4: Strengthening of National Society capacities to deliver and sustain scaled up programmes in disaster risk reduction.

- Improving governance, accountability and leadership of National Societies for discharging planned disaster risk reduction commitments.
- Improving volunteer and staff support and management to enable delivery of risk reduction programming.
- Strengthening disaster risk reduction programme cycle management, with a focus on improving the link between national and community based early warning systems.
- Widening partnerships and expanding resource mobilization to strengthen disaster risk reduction capacity to ensure effective and timely programming.

Key indicators

- Number of National Societies including disaster risk reduction in their plans and strategies.
- Numbers of volunteers, trainees and participants in disaster risk reduction programming.
- Number (percentage) of National Societies that regularly report on implementation as per standard guidelines.
- Disaster Risk Reduction Programmes Appeals coverage (Swiss francs and percentage).

National outcome:

Advancing HFA strategic goal 2: development and strengthening of institutions, mechanisms and capacities to build resilience to hazards.





International Federation

How do we work?

States are committed to concerted global action to deliver on the HFA facilitated by the ISDR system, the management oversight of which includes the International Federation.

This Global Alliance encompasses practical interventions, guided by local needs and realities, and the assigned role of National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies as part of coordinated national disaster reduction policies and

programmes. We work alongside like-minded partners in the ISDR system, UN agencies, NGOs, the ProVention Consortium (which is hosted by the International Federation), government ministries and relevant institutions such as National Meteorological Offices and the World Bank. ***Our comparative advantage, through the National Societies, is the capacity to undertake direct action at community and family level while also having access to policy makers.***

Our **programming principles** are as follows:

- First, *interventions must be evidenced-based*, i.e. they must be informed by the locally present prevalence of patterns of hazards and vulnerabilities and driven by a demonstrable understanding of what is effective disaster risk reduction in a particular context. This means taking a multi-hazard and longer-term approach to optimise cost-effectiveness and sustainability.
- Second, *interventions must be mainstreamed, wherever feasible*, into the structures and programmes of the International Federation but importantly, also into strengthened community and institutional systems for health, education, social care and livelihood promotion. Self-evidently this has resourcing implications and thus, in line with emerging global funding benchmarks which allocate a proportion of disaster response funding to follow-on risk reduction interventions, we will work towards ensuring that a similar allocation is made to disaster risk reduction in the International Federation's future emergency disaster response and recovery appeals.
- Third, *interventions must seek out the most vulnerable and build resilience* in line with the fundamental principles of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, prioritising the empowerment of the people most in need. This includes addressing gender inequalities that have a direct bearing on personal and social vulnerability to disasters.

To ensure the most effective and efficient means to deliver the greatest impact for vulnerable people, this Global Alliance works in support of country-based National Society programming. This approach is about strengthening and making better use of the combined capabilities of our National Societies and the Secretariat, and also bringing in regional networks and other funding and operating partners. The parallel paper on **practical modalities** sets out the working arrangements for this Global Alliance with its associated global forum of stakeholders and a steering committee.

Alliance partners agree to work smarter through following the principle of the "seven ones":

- One set of needs analyses to guide commonly agreed priorities.
- One set of objectives and strategies.
- One National Society Risk Reduction Action Plan (within the context of the particular country's overall National Risk Reduction Plan) with expectation of long term support commitment from partners to ensure sustainability.
- One shared understanding of the division of labour among Global Alliance members.
- One results-based funding framework in which multilateral and bilateral financing channels can co-exist.
- One performance tracking system i.e. one approach to measuring results.
- One accountability and reporting mechanism.

A "commitment to scale-up"

This strategy and the Alliance that underpins it form a **core commitment** of the International Federation to address the challenge of disaster risk reduction. With **2005** as the comparison baseline, we shall strive **by 2010** for:

- At least 20 National Red Cross Red Crescent Societies in disaster prone low income countries with well-functioning disaster risk reduction programmes.
- At least 30 per cent scale up in resources programmed for disaster risk reduction work by National Red Cross Red Crescent Societies in low income countries.
- At least 30 per cent increase in the numbers of participants and beneficiaries in Red Cross Red Crescent disaster risk reduction initiatives in low income countries.

As the Global Alliance is rolled out, practical costed plans and partnerships will be developed in relation to key targeted countries with specific baseline and delivery targets.

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