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EMERGENCY HEALTH

Towards safe and healthy living

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Saving lives, changing minds.

 International Federation
of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

Emergency health

Saving lives, strengthening recovery and resilience

ISSUE

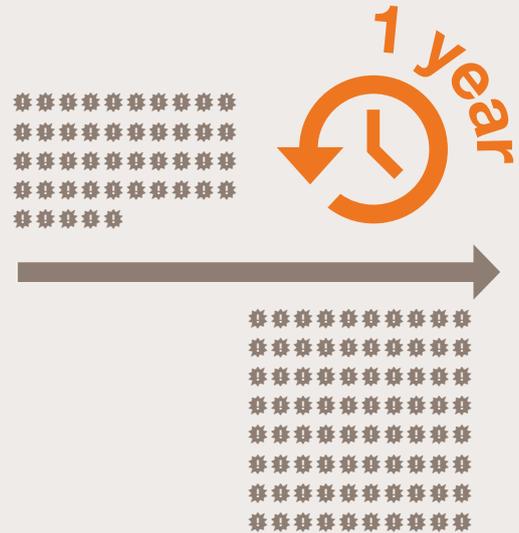
 \approx 70%

 \times 2 The total number of catastrophic events has almost doubled in the past decade with an increase from approximately 450 to 800 major emergencies per year
(source: WHO, Risk reduction and emergency preparedness, 2012)

In 2011, natural disasters affected 209 million people, 70% of whom were victims of floods
(source: World Disasters Report 2012, IFRC).

Pakistan's flood crisis in 2011, for example, has affected over **15 million** people, with at least **six million** needing life-saving humanitarian assistance, including health care.

1 = 1,000,000



HOW WE HELP



IMPACT

The IFRC delivers high-quality public health response to avert potential public health emergencies, such as outbreaks of water- and vector-borne diseases

688,000  Emergency Health trained volunteers responded to health needs

60 million people reached with curative and preventive emergency health interventions
 140 epidemic responses since 2004



1 = 100,000



ISSUE

During the past years, the world has seen a succession of catastrophic earthquakes, tsunamis, epidemics, droughts and floods. In 2011, natural disasters affected 209 million people, 70 per cent of whom were victims of floods. Seven droughts, of which five were in Africa, affected 1 to 4 million people each for a total of 14 million (*World Disasters Report 2012*).

Beyond the initial health consequences of a disaster, which the provision of emergency medical aid helps to mitigate, public health crises may arise in the aftermath as a result of new or increased needs, damaged or depleted capacities or inadequate management of the initial risk. Factors such as disrupted water and sanitation infrastructure, insufficient health-care resources, population displacement, food shortages and inadequately met basic needs may contribute to an increased susceptibility to communicable diseases, impaired maternal and newborn health, and poorly managed chronic diseases. Preventive measures – including awareness-raising, immunization, provision of access to basic health-care services and adequate water and sanitation systems – plus a quick response at the first signs of increasing health risks are crucial measures to avoid the emergence of a new disaster inside the existing crisis.

HOW WE HELP

The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) is uniquely placed to mobilize the necessary resources, provide timely health care and save lives when disaster strikes. We can count on 13 million community-based volunteers worldwide and on our technical expertise and specialized tools to act before, during and after health emergencies to meet the needs, improve the lives of vulnerable people and build community resilience. Emergency health focuses on preventing and treating ill-health and disease, promoting health and healthy behaviours, and helping people to change the social and economic factors that affect their health.

At the global level

The IFRC aims at strengthening the capacity of National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies to provide timely response by using local resources. We develop harmonized assessment and response tools and promote high-quality training courses, which can be adapted to regional and national contexts. The broader Red Cross Red Crescent Movement has access to a wide range of health response tools, developed by Red Cross Red Crescent health professionals with years of experience, and supports us in responding quickly to suddenly changing health needs.



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“We place people at the heart of our preparedness, mitigation, response and recovery work as we believe that local ownership and empowerment are essential for enhanced community resilience.”

Bekele Geleta,
Secretary General, IFRC

At the national and community levels

Community-based actions are critical in managing emergencies. A well-prepared, active and well-organized community can reduce risks and the impact of emergencies, and save many lives in the first hours after an emergency before external assistance arrives. A well-prepared community-based health workforce contributes to healthier, safer and more resilient communities. Red Cross Red Crescent local and international teams respond in community-oriented ways to ensure that the actual needs in the community are addressed.

At times in the aftermath of a crisis, needs are so overwhelming and the damage to infrastructure so vast that external assistance is required. The IFRC, along with partner National Societies, maintains a high level of readiness to provide support immediately to a damaged health-care sector in a disaster-affected country. Interventions may include epidemic control activities, social mobilization to support public health campaigns or health education in communities. Emergency Response Units are teams of trained personnel and modules of standardized equipment that are ready to be deployed at short notice as part of the global Red Cross Red Crescent Disaster Response system.

IMPACT

In addition to responding to the immediate health impact of disasters, the IFRC puts much effort into averting potential public health emergencies, such as outbreaks of water- and vector-borne diseases. Other sectors active in an emergency respond to the damage caused by a disaster, but emergency health actions also focus on emergency risk management: prevention of excess death and ill health, and improving the health outcomes for the community affected by the crisis and changed environment. The greatest risk to the health of the community sometimes comes weeks after the event.

By dealing promptly with health emergencies and ensuring early case detection, early referral to treatment and an early emphasis on prevention, the IFRC can help reduce the risk of diseases developing into more serious conditions and prevent another crisis from occurring within an existing disaster.

The IFRC delivers high-quality public health response, which has positively influenced community knowledge and awareness about health emergencies and have contributed to strengthening systems that help communities get organized and able to prepare for and respond to health emergencies.

Red Cross Red Crescent in numbers

13 million

Active volunteers worldwide

6 billion

Economic value (in US dollars) of
volunteer services to the global
economy

187

Member National Societies
worldwide

60 million

People reached with curative and
preventive emergency health
interventions since 2004

1.8 billion

Amount spent since 2004 (in US
dollars) to prevent disease outbreaks
during disasters

688,000

Emergency health volunteers trained
since 2004 to respond to health
needs

6,500

Red Cross Red Crescent staff trained
since 2010 to teach volunteers how
to control epidemics

140

Responses to epidemics since 2004



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Case study

Ready for action!

Innovative ways of addressing health threats

Mobile technology can be an ally in preparing to respond to disasters, sending early warnings and preventing diseases. Since January 2010, the Haiti Red Cross Society, with the support of the IFRC, has been sending SMS to explain to the population how to prevent and control cholera outbreaks and how to prepare for potential floods and hurricane emergencies. This tool has proven useful in tackling new health threats in Haiti, where a large response operation is still addressing the population's many priorities in the wake of the 2010 earthquake.

Afghanistan: how simulations can help prepare for emergencies

In 2011, the Afghanistan Red Crescent organized its first field-based mission training course with IFRC support. The course simulated a health emergency – a cholera outbreak – and focused on a collaborative effort in planning, preparedness and response. The training's learning-by-doing approach helped strengthen the participants' practical skills and improved the National Society's operational preparedness.

Preventing a disaster inside a disaster

Besides the response to the immediate health impacts of disasters, such as the monsoon floods in Pakistan or the tropical storm (Washi) in the Philippines in 2011, the IFRC contributed to the prevention of a subsequent public health emergency, such as an outbreak of water- or vector-borne diseases. In their response to these disasters and with IFRC support, the Pakistan Red Crescent and Philippines Red Cross carried out disease prevention and health promotion activities in areas where affected populations were evacuated or sought temporary shelter.

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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.