IFRC

DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION IMPACT PLATFORM

TRANSFORMING THE IFRC NETWORK AND SERVICES TO ACHIEVE MORE AND BETTER

OUR AMBITION

A landslide wipes out a village. The National Red Cross Society needs to send disaster response experts to the scene to support the survivors. But the power is out again at headquarters, and the emergency contact lists are on the sole computer…

A youth club has decided to approach its National Red Crescent Society and become community volunteers. The club members scroll through information on their phones, but they can't see a website or a social media account for the National Society. They decide to do something else instead…

Volunteers from a branch in a developing country are ready to quit. They love the humanitarian duties, but they are tired of how slow and disorganized everything is: the National Society is still using paper records, because there aren't enough funds to pay for a digitized system…

No community-based humanitarian organization should be offline – or have limited connectivity and access to digital tools – in 2023. But this is the reality of the digital divide, and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) needs your partnership to help close it.

Data and digital tools have the potential to transform community-level humanitarian action, and we want to equip local communities with the capacity and expertise to harness these opportunities through our Digital Transformation Impact Platform.

IFRC's Digital Transformation Impact Platform is elevating the digital data skills of our National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies to supercharge their impact within communities across the network and beyond. In doing so, IFRC is mobilizing financial, technical and material resources totalling 100 million Swiss francs over five years. In addition, IFRC is investing its own resources into this platform.

Background: a strategy for a more digital world

Digital transformation is a crucial enabler of the IFRC's Strategy 2030 and a vital means of strengthening our National Societies – it supports all our work.

But our network is large and diverse, and our 191 National Societies – and their 190,000 local branches and units – have widely different levels of digital maturity and capacities to boost their humanitarian services by using data and digital solutions. If we are to close this digital divide, we must invest heavily at the community level, in the branches and units that need it most. Our mid-term goal is to help the 80 least digitally advanced National Societies lift their digital maturity by one level (on a scale of 0–3) by 2027, with a global budget of 100 million Swiss francs. This is ambitious – but the needs are urgent.

It can be done, but we will need partners that share our vision, partners that are ready to invest funds and technical expertise in a journey along two intrinsically linked paths: 1) to strengthen National Societies' digital foundations and 2) to enhance specific digital services available to the IFRC network.

DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION IMPACT PLATFORM: TRANSFORMING THE IFRC NETWORK AND SERVICES TO ACHIEVE MORE AND BETTER

FUNDING AMBITION

Over 5 years (from 2022):
100M* CHF

For 2023:
25M CHF

FUNDING SOURCES

IFRC: Capacity Building Fund, programmatic funding

Technology partners including Twilio and Microsoft

National Societies including the Netherlands Red Cross

Governmental donors including the Norwegian Government

Other donors including MDBs

IMPACT

Local communities reduce disaster risks, can more easily access humanitarian support, and become more resilient. The IFRC seeks core partners to match our commitment and embark with us on a challenging yet rewarding journey.

IFRC DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION IMPACT PLATFORM

100M CHF

5 YEARS

80 COUNTRIES
improve digital capabilities

191 National Societies and
190,000 local offices enhance digital humanitarian services

*We estimate that a 250,000 Swiss franc investment per year over five years is needed to raise the digital capacity of a National Society by one level. We aim to support 80 National Societies on this journey.

WHY IFRC?

IFRC is the world's largest humanitarian network with unparalleled global reach via our 16.5 million local volunteers. Making us the partner of choice for those seeking to make impact by investing in community-based solutions to global issues.

STRATEGIC GOALS AND TARGETS

IFRC's Digital Transformation Impact Platform aims to achieve two strategic goals by 2027.

1. Strengthening National Societies' digital foundations

The IFRC network and partners will assist the 80 National Societies with the lowest levels of data and digital capability and resources to lift their digital maturity by one level (of three on the IFRC digital maturity matrix), putting in place connectivity, basic systems infrastructure, IT security measures, hardware and basic digital literacy skills.

2. Enhancing specific digital services available to the IFRC network

The IFRC network and partners will use digital technology to strengthen humanitarian services available across the entire network, creating digital public goods such as access to impact-based forecasting, information as aid, digitally enabled cash assistance and first aid response.

The IFRC invites partners to join us on this exciting journey, by investing simultaneously along the two axes, with both funds and expertise:

1. Digital foundations: in the basic IT foundations of at least three to five National Societies, their branches and volunteers

2. Digital services: in their data-driven and digitally enabled humanitarian services (e.g., digitally enabled cash assistance, health, climate and information services)

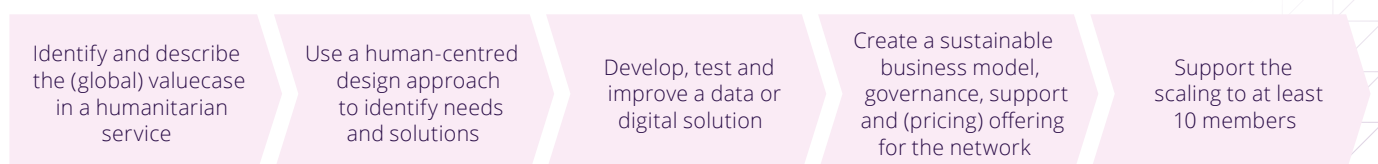## STRENGTHENING NATIONAL SOCIETIES' DIGITAL FOUNDATIONS   5 years

LIFT 3-5 NATIONAL SOCIETIES UP 1 LEVEL IN DIGITAL MATURITY

Assess National Society digital maturity	Co-develop digital transformation roadmap and strategy	Support roadmap implementation (funds and in-kind)	Support with a sustainable model for future investments in digital transformation

ENHANCING SPECIFIC DIGITAL SERVICES   3 years

ADOPT AND SCALE 1 SERVICE

Identify and describe the (global) valuecase in a humanitarian service	Use a human-centred design approach to identify needs and solutions	Develop, test and improve a data or digital solution	Create a sustainable business model, governance, support and (pricing) offering for the network	Support the scaling to at least 10 members

STRENGTHENING NATIONAL SOCIETIES' DIGITAL FOUNDATIONS

This journey focuses on the basic digital capabilities that all National Societies, large and small, should have in common.

The journey will ensure sustained support, of up to five years, to set up the basic digital foundations our National Societies and their country-wide branch networks and volunteers need to operate in an increasingly digital world. It will put in place IT infrastructure, connectivity and basic systems infrastructure including:

▲ Sufficient hardware (computers, local office networks, WiFi, local servers), sustained power supply

▲ Connectivity to internet, mobile and other

▲ Basic systems: access to (cloud-based) software: for finance, HR, grant management, communications and collaboration (e.g. website, mail), beneficiary case management (CRM), volunteer management, branch management

▲ Where relevant, digital engagement and/or individual fundraising

▲ Basic digital literacy skills across National Society staff and many more branch volunteers (often our staff to volunteer ratio is 1:10)

▲ All in a secure environment with IT security measures to protect the National Society and the personal data of the people it supports.

These are the minimum core capabilities that National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies need sustainable technical support to achieve. This will transform operations for the many that have only a few computers (and often just at head-quarters), erratic electricity supply, and operate in spreadsheets and use personal email accounts.

Platform partners will work in close coordination with partner National Societies, their IFRC regional offices and national partners.

> Not all National Societies have reliable internet connectivity – which greatly reduces their ability to reach communities. In times when international support is needed, sharing photos and videos of the impact of a disaster can drum up support – but sustained power supply and fast internet is needed to make that happen.

ENHANCING SPECIFIC DIGITAL SERVICES AVAILABLE TO THE IFRC NETWORK

National Societies can tap into these digitally enabled humanitarian services as they become more digitally mature, and therefore achieve more.

This journey has two elements: making our existing services more digital, and adding new services that have been made possible by digital transformation. It will allow National Societies to provide more data-driven and digitally enabled humanitarian aid to people affected by crisis – reaching more people, more quickly and efficiently, and be more relevant.

There are many humanitarian services that are to some extent digital but need to be further digitally enabled, such as cash assistance, data-driven early warning, health services, information services (information as aid, a growing need), and first aid response (ambulances, first aiders, pre-hospital care).

There is also the opportunity to digitally enhance key enabling processes such as needs assessments, volunteer management, community engagement and accountability, post-distribution monitoring, feedback and helpdesk functions.

We estimate a three-year journey to develop and roll out a solution to around ten National Societies. Platform partners will work in close coordination with experts from the IFRC and National Societies with expert positions, end users (such as people affected by disasters) and partners from implementing National Societies.

VALUE PROPOSITION

REACH AND SCALE

The IFRC is the world's largest humanitarian network, with National Societies in 191 countries and 190,000 local branches.
This global reach offers the opportunity for new and improved digital solutions to make unprecedented impact at scale. With digital transformation,our network can reach more people, more efficiently. Without it, we will lose relevance and opportunities, and be less able to support people at risk.

AUXILIARY ROLE TO GOVERNMENTS

Through their auxiliary status, National Societies play a unique role in supporting relevant ministries of their governments,while remaining fully independent. They actively participate in countless aspects of public life from providing first response to emergencies and crises to supporting vulnerable people in their homes. This offers untold opportunities for creating visible impact at scale through new and improved humanitarian services.

LOCAL PRESENCE

The IFRC network works at grassroots level all over the world: our staff and volunteers live in the communities in which they operate. For more than a century, we have been the first to respond when disaster strikes. This local presence and access to the most at-risk communities ensures long-term sustainable impact.

PARTNER OF CHOICE

Their mandate, permanence, scale of operations and extensive networks make National Societies the partner of choice for governments and donors seeking to make a difference by investing in community-based solutions to global issues. Together, we can transform humanitarian action and ultimately save more lives and livelihoods.

VOLUNTEER NETWORK

Our biggest asset is our 16.5 million volunteers, whose trusted status provides unhindered access to communities and the most at-risk people within them. Our volunteers can make unparalleled impact if provided with the right digital tools and information to reach more people, faster and with more relevant assistance.

DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION AT THE COSTA RICAN RED CROSS: STRENGTHENING THE BASE

The Costa Rican Red Cross has been on a self-led journey of digital transformation and organizational change.

Background

The Costa Rican Red Cross serves a population of five million people, and focuses on disaster preparedness, community health and environmental protection. It is the main provider of ambulance services in the country, offered free of charge to the population and financed 60 per cent through its own resources. The organization has 111 branches, 5,000 volunteers and 1,300 employees, while its IT team is made up of five IT specialists who serve 7,800 users.

The digital transformation journey

On a journey that began in the late 2000s, the Costa Rican Red Cross has successfully strengthened the digital capacity of its entire National Society by optimizing the hardware and software resources available to all its branches, staff and volunteers. In collaboration with partners such as Microsoft who support its aims and humanitarian objectives, it has made large investments in digital infrastructure. Now every member of the National Society has an email account and collaborative tools to access the information and processes they need, as well as greater digital literacy.

COLLABORATIVE TOOLS NOW AVAILABLE
TO EVERYONE IN THE NATIONAL SOCIETY

The National Society has implemented an enterprise resource planning system that helps automate and manage processes in areas such as finances, purchasing, warehouse management and volunteering. This makes for faster response to communities when they need it most.

The Costa Rican Red Cross has used digital technology to make other practical improvements, such as implementing an e-learning system accessible by all staff and volunteers. Online training makes for a more efficient and knowledgeable team.

Enhancing service delivery through digital systems

Strengthening its digital foundations has enabled the Costa Rican Red Cross to improve its core service delivery as well. One way has been by implementing and using outsourced (digital) systems. For example, the outsourced GPS fleet monitoring and control system now tracks and controls all ambulance fleet assets (see Box).

It has successfully outsourced other systems too:

◢ digitally tracking the transfer of patients to medical centres

◢ digitally tracking incident management.

Developing sustainable fleet management

In 2017 the Costa Rican Red Cross began a fleet management change process to address recurring problems of operational inefficiency. The fleet unit is made up of five office staff, 621 drivers and 705 fleet assets including more than 540 ambulances and some 150 operational support vehicles.

The unit introduced a new vehicle tracking system which tracks and controls every fleet vehicle. This provides data in electronic format and in real time, such as the location and speed of the vehicles. It monitors critical indicators such as excessive speeding,

CO2 emissions and accident rate, to take appropriate actions to improve. It has rolledout a database of authorized drivers, identified and reduced vehicle idle time, and achieved economies of scale by standardizing purchasing decisions.

In the four years to 2020, this process has led to significant benefits including: 19% decrease in fuel consumption and CO2 emissions; 113,000 US dollar savings per year on petrol; 15 per cent decrease in the cost of acquiring new ambulances, and 100 per cent decrease in drivers' lives lost.

What to consider when implementing digital transformation in a National Society

◢ Ensure senior management are committed to creating an enabling environment for digital transformation changes to occur.

◢ Be aware of the need to strengthen IT management as a key part of improving the organizational services offered.

◢ Set clear goals for data security, and clear roles and responsibilities for data users.

◢ Plan to combat natural resistance to change with good communication and involving main project stakeholders.

◢ Be ready to adapt to emerging systems and equipment.

◢ Bear in mind that digital transformation s a continual and incremental process and implemented systems need to be renewed over time to reflect changes in National Society needs as well as newly available technologies.

◢ Technology and digital literacy go hand in hand – strengthen these at the same time.

A DIGITAL TOOL TO COMMUNICATE AT SCALE DURING CRISES

When communities couldn't meet face to face, the IFRC network transformed how National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies communicate with affected people during crises.

Background

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the traditional channels for delivering humanitarian aid were disrupted due to lockdowns. In response to this challenge, the IFRC collaborated with the Norwegian Refugee Council and Twilio to develop a powerful tool called the Digital Engagement Hub. Built using Twilio Flex, this consists of virtual contact centres that can be rapidly scaled up in different countries to reach out to people in need.

How does the Digital Engagement Hub work?

The hub is a technology solution that allows National Societies to communicate with affected people via the digital channels they already use, such as WhatsApp, Viber and email – effectively integrating between these different channels. This versatile tool leverages the channels to provide virtual assistance in areas such as cash assistance, shelter, food and protection support, customized to the needs of the National Society.

The Digital Engagement Hub allows the IFRC to establish two-way communication, to listen to and understand the individual needs of affected people, on a large scale. It also collects data from these interactions. By analysing this data and combining it with the IFRC's local knowledge of different populations, the IFRC can develop responsive and tailored solutions, ensuring aid efforts are targeted effectively to the needs of each region or community.

How the tool is being used in different countries

Over the past year, the IFRC is implementing the Digital Engagement Hub in more than 12 countries, with the list of awaiting National Societies continuing to grow. A particular strength is its versatility: its different components can be tailored to the needs of the National Society. Here are some examples of how the tool is being used in different countries:

HUNGARY: The hub has been used to set up a country-wide call centre and information system. This assists people receiving multi-purpose cash by providing a platform to ask for help, seek clarification and provide feedback on the process.

NETHERLANDS: The hub is being used to support refugees, migrants and Dutch families in different ways. It facilitates access to necessary services and aids Dutch families in getting breakfast vouchers for their school-aged children. These services are provided through call centre technology and WhatsApp functionality offered by the tool.

JORDAN: The hub serves as the central call centre for the National Society. It allows people in need to engage directly 24 hours a day through channels such as landlines and WhatsApp, enabling efficient communication and assistance.

AZERBAIJAN, GEORGIA AND ARMENIA: These three countries use the hub to monitor complaints and feedback from the people they support. It enables effective tracking and response to address issues raised by the populations.

MONGOLIA: The hub is intended to provide the means for volunteers and branches to communicate with each other. It uses a ticketing system based in Twilio Flex, enabling issues to be resolved and assisting decision-makers. The hub's unique bulk messaging system is also used to deliver early warning information to people who may be affected.

KENYA: The hub is being used to enhance the integration of the National Society Emergency Operation Centre and its community feedback toll-free line, with various digital tools through Twilio Flex.

COLOMBIA: The hub is envisioned to be used to facilitate direct engagement between the National Society and blood donors. This assists in better coordination and retention of blood donors, ultimately improving blood donation efforts.

LEBANON: The hub is being planned for implementation to enhance engagement with populations in need. Through WhatsApp and call centres, the tool will enable direct and more individualized approaches to better tailor and target services according to specific needs.

RWANDA: The team is scoping the ability to implement a call centre across the country for the National Society to directly engage with people in need.

In each of these cases, the Digital Engagement Hub is adapted to meet the unique requirements of the community it serves, demonstrating its flexibility and effectiveness across humanitarian contexts.

Key benefits of the Digital Engagement Hub

▲ **ABILITY TO SCALE** – Now fully operational, the Digital Engagement Hub can easily be expanded to other countries when they have a need during a response.

▲ **SPEED** – The hub can be set up quickly depending on the needs of the country. For example, the mass messaging service can be established in less than a day, which ensures the IFRC can reach people with important messages about how our response can be adapted.

▲ **COLLABORATION** – The IFRC is working closely with technology partners and the Norwegian Refugee Council, leveraging a tool that is already delivering results.

▲ **CONNECTION/INFORMATION** – This is one of the things people need most in an emergency – this ensures safety messages and requests for help are captured, while helping affected people feel they can get information and communicate their needs.

The Digital Engagement Hub's ability to collect and analyse data from these interactions sets it apart from traditional approaches. By combining the data with its local knowledge of different populations, the IFRC can develop responsive and tailored humanitarian solutions. This data-driven approach ensures that aid efforts are effectively targeted and aligned with the specific needs of each region or community.

This use of digital technology is transforming the way humanitarian organizations can provide assistance during crises. By embracing virtual contact centres and leveraging popular communication channels, the IFRC can rapidly scale up operations, overcome physical barriers, and extend its reach to a wider audience. This innovative approach enables it to provide crucial support to individuals and communities, even in situations where traditional aid delivery mechanisms are disrupted.

STRATEGIC GOALS AND TARGETS

Digital transformation at the IFRC intends to increase the speed, relevance, scale, quality and efficiency of humanitarian services, ultimately contributing to achieving these SDGs:

GOAL 1
No Poverty

GOAL 2
Zero Hunger

GOAL 3
Good Health and Well-being

GOAL 4
Quality Education

GOAL 5
Gender Equality

GOAL 6
Clean Water and Sanitation

GOAL 7
Affordable and Clean Energy

GOAL 8
Decent Work and Economic Growth

GOAL 9
Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure

GOAL 10
Reduced Inequality

GOAL 11
Sustainable Cities and Communities

GOAL 12
Responsible Consumption and Production

GOAL 13
Climate Action

GOAL 14
Life Below Water

GOAL 15
Life on Land

GOAL 16
Peace and Justice Strong Institutions

GOAL 17
Partnerships to achieve the Goal

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