



Our Principles, our Move
Nos Principes, nos Actions
Nuestros Principios, nuestra Acción
مبادئنا, حراكنا



CROCE
ROSSA
SAMMARINESE

Original: English

12th Mediterranean Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

Agenda item no. 2

Concept paper on

CRISIS RESPONSE AND PREPAREDNESS

CONCEPT PAPER

CRISIS RESPONSE AND PREPAREDNESS

The impact of a disaster or crisis can be reduced if the situation is stabilized as quickly as possible. This allows people to start rebuilding their lives and communities. Depending on the specific requirements, our recovery assistance aims to prevent further damage and loss, repair essential services, protect health, provide psychosocial support, restore livelihoods, and enhance food security. Recovery is carried out in such a way so as to rebuild more inclusive societies and reduce vulnerability to future disasters. Thus, recovering communities are made safer than before

*IFRC Strategy 2020 – Strategic Aim 1
“Save lives, protect livelihoods and strengthen recovery from disasters and crisis”*

FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES REFLECTION

Our Movement response requires a scrupulously impartial approach to crisis, response and preparedness, which discriminates only according to need. A neutral approach demands that we maintain the confidence of all while respect for the principle of Independence ensures we preserve our distinctive character and autonomy, in particular as auxiliary to governments in the humanitarian field. The full reach of our response is only possible with respect for the principle of Voluntary Service while our principle of Unity challenges our own inclusiveness and diversity as an organisation. Full respect for the principle of Unity underpins our ability to deliver impartial assistance. Finally our Universality demonstrates the need to share the responsibility and cooperate with one another.

INTRODUCTION

The Mediterranean region is changing rapidly and communities are faced with a growing number of humanitarian challenges which threaten their wellbeing, their livelihoods and ultimately their lives. More and more people are becoming vulnerable to disasters or are forced to cope with all sorts of crisis, with special regards to those derived by the conflicts which are currently affecting many countries across the region, as well as climate change and its consequences for the most vulnerable, and the economic crisis and its associated uncertainty to what the future may hold for the region.

In recent years, regions and countries in MENA (Middle East and North Africa) have been affected by conflict and crisis as well as disasters in what is commonly referred to as complex emergencies. But for many countries and their National Societies that does not fully describe the longer term protracted nature of the crisis which they have to deal with today and for the foreseeable future.

The continued destruction and degradation of coping mechanisms for people caught within the current crisis provide a strong push factor for many people from the southern Mediterranean countries to undertake hazardous journeys to the relative safety of northern countries.

We are constantly faced with images of disaster concerning people who have undertaken this step to safety. The consequences of the MENA crises ensure that the countries in the north of the Mediterranean feel the full affect from the pull factors of their safe haven perception to many affected by conflict.

To address the growing needs of people affected, often multiple times, by the current situation, National Societies have drawn from their preparedness plans to scale up to meet the influx of needs for added capacity in multiple ways: from operational relief and lifesaving interventions to the need for added capacity to communicate both internally and externally.

At the same time, the reduction of vulnerability and strengthening resilience are fundamental objectives for our Movement. Strengthening livelihood assets and the achievement of livelihood outcomes contribute significantly to resilience building and broader vulnerability reduction.

As stated in the Programming Through a Livelihoods Lens: A Livelihoods Approach for the IFRC¹, vulnerability and resilience are highly influenced by the asset base that people have prior to a crisis and their ability to engage in various coping strategies. Indeed, it has been stated that 'the risk of livelihood failure determines the level of vulnerability of food, health and nutritional insecurity'. Thus, **resilience**, as the ability to withstand shocks without compromising longer term objectives, also correlates to assets and coping strategies.

According to the IFRC's resilience concept paper, interventions to strengthen resilience aim to (a) address underlying causes of vulnerability in order to increase resilience and protect development, (b) reduce and mitigate radical drops in resilience caused by disasters and crises and (c) enhance bouncing back from adversity in order to continue strengthening resilience.

During the **8th Middle East and North Africa Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent** celebrated in Teheran in 2013 under the theme 'Enhancing Disaster Management and Risk Reduction', National Societies:

- Recognized the specific role of National Societies as auxiliaries to the public authorities in the humanitarian field in engaging and participating within national disaster management systems;
- Welcomed efforts to strengthen the role and capacities of MENA National Societies in reducing risk and increasing community resilience including urban disasters. Strengthening resilience and enhancing community capacity and individual's skills and practices will help to restore and maintain sustainable livelihoods and economically-secure living conditions;
- Encouraged the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) to support National Societies to raise awareness and persuade decision-makers to develop

¹<http://www.livelihoodscentre.org/livelihoods/ShowPropertyServlet?nodePath=/Livelihoods/Knowledge+repository/Publications/Files/201-LivelihoodApproach.pdf>

measures such as disaster laws to effectively facilitate international humanitarian relief in times of crises.

The challenge for humanitarian organizations and communities is to turn communities into more resilient ones, in view of the unexpected. For this purpose the 12th Mediterranean Conference calls upon to discuss the role of the National Societies in enhancing resilience in the community and recovery work while responding to crisis and disaster, including climate change and environmental degradation, and the economic crisis.

Considerations on:

- Disaster Law

Legal issues are often overlooked as part of preparedness & response planning for disasters. This is particularly so for situations where international assistance may be needed.

Research on large-scale disaster operations around the world, conducted by the IFRC's Disaster Law Programme has demonstrated that vital international support can be hampered by issues such as: a lack of legal recognition for foreign relief providers; customs delays and tax requirements for medication, relief goods and equipment; complications with visas for relief personnel; and a lack of recognition of foreign professional qualifications in emergency situations. It has also been found that coordination and information-sharing between response agencies may be lacking, as well as adherence to humanitarian principles and standards of quality and accountability.

In November 2007, the 30th International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent (including the state parties to the Geneva Conventions and the components of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement) unanimously adopted the Guidelines for the Domestic Facilitation and Regulation of International Disaster Relief and Initial Recovery Assistance ("the Guidelines")² in order to help governments to avoid those kinds of situations.

The Guidelines set out recommendations for preparing national law, policy and institutional mechanisms to anticipate and prepare for the most common problem areas in the receipt of international disaster assistance. Based on existing international norms and best practices, and developed through an extensive consultative process with governments and humanitarian stakeholders, the Guidelines present a balanced approach to reducing potential barriers while maintaining the primary role of domestic actors.

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https://fednet.ifrc.org/FedNet/Resources_and_Services/IDRL/Basic%20documents/Introduction%20to%20the%20Guidelines.pdf

- **Resilience and Recovery**

According to the 2009 UNISDR terminology, Resilience is understood as the ability of a system, community or society exposed to hazards to resist, absorb, accommodate to and recover from the effects of a hazard in a timely and efficient manner, including through the preservation and restoration of its essential basic structures and functions.

Resilience means the ability to “resile from” or “spring back from” a shock. The resilience of a community in respect to potential hazard events is determined by the degree to which the community has the necessary resources and is capable of organizing itself both prior to and during times of need.

In the protracted stage of many of the crises in the MENA, resilience takes another meaning, in order to see how we can support people to be more resilient through our collective interventions in such a fluid situation where the deterioration of coping mechanisms is the norm. For the International Federation at large, Resilience is nowadays a major pillar in our collective actions. This approach was developed during the Third World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction, held from 14 to 18 March 2015 in Sendai (Japan), representing an unique opportunity for the National Societies and its Secretariat to articulate and commit to **‘One Billion Coalition for Resilience’³** with the goal of taking **active steps towards enhancing community resilience, together with one billion people**, by 2025.

Recovery is the restoration and improvement where appropriate, of facilities, livelihoods and living conditions of disaster-affected communities, including efforts to reduce disaster risk factors. The recovery task of rehabilitation and reconstruction begins soon after the emergency phase has ended, and should be based on pre-existing strategies and policies that facilitate clear institutional responsibilities for recovery action and enable public participation. Recovery programmes, coupled with the heightened public awareness and engagement after a disaster, afford a valuable opportunity to develop and implement disaster risk reduction measures and to apply the “build back better” principle

Workshop A: CLIMATE CHANGE AND ENVIRONMENT

Climate change refers to a set of variations in climatic and environmental conditions, such as changes in maximum, minimum and average temperatures, the intensity and frequency of precipitations (rainfall and snowfall), wind speed, ice melting, and eco-systems that will eventually affect human wellbeing.

Climate change has both natural and anthropogenic causes; nonetheless, it is extremely likely that human influence has been the dominant cause of the observed global warming since the mid-20th century.

³ <https://fednet.ifrc.org/en/resources/community-preparedness-and-risk-reduction/key-events-and-forums/global-community-resilience-forum/declaration-the-cali-one-billion-coalition-for-resilience/>

Ultimately, climate change affects key aspects of our life: food and energy production, health, the degree of society's exposure to extreme events, mobility, and the inter- and intra-generational distribution of wealth.

Climate change is one of the most serious challenges for the present and future generations. Warming of the climate system is unequivocal and adverse impacts have already been observed on natural resources, ecosystems, food security, human health and socio-economic sectors. Although substantial uncertainty remains, climate models predict that the frequency and intensity of extreme weather events, already affecting several hundred million people, will increase even with relatively small average temperature increases negatively affecting the lives and livelihoods of millions. This, together with an increased exposure to risk, linked to processes such as environmental degradation, population growth, unplanned urbanization, access to resources and unsustainable development patterns, will impact on the ability of vulnerable people and societies to cope with - and recover from - each subsequent event.

Overall, the Mediterranean emerges as a climate hotspot in terms of both natural conditions and society's attitude. Specifically, it is one of the regions of the world most subjected to phenomena such as soil degradation, desertification and water scarcity, especially on the southern shore. Moreover, the whole region may suffer from rising sea levels and droughts, the frequency and intensity of which have likely increased since 1950, as well as forest fires and heat waves.

In northern Mediterranean countries, for instance, there is already evidence of biodiversity reduction in plant and animal species, especially in mountain regions, which face a potential future loss of important ecosystem services. Wildfires have also generally consistently increased in recent decades, notwithstanding a decrease in the number of events and in total burnt area in the last years. In the longer term, the region is expected to experience a significant decline in yields, especially for cereals, given the sharp reduction in groundwater resources. Health will likewise be strongly negatively impacted, due to more frequent and intense heat waves, with the associated reduction in labour productivity. The energy and recreational sectors will be also affected. Increased electricity demand due to increased cooling needs will raise generation costs, while outdoor tourism activities are expected to decline as a result of the deteriorating climatic conditions, including unpleasantly high temperatures.

It is expected that the agricultural sector will be especially affected by the climate change in the southern Mediterranean region. The observed changes in precipitation patterns in recent decades, with increases in autumn, but decreases in winter and spring, are expected to be further consolidated in the future. This will exacerbate water scarcity and accelerate the negative change in yields. Given the still high contribution of agriculture to the production of value added in the region, this effect is particularly worrisome.

Another important stress factor is raising sea levels. In particular, the vulnerability of the Nile mega-delta will continue to increase due to higher population and infrastructure exposure on the already over-crowded and sea-flood-prone coastal system caused by migration/urbanisation phenomena and to a sea-level rise that seems to be worse than anticipated in the IPCC AR4 (2007). Underlying all of this, health statuses may also worsen,

due to both water-borne and vector-borne diseases, challenging regional healthcare systems⁴.

During the past few years, many unexpected weather events have struck the Mediterranean region. Only in 2014 the floods in the Balkans affected over 3 million people across Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia; a flood in southern Morocco killed more than thirty people; and a flood in the north of Italy caused great damages to people, environment and cultural heritage.

The need to address and limit the negative humanitarian consequences of climate change is an important part of the work of the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent (IFRC): environmental threats such as climate change are inseparable from IFRC's mission of building safer and resilient communities and addressing climate change is clearly stated as a priority under the **Strategic Aim 1 of the IFRC Strategy 2020** "Save lives, protect livelihoods, and strengthen recovery from disasters and crises".

The impact of climate change on those most vulnerable is - and will continue - rising and there is an urgent need to scale up the International RC/RC Movement work to both reduce the causes of climate change and address its consequences.

According to the **IFRC Plan of Action Climate Change 2013-2016**, there are three strategic objectives to be achieved by the International Federation:

1. Strengthening organizational capacity on climate change;
2. Mainstreaming climate change adaptation and mitigation into policies, sectorial programmes and interventions across the contexts;
3. Promoting advocacy, public awareness and partnership.

The IFRC work on climate change is guided by five key guidelines:

1. Adopt a holistic approach: climate change should not be addressed in isolation but in the context of existing IFRC's programmes, policies and operations and within a wider humanitarian-development context. This means including issues such as environmental degradation, population pressure, unplanned/rapid urbanization, gender, migration;
2. Build on activities that the Red Cross and Red Crescent already works on: IFRC interventions are designed to increase resilience to shocks in different contexts and there is already ample knowledge and experience with specific risk reduction interventions that can be used together with greater understanding of climate change impacts;
3. Focus on partnerships: IFRC work on climate change would have more impact when working with and through others;
4. Adopt participatory approaches to ensure that all relevant stakeholders are involved and the needs of vulnerable groups within communities (i.e. elderly, disabled, women,

⁴ Climate change in the Mediterranean:

http://www.iemed.org/observatori/arees-danalisi/arxiu-adjunts/anyari/anyari-2014/bosello_eboli_Economic_Costs_of_Climate_Change_IEMed_yearbook_2014_EN.pdf

ethnic minorities) their knowledge and ideas in identifying innovative solutions are taken into account;

5. Recognize the relevance of traditional and indigenous knowledge in addressing issues such as climate variability and in supporting the development of innovative solutions.

According to the **Dubrovnik Declaration**, issued by the 11th RC/RC Mediterranean Conference held in Croatia in 2010, the Mediterranean RC/RC National Societies have emphasized the need to integrate risk related to climate change in programme planning; strengthen partnership and dialogue with governments in order to help them take into account the humanitarian impacts related to climate change and mobilize human resources – with special regards youth– as actors of behavioural change.

The humanitarian consequences of climate change and environmental degradation need the special attention of RC/RC National Societies gathering at the 12th Mediterranean Conference in San Marino. In fact, **according to the RC/RC Fundamental Principles and Humanitarian Values**, the International Movement of Red Cross and Red Crescent must find common strategies to find sustainable solutions for the most pressing needs and vulnerabilities.

Workshop B: THE SOCIAL EFFECTS OF THE ECONOMIC CRISIS

The impact of the economic and financial crisis which started in 2008 is still being felt. It started as an acute crisis of the banking system, but then it quickly affected the real economy, causing a substantial slump in business investment, household demand and output.

Almost seven years after the beginning of the crisis, the number of people queuing for food has increased; many people are without a job and even those who still have it face difficulties to sustain their families due to insufficient wages and skyrocketing prices.

Other vulnerable groups include those who have lost their job and who are not or no longer entitled to unemployment benefits, as well as single-parent families, pensioners, young people neither in education nor in employment, and migrants. Therefore the number of people with mental health problems and people in need of psychosocial support are increasing. Throughout Europe and the entire Mediterranean region, communities are experiencing similar vulnerabilities due to an increasing lack of job opportunities - with the related loss of household income and the possibility for both youth and family emancipation. This leads also to difficulties to access public health systems, lack of remittances, growing tensions within families as well as generations at large, whose members eventually tend to perceive themselves either as having no perspective for the future (as in the case of young adults) or as a burden to society.

One of the groups most severely affected by the current crisis is youth. In recent times, the youth unemployment rate in the region has often been double that of total unemployment. Among the countries for which data are available, the youth unemployment rates are particularly high in the Balkans, Spain, Italy, Portugal, Greece, Tunisia, Palestine, and Egypt.

The share of the population under the age of 30 years has exceeded 60%, and as a result the working-age population is approaching 70%⁵. Considering the high aspirations of youth for education, jobs, marriage, housing etc., this puts a tremendous pressure on national economies and political systems in general. If the situation is not well managed, it may well pose a risk of social instability⁶.

In this context, the economic crisis is creating the conditions for a widespread social crisis, whereby a growing gap in the distribution of resources (the rich becoming richer and the poor becoming poorer) and the competition for shrinking resources could bring about growing xenophobia, discrimination, social exclusion, as well as abuse and domestic problems. Hence, the need to promote social inclusion and to face emerging vulnerabilities, as stated in **Strategic Aim 3 of the IFRC Strategy 2020** “Promote social inclusion and a culture of non-violence and peace”, is an imperative that National Societies are called to respond to, in the constant search for innovative and effective solutions that may improve communities' resilience.

The ‘**Think Differently**’ Report produced by the IFRC Europe Zone Office fosters a change in the approach and perspective towards the crisis. The new challenges that are affecting National Societies on various levels can actually pose the basis to set forth new innovative proposals which may respond to the increasing vulnerabilities, in a constant effort by National Societies to redefine their priorities and adapt to the new realities through a holistic approach.

Through this document, the RC/RC National Societies commit to:

1. Share knowledge, experiences and ideas in response to economic crisis;
2. Strengthen and expand existing social programmes that assist those in greatest need;
3. Find creative solutions to the new humanitarian challenges caused by the economic crisis;
4. Continue to actively involve those affected by the economic crisis in finding solutions;
5. Continue to highlight the challenges faced by individuals and communities most severely affected by the economic crisis;
6. Cooperate with governments and other partners mitigating humanitarian consequences of this economic crisis.

National Societies' commitments in the ‘Think Differently’ Report also recall a humanitarian diplomacy in action approach. In this regard, it is worthwhile mentioning already existing International Law tools such as the ***Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR - 1966)*** and the related more recent ***Optional Protocol (OP)***, adopted by the **UN General Assembly in 2008 and in force since 2013**, which establishes a complaint mechanism for the Covenant. Under the Protocol, victims of violations of economic, social and cultural rights, such as the right to food, health, education, housing and social security, who are unable to seek relief for their claims within their own country, can seek redress at the international level by filing a complaint with the United Nations Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. The Optional Protocol - ratified by 18 States and signed by 42

⁵ United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2012

⁶ European Training Foundation 2013

countries – marked the beginning of a process that can give victims of economic, social and cultural rights violations a voice, and make States more responsive and accountable with respect to their obligations under the ICESCR. To ensure the Optional Protocol's success, it is essential that governments continue to ratify it, enabling more victims of violations of economic, social and cultural rights to access justice and obtain redress. In addition to its value as a mechanism of redress for victims, the OP-ICESCR is a new international reference tool that will allow advances to be made in economic, social and cultural rights in several areas. RC/RC action at humanitarian diplomacy level aimed at advocating also for the ratification of these existing international legal instruments by governments could complement and reinforce their daily work at community level in favour of the most affected by the economic crisis.

During the 9th European Regional Conference, held in Italy in June 2014, RC/RC National Societies, through the **Florence Call for Action**, committed themselves not only to think differently but also to act differently in finding lasting solutions for and with the people affected by the crisis.

According to the **Dubrovnik Declaration**, issued by the 11th RC/RC Mediterranean Conference held in Croatia in 2010, the Mediterranean RC/RC National Societies strive to: develop vulnerability and capacity analysis programmes, as well as cooperation and collaboration programmes with stakeholders; improve the living conditions and livelihood of vulnerable populations and encourage their social inclusion.

Understanding that in the Mediterranean region the humanitarian consequences of the economic crisis will affect people for decades to come, and impact countries in specific ways, the Mediterranean RC/RC National Societies need to focus, during the 12th Mediterranean Conference, on finding common strategies to creative and sustainable solutions, in line with the **Fundamental Principles and Humanitarian Values of the RC/RC International Movement**, to problems that threaten human well-being and dignity.

GOALS OF THE SESSION

The general goal of the session is to enhance the role of the National Societies in the Mediterranean, together with the rest of the Movement components, in response and preparedness to the disasters and crises affecting the region.

The session aims as well to improve the commitment of RC/RC Mediterranean National Societies to reduce vulnerability and strengthen community resilience against economic crises and disasters due to climate change and environmental degradation.

National Societies will cooperate in order to:

- a) Identify critical humanitarian needs arising from the current protracted crises;
- b) Define the requirement for support (including support that may be required in the areas of assessment, planning and advocacy);
- c) Explore how we can collectively keep interest and focus from donors and partners in the context of protracted crisis, avoiding donors fatigue;

- d) Transfer expertise and capacities in accordance with support requirements
- e) When required, develop additional skills through coordinated efforts.

Discussions should therefore focus on country-specific examples. To this end, part of the content of the session will be the presentations delivered by the National Societies to provide a background briefing, focusing on three main areas:

- 1) *Outline of the activities required to address the critical needs identified by the National Societies concerned.*
- 2) *Analysis and inventory of constraints and obstacles affecting the response.*
- 3) *Identification of specific skills and capacities required to overcome the constraints and obstacles.*

FORMAT

- Chair: Ms. Tanya Abu Goush, Staff Director of International Cooperation and Public Relations, Palestine Red Crescent Society
- Introductory speech: Mr. Santiago Gil, IFRC Livelihood Resource Centre
- Panellists: Lebanese RC; Libyan RC; Syrian Arab RC

Then, the session will include two parallel workshops focusing on:

- 1) Climate change and Environment
 - Chair: Moroccan RC
 - Introductory speech: Ms. Fleur Monasso, RC/RC Climate Centre
 - Panellists: French RC; Egyptian RC; MDA Israel
- 2) The social effects of economic crisis
 - Chair: Hellenic RC
 - Introductory speech: FEMISE (Euro-Mediterranean Forum of Institutes of Economic Sciences)
 - Panellists: Albanian RC; Croatian RC; Montenegro RC; Slovenian RC; Spanish RC; ASCAME (The Mediterranean Chambers of Commerce and Industry)

Date: 26th May 2015

Time: 2:30pm – 6:45pm (including coffee break and 30 minutes to report back in plenary)