

COVID-19: THE INTERNATIONAL RED CROSS AND RED CRESCENT MOVEMENT'S ACTION AND APPEALS

Since March 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic has claimed over 2.7 million lives. More than 123 million COVID-19 infections have been reported. Billions of people around the world are suffering the indirect consequences of the pandemic. While a few countries have accelerated their vaccination programmes, the number of new infections is rising again in the Americas, the Eastern Mediterranean, Europe and South-East Asia.¹

In response to the rapidly evolving COVID-19 crisis, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) are launching **revised, coordinated appeals**.



Yemen, November 2020. A member of ICRC health staff monitors vital signs in a COVID-19 affected patient at the Red Cross Red Crescent COVID-19 care centre in Aden.

¹ Since the end of February 2021, the number of new infections has risen again in these WHO regions after falling steadily over the previous six weeks.

This document explains:

- the response of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement (the Movement), which comprises the 192 National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, the IFRC and the ICRC
- the Movement-wide funding requirements.

It also places the Movement's coordinated appeals in the context of significantly increasing humanitarian needs globally, related to both COVID-19 and other emergencies, and the need for longer-term investment.

The revised coordinated appeals² seek a total of CHF 2.729 billion to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic and its socio-economic impact.

COVID-19 continues to amplify inequalities, destabilize communities, jeopardize development gains and impede progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals. Beyond its dramatic health impacts, the COVID-19 crisis constitutes a crisis on top of other crises, exacerbating the vulnerability of people already at risk, whether owing to armed conflict, violence, disaster, other health emergencies, migration, food insecurity, limited access to health care and other services, discrimination or socio-economic factors.

Despite governments' efforts to maintain a balance between preventing large-scale community transmission of the virus and protecting their economies against socio-economic collapse, COVID-19 will have long-lasting repercussions for those most at risk and will create new vulnerabilities.

The rollout of COVID-19 vaccines brings a glimpse of hope to people whose lives have been turned upside-down, but pressing challenges remain, such as:

- how to ensure equitable access across and within countries
- how to identify and limit the propagation of more contagious variants
- how to ensure that measures such as vaccination passports do not further discriminate against already vulnerable groups.

The Movement will focus its efforts on those populations that are most at risk and most vulnerable. Examples include providing home care or other solutions for people with disabilities and older people unable to reach vaccine centres, plus ensuring access for those who may be unable to register for vaccines, such as detainees or irregular migrants. Combating vaccine hesitancy and misinformation through risk communication and community engagement will also be priority actions in the coming months, to ensure the success of global COVID-19 vaccination efforts.

Meanwhile, no-one can ignore the effects of confinement measures or the unrelenting pressure on the mental health and livelihoods of people all over the world – especially of vulnerable communities. Communities will still need support to reduce and mitigate the use of negative coping mechanisms and the impact of the pandemic on their livelihoods.

In this context, and in addition to responding to significantly increased humanitarian needs – resulting from multiple shocks during 2020 and the first quarter of 2021 and from the economic consequences of the pandemic – the Movement has continued to help communities contain the spread of the pandemic, including through its role in immunization. Furthermore, the Movement continues to address the deterioration in vulnerable people's physical and mental health, their livelihoods and social cohesion, and to protect, assist and advocate for the most vulnerable as a matter of priority.

² For the IFRC, this figure includes the funding ask for both the IFRC Secretariat and its member Red Cross and Red Crescent National Societies.

THE APPROACH AND CONTRIBUTION OF THE INTERNATIONAL RED CROSS AND RED CRESCENT MOVEMENT

The complementary mandates, the expertise and the institutional resilience of the Movement's components (the National Societies, the IFRC and the ICRC) place it in a unique position to contribute to the local, regional and global response to COVID-19. Over the past year, Movement components rapidly adjusted to the evolving COVID-19 pandemic, adapting their programmes and significantly scaling up their response to the crisis.

THE NATIONAL RED CROSS AND RED CRESCENT SOCIETIES

As auxiliaries to their governments in the humanitarian field, National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies are well placed to be at the forefront of the local response to COVID-19. They have a unique reach into communities, with their extended networks of local branches and their dedicated volunteers and professional staff.



Fada, Burkina Faso, April 2020. A Burkina Faso Red Cross volunteer ensures that people wash their hands and maintain physical distancing before a Movement aid distribution.

Over the past year, most National Societies have expanded the scope of their support for national public health responses to COVID-19, focusing on:

- pandemic control measures
- risk communication
- community engagement
- health and hygiene promotion
- community-based surveillance
- infection prevention and control
- access to health services
- ambulance services
- mental health and psychosocial support services
- isolation and clinical case management
- management of the dead.

The results of these efforts are impressive.

Local Red Cross and Red Crescent responders have:

- reached 650 million people through risk-communication and community-engagement activities for health and hygiene promotion
- carried out water, sanitation and hygiene activities benefiting 106 million people
- provided food and other essential items to 80 million people.

By comparison, in 2017 Red Cross and Red Crescent responders reached 100 million people through all their activities. Collectively, they reached six times as many people through their response to COVID-19.³

THE INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF RED CROSS AND RED CRESCENT SOCIETIES

The Federation-wide response to COVID-19 mobilizes the collective resources of the IFRC network to support the domestic responses of its National Societies in 162 countries. The IFRC Secretariat raises funds for all National Societies and bears primary responsibility for supporting them, allocating financial resources according to their needs and role in responding to the pandemic. IFRC data show that funds raised by the IFRC Secretariat were a lifeline over the past year for many low- and middle-income National Societies that received little support from governments or the private sector. This funding reduced global inequities in COVID-19 funding to some extent.

The Federation-wide response to COVID-19 also involves coordinating the National Societies, to maximize the collective impact on communities. This includes providing personnel from the IFRC Secretariat and National Societies to support the response where this is most needed, and facilitating peer support between National Societies by deploying country-support teams to support the response of National Societies within their own countries. Along with the Red Cross Red Crescent reference centres and hubs, the IFRC also provides a variety of global tools and resources on a wide range of topics for use by National Societies and has primary responsibility for providing support to strengthen them.

THE INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE OF THE RED CROSS

The ICRC coordinates the international Movement's response in situations of armed conflict and internal violence, working in close cooperation with National Societies and in coordination with the IFRC. Its operational footprint in over 100 countries and its role in ensuring compliance with international humanitarian law mean that the ICRC is uniquely placed to support National Societies in these contexts, both financially and logistically, and to negotiate safe access for volunteers in hard-to-reach areas where few other organizations are present, such as those under the control of

3 *Everyone Counts* report.

non-State armed groups and other areas not controlled by the government. These and other activities with National Societies contribute to the Movement's collective efforts to boost their programme capabilities, improve acceptance and legal protections, or sharpen negotiation and access skills.

THE POWER OF PARTNERSHIP

The Movement components are working together in accordance with their respective mandates to support the sustainable development of National Societies as crucial local humanitarian responders, whose resilience will be severely tested by the effects of the crisis. The partnership between the ICRC, the IFRC and National Societies is more needed today than ever before, to maintain and increase humanitarian services and access those communities that are hardest to reach, both now and in the future.

For example, coordinated Movement procurement helps ensure timely access to supplies and equipment. In the Asia and Pacific region, the ICRC and the IFRC have been sharing supplies of personal protective equipment (PPE) – including N95 face masks – and pulse oximeters over the past year. Calls for tender included technical specifications provided by both organizations, to ensure that the resulting supplies could be shared. In the Middle East and North Africa, the international components of the Movement procured equipment for National Societies, exchanged supplier data and coordinated closely on the supply of PPE to the Lebanese Red Cross.

Globally and locally, the Movement components have strengthened their collaboration with each other and with states, the UN and other organizations to achieve impact at scale, building on their complementarities.

This structured yet agile coordination aims to ensure local relevance while being globally coherent. Through the complementary use of the assets and capabilities of the various Movement components, we seek to increase the cost-efficiency, timeliness and impact of the operations we conduct and the services we provide to affected people.



Beirut, February 2021. Lebanese Red Cross volunteers offload a PPE shipment including FFP2 masks, gowns and body bags, allocated from the IFRC MENA stocks in Dubai.

THE MOVEMENT'S FIVE-PILLAR PLAN ON COVID-19 VACCINES

In December 2020, the IFRC and the ICRC adopted the Movement's Five-Pillar Plan to prepare for and introduce vaccines, providing the basis for the vaccination content of the IFRC and ICRC appeals. This plan uses the Movement's unique position to address the needs of the most vulnerable communities through a variety of strategies that are adaptable to local contexts, capacities and needs.

I. ADVOCATE FOR EQUITABLE ACCESS TO COVID-19 VACCINES

This means advocating for geographic equity in access to COVID-19 vaccines globally (among countries) and nationally (within countries) based on vulnerability criteria. The Movement also advocates for the inclusion of marginalized groups in national vaccination plans, such as migrants, refugees and people living in non-government-controlled areas.

II. TRUST: BUILD COMMUNITY TRUST AND ACCEPTANCE OF COVID-19 VACCINES AND HELP MANAGE EXPECTATIONS

The international components of the Movement are supporting the efforts of National Societies in Afghanistan, El Salvador, Kenya, Morocco, Pakistan, Ukraine, Venezuela and Yemen, among many other countries, to understand how communities perceive COVID-19 and the response to it, as a means of establishing and maintaining trust.

For instance, the Kenya Red Cross Society is conducting interactive sessions on local radio and taking part in household visits, to provide information and gather perceptions on vaccines, and is designing feedback surveys for staff and volunteers, which it is sharing on WhatsApp.

III. HEALTH: SUPPORT THE DELIVERY OF VACCINES IN HEALTH FACILITIES AND DURING OUTREACH ACTIVITIES

Currently, 152 National Societies are preparing for or supporting COVID-19 vaccine rollout.

Brazil

Red Cross volunteers and staff are vaccinating extremely isolated communities in the Amazon.

Bangladesh

The Bangladesh Red Crescent Society is the government's partner of choice in a campaign that has already vaccinated over 3.5 million people.

Maldives

The Maldivian Red Crescent has supported the immunization of unregistered migrants.

Greece

Hellenic Red Cross volunteers and staff are vaccinating migrants.



Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh, February 2021. A nurse facilitates the vaccination process with support from Bangladesh Red Crescent Society volunteers.

IV. REACH THE MOST VULNERABLE, ESPECIALLY PEOPLE LIVING IN URBAN SLUMS, REMOTE RURAL AREAS, MIGRANTS, THE HOMELESS AND PEOPLE AFFECTED BY CONFLICT, VIOLENCE AND DISASTERS

Colombia

The Movement assisted over 525,000 migrants and host communities between March and December 2020.

During that year, it:

- provided essential medical services on more than 1,320,000 occasions
- delivered COVID-19 prevention and awareness information, plus dignity and hygiene kits, to indigenous migrant communities through mobile health units
- undertook protection monitoring
- delivered safe drinking water, direct cash transfers, rent assistance and psychosocial support (including through telecare)
- established child- and youth-friendly spaces
- injected capital into individual and collective initiatives of migrants affected by COVID-19.

Azerbaijan

The international components of the Movement are cooperating closely with the Azerbaijan Red Crescent Society to assess needs, extend support and strengthen capacity.

In addition to responding to the needs created by the 44-day escalation of hostilities, the Movement supported the National Society's response to the COVID-19 pandemic by:

- providing hygiene kits and cash assistance
- disinfecting public buildings (using materials and equipment donated by the ICRC)
- donating over 100,000 items of PPE and COVID-19 diagnostic equipment to the ministry of justice medical department, for the benefit of all categories of detainee.

V. MAINTAIN AND STRENGTHEN OTHER IMMUNIZATION SERVICES, SUCH AS ROUTINE IMMUNIZATION AND VACCINATION CAMPAIGNS FOR OTHER DISEASES, WITH SPECIAL FOCUS ON ZERO-DOSE AND UNDER-IMMUNIZED COMMUNITIES

Essential life-saving services such as routine immunization recently resumed in Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Pakistan and the Philippines, under extreme care and caution, with medical workers and Red Cross Red Crescent volunteers helping to keep everyone safe.

Philippines

Some 1,500 Philippine Red Cross volunteers recently vaccinated around 275,000 children in a supplementary immunization programme for measles-rubella and polio.

Central African Republic

The Movement is supporting the national routine immunization programme in conflict-affected districts, covering an area the size of Germany. Red Cross volunteers support microplanning processes and the registration of children with local health centres, where they receive their vaccinations. The National Society is present in 3,200 villages in some of the hardest-to-reach areas. Staff are also embedded in the health clinics and at the district health office, to support the government-run system.

In 2020, Red-Cross-supported teams vaccinated over 27,000 infants, protecting them from five major diseases: diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis (whooping cough), hepatitis B and Haemophilus influenzae type b. Red-Cross-supported teams reached close to 65% of the total infant population in those districts, doubling the number of infants reached compared to 2018.

IFRC APPEAL

The Federation-wide COVID-19 revised emergency appeal seeks to address the funding needs of the IFRC Secretariat and its member Red Cross and Red Crescent National Societies, so they can continue to respond to the direct and secondary health impacts and the socio-economic impact of the pandemic. This revised emergency appeal reflects the shifting context and emerging needs in the three priority operational areas, underlining the multiple and multifaceted vulnerabilities encountered.

The Federation-wide combined domestic and international financial ask is **CHF 2.5 billion**, out of which **CHF 550 million** is to be raised through the IFRC Secretariat in support of National Societies. This reflects an increase of CHF 100 million for the immunization activities that have now been incorporated into the revised appeal. The IFRC appeal time frame has been extended by six months, to 30 June 2022, to ensure continued support to National Societies. As of 22 March 2021, the Federation-wide funding gap is **CHF 566 million**, out of which **CHF 271 million** is attributed to the IFRC Secretariat appeal.

The overall objective of the IFRC's COVID-19 operation is to reduce loss of life, while protecting the safety, well-being and livelihoods of the most vulnerable people. The operational priorities are set out below. Cutting across these issues, the operational strategy draws attention to people on the move, fragile contexts and the compounding needs of other disasters and crises, ensuring that protection, gender and inclusion needs, and community engagement and accountability, are mainstreamed in the response activities.

IFRC OPERATIONAL PRIORITIES

1. CURB THE PANDEMIC: HEALTH AND WASH

The COVID-19 pandemic has required many National Societies to take a more active role in supporting the delivery of public health measures in collaboration with national authorities. While initial efforts were focused on raising knowledge and awareness about COVID-19 in order to manage and reduce transmission, a shift is now required towards greater community engagement and participatory approaches. The IFRC Secretariat will continue to invest in community-led responses and scale up support to them, by boosting the quality and consistency of community health programming and community engagement approaches. This will include focused investment in improving programmes by using what we have learned about community context, capabilities, feedback, perceptions and behaviour.

Vaccinations

At the global level, the IFRC's work in this area will focus on equitable access to vaccines and on promoting solidarity among the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, with the support of their respective governments. The IFRC will act as a neutral, independent facilitator between and within countries.

At the country level, the IFRC will support National Societies and their governments in planning and implementing vaccination campaigns in the hardest-to-reach areas, with the aim of immunizing the most marginalized people and "last-mile" communities.

The IFRC immunization plan is designed to close the gaps identified at different stages of vaccine rollout. It complements efforts by governments and [COVAX](#) that focus on procuring and distributing vaccines between countries, by focusing on measures to ensure equitable distribution within countries. These include measures to counter vaccine hesitancy by listening, responding and adapting to people's concerns, and ensuring that people are informed about when and how they can get vaccinated. It also covers efforts to identify high-risk individuals who might be "invisible" to authorities for cultural, linguistic or other reasons. In many last-mile settings, the IFRC plan will include the provision of equipment for vaccination facilities and will support our trained health personnel directly administering vaccines to people who might otherwise go without. It will be vital to provide more peer-to-peer and thematic coaching to National Societies, so that they can identify and address community beliefs, fears, rumours, questions and feedback about COVID-19 and vaccines. Expanding and promoting the use of existing community feedback tools at the local level will enable sustained interpretation of common trends and better inform the global response.

2. TACKLE POVERTY AND EXCLUSION: THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC IMPACT

The pandemic continues to affect the livelihoods and economic security of already vulnerable and marginalized populations worldwide. The socio-economic impact of COVID-19 and the increasing inequalities have been apparent in all regions. It will be essential to focus on these inequalities and scale up efforts to address them in the immediate, medium and long term. Many National Societies wish to do more in this area, as in some countries the socio-economic impact of the pandemic will continue long after the health crisis has abated. National Societies have community reach, knowledge and engagement with specific vulnerable groups, which they can use to support recovery from COVID-19.

To respond to the massive socio-economic impact, the IFRC network is scaling up its existing support for livelihoods and food security. It is also adapting existing programmes and developing new ones to address the fall-out from COVID-19 in many countries across the world, with a focus on social inclusion, cohesion and protection.

This work includes:

- providing immediate food aid and cash or vouchers, where viable, to assist the most vulnerable communities
- developing longer-term approaches and programmes to sustain these safety nets in the months to come
- supporting early recovery and adaptation to the pandemic threat.

Evidence and learning already exist from pilot livelihood initiatives conducted in 2020 that helped micro-enterprises affected by the crisis to restart their activities. These include programmes in Ecuador, El Salvador and Peru that used such innovations as the [ATLAS](#) business preparedness application. Those innovative pilot programmes can be adapted, replicated and scaled up. Some National Societies have engaged in the livelihood sector for the first time through their COVID-19 response, and there are opportunities for them to continue to respond and build their capacities.

3. STRENGTHEN NATIONAL SOCIETIES

With significant movement restrictions over the past year, the COVID-19 pandemic has underlined the need for strong, sustainable and accountable local responders.

This IFRC priority action seeks to strengthen its member National Societies as local organizations able to rapidly develop emergency operations and to adapt, prepare for, scale up and maintain readiness for such operations. It is intended to enhance both their COVID-19 response and their response to other disasters or crises.

This priority action also encompasses supporting our National Societies in their efforts to be well-functioning local organizations that are relevant within their own communities and have sustainable operational, organizational and financial structures and safe, well-managed staff and volunteers. This includes supporting National Societies in fulfilling their role as auxiliaries to their governments, strengthening risk analysis and continuing their disaster-risk-reduction and climate-risk-reduction activities safely and effectively.



Turkey, May 2020. Turkish Red Crescent volunteers support vulnerable communities by providing masks and meals, and sharing critical information on the virus.

ICRC APPEAL

The ICRC has continued to scale up its response to the pandemic, with a strong focus on areas and contexts where it has most added value and in accordance with its mandate: armed conflict and other situations of violence, and places of detention. It is conducting its operational response to COVID-19 in support of or in close cooperation with other Movement components.

The aims of the ICRC's COVID-19 response are to:

- strengthen the resilience of people, communities, systems and services affected by armed conflict and internal violence that are also having to deal with the COVID-19 pandemic
- help them adapt to the complex circumstances that the pandemic is generating.

Following a global review of its operations, and adjustments to its programmes, the ICRC is appealing for **CHF 229.4 million** (CHF 225 million for the field and CHF 4.4 million for its HQ) to continue supporting its critical response to COVID-19. That response includes the ICRC's efforts to ensure equitable vaccine access and coverage for people affected by armed conflict and other situations of violence, and to ensure that the focus of its response extends beyond the immediate effects of the pandemic. This amount represents 10% of the ICRC's overall budget of **CHF 2.3 billion** for 2021.⁴

THE ICRC'S RESPONSE TO COVID-19

The ICRC seeks to address the most pressing needs arising from the pandemic, focusing on:

- supporting vital health infrastructure
- supporting access to health care
- preventing the spread of diseases in places of detention, while safeguarding the rights and dignity of detainees
- ensuring access to clean water and sanitary living conditions, to reduce viral transmission
- supporting the safe and dignified management of human remains
- ensuring that communities at risk have access to life-saving services and information.

Vaccinations

The ICRC will:

- continue to advocate domestically and internationally for the inclusion of all population groups in national COVID-19 deployment and vaccination plans and other routine immunization services, including groups living in areas not under government control and people in detention
- directly support national vaccination campaigns and immunization services in areas covered by its operations and in hard-to-reach areas, at the request of a ministry of health or National Society
- in coordination with the IFRC, continue to promote and support National Societies in their auxiliary role, whether through financial support or donations of equipment and supplies
- act as a neutral intermediary to facilitate "last-mile" access for specific groups of the population across front lines, in hard-to-access areas, in areas under the control of non-State armed groups and in non-government-controlled areas; for example, it will seek to facilitate safe access for vaccination teams or provide a neutral space for local access and for negotiations between vaccinators and local communities and authorities, including non-State armed groups.

⁴ Revised budget as of 1 March 2021, including budget extensions launched by that date.

ICRC ACTIVITIES TO ADDRESS THE BROADER IMPACT OF THE PANDEMIC

Sustaining access to other essential services and protecting people's livelihoods and dignity are also crucial to the survival and well-being of communities. These activities are included in the plans of action set out in the 2021 Appeals, and the ICRC has adapted them in accordance with the specific needs of people affected by COVID-19 and in line with infection-prevention measures. These efforts to save lives, strengthen the resilience and protection of people and communities and ensure essential services constitute the ICRC's core work and expertise and are more critical than ever in helping communities emerge from the crisis.

The extensive network of National Societies continues to be a key element of the ICRC's operations, enabling it to stay close to the communities it serves. Their operational effectiveness is vital to supporting critical humanitarian responses and a key enabler for the ICRC's COVID-19 response. Furthermore, in coordination with other components of the Movement, the ICRC is providing material support and training to specific National Societies, so they can respond to this crisis effectively and safely.



Lima, Peru, April 2020. A member of ICRC staff provides the national penitentiary authorities with hygiene products and personal protection equipment for health workers.

CALL FOR ACTION

The Movement has received generous support from its partners to tackle this global pandemic, but significant funding gaps remain.

Owing to the local presence and reach of our National Societies around the world and the complementary mandates, expertise and institutional resilience of the different parts of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, it is in a unique position to contribute to the international community's collective response to the COVID-19 pandemic, ensuring local relevance and global coherence. The Movement has a globalized, extended reach, including in many last-mile settings. As a result, it can facilitate COVID-19 response activities, including administration of vaccines, or ensure that they reach people who might otherwise miss out.

The Movement continues to work with disenfranchised communities that are particularly vulnerable to the primary and secondary effects of COVID-19, enabling it to identify gaps in the response and any unintended consequences of the measures taken. Through the complementary use of its assets and capacities, the Movement collectively seeks to increase the cost-efficiency, timeliness and impact of its operations and services to affected people. Through its wide range of existing activities, it also continues to respond to other dire humanitarian emergencies, including the paramount need to maintain or restore routine immunization services.

The Movement is well-positioned to counter vaccine hesitancy, build community confidence in vaccines and reach high-risk individuals who may be marginalized in national vaccine rollout plans. Without additional funding, a significant gap will remain between the vaccines that will ultimately end this pandemic, and some of the most vulnerable and isolated people in the world. This gap means that the virus will continue to circulate and mutate, and that people will continue to die from the pandemic.

Despite enormous financial efforts to cover the Movement's response, more remains to be done as the constantly evolving crisis creates new vulnerabilities that must be addressed. A generous response to the revised appeals will enable further support for efforts to tackle the pandemic. Rapid, targeted and sustained action is required to save lives now and in the years to come, and we call for your support to enable the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement to further scale up its response.