



# ENGAGING IN CLIMATE RISK AND EARLY WARNING SYSTEMS (CREWS) PROJECTS

*TO ENSURE THEY REACH THE 'LAST/FIRST MILE'*



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**Climate  
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**Disclaimer:** This guidance has been made possible by the generous support of the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC). The contents are the responsibility of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) and do not necessarily reflect the views of SDC or the Swiss Government.

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## **Engaging in Climate Risk & Early Warning Systems (CREWS) projects to ensure they reach the ‘last/first mile’**

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Guidance for IFRC and National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

*October 2022*

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## **CHECKLIST – *is this guidance relevant for you?***

- Do you work in or cover a Least Developed Country (LDC) or Small Island Developing State (SIDS) as part of the IFRC network?<sup>1</sup>
- Are you interested in implementing or scaling up people-centred early warning and anticipatory action?

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<sup>1</sup> There are 38 [SIDS](#) and 47 [LDCs](#)

# CONTENTS

Acknowledgements	5
Abbreviations	5
<b>Executive Summary</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Why a guide on engaging in CREWS projects for the IFRC network?</b>	<b>8</b>
Opportunities	10
Challenges	11
<b>General modalities for IFRC network engagement</b>	<b>12</b>
Roles and responsibilities	12
Entry points along the project development timeline	14
<b>Recommendations for National Society roles and activities in CREWS projects</b>	<b>18</b>
National Societies as “ears” to the ground	18
National Societies as “top-down/bottom-up” early warning-early action planners	19
National Societies as “users” and “implementers”	20
National Societies as “advocates and conveners”	21
<b>Annexes</b>	<b>22</b>
Annex 1: Responsibility Assignment Matrix	22
Annex 2: Contracting	22
Annex 3: Key resources	22

## Acknowledgements

IFRC and the Climate Centre recognize the contributors to this guide and the valuable contributions they have provided.

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Partnership (REAP)

## Abbreviations

**CAP** Common Alerting Protocol

**CEWS** Community Early Warning Systems

**CREWS** Climate Risk and Early Warning  
Systems Initiative

**DREF** IFRC's Disaster Response  
Emergency Fund

**DRR** Disaster Risk Reduction

**DRM** Disaster Risk Management

**EWEA** Early Warning Early Action

**EWS** Early Warning Systems

**FbF** Forecast-based Financing

**GFDRR** Global Facility for Disaster  
Reduction and Recovery

**Hydromet** Hydro-meteorological

**IP** Implementing Partner

**LDC** Least Developed Country

**NMHS** National Meteorological and  
Hydrological Services

**PAPE** Public Awareness and  
Public Education

**RCRC** Red Cross and Red Crescent

**SIDS** Small Island Developing State

**UNDRR** United Nations Office for Disaster  
Risk Reduction

**WMO** World Meteorological Organization



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Climate Risk and Early Warning Systems (CREWS) projects aim to increase access of Least Developed Countries (LDCs) and Small Island Developing States (SIDS) to early weather warnings and risk information to save lives and livelihoods. One of the CREWS Initiative's goals is to significantly increase financial and institutional commitments towards people-centred early warning systems that lead to early action, and as part of that to build coalitions with National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies. For the first time in 2021, IFRC was invited to engage in proposal development of CREWS projects from the get-go, following years of advocacy, and the intention is to continue engaging from the onset in future CREWS projects to ensure they benefit the last/first mile. This guide consolidates practical suggestions to support the IFRC network to engage with CREWS projects.

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## Why

CREWS projects present a unique opportunity for the IFRC network to advance its mission of protecting the most vulnerable. In turn, the IFRC network can contribute important added value in ensuring lasting, people-centred CREWS service delivery at scale.

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## Who

National Societies, the IFRC Secretariat and its reference centres like the Red Cross Red Crescent Climate Centre can have unique roles to play in engagement in CREWS projects. These roles should be clearly articulated, and budgets developed to reflect both funding required for National Society activities and any cash or in-kind co-financing the National Society may be able to leverage.

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## When

The IFRC network should get involved in CREWS projects at the very beginning of project proposal development to identify common interests and complementary mandates with Implementing Partners and target countries and ensure its positioning as a key stakeholder and funded operational partner in the project.

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## How

National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies can offer a variety of roles, and proven people-centred early warning and anticipatory action tools, methods and activities, to CREWS projects. Examples include:

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Being **community “ears”** to the ground, to collect data and feedback about vulnerability, exposure and the effectiveness of early warning systems.

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Being **“inclusive planners”**, to develop early warning early action plans and protocols.

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Being **“users and implementors”**, who act based on early warnings.

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Being **“advocates and conveners”**, informing the design of early warning systems and convening a diversity of voices.



**Bangladesh 2013** Every year thousands of lives are saved by the National Society in cyclone-prone Bangladesh. Thanks to cyclone shelters and early warning systems by which volunteers sound the alarm, evacuate and assist with First Aid, vital assistance reach people in need.  
© Yoshi Shimizu





# WHY A GUIDE ON ENGAGING IN CREWS PROJECTS FOR THE IFRC NETWORK?

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## CREWS at a glance

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Financing mechanism that funds projects in LDCs and SIDSs for risk informed early warning systems

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Implemented by three partners: WB/GFDRR, WMO & UNDRR

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National and regional level projects (regional projects can have a purely regional scope or also a national-level scope)

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Areas of operation:

- Improving risk knowledge through identification of risks
  - Strengthening capacity of NMHSs
  - Modernizing hydrometeorological infrastructure
  - Improving dissemination & communication of actionable warnings
  - Strengthening the ability to prepare for & respond to warnings
- 

- 74 countries supported in 2021
  - 12 pipeline projects awaiting funding
- 

US\$84 million received since 2015, with 17.3% increase in funding since 2020

The **Climate Risk and Early Warning Systems (CREWS)** initiative aims to increase the availability of, and people's access to, early warning services to support climate resilience in **Least Developed Countries (LDCs) and Small Island Developing States (SIDS)** (full list [here](#)). The stated goals are to "save lives, assets and livelihoods". To achieve these ambitious goals, CREWS projects cannot simply improve weather, climate and hydrological information, services and infrastructure. They must also ensure that people take appropriate action using early warning information to successfully reduce the impacts of extreme events and prepare for unavoidable impacts before they happen.

**One of CREWS' value proposition is to strengthen commitments and actions towards people-centred early warning systems that lead to early action, and as part of that to build coalitions with institutions such as National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies.** The IFRC network is uniquely positioned to help ensure early warning leads to more effective early action at a scale commensurate with the growing number of people at risk. While CREWS investments have traditionally focused on the development and improvement of climate services, National Societies can be crucial partners in ensuring these services are needs-driven, serve communities effectively, and that forecasts are used for anticipatory action at household, community, national and regional levels - in their unique position as auxiliary to their governments, as civil society advocates and as holders of strong grassroots relationships and volunteer networks. The IFRC Secretariat/National Societies/the Red Cross Red Crescent Climate Centre can be subcontracted as operational partners on CREWS projects and receive funding for people-centred early warning and early action activities, such as the development of Forecast-based Financing (FbF) programmes and development/maintenance of Community Early Warning Systems (CEWS).

**CREWS projects are under preparation or implementation in many countries and regions, with increasing scope and funding.** In 2021, the CREWS Initiative supported the improvement of early warning systems in 74 countries, through 15 national, regional and global projects covering the Caribbean, West Africa, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Afghanistan, South-West Indian Ocean, Pacific, Cambodia and Lao People's Democratic Republic<sup>2</sup>. The CREWS Trust Fund has received US\$84 million in signed contributions since its inception in 2015, with a 17.3% increase in funding since 2020<sup>3</sup>. Among the 12 pipeline projects, the green light was given in 2021 to develop project proposals for Central Africa, Horn of Africa, East Africa and Malawi, and for additional funds for the Caribbean – and additional pipeline projects will be green-lighted by the end of 2022. Work to set up a new, rapid financing scheme for quick and targeted high priority assistance – the Accelerated Support Window – has also advanced and is expected to be operational in 2022. Financial contributions to the CREWS Trust Fund have been received from Australia, Finland, France, Germany, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Switzerland and the United Kingdom.

**For the first time in 2021, the IFRC network was invited to engage in the development of CREWS project proposals from the get-go, and the intention is to continue engaging from the onset in future CREWS projects to ensure they benefit the most at-risk and hard to reach communities.** The IFRC Secretariat and its Climate Centre provided inputs into the five CREWS project proposals under development in 2021-2022, and this guidance includes learning from those experiences. Acknowledging this is a new area for the IFRC network, this document aims to guide National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, with support from the IFRC Secretariat and the Climate Centre, in how to engage in the development of CREWS projects.

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## CREWS project countries approved in 2022

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The **CREWS Malawi project**'s main aim is to strengthen "the overall provision of climate services (...), a drought monitoring and early warning system (...), early warning dissemination and preparedness/response capacity" and build the capacity of the National Meteorological and Hydrological Services and users.

The **CREWS Greater Horn of Africa project** is implemented at the regional level and in Ethiopia, Somalia and Sudan. The project's main aim is to "enhance the capacities for regional and national entities to produce and use climate, weather and hydrological services, including early warning systems."

The **CREWS Central Africa project** is implemented at the regional level, covering 11 countries in the region. The project's main aim is to "enhance national early warning systems, with a multi-hazard, impact-based and seamless approach, based upon strong regional cooperation".

The **CREWS Caribbean project** (additional financing) was an extension of a previously approved project active in 17 countries in the region. The project's main aim is to "strengthen and streamline regional and national systems and capacity related to weather forecasting, hydrological services, multi-hazard impact-based warnings and service delivery for enhanced decision-making."

The **CREWS East Africa project** (not yet approved) aims to scale up early warning services in the region and improve coverage of impact-based early warning services across Lake Victoria and surrounding communities. The project seeks to strengthen institutional and human capacities in regional and intergovernmental organizations in providing climate services, while also improving early warning services in Kenya, Tanzania, Rwanda and Uganda.

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<sup>2</sup> CREWS (2022). Annual Report 2021. Available at: [https://ane4bf-datap1.s3-eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/wmocrewns/s3fs-public/ckeditor/files/double\\_page\\_spread\\_view\\_4.pdf](https://ane4bf-datap1.s3-eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/wmocrewns/s3fs-public/ckeditor/files/double_page_spread_view_4.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.



*The Katakwi district branch of the Uganda Red Cross Society (URCS) carried out its second humanitarian distribution, for just over 2000 people, on 29 April 2016 ahead of forecasted floods in the east of the country.  
© Denis Onyodi / URCS*



## Opportunities

**CREWS acknowledges that investment in early warnings are effective only if they lead to successful early action to reduce risk and enhance preparedness at scale.** The CREWS Initiative is eager to go beyond technical hydrometeorological data systems and hazard risk models to ensure that early warning services are people centred. For CREWS, people-centred approaches are approaches that “involve the people and communities that most require warnings – the end-users – in each of the four elements required for effective impact-based multi-hazard early warning systems”.<sup>4</sup> The IFRC network brings a comparative advantage in this regard, which offers a key opportunity for National Societies to advocate for inclusion as funded project partners in CREWS projects and to identify roles and tasks for which they could take responsibility. CREWS projects have the potential to help position National Societies as key actors in the early warning early action space and enable them to build or strengthen sustainable relationships with key national actors.

**There are synergies between the objectives of CREWS investments and the existing work and ambitions of the IFRC Secretariat and its member National Societies related to people-centred early warning and anticipatory action.** People-centred early warning and anticipatory action are an institutional priority for the IFRC network – recognized in our Plan and Budget 2021-2025 and the IFRC Global Climate Resilience Programme. The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement has endorsed a Council of Delegates resolution on ‘Strengthening Anticipatory Action: Our way Forward’, which is accompanied by an IFRC Operational Framework for Anticipatory Action that unpacks how the network will reach the desired scale-up by 2025. CREWS projects can help National Meteorological and Hydrological Services (NMHSs) improve risk forecasting and develop impact-based forecasts that can be used for anticipatory action – and which are key to the effectiveness of anticipatory action – something which is often difficult to fund through Red Cross and Red Crescent projects.

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<sup>4</sup> [CREWS Operational Plan: Delivering at Scale 2021-2025](#)

## **National Societies can leverage funding from CREWS projects to ensure they are people-centred by implementing activities National Societies are well suited to do, such as:**

- The IFRC network is a recognized leader on Community Early Warning Systems (CEWS), having developed **Guiding Principles** for establishing such systems, along with a **Field Guide** and a **Training Toolkit**. CEWS can deliver trusted, timely and locally relevant warnings yet are often not integrated into national early warning systems or may not be used broadly. As collaborators on CREWS projects, National Societies can help to strengthen and develop CEWS as part of a people-centred approach to hazard monitoring, detection and warning services.
- In their unique position as auxiliary to their governments combined with their community presence and volunteer network, National Societies can work with authorities, hydro-meteorological agencies, public officials and other stakeholders to develop and strengthen national early warning early action systems, including improving the accessibility, understandability and actionability of national early warning systems, such as through the promotion of the **Common Alerting Protocol (CAP)** standard format for early warning messages and impact-based forecasting. Through the **Alert Hub Initiative**, the IFRC Secretariat works with member National Societies to promote, expand and support the use of the CAP among official alerting authorities and amplify alerts in countries worldwide.
- The IFRC network has a long history in helping frame relevant warning messages for different audiences, using the **Public Awareness and Public Education (PAPE)** messages on what protective actions to take, and strengthening the link between community and national early warning systems.
- Our global network of 160,000 local branches and nearly 15 million volunteers play an important role in community mobilization and supporting locally led action, ensuring that early warning information is effectively communicated and disseminated to “last mile”, hard to reach communities, and that at-risk communities gain ownership of early warning systems and that their needs are understood and heard to ensure effective and participatory anticipatory action planning. National Societies can build an active volunteer base that is connected to community-level planning and help to ensure that improved early warnings benefit all people in society.
- The IFRC Secretariat’s Disaster Response Emergency Fund (DREF) Anticipatory Pillar is a fast, reliable and efficient way of getting money to National Societies in anticipation of disasters. Based on meteorological forecasts and risk analysis, the DREF approves funding to National Societies for early action in advance of a predicted hazard. Money is then released automatically when pre-defined forecast thresholds or ‘triggers’ are met. However, accessing these funds requires that Early Action Protocols be developed and validated along with strengthening the capacity of National Societies to act early, which requires funding. Including the development of Early Action Protocols in CREWS projects can help ensure that CREWS investments lead to people-centred early action.
- As auxiliaries to their governments, National Societies are key advocates and players to integrate anticipatory action in national disaster risk management and climate change adaptation plans, strategies and policies. They support governments in their efforts to update, develop and implement effective climate and disaster risk management legislation (see for instance the **Checklist on Law and Disaster Risk Reduction**).

The IFRC network can also offer expertise, anticipatory action tools, training methods and information resources, including from the IFRC Secretariat and the Climate Centre.

## **Challenges**

The IFRC Secretariat is responsible for the coordination and strengthening of the IFRC network, which encompasses different actors with different strengths: National Societies, the IFRC Secretariat (at headquarters, regional, cluster (i.e. sub-regional) and country level), partner National Societies supporting work internationally, and technical reference centres like the Climate Centre. This can make it difficult for CREWS partners to know



*In November, the Bangladesh Red Crescent Society, along with the Cyclone Preparedness Programme, trained 640 community volunteers in early warning action drills, including evacuation and managing cyclone shelters. © IFRC*



who to engage and how to coordinate. CREWS projects can be formulated for either one country or for a defined region encompassing a dozen or more countries, which may not align with the clusters of countries within the IFRC structure – thus causing a coordination challenge. Working with clear lines of communication and coordination at the global, regional and national levels can diminish this challenge.

Every National Society and IFRC Secretariat cluster/country delegation has different strengths, resources and strategic objectives, and therefore the type of engagement that can be expected of different National Societies and IFRC staff in CREWS projects will be different. This can lead to confusion around expectations and commitment levels. Confirming interest and capacity to engage (by National Societies but also IFRC country/cluster delegations), along with support needs that might be required, from the get-go can help reduce this challenge.

Internally, understanding of and operational experience with early warning early action (EWEA), including forecast-based financing (FbF) / Early Action Protocols (EAPs), Community Early Warning Systems (CEWS) and the Common Alerting Protocol (CAP), vary from one National Society and IFRC region or cluster/country delegation to another. Even National Societies that have developed an EAP or that support Community Early Warning Systems may not have enough practical experience in advocating to include these in CREWS projects. Understanding these limitations and seeking to address them through technical support and accompaniment can help reduce this challenge, as can enhancing capacity related to EWEA, using material from IFRC's comprehensive EWEA learning approach.

CREWS projects tend to be focused on improving hydrometeorological data, models and services, and National Societies often lack knowledge and ability to engage substantively in the technical conversations, which can lead to a reluctance to engage in CREWS projects. Seeking technical support from the Climate Centre can reduce this challenge.

Beyond technical EWEA knowledge and capacity, National Societies can lack project formulation and budgeting expertise and may not be equipped to negotiate for an operational (funded) role. Further, a National Society might not be able to advocate for a role or responsibility to enhance project outcomes which CREWS teams did not originally think of. This challenge can be reduced with support from IFRC Secretariat cluster/country or regional delegations and the Climate Centre.

Given that IFRC network engagement in CREWS projects is new, there may be little understanding of the CREWS Initiative and how to engage. The following sections attempt to provide ideas and guide IFRC Secretariat and National Societies through this process.

# GENERAL MODALITIES FOR IFRC NETWORK ENGAGEMENT

## Roles and responsibilities

The **CREWS Steering Committee** serves as the decision-making body of the CREWS Initiative and oversees the activities funded by the CREWS Trust Fund. It is responsible for reviewing and approving the list of pipeline countries/regions, the list of which priority countries/regions can move on to proposal development stage and project proposals themselves. The World Bank (through the Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery), World Meteorological Organization and United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction serve as **Implementing Partners** of the CREWS Initiative and are responsible for supporting selected recipient countries and/or regional organizations in the design and implementation of projects. The development of a CREWS project is facilitated by a Lead Implementing Partner (Lead IP) which is responsible for leading and assisting relevant partners in the design of the project, and consulting with recipient countries and interested parties. A Lead Implementing Partner facilitates consultations and reporting but decisions are made collectively with all implementing partners and stakeholders involved in a project. The **CREWS Secretariat** is responsible for receiving and reviewing project proposals, which are then submitted to the CREWS Steering Committee which reviews and approves projects and fund allocations.

Different components of the IFRC network may be engaged in the development and implementation of a CREWS project. Each entity will have a different role to play based on their specific areas of expertise or responsibility. The following summarizes possible roles and responsibilities within the IFRC network, as set out in more detail in the matrix in Annex 1.

### 1. IFRC Secretariat Headquarters

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- a. Liaise with the CREWS Secretariat. Observer on the CREWS Steering Committee. Stay abreast of when the Steering Committee approves countries/regions from the Pipeline List (at least on a biannual basis) which then kicks off the development of project proposals; and obtain final approved project proposals.
- b. Alert relevant IFRC Secretariat Regional Offices and the Climate Centre when it is clear which countries/regions from the Pipeline List are likely to be added to the Priority List for Investments, and when countries/regions have actually been approved to move onto the project proposal development phase.
- c. Inform the CREWS Secretariat of relevant IFRC Secretariat and Climate Centre focal points for each project.

### 2. IFRC Secretariat Regional Office

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- a. Alert relevant IFRC country/cluster delegations when it is clear which countries from the Pipeline List are likely to be added to the Priority List for Investments, and when countries have actually been approved to move onto the project proposal development phase.
- b. In regional projects that cut across multiple IFRC country/cluster delegations, act as the focal point for the project and liaise with relevant country/cluster delegations to ensure their role in b-d below.



### **3. IFRC country/cluster delegation**

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- a.** IFRC focal point for country projects or regional projects limited to the cluster's purview.
- b.** Alert relevant National Societies when it is clear which countries from the Pipeline List are likely to be added to the Priority List for Investments, and when countries have been approved to move onto the project proposal development phase and determine/re-confirm their interest and capacity to engage.
- c.** Act as the project coordinator on behalf of the IFRC network and ensure National Society/ies are properly engaged in proposal development.
- d.** Where possible, provide technical support to the National Society related to the types of activities that could be included in the proposal. Where the country/cluster delegation does not have the required expertise, help connect the National Society to relevant expertise, including from the Climate Centre.
- e.** Provide support to the National Society related to contract and project management – including time, scope, budget and reporting (where contract is with them).
- f.** Shape/design IFRC country/cluster delegation support activities (and required budget) in the proposal.
- g.** Implementation of IFRC country/cluster delegation support activities in the proposal.

### **4. National Societies**

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- a.** Engage in proposal development.
- b.** Shape/design National Society led activities (and required budget) in the proposal.
- c.** Liaise with government counterparts in the proposal, along with the national disaster management organization (NDMOs or civil protection).
- d.** Implementation of National Society activities in the proposal.

### **5. Climate Centre**

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- a.** Can support the IFRC Secretariat and National Societies in identifying entry points for activities to be included in CREWS projects.
- b.** Provide support to the National Society related to technical elements of the proposal (e.g. science-based elements, FbF trigger development), upon demand.
- c.** Shape/design Climate Centre support activities (and required budget) in the proposal.
- d.** Implementation of Climate Centre support activities in the proposal.
- e.** Within the context of regional projects, can interact with WMO Regional Climate Centres, when necessary, regarding the improvement and development of climate services oriented to addressing community needs.

At the national level, National Societies can speak with their NMHS about existing or planned CREWS programming and propose inclusion in project planning and /or implementation. National Societies can always reach out to the IFRC Secretariat for assistance with an introduction to the Implementing Partner/s in their country or region.

Close coordination is needed between the different components of the IFRC network that may be engaged to ensure coherence and added value for the CREWS project.

## Entry points along the project development timeline

For projects with a national-level focus, the IFRC Secretariat and relevant National Societies should ideally be involved as early as possible and in all stages of national project design and implementation. For regional projects, it is ideal to have early and active IFRC Secretariat engagement at regional level.

CREWS projects follow these key steps per its Operational Procedures. More details can be found [here](#).

### 1 Review of Pipeline List of Countries and Regions

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The CREWS Secretariat carries out a mapping of LDCs and SIDS status and needs on an ongoing basis and includes countries/regions in the Pipeline List if they have demonstrated eligibility and readiness for CREWS investment. Twice a year (in June/July and around UNFCCC COP in November), the CREWS Steering Committee reviews the list of Pipeline countries/regions for potential future allocations (N.B. the first meeting is open to Members only whereas the second meeting is open to Observers – IFRC is an Observer). Approval for full proposal development depends on the needs and rationale as well as the availability of funding. Each pipeline project has a Brief with key information to support the deliberations of the Steering Committee. Information on which pipeline countries/regions are likely to be green-lighted to move on to proposal development is known several weeks before Steering Committee meetings, which is an opportunity to reflect in the relevant Briefs which Red Cross and Red Crescent EWEA-related work could be leveraged if the project goes through.

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#### To do / 1

Several weeks before Steering Committee meetings, the IFRC Secretariat in Geneva should discuss with the CREWS Secretariat to understand which pipeline projects are likely to be added to the Priority List (see step 2). For regional projects, IFRC Geneva to clarify as needed which will have a purely regional scope (without planned investment at country-level) or also a country-level scope. For pipeline projects with only a regional scope, IFRC Geneva to inform the IFRC Regional Office(s) and Climate Centre regionally, clarifying that this will mean engagement at their level and not country-level. For pipeline projects with a national scope, IFRC Geneva to alert the Regional Office(s) and encourage outreach to relevant National Societies to understand their interest to engage, their capacity and relevant work to date, and ask for consolidated information to be shared with IFRC Geneva – for onward sharing to the CREWS Secretariat *ahead of the Steering Committee meeting* – so that IPs can include this in the pipeline brief as an additional consideration for selection.

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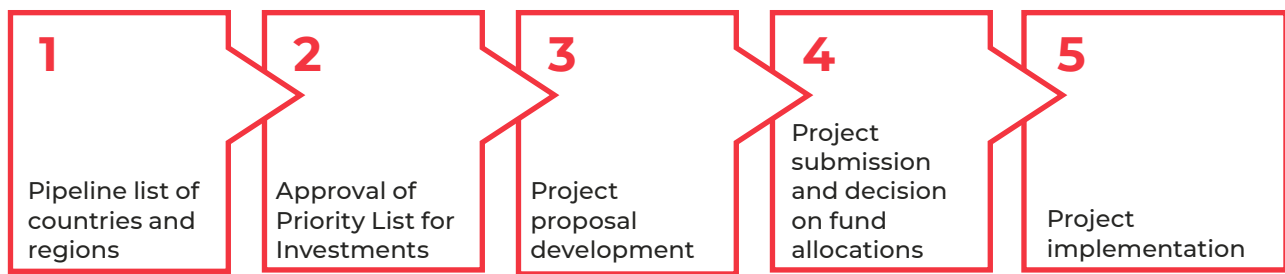
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#### To do / 2

IFRC country/cluster delegations covered by pipeline projects likely to be added to the Priority List and with a country-level scope to alert relevant National Societies (making it clear that this does not mean the project will be approved and go forward) and gauge their interest to engage, their capacity and relevant work to date (the information can be high-level and include e.g. whether the IFRC network has any ongoing EWEA work that could be leveraged by CREWS funding (and if so by whom it's funded); whether the National Society has experience working with their government related to EWEA and if so how). This information should be consolidated and shared with IFRC Geneva to be used by the IPs in the pipeline brief as additional information for consideration by the Steering Committee. The National Society / IFRC Secretariat can also at this point kick-start / build on dialogue with Implementing Partners.

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**Figure 1** CREWS project development timeline



## 2 Review and Approval of CREWS Priority List for Investments

Twice a year (during the same meetings mentioned above, in June/July and around UNFCCC COP in November), or at the request of the Steering Committee, the CREWS Priority List for Investments (which lists which countries/regions should move forward with proposal development) is reviewed and approved by the Steering Committee. The CREWS Priority List for Investments identifies priority countries and regions from the Pipeline List and programmatic areas for the development of CREWS projects. At this point, it is clear which countries/regions can move ahead with proposal development.

### To do / 1

IFRC Geneva to participate as Observer in CREWS Steering Committee meetings and/or to check records of the meetings which are circulated to the Steering Committee, Members, Implementing Partners and Observers at least three weeks after the meeting in order to obtain information on which countries/regions have been approved to move to proposal development.

### To do / 2

IFRC Geneva to confirm to IFRC Regional Offices and the Climate Centre which countries/regions have been approved to move to the project proposal phase (step 3 below) (for onward communication to relevant delegations and National Societies for projects with a national-level scope) and ask who the focal points for each project will be. As part of the outreach to the relevant Regional Office(s), IFRC Geneva to share this guidance and organize an introductory briefing session if need be.

To see a list of pipeline countries and regions, as well as ongoing project locations, click [here](#).



### 3 CREWS Project Development Process

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The Implementing Partners prepare the proposal in close discussion with operational partners in the country or region, nominated experts by the CREWS Steering Committee, which would ideally include the National Societies, with support from the IFRC Secretariat and/or the Climate Centre, as needed.

- a. The Implementing Partners will identify one Implementing Partner to lead the consultations and project development. Timeline: two weeks as per the CREWS Operational Procedures.

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#### To do / 1

IFRC Geneva to share the names/emails of the IFRC Secretariat and Climate Centre focal points for each project with the CREWS Secretariat (who will pass on the information to the lead Implementing Partner).

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- b. The Implementing Partners will consult with national counterparts and relevant stakeholders, align with relevant ongoing initiatives and Regional and Global Support projects. If necessary, they will carry out multistakeholder consultations in the country or region. *This is the entry point for a National Society to position itself as a key actor and to discuss activities and budget for National Societies and IFRC.* Timeline: two to three months as per the CREWS Operational Procedures, but often longer. N.B. Budgets are listed down to the output level and per each IP; and are then detailed to the activity level once the proposal is approved (step 4 below).

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#### To do / 1

If/when they are invited to project preparation meetings organized by the Lead IP, National Societies should come prepared with a clear idea of their comparative advantage, value added and the activities they can bring to the table (see ideas of activities in Part 3) so that they can advocate for and articulate their proposed role in the project. National Societies should select activities that align best with CREWS project goal and identified gaps. National Societies should also broadly estimate the cost for them to implement these activities. National Societies should also think about what support they may require from IFRC and the Climate Centre.

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#### To do / 2

If National Societies interested to engage in the project(s) would like help to prepare their offer for the project, IFRC country/cluster delegation to organize a brainstorming session with the National Society and the Climate Centre, ahead of the project preparation meeting with the Lead Implementation Partner.

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#### To do / 3

IFRC Secretariat project focal point and Climate Centre focal point to identify support that may need to be provided to the National Society/ies and broadly estimate the budget for this.

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#### To do / 4

IFRC project focal point to share the draft project proposal with the Climate Centre for their feedback.

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## 4 Project Submission and Decisions on Fund Allocations

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The Implementing Partners submit projects to the Steering Committee through the CREWS Secretariat for approval and allocation of funds, either at one of the regular Steering Committee meetings or through a virtual, no-objection, procedure. Timeline for feedback: three weeks as per the CREWS Operational Procedures.

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### To do / 1

IFRC project focal point and National Societies to keep in touch with the Lead IP to be aware of when the proposal is approved and inception phase begin.

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## 5 Project implementation

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The project activities are implemented by the partners, after the workplans and budgets have been elaborated during the inception phase. Note that CREWS projects generally last three to five years.

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### To do / 1

National Society and IFRC project focal point to join the inception meetings, during which IFRC membership engagement (activities and budget requirements) will need to be shaped.

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### To do / 2

IFRC project focal point to reach out to the global focal point to discuss/ agree on contracting modality with the IP (see Annex 2 for more information on contracting).

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### To do / 3

National Societies, IFRC Secretariat and the Climate Centre (as relevant) to implement budgeted activities.

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**Uganda 2018** The German Red Cross-supported Integrated Climate Change Adaptation (ICCA) programme in Uganda's Teso and Karamoja sub-regions was designed to help the Uganda Red Cross Society strengthen community resilience and promote risk reduction and adaptation, including through early warning and anticipatory action activities. © Denis Onyodi / URCS / DRK / Climate Centre





# RECOMMENDATIONS FOR NATIONAL SOCIETY ROLES AND ACTIVITIES IN CREWS PROJECTS

CREWS projects can be in one country or at a regional-scale and activities include (but are not limited to): (1) analytical and advisory services; (2) investments and technical assistance activities; and (3) capacity building and operational support.

In its Guidance Document on People-Centered Risk-Informed Early Warning Systems, CREWS outlines a five-pillar methodology for people-centered EWS, closely aligned to Red Cross and Red Crescent areas of expertise:

1. Identifying and engaging actors, with an emphasis on (a) stakeholder / actor mapping across the early warning system value chain; (b) identifying partners and partnership modalities; and (c) co-defining roles and pursuing active collaboration between all early warning system actors
2. Co-creating a collaborative design process with the assessment of risks and select at-risk target groups and locations for early warning systems
3. Co-exploring, co-developing and co-delivering solutions
4. Capacity building and learning
5. Monitoring and evaluation with process indicators of people-centered activities.

Depending on the capacity and strategic direction of each National Society, and the type of support that can be expected from the IFRC network, a National Society's choice as to how to engage in CREWS projects will differ. There are four major types of roles that National Societies can offer to play as partners in CREWS projects. Many different types of activities can fall under these roles. Some examples of services and support by National Societies with regards to people centred EWEA have been documented in [People Centered Early Warning Systems: Learning from National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies](#).

## **National Societies as “ears” to the ground** *Support CREWS project design to be based on community-level realities and evaluate impact.*

National Societies can gather community-level risk information and gender-disaggregated data to inform the early warnings and climate services developed by a CREWS project. This could include, for example, a Knowledge, Attitudes and Practices (KAP) survey of community members to understand the needs and perspectives of communities at risk, or an Enhanced Vulnerability Capacity Assessment (EVCA) to provide hazard mapping involving at-risk communities. These could in turn provide detailed information about exposure and vulnerability for the design of effective forecasts and warning, contextualisation which would then support CREWS to create needs-responsive and impact-based early warning systems.

In addition, some National Societies have engaged in data collection initiatives for weather data itself. Forecast verification is an area that is quite weak in most developing countries; National Societies could gather crowd-sourced data to ground truth new forecasts. For example, National Societies could facilitate a data collection initiative to understand whether it rained in the areas receiving an extreme weather warning and play a role of providers of information about the impacts and lived experience of this event, including decisions taken, as part of a CREWS project.

Finally, National Societies can provide feedback to CREWS projects related to the effectiveness of the projects, through monitoring and evaluation methods.

## Possible wording which could be included in CREWS proposal

“Develop early action plan(s)/protocol(s) that can be triggered based on national forecasts”;  
“Develop, strengthen and/or maintain Community Early Warning Systems in high-risk areas”;  
“Conduct workshops with government alerting agencies and local media to promote CAP and increase understand of its utilization”; “Tailor and harmonize Public Awareness and Public Education messages to the national context in collaboration with the government and ensure these are included in alerts/early warning messages”.

### Example – IFRC and the Common Alert Protocol

The IFRC Alert Hub and the Climate Centre are currently promoting CAP in six countries in Africa (Burkina Faso, Burundi, Namibia, Togo, Uganda, and Zambia) and National Societies are being positioned to be CAP champions in their respective countries. Workshops to contextualize and harmonize Public Awareness and Public Education messages are being undertaken with government alerting agencies. This would be an interesting angle to link with ongoing or new CREWS projects in these countries.

### Example – IFRC network recommendation provided to CREWS Malawi proposal

“The Malawi Red Cross Society [...], supported by the Red Cross Red Crescent Climate Centre, can assist in the formulation and implementation of an Early Action Plan. The Malawi Red Cross enables widespread engagement at community level to ensure that i) EAPs are relevant and viable at community level, and ii) early warnings are disseminated effectively down to the community level. The Climate Centre contributes global experience and expertise on early action.”

## National Societies as “users” and “implementers” *Support CREWS projects to lead to early action by ensuring an active RCRC volunteer base.*

National Societies themselves are a primary user of forecast and early warning information, taking action to protect vulnerable people, support communities to take early actions and prepare for response operations. CREWS projects can support National Societies to go to scale with these early actions, improving their scope and effectiveness. National Societies also have the value added of being long-term established civil society institutions in countries, with clear statutory government mandates, and therefore likely to be users and beneficiaries of CREWS project outcomes and deliverables far beyond the end of the project, so long as these are useful and usable to address the needs of the most at-risk communities.

To act quickly based on early warnings, National Societies need to have a highly trained volunteer base that is ready to jump into action, and which will sustain the capacity for effective anticipatory action after the project ends. This can involve capacity building support from IFRC delegations and regional teams, as well as partner National Societies and IFRC reference centres.

## Possible wording which could be included in CREWS proposal

“Conduct community-based Knowledge, Attitudes and Practices (KAP) surveys and community risk assessments (Enhanced Vulnerability and Capacity Assessment (EVCA)); “Volunteer-led hazard, exposure, vulnerability and capacity data gathering”; “Facilitate community-level data collection”; “Monitor and evaluate activities”

### Example – Volunteers collect volcanic ashfall data in Ecuador and Costa Rica

The Ecuador and Costa Rica Red Cross societies have both developed a data monitoring system by which National Society volunteers are tasked with measuring volcanic ashfall in different locations and reporting on the severity of the eruption. In Costa Rica, this activity will be implemented as part of the Costa Rica Early Action Protocol.

### Example – IFRC network recommendation provided to CREWS Central Africa project proposal

“Red Cross and Red Crescent volunteers can take an active role in monitoring risks that affect their communities as well as issuing and responding to warnings that arise from local monitoring (e.g. in remote communities or where national early warning systems are undeveloped and unable to reach all at-risk areas)”.

### Example – IFRC network recommendation provided to CREWS Caribbean project proposal

“The National Society [could... be a] contributing source of vulnerability data and [could] lead on conducting national vulnerability data mapping.”

**National Societies as “top-down/bottom-up” early warning-early action planners** *Support CREWS by developing early action plans and systems at both national and community levels. Support CREWS early warning messaging to be people-centred and reach the most at-risk and hard to reach communities.*

## Early warning design

To enable end-to-end early warning that reaches the last/first mile and is both understandable and actionable, the IFRC Secretariat is working to strengthen national alerting systems through advocacy and training on the [Common Alert Protocol \(CAP\)](#), a standard format to issue early warning alerts that communicates key information, which could be expanded upon in CREWS projects. Building on the existence of a global database of IFRC Public Awareness and Public Education messages to communicate recommendations to the public of what risk reduction action to take for a range of hazards, National Societies can also tailor and share such messages for what to do when warnings are received to the local context and local language(s) and connect with Community Early Warning Systems.

## Early action planning

Around 40 National Societies around the world have developed, or begun developing, Early Action Protocols (EAPs) that enable them to access rapid, reliable funding for forecast-based action through the IFRC’s Disaster Response Emergency Fund (DREF). These National Societies have developed networks of experts in anticipatory action for primarily hydrometeorological risks. Beyond EAPs, National Societies around the world also bring expertise in facilitating community action planning and Community Early Warning Systems based on their years of experience with community-based disaster preparedness and disaster risk reduction activities. This is an ideal activity to include in CREWS projects, to link the national development of early warnings and climate services with a systematic approach to community-level early warning and anticipatory action planning across the country.



## Possible wording which could be included in CREWS proposal

“Strengthen the mechanisms for local early action”; “Strengthen the volunteer base of the National Society”

### Example – Early actions by the Bangladesh Red Crescent during Cyclone Amphan

The Bangladesh Red Crescent currently has two operational Early Action Protocols, for flooding and cyclones. In 2020, the Early Action Protocol triggered two days before cyclone Amphan hit the country. In coordination with the national Cyclone Preparedness Programme, and based on previous trainings and simulations, the Bangladesh Red Crescent Society mobilised a high number of volunteers to warn exposed communities, support the evacuation of people and their assets, distribute food and water to evacuation shelters, and preposition to provide timely first aid.

### Example – IFRC network recommendation provided to CREWS Central Africa project proposal

The National Society can “mobilize Red Cross volunteers, especially for remote communities or where national early warning systems are undeveloped and unable to reach all at-risk areas.”

**National Societies as “advocates and conveners”** *Support CREWS to convene disaster risk management and local stakeholders, as well as communities, to ensure projects respond to the needs of the most at-risk communities.*

Given the unique role of National Societies as auxiliary to government and critical to community level disaster risk management, National Societies are respected around the world for their ability to convene diverse stakeholders and advocate on behalf of the most at-risk communities. In the context of CREWS projects, National Societies can offer the role of convening the necessary consultative process between forecasting agencies, at-risk communities and the disaster risk management community.

In convening and facilitating these dialogues, National Societies can advocate for increased ambition of CREWS projects related to people-centred early warning and anticipatory action. This can include advocating for improved forecast quality for extreme events, advocating for impact-based forecasts that provide clear actionable information and advocating for messaging that is tailored to at-risk communities and diverse groups within society.

## Possible wording which could be included in CREWS proposal

“Organize national dialogue platform on early warning early action”; “Broker meetings between stakeholders”; “Organize community consultations”.

### Example – Regional and National Dialogue Platforms on Anticipatory Action

Many National Societies have convened regional and national Dialogue Platforms on Anticipatory Action, to bring together relevant stakeholders in the design of early actions, and these platforms are also activities that National Societies can contribute within CREWS projects. Dialogue Platforms are notably organized annually in Africa, Asia Pacific and Latin America.

### Example – IFRC network recommendation provided to CREWS Malawi project proposal

“The Malawi Red Cross Society [could convene] associated structures from national down to community level for implementation.”





**St Maarten 2017** After Hurricane Irma, the Netherlands Red Cross helped to distribute early warnings of the approach of Hurricane Maria, which threatened St Maarten, Saba and St Eustatius, which helped save lives and livelihoods. © Netherlands Red Cross



# ANNEXES

## **Annex 1** *Responsibility Assignment Matrix*

For RCRC partners, a living RACI matrix can be found [here](#).

## **Annex 2** *Contracting*

For RCRC partners, further information and guidance on contracting can be found [here](#).

## **Annex 3** *Key resources*

The resources listed here are a small selection of manuals and reports that allow you to explore certain aspects more deeply. Click on the title to view the documents.

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GRC/IFRC/RCCC. [Forecast-based Financing Practitioners Manual](#). This manual is a step-by-step guide for National Societies and partners to implement Forecast-based Financing (FbF), with the objective to develop an Early Action Protocol (EAP) or a simplified EAP to be able to access funds from the IFRC's DREF.

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IFRC (2012). [Community early warning systems: guiding principles](#). This guide outlines the guiding strategic principles related to the role of people-centred early warning systems in reducing risk.

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IFRC (2014). [Community Early Warning Systems Training Toolkit](#). This toolkit is an operational manual that accompanies and should put into practice the *Community Early Warning Systems: Guiding Principles*. The Toolkit is a ready-to-go Training of Trainers (ToT) and Workshop manual and is targeted to National Societies and NGOs that are embarking on a journey either to strengthen existing CEWS efforts in a country (joining them seamlessly to national systems) or to create, from scratch, a community-driven EWS as part of a larger Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) programme.

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IFRC (2018). [Public Awareness and Public Education for Disaster Risk Reduction: Action oriented key messages for households and schools](#). This updated publication provides practical advice and guidance about disaster risk reduction messages and information to share with the public, including hazard-specific key messages.

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IFRC (2020). [People Centered Early Warning Systems: Learning from National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies](#). This report focuses on the role of National Societies in people-centred early warning systems, anticipatory action and forecast-based financing (FbF), including looking into specific initiatives in Nepal, Malawi and the Pacific.

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IFRC (2022). [IFRC Operational Framework for Anticipatory Action 2021-2025](#). This framework translates the ambitions of the RCRC Movement Council of Delegates resolution '[Strengthening anticipatory action in the Movement: Our way forward](#)', which calls for increased engagement in anticipatory action so that more people, more countries and more hazards are covered by the approach, by setting clear targets and action pillars for IFRC and the network.

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IFRC (2022). [Anticipatory action: using forecasts to prevent hazards from becoming disasters](#). This two-page brochure explains what anticipatory action is, how it works and why it's important. You can also download a one-page factsheet showing examples of anticipatory action for different hazards below.

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CREWS (2022). [Annual Report 2021](#). This report provides an overview of CREWS efforts in 2021.

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REAP (2022). [Early Action: The State of Play 2021](#). This report provides a snapshot of early warning early action commitment, investment and activity over the previous year. It intends to give decision-makers top-line analysis that identifies gaps and opportunities in the delivery of early action and supports the broader goal of a systemic shift towards acting ahead of disasters.

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**For more information, visit:**

<https://www.crews-initiative.org/en>

<https://www.ifrc.org/forecast-based-action>

<https://www.ifrc.org/early-warning-early-action>

<https://www.anticipation-hub.org/>



**The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC)** is the world's largest humanitarian network, with **192 National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies** and around **14 million volunteers**. Our volunteers are present in communities before, during and after a crisis or disaster. We work in the most hard to reach and complex settings in the world, saving lives and promoting human dignity. We support communities to become stronger and more resilient places where people can live safe and healthy lives, and have opportunities to thrive.