

IFRC Secretariat Strategic Plan – *An agenda for renewal*

8 June 2020

Introduction

In December 2019, the General Assembly of the IFRC approved the Strategy 2030 as the 10-year strategy for the IFRC network of National Societies. Since the adoption of the Strategy 2030 the world has been facing a global shock with the outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic. While the full impact of this outbreak is still unfolding and the relevance of our network is gaining renewed recognition, it is becoming increasingly clear that National Societies and the IFRC Secretariat need to adjust their business models and adapt to new ways of working.

This document articulates how the IFRC Secretariat sees its role in implementation of Strategy 2030. It is presented to the Governing Board to deliberate upon and will form the direction for the IFRC Secretariat's Plan and Budget.

Strategy 2030: A call for change

Global Humanitarian Context

The changes of the 21st century are complex and inter-related. There are far greater leaps in education, technology, volatility, connectivity, and networks than ever before. The impacts of the climate and environmental crises, driving more severe disasters and increased vulnerability, will remain the long-lasting issue of concern, and a reality for millions of people around the world. These threats combined with increased number of protracted crises and contexts of high fragility contribute to driving migration and displacement, deepen conditions of distress in societies, at a time when compassion for people on the move is at an all-time low.

The COVID-19 crisis reflects the increasingly complex and inter-related world we live in today. The social and economic impact caused by the COVID-19 pandemic worldwide has and will become a significant threat that will increase the number of people living in poverty, and lead to greater exclusion, marginalization and stigma. We have witnessed how vulnerable the gains made in recent years around immunization and vaccination are, as millions of children are at risk of missing their vaccinations and the achievement of universal health care has become more challenging.

There are dramatic shifts in systemic power, with institutions losing trust, movements driving their own social change, and demands from marginalised people to be seen, heard, and included, are growing.

New approaches are needed to respond and adapt to these global changes, and while effectiveness of the global humanitarian system is being questioned, there is a growing push for more responsibility and resources to be provided to local or national actors.

Context within the IFRC network

National Societies are uniquely placed to respond to these challenges. Through their volunteer networks, they are permanently present in communities, and this grassroots presence enables National Societies to act quickly and in ways that are appropriate to the local context. Volunteers' frontline experience with current shocks gives us unique insights into vulnerabilities that need to be addressed

to counter longer-term trends in risk. The strength of the National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies is also derived from their auxiliary status with their governments, as well in the resources, expertise and solidarity found in the global Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement.

The IFRC network provides a platform for intergenerational engagement, enriched by the experience of adults as well by the energy and dynamism of youth for greater innovation and behaviour change. The IFRC Secretariat plays an important role in this. Without its coordination, commitment to National Societies, and capacity to convene, the network has been able to respond successfully to the major disasters that have defined the past decade and in the ongoing response to COVID-19 pandemic.

However, this is not to say that the network has not faced its own challenges. Several reviews have identified:

- The fragmentation of the IFRC Secretariat, between regions, between regions and Geneva, and within Geneva
- The lack of internal clarity on roles and responsibilities within the network
- The increasing number of National Societies operating bilaterally, not seeking to collaborate with the IFRC Secretariat to coordinate their work
- The IFRC not working optimally as a single, global organisation, but being more akin to a patchwork of donor agendas
- A trust deficit between the IFRC Secretariat and its members.

Strategy 2030's vision for the IFRC

Strategy 2030 puts forward a vision of a global IFRC network that brings people together for the good of humanity and is fit for this purpose. It is about changing not just what we do, but how we do it, so that we are even better able to save lives, accompany people and support their resilience. Strategy 2030 seeks to inspire and guide National Societies.

IFRC Secretariat's Mission

The mission of the IFRC Secretariat is to coordinate and support the work of the member National Societies, driving the transformations that are essential for the IFRC network to fulfill its potential as a global humanitarian actor - engaged, accountable and trusted – and deliver on an agreed agenda.

What we will do to implement Strategy 2030?

In its Strategy 2030 the IFRC network has agreed to focus its work on **five global challenges**. They represent the most pressing existing and emerging risks that confront our network and will require committed local action to manage them and drive positive global change. They are presented as distinct areas but in reality, they are highly interconnected:

1. Climate and environmental crises
2. Evolving crises and disasters
3. Growing gaps in health and well-being
4. Migration and Identity
5. Values, power, and inclusion.

This calls for an **Agenda for renewal** which better positions the IFRC Secretariat for more effective global coordination and leadership to ensure that the IFRC network addresses these challenges, and also the areas for transformation reflected in the Strategy 2030 working as an organisation that is:

1. **Focused on five strategic priorities.** The IFRC is recognized as a community-based, cost-effective, and innovative leader in addressing the five global challenges. It is capable of leveraging its strong

and diverse network of volunteers of all ages to support “first mile” communities and people affected before, during and after crises and shocks.

2. **Engaged, with renewed influence, innovative and digitally transformed.** The IFRC will be actively engaged in partnerships to define and re-shape humanitarian and development agendas, further expand in terms of legislative advocacy and will be able to rapidly induct new technologies and innovations to the mainstream of our organisation.
3. **Accountable, with agile and efficient management.** The IFRC is recognized as an accountable organization based on Red Cross and Red Crescent Fundamental Principles, and it operates with transparency. Underpinning our accountability will be a **new deal for a renewed partnership with National Societies**. This new deal recognizes the strength of a coordinated Federation-wide approach and the need for a new resourcing architecture of the IFRC Secretariat.
4. **Trusted, owned and valued by the membership.** The IFRC is positioned as a principled and trusted network which is owned and supported by its membership, and it strives for mutually respectful cooperation and coordination within the Red Cross Red Crescent Movement, to function better together as a global network of local actors, and as the partner of choice for community resilience.



An agenda for renewal for the IFRC Secretariat

The agenda outlined below represents **a renewal of the IFRC Secretariat**, and substantial efforts will be required to build a consensus around these, and many other, issues that will emerge from the membership to collectively build a strong foundation for its future.

The IFRC Secretariat’s agenda for renewal will focus to deliver on the **5 strategic priorities** addressing the global challenges identified in the Strategy 2030. The IFRC Secretariat will further define its role along **three enabling approaches** that describe how the renewal and transformations will happen.

Focusing on five strategic priorities

The IFRC Secretariat will increase the share of consistent and reliable Red Cross Red Crescent action in support of most vulnerable people and communities. IFRC has the leadership, institutional capacities,

tools, resources and mechanism to help uplift the humanitarian and development work of the National Societies and is recognized as an integral actor in building community safety and resilience.

Strategic priority 1: Climate and environmental crises

The focus will be on reducing the current and future humanitarian impacts of climate and environmental crises and supporting people to adapt and thrive in the face of it. This means climate adaptation and mitigation are high on our collective agenda, integrating climate risk management across all programmes, operations and advocacy.

In addition to scaling up climate-smart disaster risk reduction, increased focus will be placed on reducing health impacts, addressing climate displacement, enabling climate-resilient livelihoods and human settlements, with a strong focus on urban contexts.. It also embraces early action models, scientific forecasts, innovation, and financing that can improve our response. Reducing IFRC's carbon footprint will be prioritized as a cross-cutting consideration, together with adopting better environmental management and increasing nature-based solutions wherever it is effective.

Strategic priority 2: Evolving crises and disasters

The focus will be on reinforcing preparedness and readiness to respond to shocks, enhancing community risk reduction and resilience. This will include early warning, early action and anticipation to mitigate risks from multi-hazards affecting the lives, the livelihoods, homes and living conditions of vulnerable communities and the most disadvantaged and hard to reach. This means integrating further urban risks and preparedness into disaster risk management and ramping up efforts to understand urban systems thoroughly.

Strengthening the agency of the affected people will be a main focus, through systematic community engagement in disaster risk management, and response modalities respectful of people's dignity, such as through the scaling-up of cash based assistance, accompanied by appropriate technical assistance to bolster their choices.

This means leveraging the right information for decision-making, being there at the right time, in the right place, with the right capacity and the right focus.

Strategic priority 3: Growing gaps in health and wellbeing

The focus will be on making sure that all people have safe and equitable access to health, water, sanitation and adequate living conditions. This means expanding integrated community-based health, care and first aid as well as water, sanitation, and hygiene programmes to address the unmet needs of vulnerable or marginalised groups. This also includes significantly investing in epidemic and pandemic preparedness, and investing in local actors, networks and volunteers as front-line health responders and early health risk detectors.

Strategic priority 4: Migration and identity

The focus will be on making sure that all people who migrate and are displaced are safe, are treated humanely and with dignity, and have the support they need to thrive in inclusive societies.

This will include expanding the support to migrants along major migratory routes and cycles to ensure that their humanitarian needs are addressed through essential services and protection irrespective of their legal status, in both emergency and non-emergency contexts.

Strategic priority 5: Values, power and inclusion

The focus will be on protecting and promoting a positive change for humanity, based on humanitarian values and principles.

This means expanding humanitarian education programmes focusing on humanitarian values, as well as improving access for people whose education has been disrupted by war, disaster, or displacement. Education programmes will also help prepare young people particularly, for the challenges and opportunities of the 21st century.

There will also be a focus on initiatives that promote inclusion, participation, and diversity in opportunities, representation, and decision-making, both within the organisations of our network as well as in society at large.

The enabling approach

To achieve the five strategic priorities, the IFRC Secretariat will invest into the following three enablers capturing the changes and transformations required.

Enabler 1: Engaged, with renewed influence, innovative and digitally transformed

The focus will be on ensuring that the IFRC and National Societies are respected and recognized as neutral, impartial humanitarian actors; are effectively positioned to promote principles, values, policies and legislation in support of humanitarian action; and mobilize support for the needs and aspirations of vulnerable communities.

Influencing humanitarian action

Building on the trust of the membership and its access to vulnerable communities the IFRC Secretariat has a responsibility to pursue humanitarian diplomacy in global decision-making fora on behalf of people in need. As such, the IFRC Secretariat has to go beyond informing and commit to **influencing humanitarian action** with appropriate diplomatic tools and actions, focusing on the areas where the network has knowledge and expertise.

To address the global challenges identified by the Strategy 2030, the IFRC Secretariat will engage on issues of climate change and the environmental protection, epidemics and pandemics, migration and displacement, urban risks and systems, demographic shifts, as well as on innovative funding, and anticipatory risk management and enhancing the important role of local actors to reduce vulnerabilities and respond to disasters and crises

Digital transformation

Underpinning the renewed influence stands the strong push to **digitally transform the IFRC** into an organisation that uses technology and data to increase reach, accountability and collective intelligence in keeping with the data protection standards and applicable legal framework. At National Society level the IFRC Secretariat will support the use of the latest affordable technology to efficiently manage operations and internal business processes, to look at expanding the ability to attract and motivate supporters and staff, and to reach people affected in novel and engaging ways.

In short, the IFRC Secretariat will embrace digital technology and foster a culture where innovation and learning are key drivers for how it engages with National Societies and other partners.

Enabler 2: Accountable, with an agile and efficient management

This enabler touches on the management and organisational approach the IFRC Secretariat will take.

A united and agile Secretariat

Having learned that we can have greater impact with a more globally harmonized and consistent approach, the IFRC Secretariat will invest in systems that enable it to work as one organisation globally. This will include:

- Drive gender parity and ensuring diversity at all levels across the IFRC Secretariat and inspire National Societies to do the same.
- Eliminate bureaucracy and focus on simplification and flexibility with a very strong risk management capability.
- Maximize capacity for membership coordination to increase efficiency and eliminate duplication
- Review the talent pool approach and continue to improve surge mechanisms to better capitalize on the strength of our network. This will include the creation of a balanced pool of experienced and young managers that will strengthen our presence globally including at country level.
- Increase the contribution of staff from the National Societies.
- Strengthen management, team leadership and leadership development.
- Align organizational development with programmatic capacity building.
- Further pool the support and processing functions at the Global Service Centre.
- Zero tolerance on fraud and corruption.
- Maximum effort on the prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse.

The actions described above will build on maintaining high levels of accountability in the IFRC. From ensuring that governance decisions support effective and efficient humanitarian services, over upholding our responsibility to support the network and speak out on behalf of vulnerable people, to making sure that we deliver what we promise as effectively and efficiently as possible.

A coordinated IFRC-wide approach

As a network, our strength lies not only in the individual capacity of the members, but as well in the combined results of the collective. The whole is greater than the sum of its parts defines the concept of synergy within the IFRC network. There will be an increased emphasis on making the IFRC a more effective platform for international coordination of emergency operations, collective representation of the IFRC, policy discussions, and National Society development and capacity strengthening.

The IFRC Secretariat will invest in systems, mechanisms, and people to play a more effective and strategic coordination role as expected by our membership and other key stakeholders.

The IFRC Secretariat will further develop Federation-wide information management, planning and reporting systems and approaches, to demonstrate the overall reach and value of the entire network, as well as garner further support from external stakeholders.

Financing the future

Underpinning our accountability, and as part of the **efforts to finance our future**, the IFRC Secretariat proposes to establish a **new deal for a renewed partnership** with National Societies through a new resourcing architecture.

The IFRC Secretariat aims to increase the financial resources for the benefit of National Societies, with them, for them and together with them with the spirit of complementarity and mutual support to access multilateral funding and support National Societies in their more direct access to government funding.

For the renewed partnership with the membership to happen, a transparent process will be set up to increase the available regular resources to fully fund the critical structures of the IFRC Secretariat globally to deliver on its mission.

This will require significant changes to systems (e.g. integration, cost recovery mechanisms, partnerships and resource development, etc.) at the IFRC Secretariat which will be done together with the membership. The new resourcing model will seek to maximize the use of the International Organization status of the IFRC to access large-scale grants to be implemented by the membership.

Enabler 3: Trusted, owned, and valued by the membership

The IFRC is positioned as a principled and trusted network which is owned and supported by its membership, and it strives for mutually respectful cooperation and coordination within the Red Cross Red Crescent Movement, as well as with external partners.

A trusted organization

The delivery of Strategy 2030 depends on the sense of ownership the membership has of their Federation and on **the trust National Societies have in their Secretariat**. We are united by our values and strong through our diversity. As the IFRC Secretariat we must accept the different needs and expectations of National Societies and transform ourselves to be more efficient and representative of the collective.

We will therefore:

- Address unresolved agendas and further the strategic discussions through membership-led focused discussions.
- Enhance our collective humanitarian diplomacy, and resource development by better engaging National Societies in governance structures in a spirit of shared leadership.
- Maintain a respectful dialogue with the ICRC, seeking to clarify roles, improve efficiency and demonstrate the strength and scope of our humanitarian response.
- Systematically promote the global reach of the network with the Federation-wide communication, planning and reporting.
- Invest in skills development to build the future generation of leaders of the IFRC.

Strong local actors

We will also support National Societies in being **strong local actors**, with clear strategies and plans that articulate their priorities. This will involve recognizing the crucial contributions of volunteers, staff and communities to generate ideas and drive change.

A distributed network

As IFRC Secretariat we will be more than a bureaucracy, we are part of many global systems, and our system does not stand or operate alone. As **part of this distributed network** we will prioritize shared knowledge and find ways to build collective intelligence.

Volunteering and Youth

Finally, we will work with National Societies to **re-imagine volunteering** and support **young people** as enablers and drivers of change and we will invest in creating more opportunities for peer to peer learning, promotion of friendly environment for their own development and recognition for their contributions to humanity.

Roles and responsibilities

Country Delegations and Country Cluster Delegations

Country offices and country cluster support teams will strengthen the provision of front-line support to the National Societies to make them stronger in volunteering and national network of branches and systems, including the development of financial capacities to sustain quality and relevant services in

their domestic context as well as surge capacity whenever large disasters overwhelm the capacity of the National Society to manage the operation fully. The offices will provide qualified membership coordination before, during and after disasters and crises and effective Movement Coordination to reinforce the Red Pillar actions. In times of disasters or crises the IFRC Secretariat will have systems in place to allow temporary mechanisms to separate from those used for cooperation in normal programming. This may involve the IFRC Secretariat or another National Society taking a more operational role in explicit agreement with the host National Society for a specific period.

Regional offices

The management of the IFRC Secretariat's operational and technical support to its membership will be channeled through the regional offices. The regional offices will be equipped with adequate financial and human resources and clear rules and responsibilities as well as management authority. They will be accountable for the IFRC Secretariat's successful delivery of services to National Societies, according to pre-agreed objectives and budgets, including:

- Strengthening National Societies
- Disasters and crises risk management
- Provision of quality assurance and technical advice
- Resource management and communication
- Membership and Movement Coordination
- Representation of the IFRC at regional level
- Managing country and cluster offices

Geneva Headquarters

The Geneva Headquarters will focus on:

- Defining global vision
- Providing leadership and facilitation
- Framing membership-wide approaches
- Adding operational capacity
- Setting policy and standards for quality
- Communication and knowledge management
- Representing the IFRC at global level
- Managing the regional offices

What the success looks like?

In 5 years:

- The IFRC network has made a measurable difference to addressing the five global challenges, especially at the community level, and is recognized as a **"first mile", cost-effective and innovative service provider** at the time of disasters and crises.
- The IFRC network is positioned as a **leading, principled and trusted network** to provide solution-driven approaches in the fields of community risk reduction and resilience, disaster preparedness, disaster response, and health and care, through strong national and local institutions.
- The IFRC network **defines and re-shapes humanitarian and development policies and agendas** on issues like climate change, epidemics and pandemics, migration and urbanization in contexts of fragility and greater inequality. **The IFRC network further expands the influence in terms of legislative advocacy**, especially in the field of disaster laws, by supporting the whole membership.
- The IFRC ensures that **humanitarian principles**, the spirit of volunteering and a culture of non-violence and peace are increasingly mainstreamed.

Risks

While a risk appetite statement is currently being developed, two high-impact risks can be mentioned already:

- Protracted pandemic emergencies, causing further depletion of already restricted resources of National Societies, and resulting in increased need for support from the IFRC Secretariat.
- Continuing competition among the most resourced National Societies for influence, requiring agreement on changing priorities.

The IFRC Secretariat will continue working on further development of its risk management framework to identify and address potential risks in the implementation of its strategic priorities.

How will this agenda for renewal be operationalized?

Through the 5-year Plan and 2 year Budget structured along the five strategic priorities and the three enablers.

Draft