



Who we are

Our mission and role

The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies is the world's largest humanitarian organization, providing assistance without discrimination as to nationality, race, religious beliefs, class or political opinions.



Founded in 1919, the International Federation comprises 185 member Red Cross and Red Crescent societies, a Secretariat in Geneva and more than 60 delegations strategically located to support activities around the world. There are more societies in formation. The Red Crescent is used in place of the Red Cross in many Islamic countries.

The Federation's mission is **to improve the lives of vulnerable people by mobilizing the power of humanity**. Vulnerable people are those who are at greatest risk from situations that threaten their survival, or their capacity to live with an acceptable level of social and economic security and human dignity. Often, these are victims of natural disasters, poverty brought about by socio-economic crises, refugees, and victims of health emergencies.

The Federation carries out relief operations to assist victims of disasters, and combines this with development work to strengthen the capacities of its member National Societies. The Federation's work focuses on four core areas: promoting humanitarian values, disaster response, disaster preparedness, and health and community care.

The unique network of National Societies - which cover almost every country in the world - is the Federation's principal strength. Cooperation between National Societies gives the Federation greater potential to develop capacities and assist those most in need. At a local level, the network enables the Federation to reach individual communities.

The role of the Secretariat in Geneva is to coordinate and mobilize relief assistance for international emergencies, promote cooperation between National Societies and represent these National Societies in the international field.

The role of the field delegations is to assist and advise National Societies with relief operations and development programmes, and encourage regional cooperation.

The Federation, together with National Societies and the International Committee of the Red Cross, make up the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement.

What we do

The International Federation's programmes are grouped into four main core areas: promoting humanitarian principles and values; disaster response; disaster preparedness; and health and care in the community.

These activities are those which are carried out by most National Societies, and details of each core activity can be found by clicking on the appropriate section.



Red Cross Red Crescent promotes individual and community **humanitarian values** which encourage respect for other human beings and a willingness to work together to find solutions to problems. From the seven fundamental principles to the "power of humanity" slogan, the aim is to influence the behaviour of the people we work with.

Disaster response continues to represent the largest portion of our work, with assistance to around 30 million people annually from refugees to victims of natural disasters. This section includes our emergency response units and issues relating to humanitarian policies as we strive to improve the quality of our immediate response and long-term rehabilitation work.

The sharp increase in the number of natural disasters worldwide in recent years has prompted the Federation to devote more attention to **disaster preparedness** activities.

These aim to make National Societies and communities more aware of the risks they face, how to reduce their vulnerability, and how to cope when disaster strikes.

Too many people die as a result of no access to even the most basic health services and elementary health education. **Health and community care** has become a cornerstone of humanitarian assistance, and accounts for a large part of Red Cross Red Crescent spending. Through these programmes, the Federation aims to enable communities to reduce their vulnerability to disease, and prepare for and respond to public health crises.

Guiding and supporting the development of its member National Societies is one of the Federation's fundamental tasks, and runs through these four core areas and other programmes. **Capacity building** programmes include management and volunteer training, branch structures, planning, fund-raising and gender equality. Creating the opportunity for National Societies to network and work together is one of the Federation's key roles.

Strategy 2010

Strategy 2010 will guide the Federation's actions from the years 2000 to 2010. It defines three strategic directions for the Federation and its member National Societies to follow in order to achieve a common mission: to improve the lives of vulnerable people by mobilizing the power of humanity.

These three directions are:

- National Society programmes that are responsive to local vulnerability and focused on the areas where they can add greatest value. The four core areas are:
 - promotion of humanitarian values and principles
 - disaster response
 - disaster preparedness
 - health and care in the community
- Well-functioning National Societies which can mobilize support and carry out their humanitarian mission, contributing to the building of civil society.
- Working together effectively through programme cooperation, long-term partnerships and funding, as well as more active advocacy.

Details of our work in each of the four core areas can be found in the What we do section. For further information, see the complete Strategy 2010 document.

Adopted by the Federation's General Assembly in October 1999, *Strategy 2010* was the culmination of a two-year process of consultation with National Societies. Along with an analysis of trends in the external environment, it draws on the lessons learned by the Federation from its performance during the 1990s, as captured in the evaluation report *Learning from the Nineties*