

A decorative graphic on the left side of the cover features four red paper airplanes. They are arranged along a winding, dotted black line that starts from the bottom left and curves upwards and to the right, ending near the top right corner. Each airplane is shown in a 3D perspective, casting a soft shadow on the light blue background.

Capacity Building Fund Report 2023

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FOREWORD

Over the past 105 years the IFRC network has delivered humanitarian services, contributing to building the resilience of communities worldwide. Each of the 191 National Societies has taken a different journey, shaped by diverse contexts and varying conditions for development. In each of these journeys, the IFRC Secretariat has played a role in fostering their growth and development.

National Societies' development journeys are little known and understood. Since the inception of Red Cross Red Crescent National Societies, localization has been a critical factor in fulfilling their humanitarian missions. This approach involves creating a central body that legally represents the existence of a National Society, aligning its performance with the Movement's Fundamental Principles. These national bodies are responsible for developing a distributed network of regional, provincial and cantonal branches, and local committees, so that humanitarian action is as local as possible. The closer National Societies are to local communities, the greater the humanitarian impact they achieve.

However, National Societies must also face the complexities of sustaining well-functioning organizations at both central and local levels. This often requires organizational transformation.

The Capacity Building Fund (CBF) supports National Societies to develop their organizations. It invests in capacities that are key to strong local actors: human and financial resources; the network of local branches; digital capabilities; and the regulations, policies and leadership needed to guide a strong organization.

The IFRC has re-engineered the CBF, taking into consideration the dynamics of today's world and the most significant challenges faced by National Societies. At the same time, it strategized a pragmatic approach for



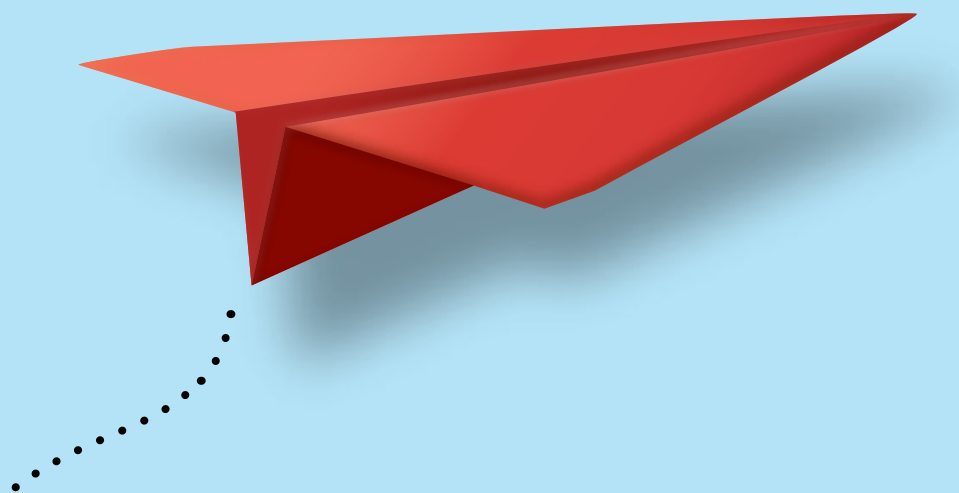
Jagan Chapagain
Secretary General, CEO
 International Federation of Red Cross
 and Red Crescent Societies

the development journey that National Societies had envisioned. This includes a more tailored and focused IFRC approach to accompany National Societies in their development. The CBF has also driven greater use of the IFRC's technical expertise in addressing the strengthening of National Societies, through a more comprehensive accompaniment in focused development projects or initiatives aiming at enhancing their development status.

In 2023 the CBF funded 50 new initiatives by National Societies around the world. In the last 2.5 years, the CBF has disbursed CHF 9.1 million in grants to 117 National Societies. We are starting to see the long-term results of this investment, captured in some of the cases featured in this report. The eventual impacts of these and other investments will contribute to IFRC's ambition of National Societies that are stronger and better able to accompany communities in building their resilience and responding to sudden humanitarian crisis.

The IFRC's goal for the CBF is to ensure that every National Society has access to adequate funding for their institutional strengthening. This will enable them to sustain humanitarian and resilience services at all times and act as the natural convener for local humanitarian action.

We are proud to present you with this second report of the re-energized CBF. This time, it offers more concrete examples of the positive effects of the CBF's investment in National Society Development, especially on the core areas of focus for the development of National Societies.



1

ABOUT THE CAPACITY BUILDING FUND (CBF)

Capacity Building Fund mission and operation

The Capacity Building Fund supports National Societies in their self-development, through both financial support and facilitation of technical support from peer National Societies and IFRC experts. Its ultimate goal is for National Societies to increase the scale, quality and sustainability of their humanitarian service. CBF offers:

- Core development grants for National Society organizational transformation.
- Special development initiatives such as organizational capacity assessment and certification, National Society leadership development, and more.
- Dedicated funds aimed at resolving institutional crises within National Societies.

CBF invests in seven critical focus areas of effective local humanitarian action. In order to facilitate communities and respond rapidly to humanitarian crises, National Societies need to be able to mobilise, train, equip and support volunteers (including young people) through organizational units (branches) located close to or within vulnerable communities.

Hence CBF supports

1

Branch development

2

Volunteering development

3

Youth engagement and development

For these services to be effective and accountable, **National Societies need coherent internal regulations** that define the roles and accountabilities of national and local organizational components, and for local and national leaderships to be equipped and supported to carry out their roles. They also need policies and procedures to safeguard and protect vulnerable people from harm, abuse and exploitation.

So CBF supports

4

Integrity, transparency and accountability

5

Protection, gender and inclusion



Robust systems enable more accountable, effective and efficient humanitarian work through rapid communication and data sharing, collation and analysis. They also present opportunities to develop new humanitarian services and responses in the future.

So CBF supports initiatives focused on

⋮
6

Systems development and digital transformation

Developing and maintaining capacity to respond to humanitarian crises requires a solid organizational financial base. This enables ongoing services to continue for as long as needed and allows investment in further organizational strengthening. Researching and developing diverse income streams is critical to more financially sustainable National Societies, as are transparent financial management systems.

So CBF supports

⋮
7

Financial sustainability

Finally, CBF provides support to National Societies in addressing serious institutional crises through its emergency organizational development facility.

The CBF functions as a pooled fund. National Societies apply to the fund through a simple online application form. Applications are made on an ongoing basis, and the CBF committee aims to make an allocation decision within three weeks of receipt of all relevant documentation. Unsuccessful applicants receive feedback and technical accompaniment to strengthen their applications. There is no limit to the number of applications a National Society may make to the CBF, assuming previous funding allocations have been successfully completed and reported. For more detail, see Annex 1: How does the CBF work?

Photo: Young volunteers from the Mongolian Red Cross Society doing publicity work on bikes.





Changes in CBF operation during 2023

During 2023, five key changes were made to CBF operation:

- The fund introduced two new focus areas for applications, to better reflect National Society needs. These were **Branch development** and **Protection, gender and inclusion**.
- The previous focus area of Youth and Volunteering was split into two distinct categories: **Volunteering development** and **Youth engagement and development**. This enables a more concentrated emphasis on each of these developmental priorities.
- **The standard application threshold was increased** from CHF 50,000 to CHF 100,000 to enable National Societies to plan larger initiatives and to optimize CBF operating costs.
- The maximum application amount for initiatives addressing aspects of **Protection, gender and inclusion** and/or **Youth engagement and development** (in multi-focus applications) was increased to CHF 150,000 to incentivise National Societies to undertake development work in these areas.
- Finally, the fund introduced **a new funding avenue** for National Society Development (NSD) special initiatives. These are only available in exceptional circumstances (see Annex 2: Financial overview).

Photo: A volunteer from the Zambia Red Cross Society raising awareness about the cholera outbreak.



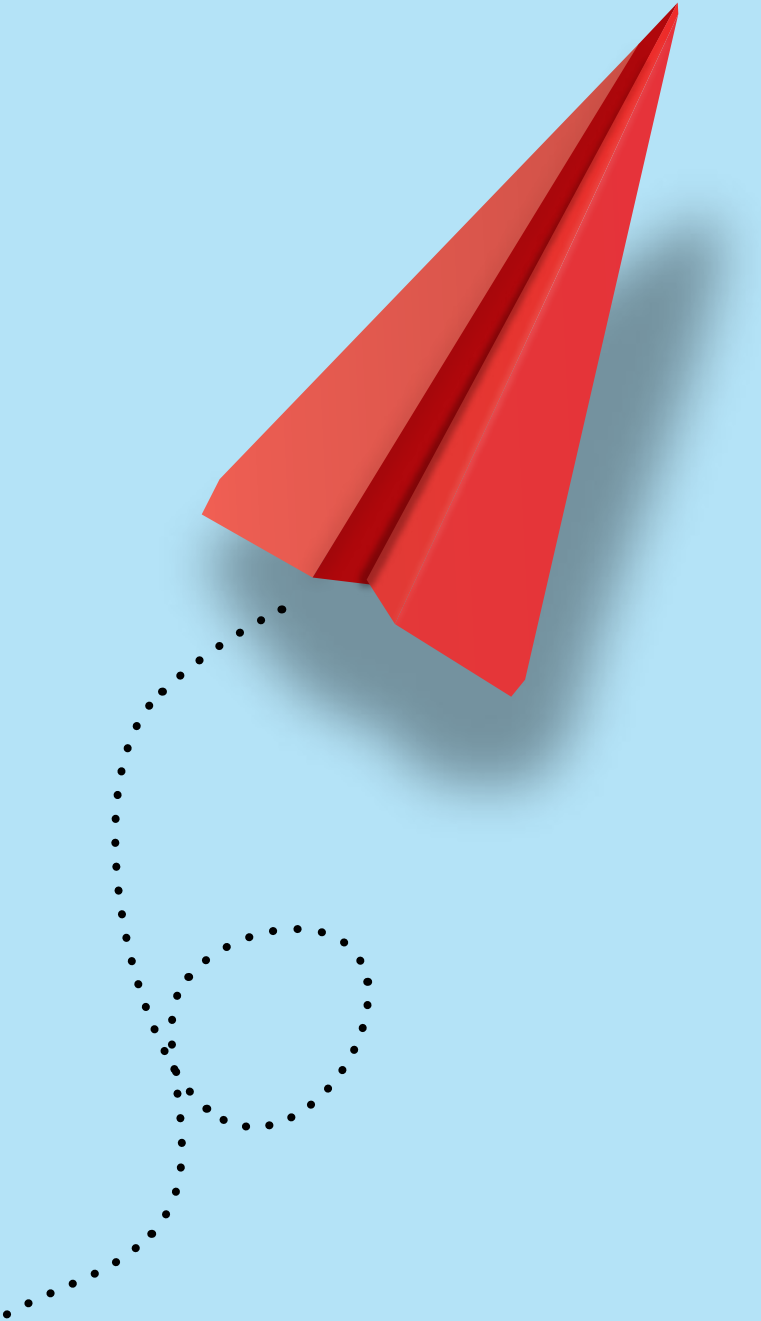
CBF within the wider IFRC National Society Development support ecosystem

The CBF is integrated into a wider ecosystem of support services for National Societies to assess needs, plan for future development, and lead and manage change. IFRC offers its own services within this ecosystem, as well as leading on overall National Society Development policy and coordinating the support of other Movement actors to National Societies.

The ecosystem offers National Societies:

- **High level support:** advice and encouragement to National Society leaderships to shape long-term organizational transformation as well as deal with sudden shocks and crises. **The flexible and light-touch nature of CBF funding** encourages leaderships to try new approaches. **The structure of CBF focus areas** guides leaderships to target key areas of National Society development.
- **Technical support:** expertise, learning and advice are facilitated from IFRC resources, but increasingly from peer National Societies operating in similar contexts. **CBF links National Societies to learning opportunities** within the network and encourages grantees to **share their experiences** of implementation with peer National Societies.
- **Financial support:** funding that is often not available to National Societies from their existing resources is made available for investment in long-term organizational transformation. **CBF provides flexible funding with the option of repeat investments**, contributing to longer term sustainable development. **CBF is available in all contexts**, complementing the National Society Investment Alliance (NSIA) that specialises in investment in high-risk humanitarian contexts.

Photo: A volunteer from the Bulgarian Red Cross conducting a First Aid training in a new space built with CBF support.



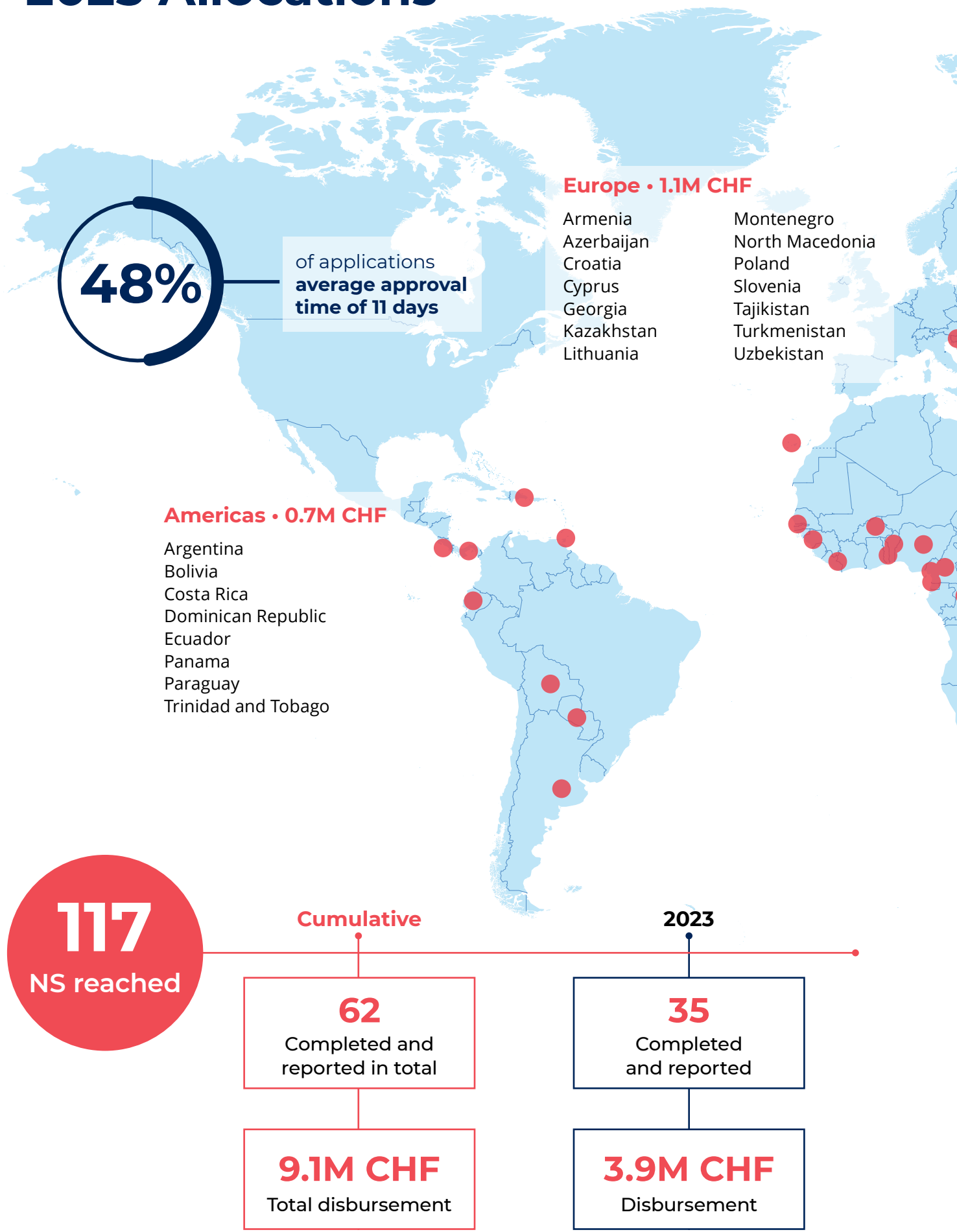
2

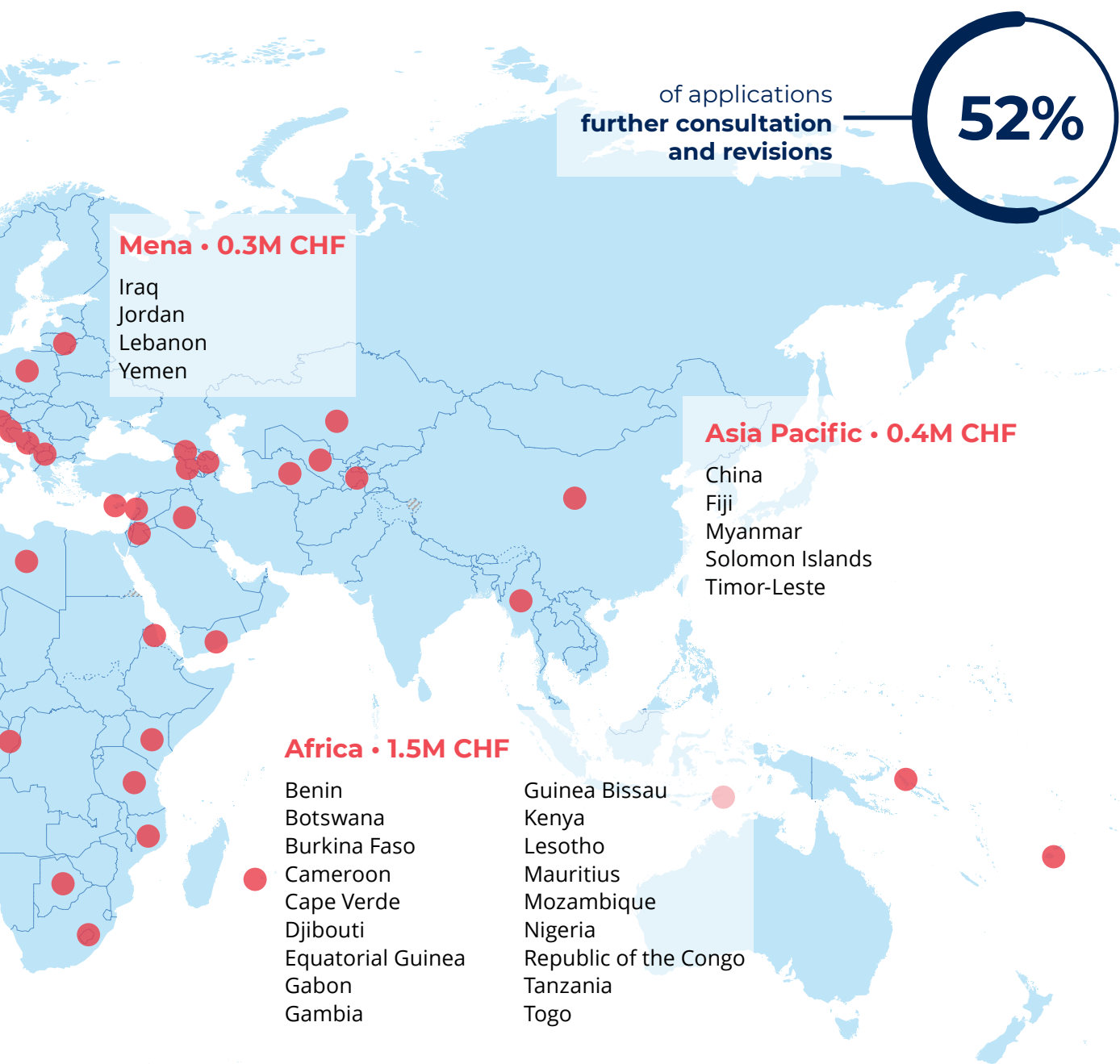
CBF INVESTMENTS IN 2023

The CBF offered a high rate of support to National Societies in 2023. The fund supported 50 new initiatives, which is comparable to the 45 initiatives supported in 2022 and shows the CBF providing a steady supply of funding. The new initiatives are from a wide diversity of countries across all regions of the globe.

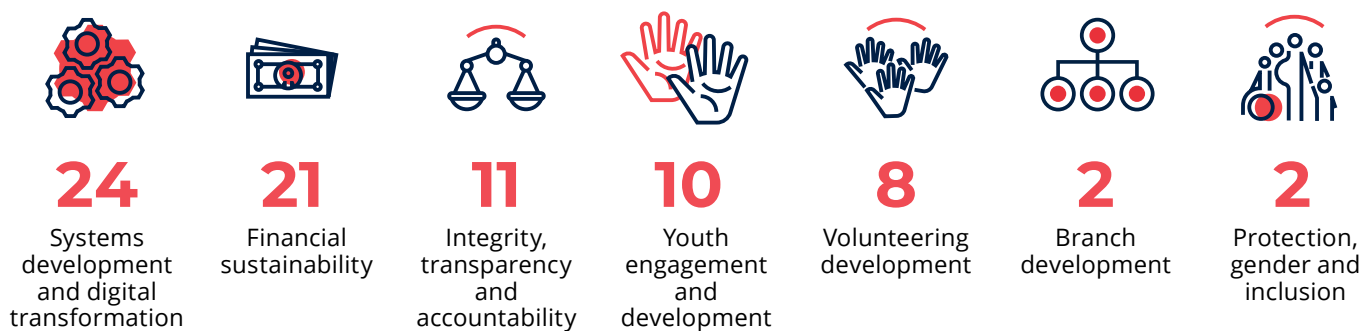
Cumulatively, CBF has disbursed CHF 9.1 million in grants since its relaunch in August 2021. 117 National Societies (61% of the total) have been supported by CBF at least once in that time. 62 initiatives have been completed and reported – including 35 in 2023.

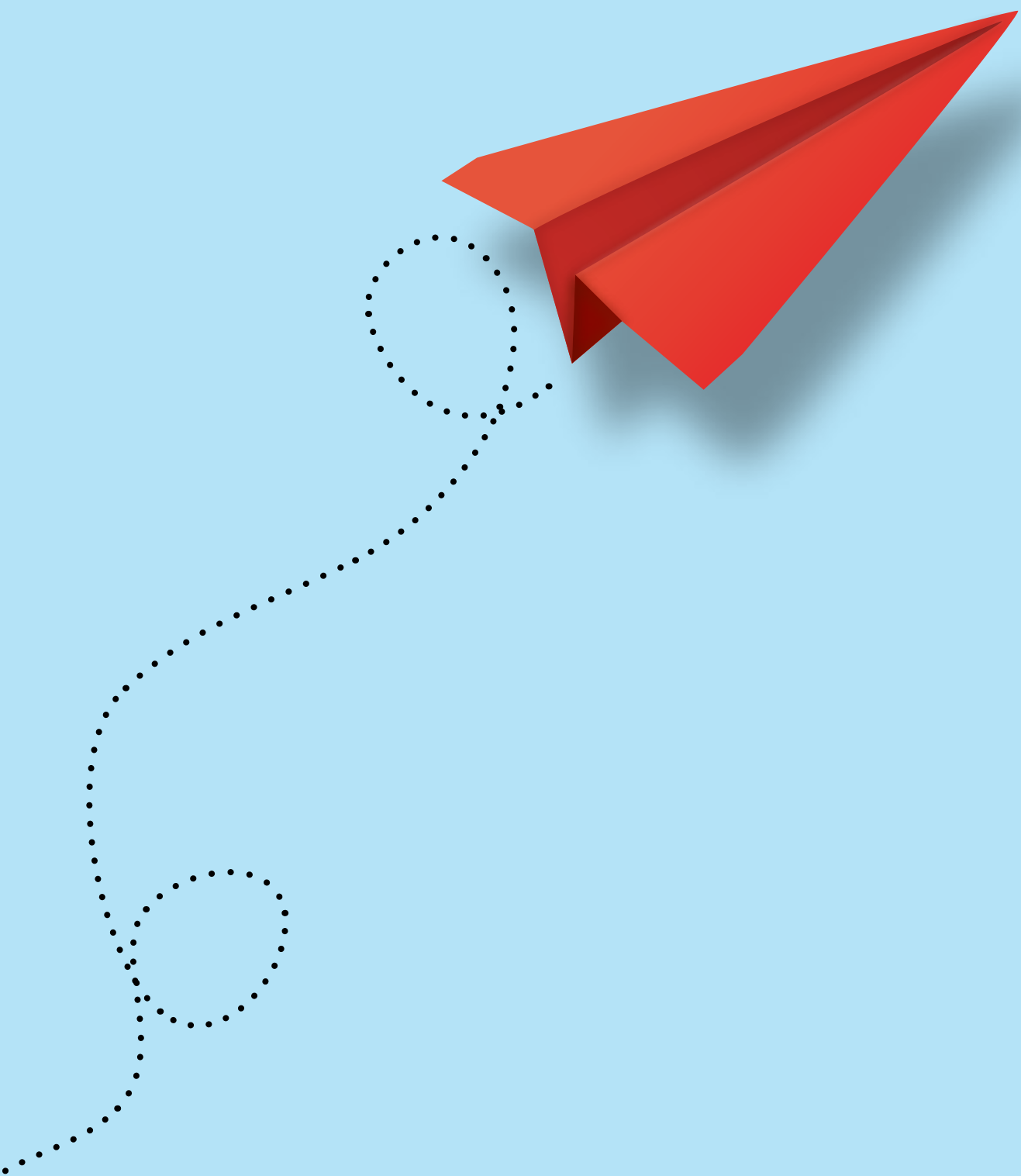
2023 Allocations





Seven development priorities addressed in 2023 (note one application may cover more than one category)





3

OUTCOMES OF CBF INVESTMENT 2022 / 2023

National Societies have reported positive outcomes across all seven of CBF's focus areas. In this section we highlight some of these outcomes.

How to read the data

Readers should note that a single CBF grant may address more than one of the seven focus areas. This reflects the strongly interdependent nature of the seven focus areas: strong internal procedures often facilitate financial sustainability, for instance. In this report, case studies are presented under their primary focus areas for ease of reading, but readers will see that in many cases the initiatives tackle multiple focus areas.

Within a given initiative, National Societies typically plan to achieve multiple outputs under a given focus area. As a result, numbers of outputs are often larger than numbers of initiatives.



Financial sustainability

National Societies that can finance their core capabilities themselves are ready to respond to humanitarian needs as they occur and have the financial controls in place to manage finances accountably. Such National Societies are also less dependent on external funding. **Over one-third (21) of the 2023 initiatives** supported by the CBF included a financial sustainability component.

What support did CBF grantees apply for to bolster financial sustainability?

<u>Planned output</u>	<u># of initiatives including this output</u>
Income generation	14
Strengthening fundraising capacities	6
Internal controls and risk management	6
Policy / strategy development	3
Market assessments to support income generation	3

“Our focus is to become a more financially sustainable National Society.

— Linė Skirpstė,
Head of Fundraising,
Lithuanian Red Cross Society

Boosting income through online fundraising and commercial first aid training



LITHUANIAN RED CROSS SOCIETY

Focus Financial sustainability; Systems development and digital transformation	Completed 2022 estimated June 2024	Funded 2022 2023	Amount CHF 38,205 CHF 102,570
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The Lithuanian Red Cross Society (LRCS) has used two consecutive CBF grants to develop its own webpage, including a donations page, and to strengthen its online fundraising.

The first CBF grant of CHF 38,205 in 2022, enabled LRCS to develop its own webpage. This had previously been hosted on the Swiss Red Cross webpage and their donations page was managed by a company in Belarus. The new website allows them to update campaigns rapidly and change content in response to emergencies.

The new LRCS website includes a Lithuania-hosted donations page, ensuring that donor information is kept in Lithuania in line with European data protection regulations. To boost donations, LRCS created landing pages that enable individuals to make donations at the end of the tax year. Due to a big rise in donations in 2022, in response to the Ukraine crisis, year-on-year giving can't be compared. However, 'our strong sense is that the website is a crucial support to our fundraising initiatives,' says Linė Skirpstė, Head of Fundraising at LRCS.

The website also enabled LRCS to boost income in other ways. For instance, the National Society expanded its first aid training programme by offering training to individuals. 'The website integrations created a new channel of income for LRCS,' says Skirpstė. In 2023, 1500 participants registered for first aid training through the website. This generated €36,000 of income, representing a 10% increase in first aid income. The website also allows LRCS to create combined campaigns with corporate partners. In 2023, an insurance company donated €10,000 for community first aid courses. 'We will repeat this in 2024,' says Skirpstė.

Building on these successes, LRCS obtained a second grant from the CBF in 2023. This time the aims were to improve LRCS's capacity to maintain regular donors, reactivate previous donors, and convert one-time donors into regular givers. LRCS also aims to strengthen its relationship with small and medium enterprises (SMEs).

'We won't know the exact financial outcomes of this investment until later in 2024,' says Skirpstė. 'But already we see that 30% of the 8000 donors in our database that had become inactive have been reactivated to make regular donations.' Reactivating a previous donor pays for itself after just 4 months of donation, compared to 8 months of donation for recruiting a new donor, so LRCS expects this investment to be successful. In addition, 16% of one-off donors have agreed to make regular donations, and 30% of SMEs have agreed to pay a membership fee.

'The challenge for us now is to be able to reinvest our income in maintaining and growing these donors,' says Skirpstė. That should provide LRCS with long-term financial stability.

Photo: The Lithuanian Red Cross Society's landing web page developed with CBF funding.



“**CBF investment in the scanners is contributing to ERC’s double bottom line, both in extending medical services to marginalized populations, but also contributing to the sustainability of the organization.**

— Marcela Cevallos Sánchez, General Manager of Medical Centres, Ecuadorian Red Cross

Opening access to health and generating sustainable income



ECUADORIAN RED CROSS

Focus Financial sustainability	Completed 2023 expected April 2024	Funded 2022 2023	Amount CHF 53,250 CHF 106,500
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The Ecuadorian Red Cross (ERC) has used two successive rounds of support from CBF to purchase portable scanners for its medical centres. The equipment serves two functions: enabling free healthcare services for vulnerable populations, while also providing income for the National Society through paid services.

The first round of funding, in 2022, enabled ERC to purchase five portable scanners for use in its medical centres. ERC's medical centres offer free services to populations who cannot afford standard market rates, extending health services in Ecuador to marginalised communities. They also contribute a surplus to ERC finances through their paying services, sustaining their own operation and contributing to the financial sustainability of the wider National Society.

In the period to 31st December 2023, the scanners carried out 3197 scans across ten medical centres. 90% of scans were provided for free, but often led to further laboratory tests or other procedures carried out by the medical centres. For people with limited resources, the scans enable early detection of diseases that can be prevented or treated, says Marcela Cevallos Sánchez, General Manager of ERC's Medical Centres. 'These services are finding resonance with people in communities, who begin to identify the Medical Center as a source of accessible medical services.' This, in its turn, promotes an enhanced image and value of the Red Cross within communities, fostering enduring trust over the long term.

The scanners are also proving to be a good investment. Gross income related to the scanners totalled CHF 33,000 (US\$36,375). Calculations based on initial usage suggest the scanners will generate a surplus equal to CBF's initial outlay after 3.5 years of their assumed 10-year lifespan.

This is exemplified by Nueva Aurora Red Cross Medical Center. In 2023 it generated an additional CHF 24,312 (US\$26,755) compared to its 2022 income, an increase of 13.95%. The income came from clinical laboratory tests, plus medical and specialty consultations: all arising from free ultrasound services using equipment purchased with CBF support. The additional resources made it possible to cover multiple costs, including rental of the space and salaries.

Building on this success, the ERC secured a second, larger grant from CBF in 2023. This will enable it to purchase an additional 11 ultrasound machines to support a further ten medical centres and the ERC Day Hospital.

Photo: A staff member from the Ecuadorian Red Cross medical center using a CBF-funded portable scanner to examine a patient.



Integrity, transparency and accountability

Transparent and accountable National Societies are trusted and accepted by communities and partners. They have in place the internal regulations and tools to ensure that their humanitarian work is carried out to the highest possible standards, and that National Society leaders make effective and transparent decisions.

Of the 50 initiatives supported by the CBF in 2023, **11 focused on Integrity, transparency and accountability.**

What support did CBF grantees apply for to bolster integrity, transparency and accountability?

<u>Planned output</u>	<u># of initiatives including this output</u>
Leadership development	4
Self-assessment and follow-up	4
Policy and / or strategy development	2
Statutes / Red Cross Law development	1
Strengthening internal coherence	1

“Peer learning is extremely important as we rebuild the National Society on the foundations of the new constitution.

— Mabvuto Ng’ambi,
Branch Development Manager,
Zambia Red Cross Society

A new constitution to support youth engagement

ZAMBIA RED CROSS SOCIETY



Focus

**Integrity, transparency and accountability;
Youth engagement and development**

Completed

July 2023

Funded

2022

Amount

CHF 53,250

The Zambia Red Cross Society (ZRCS) has revised its constitution with support from the CBF, in order to address governance challenges. The revisions have strengthened ZRCS's procedures and communications, and bolstered the role of young people as agents of change and innovation.

The ZRCS chose to revise its constitution because gaps and ambiguities in the previous constitution had led to governance and institutional challenges over the past decade. These had undermined ZRCS's financial basis and eroded the trust of key partners. Support from CBF and the Netherlands Red Cross enabled ZRCS to revise the constitution through a consultative participatory process.

This process was an opportunity for ZRCS to look more closely at the role young people played within the organization, and how the National Society could strengthen their engagement as leaders of change within ZRCS. This led to constitutional changes. The National Youth Commission President will be elected directly by youth members during the National Youth Council, for the first time in the National Society's history. ZRCS has also developed key policy and strategy documents relating to youth engagement, in line with the IFRC Youth Commission's recommendations for advancing meaningful youth engagement.

In conjunction with this, ZRCS strengthened its network of young people across Zambia by running a virtual seminar. This led to re-opening of some youth-led school groups and clubs, plus new links being developed at colleges and universities.

Engaging with young people is key because of the threats posed to Zambia by climate change. The country is currently facing its second national drought emergency in ten years. If the country is to prepare for more frequent climate-driven droughts, the country's young people will be essential. 'We need to see changes in mindsets, innovations and practices in agriculture for people to be able to prepare for the future,' says Mabvuto Ng'ambi, Branch Development Manager for the ZRCS.

CBF support also enabled ZRCS to disseminate key policies, and to induct provincial and branch leaders. Ng'ambi says the leadership induction process has strengthened how branches and national headquarters communicate, and encouraged branches to stay in touch with one another. 'The induction process enabled branch leaders to exchange ideas on key issues, such as volunteer recruitment and support,' he says. 'Whereas I used to receive calls asking for advice on issues regarding reporting, branch leaders are now contacting one another for support. This peer learning is extremely important as we rebuild the National Society on the foundations of the new constitution.'

Photo: A team of Zambia Red Cross Society volunteers visiting households to educate community members about cholera prevention.



“CRC wants to be recognised as the lead agency for disaster management in Congo. To achieve this, we need to be strong where it matters: at the local level.

— Bell Campourou, Programme Coordinator, Congolese Red Cross

Accelerating strategic thinking with support from a peer National Society



CONGOLESE RED CROSS

Focus Integrity, transparency and accountability	Completed August 2023	Funded 2023	Amount CHF 51,906
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The Congolese Red Cross (CRC) worked with the leader of a peer National Society, and their own staff and volunteers, to identify four priority areas for development.

The CRC (in Republic of Congo) has been developing rapidly in the last four years, spurred by the COVID-19 pandemic. 'Prior to the pandemic, the National Society did not have many activities, and we were unable to finance our secretariat,' says Bell Gampourou, programme coordinator of the CRC. 'During the pandemic we became more active, working with government and partners to respond to the needs of the population. As the pandemic came to an end, we were moving in the right direction – but we needed to keep that momentum going.'

CRC conducted the IFRC Organisational Capacity Assessment and Certification (OCAC) self-assessment in late 2022, identifying multiple areas for development. The CRC then applied to the CBF for support to deepen the analysis and identify next steps. CBF support enabled CRC to bring on board a specialist to help lead a series of national and branch workshops. These would disseminate the OCAC results and engage National Society leaders, staff and volunteers in both analysing the results and identifying potential ways forward.

The chosen expert was the Secretary General of the Burundi Red Cross. This was ideal: as the leader of a peer African National Society in a comparable context, which has undergone significant transformation over the past fifteen years, he had invaluable experience. 'With his support, we were able to engage in internal discussions, and engage with key partners, including IFRC, ICRC and the French Red Cross,' says Gampourou. These discussions led CRC to four priorities: re-activating local branches, humanitarian diplomacy, resource mobilisation, and internal and external coordination.

The CRC now wants to develop a five-year strategic plan to implement these priorities. 'We'll be asking the CBF to help us ensure that the plan represents the views of all National Society stakeholders and is owned by the entire National Society,' says Gampourou.

CRC's efforts to strengthen itself have already improved the way it is perceived by domestic and international partners. During the response to recent flooding in northern Congo, partners saw that CRC was involved in managing local early warning systems, and included it in their plans. 'This had not happened before,' says Gampourou. Similarly, the Minister of Social Affairs, Solidarity and Humanitarian Action decided to systematically involve the CRC in all the government's actions in response to the floods – even declaring that 'she would not go into the field without the National Society.'

'CRC wants to be recognised as the lead agency for disaster management in Congo,' says Gampourou. 'To achieve this, we need to be strong where it matters: at the local level.' That means responding to a range of needs, including those of refugees and vulnerable indigenous groups with no access to basic social services. They also aim to mitigate regular disease outbreaks through community-based surveillance.

Photo: Congolese Red Cross volunteers at the forefront of delivering community services.



Systems development and digital transformation

National Societies with strong systems collect and manage data rapidly and accountably, enabling them to work transparently, effectively and efficiently. Identifying and implementing appropriate technologies across branch networks requires investment and expertise that is often not available to National Societies.

Of the 50 initiatives supported by the CBF in 2023, **24 included elements of Systems development and digital transformation.**

What support did CBF grantees apply for to bolster systems development and digital transformation?

<u>Planned output</u>	<u># of initiatives including this output</u>
IT infrastructure and equipment	21
IT systems development	13
Staff and volunteer IT training	6
Website and application development	3
IT assessment	3
IT policy / strategy development	1

“At the end of this journey, we expect SARC to have transformed existing practices and be pursuing new ways to deliver humanitarian services supported by digital technologies, better data usage, and a unified reporting system.

— Dr Maaly Alddin Al-Ayoubi, Unit Manager for National Society Development and Strategic Planning, Syrian Arab Red Crescent

Mapping out a route to digital transformation

SYRIAN ARAB RED CRESCENT



Focus Systems development and digital transformation	Completed September 2023	Funded 2022	Amount CHF 52,735
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The Syrian Arab Red Crescent (SARC) has created a roadmap for digital transformation, after a detailed assessment of its branches. The aim is to create a unified and efficient digital system that supports its humanitarian services.

SARC branches initially conducted self-assessments using the IFRC Preparedness for Effective Response (PER) approach. This revealed that branches were at different stages of digital maturity. Furthermore, 'SARC did not have a common approach to strengthening IT,' says Dr Maaly Alddin Al-Ayoubi, Unit Manager for National Society Development and Strategic Planning in SARC.

A subsequent national-level scan, carried out through IFRC with the support of the Netherlands Red Cross, identified additional challenges. 'While we had the basic IT infrastructure in place, there were serious gaps in IT security, shared systems, and user and manager capacities, with branch use of IT challenged by a lack of connectivity and resources,' says Dr Al-Ayoubi.

To get a grip on these challenges, SARC used CBF funding to conduct digital maturity assessments in thirteen of its fourteen branches. The security situation in northwest Syria meant that it was not possible to complete the assessment in the Al-Hasakeh branch.

'Through the assessments, we learned that branches had very different technical needs,' says Dr Al-Ayoubi. Many did not have the resources to finance digital transformation, and lacked access to key national databases. 'We also understood that we did not have good procedures in place for reporting between branches and headquarters.'

The assessments enabled SARC to develop its Digital Transformation Roadmap (2024-2026). It includes developing a sustainability plan to address gaps in ICT resources, especially in branches, plus further follow-up with branches to understand how they are currently dealing with data and its protection. SARC will also deliver data literacy training sessions for staff and volunteers. It now plans to apply to CBF again, to continue its digital transformation.

Photo: Al Swaida branch of the Syrian Arab Red Crescent conducting a digital maturity assessment.



Branch development

National Societies with strong local structures ('branches') can access communities rapidly. These branches are themselves able to sustain their core activities: they have the necessary equipment and skills to deliver local programmes and activities, and to connect with National Society systems.

CBF added branch development as a dedicated focus area in June 2023, and since then 2 applications have been received for this category. However, of the 50 initiatives supported by the CBF in 2023, **10 included elements of Branch development.**

What support did CBF grantees apply for to bolster branch development?

<u>Planned output</u>	<u># of initiatives including this output</u>
<u>Branch volunteer and staff training</u>	5
<u>Branch capacity development</u>	3
<u>Branch self-assessment</u>	2
<u>Peer learning between branches</u>	1

The CBF grant is enabling us to update ourselves to our current context and to expand our field of action through identifying business opportunities. The quality assurance processes we have undergone with CBF support give us the opportunity to comply with national regulations and be more effective.

— Alexander Sanchez, General Director of Cauca branch, Colombian Red Cross

Creating new income streams to make branches more self-sustaining and effective



COLOMBIAN RED CROSS

Focus Integrity, transparency and accountability; Financial sustainability; Branch development	Completed 2023	Funded 2022	Amount CHF 53,250
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The Colombian Red Cross (CRC) identified potential income streams for two branches. Combined with improved processes, this should make the branches more financially sustainable.

CRC's branches are under financial pressure, due to the COVID-19 pandemic and increases in the consumer price index. Between 2019 and 2020, income reduced by 17%. If branches are not financially sustainable, they cannot respond to local crises and may even close.

In response, CRC used CBF funding to assess resource mobilization opportunities in two branches. These branches also designed and implemented tools to strengthen their quality management and accounting systems, in order to safeguard the new income streams. The CBF initiative complemented a three-year initiative funded by the National Society Investment Alliance, which strengthened CRC's national resource mobilization capacity.

One of the branches chosen was Cauca. It covers about 1.5 million people, offering basic health services and responding to humanitarian needs resulting from armed conflict, migration and natural disasters. 'The branch does not usually have additional funds to invest in its development,' says Alexander Sanchez, General Director of Cauca branch.

A consultant, hired for the local branch, identified a low-cost comprehensive health plan for families as most relevant for Cauca. Projections suggest it could generate US\$ 250,000 / year in net revenue after two years. The total branch expenditure in 2023 was US\$ 411,000. Cauca has begun setting up the business by developing marketing tools and updating its infrastructure.

Meanwhile, Magdalena branch identified an opportunity for an education institution. This will offer young people higher technical education in health, nursing and environmental health, and in Occupational Health and Safety. Working with CRC's national education team, the branch has adapted its facilities. It expects to launch the new courses in June 2024.

'People constantly approached the Red Cross to ask about higher level nursing training, but we did not know how to offer this,' says branch President Julia Benavides. Now Magdalena branch has identified the careers of most value for local people and created a roadmap to provide them. 'This will improve people's livelihoods through education in line with our humanitarian mission.'

Photo: Training workshop for volunteers from the Magdalena branch on "Young leaders for climate change in the Caribbean region".



Volunteering Development

National Societies with strong volunteering systems mobilise and support enough people as volunteers to deliver their development and humanitarian services. Volunteers are fulfilled through their engagement with National Societies: they make friends, learn new skills, and feel empowered to tackle humanitarian challenges in their own communities.

Of the 50 initiatives supported by the CBF in 2023, **8 included elements of volunteering development.**

What support did CBF grantees apply for to bolster volunteering development?

<u>Planned output</u>	<u># of initiatives including this output</u>
<u>Volunteering policy / strategy development</u>	4
<u>Training</u>	4
<u>Volunteer management systems strengthening</u>	1

“As a National Society in a middle-income country, it is difficult to access funding to make this type of investment when we already struggle to maintain our financial sustainability. The CBF is a crucial source of funding for us to be able to modernise our services and processes.

— Walter Fallas Bonilla, Secretary General, Costa Rican Red Cross

Strengthening volunteer management systems

COSTA RICAN RED CROSS



Focus	Completed	Funded	Amount
Volunteering development; Youth engagement and development; Systems development and digital transformation	March 2024	2023	CHF 106,500

Costa Rican Red Cross (CRRC) used CBF funding to develop software to strengthen its capacity to work with young people and volunteers.

CRRC is the main ambulance provider in Costa Rica. It provides free ambulance cover through 600 ambulances based in 134 locations. The ambulances are crewed by about 5000 volunteers and 1000 staff. Without volunteer paramedics and drivers, the ambulance service would not function. This means it is crucial that policies, strategies and tools to support volunteer engagement are up to date and meet volunteers' needs. CRRC needs effective volunteer management systems to maintain and grow its humanitarian services.

CRRC also runs a significant youth programme. This engages young people, often from disadvantaged backgrounds, in environmental and health activities. The youth programme is a source of volunteers for the National Society's social and environmental programmes.

Both services depend on effective management of people. However, CRRC's systems were paper-heavy and inefficient. Details of 5000 volunteers were held in spreadsheets. CRRC used manual mechanisms to track training and length of service, and to record volunteer engagement in different programmes and branches. Furthermore, CRRC needed a way to record parental permissions for the 800 minors in its Red Cross Youth programme.

CBF funding supported the development of a new system for volunteer and youth management. This included consultations with volunteers and young people about their needs. "We heard from volunteers about their frustration at not having their exact date of enrolment on the records, or not being able to demonstrate that they had completed a specific training that took place a while ago," says Walter Fallas Bonilla, secretary general of CRRC. "Ensuring that the new database helps us to meet these needs shows respect and a better service for volunteers, and will be a part of motivating them into the future." CRRC has also updated its volunteering and youth policies and strategies, and is implementing a second CBF grant to drive further digital transformation.

"Over time, our goal is to reduce our administrative costs and be more efficient through better use of digital tools, and invest these savings in humanitarian services and a better environment for volunteers," says Fallas Bonilla. "Digitalisation will also give us better data to support us in decision-making."

Photo: The Costa Rican Red Cross commemorating the 100th anniversary of the Red Cross Youth Program.



Youth engagement and development

National Societies with strong youth engagement attract, educate and engage tomorrow's generation of humanitarians and humanitarian leaders in their countries in a safe and enjoyable manner. Young people have their voices heard within the National Society.

Of the 50 initiatives supported by the CBF in 2023, **10 included elements of youth engagement and development.**

What support did CBF grantees apply for to bolster youth engagement and development?

<u>Planned output</u>	<u># of initiatives including this output</u>
Youth training	6
Development of new youth spaces / programmes	3
Youth events	3
Youth policy / engagement strategy development	1

In 2023, the Mongolian Red Cross Society developed their Youth engagement strategy, implemented a youth governance structure, and updated rules for the Youth Movement.

A comprehensive initiative to boost youth engagement



MONGOLIAN RED CROSS SOCIETY

Focus Volunteering development; Youth engagement and development	Completed 2023	Funded 2022	Amount CHF 53,250
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To bolster youth engagement, the Mongolian Red Cross Society (MRCS) created new roles, training, a support group, a Facebook group and merchandise as part of a wider Youth engagement strategy.

Young people are the main human resource driving humanitarian action at the grassroots level of the MRCS. There are 75,000 youth movement members nationally, 16,000 of whom participate in National Society activities each month. Typical youth activities include visiting elderly people in communities, first aid training and encouraging blood donation.

However, youth engagement in MRCS has fallen since the COVID-19 pandemic, linked to a decrease in funding from international partners. This means communities that previously benefited from MRCS services are no longer being reached. Therefore, MRCS prioritised developing an organizational environment that attracts young people to participate in and lead humanitarian activities, as well as develop their own skills and friendships.

An Organizational Capacity Assessment and Certification self-assessment found weaknesses in MRCS's youth engagement. There was no strategic plan for youth engagement, youth representation on National Society governance structures was limited to one person on the national board, and there were no dedicated funds for youth development.

With CBF support, MRCS assessed current youth engagement and consulted youth members. Survey results revealed gaps in regional branch staff's knowledge of how to engage with young people. MRCS also needed to update safety systems for youth volunteers and build better relationships with other local youth organizations.

Subsequently, MRCS implemented a new youth governance structure at regional and local levels, and updated rules and regulations for the youth movement. It created a youth engagement strategy by adapting the IFRC Youth Engagement Strategy toolkit for the Mongolian context. It also revised its child protection policy and other relevant regulations.

With these systems in place, MRCS has taken five steps to engage young people:

- Created a new role of Youth Movement Chair in each regional branch to support the voluntary work of children and young people. Initial results suggest that having these youth action champions has proved motivating to Youth Movement members;
- Created a peer support group for youth staff from regional branches to share ideas, experiences and resources;
- Created a youth-focused Facebook page to share information with young people;
- Developed a monthly e-training on communication with children and young people;
- Developed a youth Movement mascot and merchandise to strengthen the identity of youth volunteering in MRCS.

Photo: The Mongolian Red Cross Youth conducting a self-assessment using the Youth Engagement Strategy (YES) toolkit.



Protection, gender and inclusion

National Societies with robust Protection, gender and inclusion policies and procedures are safe spaces for vulnerable people, volunteers and staff.

CBF added Protection, gender and inclusion as a dedicated focus area in June 2023. Since then, 2 applications have been received for this category. However, of the 50 initiatives supported by the CBF in 2023, **4 included elements of Protection, gender and inclusion.**

What support did CBF grantees apply for to bolster protection, gender equality and inclusion?

<u>Planned output</u>	<u># of initiatives including this output</u>
PGI training	4
PGI systems development	3
PGI self-assessment	2
PGI policy / strategy development	2

“Our ongoing role as headquarters will be to encourage and support branches to be safe, and to respond well should there be inappropriate behaviour.

— Vladimir Vukelic, Head of Coordination and Development, Red Cross of The Republic of North Macedonia

Strengthening protection against sexual exploitation and abuse



RED CROSS OF THE REPUBLIC OF NORTH MACEDONIA

Focus	Completed	Funded	Amount
Protection, gender and inclusion; Integrity, transparency and accountability	November 2023	2023	CHF 53,250

The Red Cross of The Republic of North Macedonia (RCRNM) used CBF funding to improve its policies and procedures to prevent and address sexual abuse and exploitation. The National Society has rolled out the new systems to its branches, helping to create a safe and inclusive environment.

RCRNM's previous policies and procedures on sexual abuse and exploitation were weak: a point highlighted by its partners' due diligence processes. The weaknesses were particularly apparent in programming in aged care, home-based support and medical care in migrant camps. 'We were not sure what would happen if a case of sexual exploitation came to light,' says Vladimir Vukelic, Head of Coordination and Development at RCRNM. Policies were in place but were not known to staff or regularly implemented. 'We realised that this was an area that we needed to strengthen, or face serious reputational risk.'

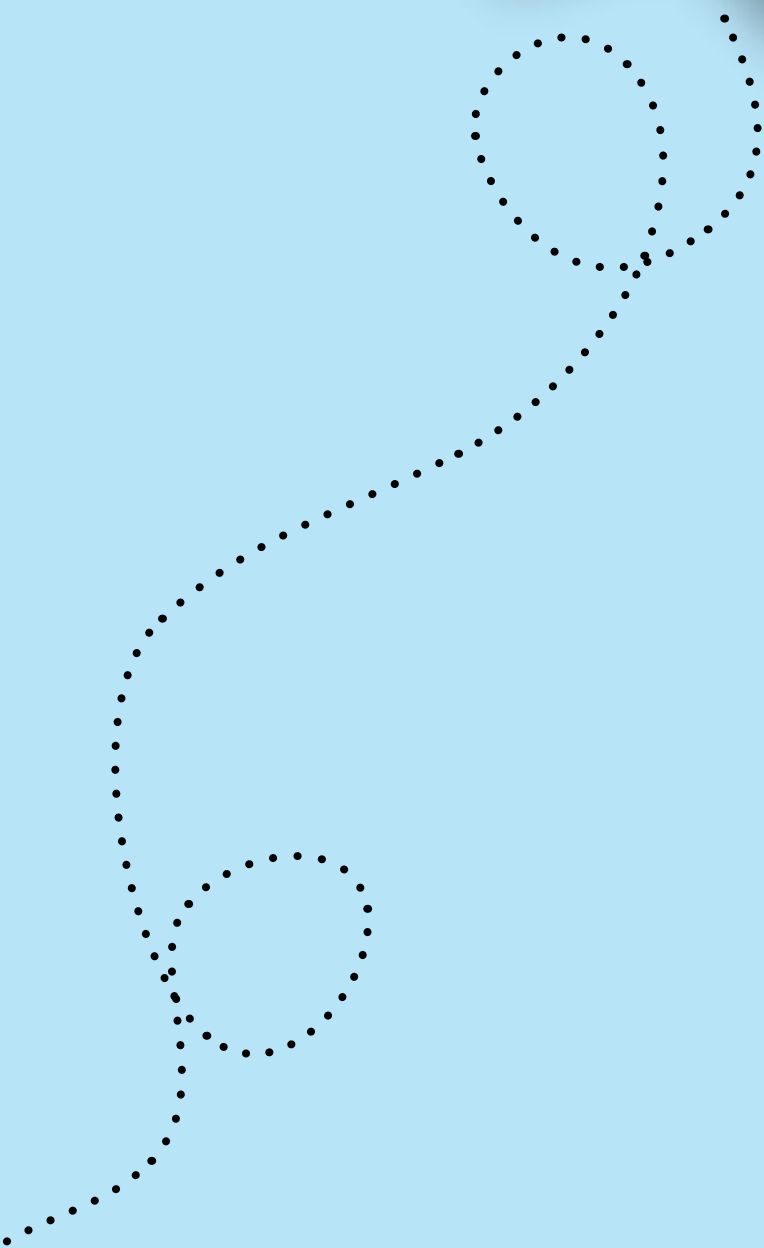
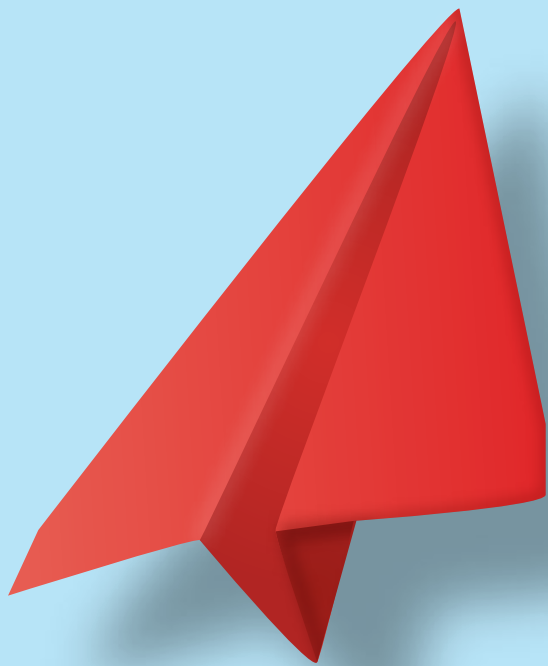
RCRNM consulted with the IFRC Protection, Gender and Inclusion team, and with the British Red Cross, when applying to the CBF. Vukelic says these discussions 'really opened our eyes and helped us understand the work we needed to do early on.' A self-assessment tool was also 'very user-friendly'.

With CBF support, RCRNM conducted self-assessments in 10 of its 33 branches. It then developed and adopted policies on 'prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse', 'child safeguarding', 'whistleblower protection' and 'protection against workplace harassment and discrimination'. CBF support also enabled RCRNM to develop procedures, systems, communications, training support and manuals to implement the policies.

It was critical to go beyond words on paper and embed the new policies in branches, says Vukelic. 'What really got branch leaders' attention was the realisation that, in an emergency when we are recruiting large numbers of volunteers with little time for induction, we faced large reputational risks if we did not have good procedures in place.' To boost local implementation of the policies, RCRNM worked with a national partner to identify local organizations with expertise in sexual abuse and exploitation. This ensured that each branch knows what to do and has access to local support if a problem occurs.

The RCRNM is now in the process of setting up an integrity hotline. Once online, this will enable members to report any issues – and enable headquarters to monitor the new policies' results and adjust as necessary.

Photo: The Red Cross of The Republic of North Macedonia conducting a PGI workshop with operational team coordinators.



4

THE CBF SUPPORTS LEARNING AMONGST NATIONAL SOCIETIES

The CBF encourages National Societies to include a focus on self-learning and peer sharing in their development initiatives. This creates added value by removing silos and enabling cross-border learning and economies of scale. CBF's work on learning is both supported by, and supportive of, ongoing National Society development learning initiatives.



Enabling digital transformation by peer-to-peer learning

Shared learning in the South Caucasus Region to enable digital transformation

Driven by a shared vision, the **Armenia**, **Georgia** and **Azerbaijan** National Societies applied for CBF funding to establish digital community feedback mechanisms. The three projects were approved in 2023 and are ongoing. All three National Societies are applying a common and interoperable technology standard across the South Caucasus region in line with the IFRC's digital engagement hub (DEH) concept.

The DEH team undertook a scoping and design process in each country to learn how each National Society collected feedback and complaints, and how best to implement DEH. The team took best practices from each country and used them to inform the product for all three countries. For example, a 'sensitive case' functionality that was first scoped by one of the National Societies was later included in the systems of the other two National Societies.

Inspiring digital transformation in the Americas

The **Costa Rican Red Cross** (CRRC) shared their learnings from an ongoing digital transformation initiative. CRRC first used CBF funding to design a roadmap for digital transformation. Following this, CRRC improved its data security and accountability standards, modernised its infrastructure and connectivity, and improved its institutional telephone exchange. These changes have significantly improved the running of the CRRC.

During a regional workshop held in Panamá in January 2024, CRRC led sessions explaining how the CBF enabled them to kick off their digital transformation roadmap. This highlighted the value of structured transformation roadmaps to other National Societies: CRRC emphasised the improvements to their fundraising and other essential processes due to the digital transformation. CRRC is hopeful that their willingness to share what they had learned will inspire innovation among other National Societies.

Photo: Costa Rican Red Cross volunteers in a participatory session to design the Youth strategy of the National Society.



Bringing together National Societies globally to share learning

Good practices are increasingly being shared widely among IFRC National Societies, including insights derived from CBF initiatives.

To foster collaboration and peer to peer learning, the IFRC has introduced digital **Communities of Practice** (CoP) for National Societies. The forums support National Societies to exchange knowledge, co-create innovative solutions, and identify peer expertise within the IFRC network.

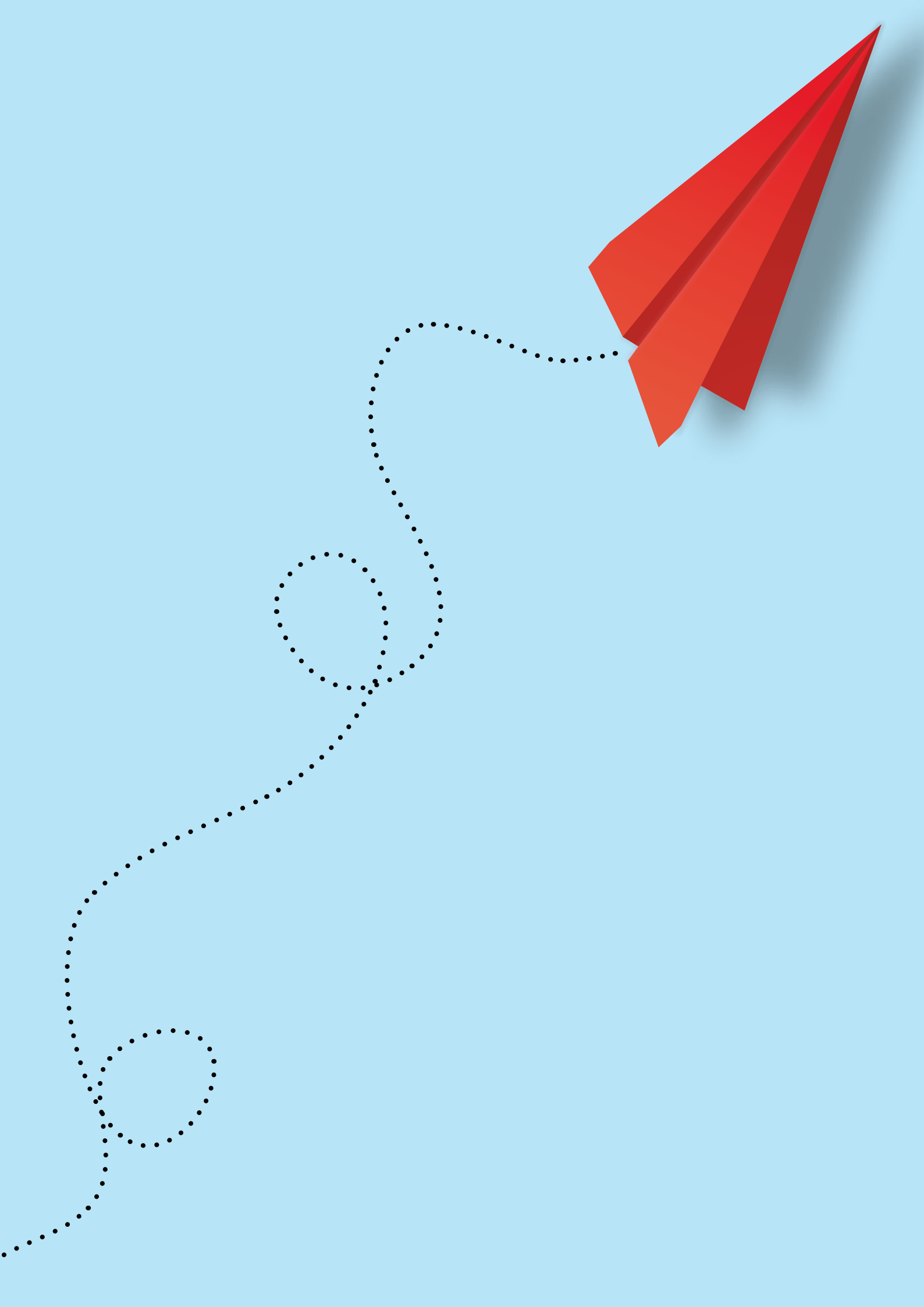
Each CoP focuses on a specific thematic. Five CoPs are aligned with the core focus areas of the CBF: Finance Development Competency Network, Resource Mobilization, Digital Transformation, Volunteering and Branch Development. One other community that aligns with CBF focus area – Integrity strengthening – is currently in development.

The CoPs already have over 2200 active members from 140 National Societies, many of which have either completed or are implementing CBF-funded initiatives. Engagement is rising steadily.

The new CoP forums provide a robust framework for fostering peer-to-peer learning. They are also laying the groundwork for meaningful connections and collaborations across borders. In this way, good practices, insights and technical resources gleaned from CBF initiatives can be exchanged among National Societies – ultimately empowering the global Red Cross Red Crescent community.

For instance, the **Ukrainian Red Cross Society** described their own financial development in March 2024 in the IFRC financial sustainability CoP. The National Society highlighted the importance of change management and leadership commitment to achieving its goals. It also explained the important links between financial development and other capacities such as resource mobilisation (including the development of social enterprises for income generation) and branch development. This session was attended by 89 practitioners in finance, resource mobilisation and national society development from 22 National Societies, IFRC and ICRC.

Photo: Awarding volunteers of the Ukrainian Red Cross Society on the International Volunteer Day, December 2023.



5

THE CBF GOING FORWARD

IFRC has already significantly reformed CBF's operations in 2023. The changes were driven by analyses of emerging results from completed and ongoing initiatives in the last three years. The aim was to capitalise on CBF's unique advantages and enhance its value proposition. CBF has doubled the standard funding threshold, raised the maximum funding level, and established a new funding pipeline for special NSD initiatives. Thanks to these reforms, the fund disbursed an additional CHF 3 million in the second half of 2023 alone.

Two further reforms are underway:

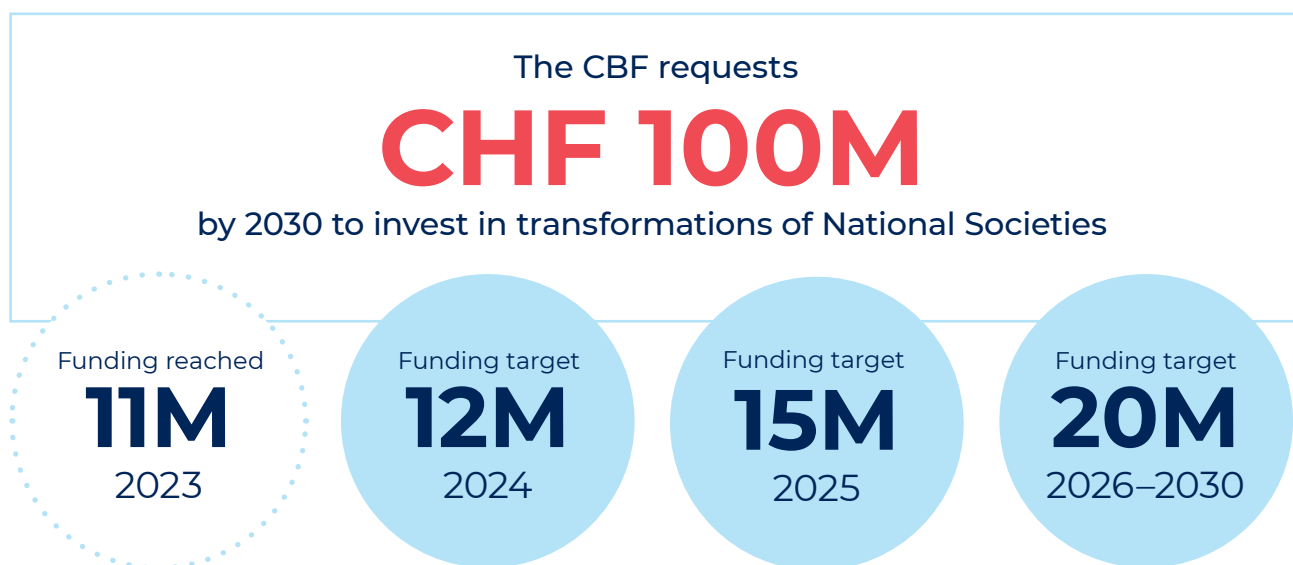
First, in 2024, CBF will roll out **a new application system**. This will further assist National Societies in crafting robust proposals, grounded in well-defined objectives, baselines, and target indicators. The ability to effectively capture and demonstrate these impacts will be crucial in sustaining donor engagement and attracting new sources of support.

Second, a **CBF Advisory Council** will be established. It will provide strategic advice, helping to further align CBF with the broader localization agenda. In addition, it will analyse the prevailing trends influencing the IFRC network's work and offer insights to enhance operational effectiveness and foster continuous improvement. The Council will comprise IFRC, National Society and external stakeholders. It will be co-chaired by the IFRC Under Secretary General for National Society Development and Operations Coordination and the IFRC Under Secretary General for Global Relations, Humanitarian Diplomacy, and Digitalization.

To maximize the impact of achievements and reforms, the CBF will require continuous donor support. The **IFRC** has allocated significant funds to CBF as seed funding to enhance support for National Societies. Additional substantive contributions have been made by **the Netherlands Red Cross**.

The CBF now has longer-term aims. The fund has experienced growing demand for its support from National Societies over the last three years. Inspired by this demand and the success of its initiatives thus far, the CBF now sets its sights on a loftier ambition: **an annual funding target of CHF 20 million by 2026**.

We understand that such an aspiration cannot be achieved alone. It requires the support and collaborative efforts of all interested partners. Your support will contribute to a world where every National Society has the resources it needs to bolster its services for local communities. Together, let's make a tangible difference for communities worldwide and turn our collective vision into action.



ANNEX 1

HOW DOES THE CBF WORK?

The Capacity Building Fund has been designed on two principles: **agility of the fund** and **simplicity of processes**. National Societies submit funding requests through a dedicated online platform. Requests are reviewed “as received” by a three-person committee, which invites relevant IFRC field focal points and subject matter experts to provide technical input.

The CBF’s flexibility has been maximised. There is no fixed call for proposals: National Societies can apply 24/7. Furthermore, the number of applications made by a given National Society per year is unlimited, and the implementation timeframe is decided by the applicant National Society. The only requirement is to demonstrate achieved results from the previous allocation before applying for the next grant.

To be considered for funding, a proposed initiative must match **six indicators**:

1. Reflect one or more of the seven development priorities within the CBF criteria.
2. Demonstrate successful completion of, and reporting on, previous CBF allocations.
3. Not be a duplication of an initiative supported by other funds or by other partners.
4. Aim at results that contribute to sustainable development of the National Society.
5. Present a technically sound development initiative, reflecting best practices.
6. Demonstrate that the proposal is viable and includes measures to ensure its success.

In a case where a proposal does not explicitly show its relevance for the NSD priorities of that National Society, or fails in the first attempt to meet the simple requirement criteria, the CBF office and technical teams step in. They provide the necessary technical accompaniment to help the National Society to improve the application, so that it will address their priorities in the most efficient way.

The regular threshold of funding requests was doubled in June 2023 and is now up to **CHF 100,000** (approximately US\$114,000 / €105,000) per application. National Societies can address one or more of the seven CBF focus areas in their application.

The CBF has also introduced **an exceptional threshold of up to CHF 150,000**. This is only available to multi-focus projects that include a focus on **Protection, gender and inclusion** (PGI) and/or **Youth engagement and development** (YED). The aim is to encourage investments in these two priority areas. To qualify for this higher funding rate, such initiatives should present the PGI and/or YED element as part of a comprehensive development plan.

Due to its design and the focus on agility and simplicity, the CBF provides grants that are limited in size. However, the use of such grants by National Societies is meant to support the strategic vision and commitment to transform that National Society. They are intended to ignite and support National Societies’ development efforts in the longer term.

In addition, the CBF encourages National Societies to work together when addressing similar issues. This enables proposals that incorporate economies of scale, synergies and collective learning. However, each National Society submits an individual proposal to CBF.

The IFRC will continue listening to National Societies to receive feedback and guidance on the relevance of the CBF to their development needs. It will also adjust the funding mechanism and its business processes to better match such expressed needs.

ANNEX 2

FINANCIAL OVERVIEW

Note: A National Society can apply unlimited times if they complete and report on the previous grant before reapplying. Only one application at a time is allowed.

	2021	2022	2023
INCOME IN CHF			
IFRC	14,400,000		
Netherlands Red Cross		786,446	
Netherlands Red Cross (for Digital Transformation)		524,736	211,364
Grand Total Income		15,922,547	

ALLOCATIONS AND EXPENSES IN CHF			
Standard grants			
Argentina		54,208	53,250
Armenia		53,250	106,323
Azerbaijan			53,093
Belize		53,227	
Benin	32,140		53,250
Bolivia	53,250		106,220
Botswana		41,858	159,750
Botswana		35,341	
Bulgaria		53,101	
Burkina Faso			53,250
Burundi		53,248	
Cameroon			53,250
Cape Verde			53,033
China			106,500
Colombia		53,250	
Costa Rica		53,250	106,500
Croatia			106,500
Cyprus		52,132	46,995
Democratic Republic of the Congo		53,250	
Djibouti	50,055		50,588
Dominican Republic		53,250	87,330
Ecuador		53,250	106,500
El Salvador	53,250		
Equatorial Guinea			83,603
Estonia		53,250	

ALLOCATIONS AND EXPENSES IN CHF			
Fiji			18,105
Gabon			53,258
Gambia			106,500
Georgia			68,265
Guatemala	106,500	106,500	
Guinea Bissau			53,330
Honduras		53,250	
Iraq			32,064
Jordan			106,500
Jamaica		53,250	
Kazakhstan			53,250
Kenya		79,979	106,500
Kenya			102,906
Lebanon		53,250	106,500
Lesotho		53,250	106,490
Liberia		53,250	
Libya		106,500	
Lithuania		38,205	102,570
Madagascar	52,908		
Malawi		53,250	25,234
Malaysia		53,250	
Mali		53,092	
Mauritius			106,500
Mongolia		53,250	
Montenegro			106,500
Mozambique			53,250
Myanmar			158,739
Namibia		69,607	
Nicaragua	53,250		
Niger		106,500	
Nigeria			106,500
North Macedonia			52,718
Palestine	97,554		
Panama		53,172	53,248
Paraguay		53,250	53,250
Poland			106,469
Portugal	53,250		
Republic of the Congo			51,906
Russia	53,250		
Rwanda		53,250	

ALLOCATIONS AND EXPENSES IN CHF			
Saint Vincent & Grenadines		53,250	
Serbia	49,769		
Slovenia			106,500
Solomon Islands			68,871
South Africa		53,250	
South Sudan		106,500	
Sri Lanka		106,473	
Sudan		53,250	
Switzerland		48,032	
Syria		52,735	
Tajikistan			53,250
Tanzania			64,269
Timor Leste			89,998
Togo	42,600		32,738
Trinidad and Tobago		53,250	106,500
Turkmenistan			53,250
Uganda		53,186	
Ukraine		106,500	
Uruguay		53,250	
Uzbekistan			53,250
Yemen			53,250
Zambia		53,250	
Zimbabwe		53,250	
Total NS Grant Allocations*	697,776	2,708,096	3,958,363
Adjustments and unspent balance returns			-25,903
Bulk allocation for NSs digital maturity**	1,500,000		
Grants for NS institutional crisis intervention		53,250	188,506
NSD Special Initiatives***			1,852,263
CBF administration costs	6,816	8,389	55,071
Grand total allocations and expenses per year	2,204,592	2,769,735	6,028,300
Cumulative grand total allocations and expenses			11,002,627
Balance by end Dec 2023			4,919,919

* National Society grant amount is made of National Society allocation plus IFRC indirect cost recoveries at 6.5 percent.

** List of 67 NS supported by bulk allocation: Afghanistan, Algeria, Argentina, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Belize, Plurinational State of Bolivia, Chad, Chile, Comoros, Congo, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Djibouti, Dominica, Egypt, the Kingdom of Eswatini, Ethiopia, Gambia, Georgia, Grenada, Guinea-Bissau, Haiti, Honduras, Islamic Republic of Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kiribati, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Lebanon, Lesotho, Libya, Madagascar, Malaysia, Mexico, Federated States of Micronesia, Mongolia, Myanmar, Nicaragua, Niger, Nigeria, Palau, State of Palestine, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, Qatar, Saint Lucia, Samoa, Solomon Islands, South Sudan, Sudan, Syrian Arab Republic, Tajikistan, United Republic of Tanzania, Timor-Leste, Togo, Tonga, Trinidad and Tobago, Tuvalu, Uruguay, Vanuatu, Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Yemen, Zimbabwe.

***New funding avenue introduced in June 2023. Supported initiatives included: NS certification, NS youth engagement, NS leadership development, new ways of working, allocation towards NSIA.

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.



The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC)

is the world's largest humanitarian network, with 191 National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and around 15 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.