



Ambitions to address the climate crisis

International Red Cross
Red Crescent Movement

2020*



IFRC

The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) is the world's largest volunteer-based humanitarian network. With our 192 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.

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.

ICRC

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) is an impartial, neutral and independent organization whose exclusively humanitarian mission is to protect the lives and dignity of victims of armed conflict and other situations of violence and to provide them with assistance. The ICRC also endeavours to prevent suffering by promoting and strengthening humanitarian law and universal humanitarian principles. Established in 1863, the ICRC is at the origin of the Geneva Conventions and the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement. It directs and coordinates the international activities conducted by the Movement in armed conflicts and other situations of violence.

Climate Centre

The Climate Centre is one of the 13 current or planned reference centres. It was established in 2002 by the IFRC and the Netherlands Red Cross. Its mission is to help the Red Cross Red Crescent Movement and its partners to reduce the impacts of climate change and extreme -weather events on vulnerable people.

The Climate Centre helps to fulfill the ground-breaking commitments on climate made at the 30th International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent in November 2007 to: raise awareness on climate change, provide humanitarian assistance, improve response and preparedness, decrease vulnerability of communities, integrate climate risk management into policy and planning, and mobilize human and financial resources.

**At the end of 2020, we will review the document as per progress made.*

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Foreword

Climate change is a humanitarian emergency. Today, one weather- or climate-related disaster occurs every 1-2 days, with an estimated 108 million people needing life-saving assistance in 2018. This number could double by 2050 ¹. The people who suffer the most are – and will continue to be – the world’s poorest: those who do not have the resources to protect themselves from disasters and who, more often than not, live in areas where climate impacts like floods, droughts and storms hit hardest.

Today, humanity faces a choice. We can continue to respond and struggle to meet demand as needs grow. Or we can choose to invest to prevent such a future scenario from occurring.

The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement has made its choice and is mobilizing to meet the urgency and scale of the crisis. Through our network of 192 National Societies, 165,000 local branches and 14 million volunteers, we will make our work climate-smart ² and increase our climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction efforts, working with communities on the frontlines of climate change. We will consider climate risks in all we do and anticipate extreme weather events ahead of their impact. And we will reduce our own environmental footprint, greening our operations and pursuing nature- and ecosystem-based solutions. We also call on the world’s citizens, governments and companies to do their part to reduce emissions but also to resolutely address the rising risks already facing the most vulnerable.

1. *The Cost of Doing Nothing*, IFRC

2. *Climate-smart* refers here to projects that not only raise people’s awareness of climate risks but also use climate and weather information in assessing risk and vulnerability, enabling early warning and early action, and address in a sustainable manner climate risks and trends, changing climate and global warming impact.

Introduction

Climate change is having major humanitarian consequences. The poorest and most vulnerable people and those on the margins of society are suffering the greatest consequences through loss of life, greater susceptibility to disease, economic setbacks and livelihood erosion. Armed conflict, unplanned urbanization, environmental degradation, weak governance and social marginalization are exacerbating these impacts, together with social and economic inequalities. Individual characteristics related to gender, age or disability can also make people more vulnerable to climate risks. The reverse is also true, as the vulnerabilities resulting from conflict, weak governance or environmental degradation are also exacerbated by climate change.

The science is clear. The frequency and severity of extreme weather events have increased and will continue to do so, together with more uncertainty. Over the past decade alone, there have been around 3,000 weather-related disasters. This is in addition to longer-term impacts of climate change, such as sea level rise and ocean acidification.

Without drastic, immediate and global reductions in greenhouse gas emissions, the impacts of climate change will pose existential threats to societies and ecosystems.

The next years are critical to increase ambition from all stakeholders to tackle the climate crisis. The UN Secretary General's Global Climate Action Summit held in September 2019 generated new levels of collaboration and commitment, including for anticipatory action in the face of extreme weather events. The Global Commission on Adaptation, on which the IFRC Secretary General serves as Commissioner, is driving greater commitments to urgently invest in equitable adaptation. Under the UNFCCC, 2020 is the year when states will review, update and enhance their climate action plans through their Nationally Determined Contributions. Each country must make up its mind about its level of ambition in the face of the climate crisis – and the humanitarian voice, including

that of National Societies, must be heard in that process.

The Red Cross and Red Crescent (RCRC) Movement is uniquely placed to address the consequences of the climate crisis.

National RCRC Societies are present in communities before, during and after emergencies, accustomed to identifying local solutions to local needs and supporting community mobilization. As auxiliaries to public authorities, National Societies are in a unique position to support their government counterparts in taking necessary climate action. Disaster and climate risk reduction has been one of IFRC's key focus areas over the past three decades. Today, the IFRC network is one of the biggest disaster risk reduction actors in the world. The IFRC's Strategy 2030 identifies climate change as the first of five global challenges and makes it a focus over the coming decade to reduce its current and future humanitarian impacts and support people to thrive through it.

The ICRC, through its work in situations of armed conflict and violence, is engaging with some of the populations most vulnerable to climate risk. It is committed to strengthening its sustainable humanitarian impact through further integrating climate risk into its analysis and better supporting the resilience of people and systems to climate-related hazards. The ICRC's Strategy 2019-2022 includes adaptation to the combined consequences of conflict and climate shocks as one of its key objectives.

Building on our unique added value and expertise, this document articulates what the Movement is ready to do collectively to address the climate crisis. Our objective is to reduce the current and future humanitarian impacts of climate change and to support people to thrive in the face of it. Below we set out our joint commitments, approaches and practices, as National RCRC Societies, IFRC, the Climate Centre and ICRC.

Our plan

Drawing from the **IFRC Framework for Climate Action towards 2020 and Strategy 2030**, and the **ICRC's Strategy 2019-2022**, we will work across four pillars of action, with four enabling approaches. Reducing our own carbon footprint will be prioritized as a cross-cutting consideration in all we do. Our activities will tackle prevention, preparedness, response and recovery to address and reduce the impacts of climate-related shocks and hazards to support the longer-term resilience of communities.

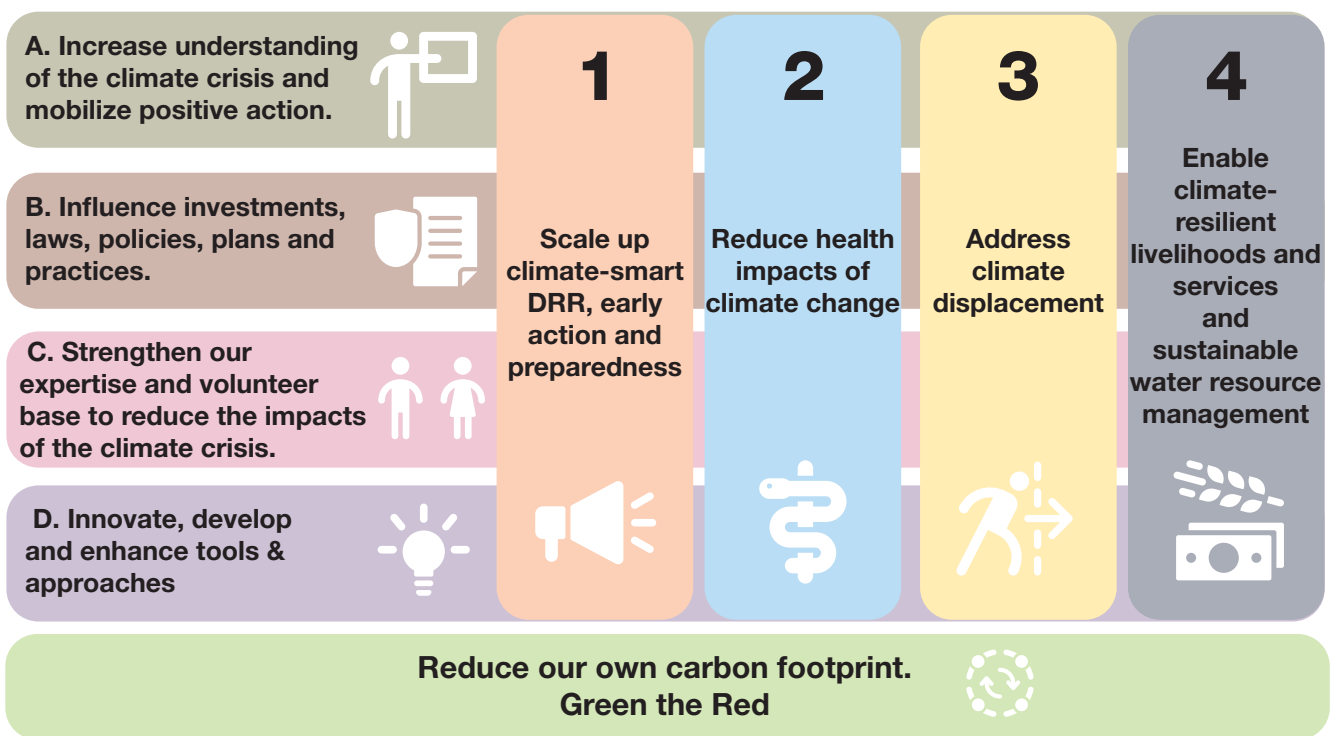
Achieving these ambitions will be dependent on enhancing the capacity of National Societies as strong local actors and as auxiliaries to their government. In reaching our ambitions, we will also seek to strengthen and expand our partnerships to increase our impact and effectiveness.

In 2018, the IFRC network invested 207 million Swiss francs on DRR and climate adaptation projects, reaching 52 million people in 160 countries – of which 72% were climate-smart. **Doubling investment will allow the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement to double our reach and impact in climate action.**



*Typhoon Mangkut, the Philippines, September 2018
 © Patrick Mongaya, Philippine Red Cross*

Reduce the current and future humanitarian impacts of climate change & support people to adapt in the face of it



Pillars of Action

1. Scale up climate-smart disaster risk reduction, early action and preparedness



We will work with communities to reduce vulnerability and exposure to the impacts of climate change in both rural and urban settings by scaling up our climate-smart disaster risk reduction (DRR) and climate change adaptation (CCA) activities. Communities will be better prepared to manage forecasted weather events and new climate extremes, including by being able to access resources ahead of their impact.

Example activities include:

- Scaling up community awareness, public education and school-based, formal and non-formal education programmes on DRR, CCA and environmental issues to enhance understanding of present and future risks.
- Increasing nature-based solutions and ecosystem-based DRR wherever it is effective.
- Support the growth and development of strong National Societies preparedness programmes for climate-related disasters.
- Expanding and connecting community early warning systems (EWS) to national EWS to ensure action in “last mile” communities.
- Continuing to develop Early Action Protocols in more countries, and for more hazards.
- Enabling access of funds for early action from the IFRC’s Forecast-based Action by the Disaster Relief Emergency Fund and support governments to create anticipatory/forecast-based risk management mechanisms.
- Continuing to prioritize and invest in addressing the disproportionate impacts of climate change on women, girls, older people, people with disabilities, marginalized and vulnerable groups.

2. Reduce health impacts of climate change



We will systematically integrate climate risk management across our health programmes and anticipate the health-related consequences of climate change and environmental degradation, focusing on people experiencing increased exposure and vulnerability. This will require scaling up our health literacy, health promotion, hygiene promotion and community preparedness interventions for climate-related diseases, including vector-borne, water-borne and chronic respiratory diseases in high-risk areas. We will seek to use climate information to anticipate, prepare for and reduce the impacts of climate-related health emergencies, including in conflict settings.

Example activities include:

- Working with local authorities (especially in urban settings), meteorological agencies, public health officials and other stakeholders to develop heatwave early action plans and early warning systems.
- Advocating for urgent measures to reduce urban air pollution around the world to prevent the drastically increased morbidity and mortality that result from the combination of heat extremes and excess air pollution.
- Partnering with Ministries of Health to strengthen the climate readiness of health systems.
- Working with youth groups to teach health promotion through targeted interventions that address climate risks in communities and schools.

3. Address climate displacement



We will seek to reduce the risk of climate-induced displacement by better mapping, understanding and predicting climate-related population movements. We will continue to prepare for and respond to the humanitarian needs of climate-related displaced communities while addressing the needs of host communities. We will enhance support for climate-smart durable solutions to enable safe, voluntary and dignified return, local integration or resettlement according to the wishes and priorities of displaced people.

Example activities include:

- Enhancing the understanding of displacement, migration and planned relocation triggered by the effects of climate change and extreme weather events.
- Investing in initiatives that address the drivers of disaster-induced / climate change related mobility, including through more targeted DRR and CCA strategies that aim to prevent the conditions of displacement.
- Reviewing preparedness and contingency plans through a “displacement lens” to better anticipate and prepare for different displacement scenarios.
- Supporting inclusive and equitable access to humanitarian assistance and protection for those displaced by climate change and extreme weather events.
- Focusing on climate-induced displacement in and to urban contexts.

4. Enable climate-resilient livelihoods and services, and sustainable water resource management



We will work with communities to strengthen the resilience of their livelihoods by helping them adopt climate-smart practices combining traditional and scientific knowledge and technologies while maximizing the use of weather and climate information and diversify their livelihoods activities. We will seek to ensure that essential services are resilient to hazards. We will also utilize climate change projections to strengthen water resource management practices in areas which are, or will be, water stressed, and seek demand-side solutions.

Example activities include:

- Supporting transformative change towards climate-smart economic security interventions including the promotion of agricultural practices and inputs adapted to the weather and development of carbon-neutral livelihood sources in urban areas.
- Promoting the transition towards agroecology-based farming and food systems along the entire value-chain.
- Increasing the protection of agro-ecosystems and use of nature-based solutions to reduce climate shocks and securing ecosystem services, including in fragile and conflict-affected areas.
- Supporting service providers and communities to devise ways to better manage and sustainably use water, while supporting efforts to rehabilitate infrastructure to reduce water losses and use it responsibly.
- Preventing erosion from encroaching on human settlements through building protective walls.

Enabling Approaches



A. Increase understanding of the humanitarian consequences of the climate crisis and mobilize positive action

We will speak up about our concerns and encourage individuals, businesses and governments everywhere to take bold climate action (both mitigation and adaptation). We will listen to communities to understand how the climate crisis is affecting them and ensure that their voices are heard at the local and global levels. We will also work with researchers to understand how people perceive risks associated to climate change and how they can work to address them.

Example activities include:

- Set up channels for conversations about positive climate action through media, social media, art and culture.
- Build on, adapt and expand our climate change communications campaign and produce impactful communications material.
- Roll out programmes across the globe to harness the power of young people to call for and implement change. Enable this with digital literacy, digital responsibility and digital inclusion (access to information/internet) to leave no one behind.



B. Influence investments, laws, policies, plans and practice

We will seek to foster the right level of ambition on both adaptation and mitigation, in particular to ensure that people in vulnerable situations are not left behind. Leveraging our auxiliary role, we will influence how risks are managed to ensure climate change impacts on vulnerable, excluded and at-risk people are prioritised, that vulnerability is reduced and resources are channeled to the local level. This will include influencing major investments and risk management practices of global institutions, shaping national and local legal and policy frameworks and enhancing our advocacy on both climate change adaptation and mitigation. It will also require expanding and strengthening partnerships.

Example activities include:

- Advise local and national governments in assessing and, as necessary, strengthening relevant disaster and climate-related laws and policies.
- Work with development partners to ensure public and private investments are risk-informed and include the needs of excluded and vulnerable groups in the design and implementation of investments.
- Engage with the private sector to invest in climate resilience across value-chains and with medium to small enterprises on business preparedness for more resilient communities.

C. Strengthen our expertise and volunteer base to reduce the impacts of the climate crisis



We will strengthen the capacities of National Societies to understand and proactively address the climate crisis. As part of this, we will leverage and build our volunteer network to reduce the impacts of the climate crisis. We will explore new volunteer engagement platforms and entry points for current volunteers to deepen their engagement and for new volunteers to engage in climate action.

Example activities include:

- Make it easier for National Societies and volunteers to support the dissemination of climate and weather information and associated preparedness advice.
- Attract volunteers with sought-after technical skills, for instance who can help generate and analyse data on hazards, exposure and vulnerability.
- Make available and promote training to National Societies and volunteers on issues such as climate change and climate action, advocacy and digital literacy.
- Encourage a wider audience to volunteer by expanding/diversifying the types of volunteer opportunities including crowdsourcing ideas from volunteers and enabling volunteers to self-organise.

D. Innovate and develop new tools and approaches, while leveraging, enhancing and scaling existing tools

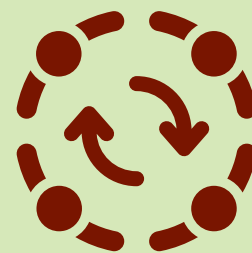


We will strengthen the use of data, analysis, evidence and research in decision-making and planning across timescales and sectors. Where needed, we will enhance existing, proven tools to incorporate relevant climate risk information. We will learn from and further integrate science and community knowledge in our approach to reducing risks.

Example activities include:

- Develop an approach for dynamic risk assessments that include a better understanding of differentiated risk, vulnerability and exposure e.g. impact-based forecasting.
- Scale the use of proven frameworks and tools such as the Framework for Community Resilience, the Participatory Approach to Safe Shelter Awareness, the Participatory Approach to Safe Shelter Awareness for Youth, the Enhanced Vulnerability and Capacity Assessment, the Community Based Health and First Aid manual, Y-Adapt, the Heatwave Guide for Cities, the Economic Security Handbooks, resilience assessments and health impact assessments, etc.
- Enhance the use of basic environmental tools (such as Environmental Impact Assessments and Environmental Management Plans) to improve the environmental outcomes of RCRC activities.

Reducing our Carbon Footprint



Cross-cutting ambition: Green the red

We will limit our own contribution to the climate crisis by measurably reducing our carbon footprint and environmental impact. We will seek to ensure that IFRC and ICRC are leaders in the field of greening their operations. Collaborating through our Green Response Working Group, we will do this by:

- Reviewing our global tools to integrate environmental and sustainability considerations.
- Implementing and mainstreaming environmental screening tools in our programmes and emergency response and early recovery operations.
- Further developing and implementing environmental policies.
- Favoring renewable sources of energy, better managing our use of water and waste in our premises and programmes.
- Preserving and restoring the ecological value of sites during and after use.
- Ensuring that our procurement and logistics choices are not only dictated by price, but also by their environmental and social impact.
- Developing and promoting green response options, including by undertaking scientific studies and pilots to support innovation in the field. Where available, leveraging potential co-benefits of adaptation and mitigation in community interventions, prioritizing risk reduction. This could include simple but effective measures to reduce carbon-footprint and environmental impact (e.g. recycling, tree-planting).



Demack, Central Java
© Jenelle Eli, American Red Cross

Roles in delivering on these ambitions

National Red Cross Red Crescent Societies

National Societies through their ongoing presence in communities and as auxiliaries to their government, will be the primary actors delivering on these ambitions, working closely with the communities they serve and driving local solutions to local needs. This will be done through National Societies' 165,000 local branches and with the support of 14 million volunteers.

IFRC Secretariat

IFRC Secretariat will support National Societies to scale up their climate-related activities and programmes, helping to drive forward ambition and progress amongst the network, and providing technical assistance, leadership, coordination and project management support. IFRC will promote and continue to enhance approaches and tools for humanitarian response, disaster risk reduction and climate resilience. The IFRC Secretariat will lead by example in implementing these priorities in its own practice.

Red Cross Red Crescent Climate Centre

The Climate Centre will serve as the principal technical resource to achieve these ambitions, providing scientific analysis and guidance, developing and supporting the use of tools and guidance material to inform practice, fostering partnerships with climate-related organisations and institutions, providing technical assistance and capacity strengthening to National Societies and providing advice and representation on policy engagements related to climate change. It will also serve as an innovation and research hub, generating new ideas and approaches that can support climate risk management within and beyond the Movement.

ICRC

The ICRC will strengthen its capacity to design climate-sensitive programmes in conflict situations and will support its National Society partners to do the same, while greening its operations. The ICRC will also continue gathering evidence on the impact of climate risk on populations living in situations of armed conflict and violence and will integrate relevant climate messaging into its policy work.





Flooding, Bangladesh, 2017

© Aminul Shawon, Bangladesh Red Crescent Society



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