

A NATIONAL RESPONSE PLAN FOR A GLOBAL PANDEMIC

Costa Rican Red Cross

Investing in disaster preparedness is worth it - both in terms of human lives saved and economic returns. In this story we learn about how developing a **Plan of Action** helped the Costa Rican Red Cross to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic

Recognition of the auxiliary role of the National Society

The Costa Rican Red Cross (CRC), as an auxiliary of the public authorities, is **one of the largest providers of pre-hospital emergency care services in the country** and is part of the first responders to crises, emergencies and disasters at all levels.

To adequately respond to these exceptional situations, the **National Society developed a National Response Plan**, which establishes the conditions for inter-institutional coordination.

A Plan of Action before the first COVID-19 case was detected in the country



As soon as the COVID-19 pandemic was declared, the Costa Rican Red Cross developed a Plan of Action to respond to the pandemic. The objective of the Plan of Action was to fulfill the **role as an auxiliary to the public authorities in the humanitarian field** and to contribute to reducing disease and loss of life, while protecting the health, safety, welfare and livelihoods of the most vulnerable people.

This plan included **protective measures for staff and volunteers** such as an internal communication campaign showing the use and handling of Personal protective equipment, (PPE), and live interviews and chats with space for answering questions; modification of work systems to reduce the risk of exposure of non-health workers; coordination to ensure vaccination of all NS staff and volunteers; etc. Also, CRC has implemented mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) for volunteers and staff.



PREPAREDNESS AREA & COMPONENT RELATED

ANALYSIS & PLANNING



Response and Recovery Planning

KEY STATS



Real-time information on the development of the outbreak is available through the IFRC's **GO platform**.



The National Society has **nationwide geographical coverage in 9 regions**, and **112 branches**, with more than **6,000 duly trained volunteers** and **551 ambulances**.

Keys to success



- The **National Response Plan** allowed the development and implementation of a **Plan of Action**, before the first COVID-19 case was reported in the country.
- Due to the uncertainty of the course of the pandemic, the Plan of Action was developed considering the most conservative **scenarios**, as well as the most extreme ones.
- Development and implementation of a business continuity plan, particularly focused in finance, administration, information technology and human resources.
- **The Costa Rica Red Cross is part of the National Risk Management System**, and has been present in the Emergency Operations Centre (EOC), coordinating the response with all the institutions involved in the emergency.
- **The Costa Rican Red Cross is part of the Health Cluster** that supports all initiatives being implemented by the government to respond to the pandemic.
- Protective measures were implemented for staff and volunteers such as an **internal communication campaign** showing the use and handling of PPE and the creation of spaces for dialogue and the resolution of doubts about its use.



"We had to apply quickly new protocols: now all the patients we are transferring to the hospital are treated as suspicious of COVID-19, until proven otherwise. I had to assume that a possible contagion is part of the work we do, but with protective measures we minimize the risks".

Diego Gómez, paramedic, Costa Rican Red Cross



For more information:

- Costa Rican Red Cross: www.cruzroja.or.cr
- National Society Preparedness: www.ifrc.org/disaster-preparedness

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