

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

COVID-19 is directly impacting the lives of millions of people around the world. While all countries are affected and everyone is at risk, the pandemic **further exacerbates the vulnerabilities** (“**a crisis on top of a crisis**”) of people already at risk, be this due to armed conflict, violence, disaster, migration, their own health status, limited access to health care and the immunization gains of the past decade, their socio-economic situation or detention. Beyond its immediate health impacts, the crisis will have long-lasting repercussions for the most vulnerable, while also creating new vulnerabilities.

The health and socio-economic impact will have a wider effect on the needs of extremely vulnerable communities, including in relation to access to epidemic prevention measures, consistent and safe health services, safe and sanitary shelter and settlement, and population movements, and will have a knock-on effect on social care needs and on cohesion and integration across our societies. Greater severity of food insecurity is being experienced among the already food insecure, with the rural and urban poor considered the most at risk, followed by displaced people, migrants and informal workers. Millions of people on the move, who often live in sub-standard shelters, collective accommodation, inadequate housing, informal settlements and slums, with no or limited access to services, may be invisible or deprioritized and face stigma, discrimination and hostility. Pockets of further vulnerabilities affecting people within this group (e.g. women and older people) may lead to them being disproportionately affected by the pandemic.

Syrian Arab Red Crescent first aid squads are transferring patients to health facilities.



The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement (the Movement) continues to focus on **containing the spread of the pandemic**, while at the same time **addressing the deterioration in vulnerable peoples' livelihoods and communities' social cohesion and, above all, protecting, assisting and advocating for the most vulnerable**.

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) are jointly launching their revised coordinated appeals. This document grounds their separate, yet coordinated, appeals in a common narrative.

Together, the IFRC and the ICRC are appealing for CHF 3.1 billion to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic and its socio-economic impacts. These coordinated appeals build on the previous ones, jointly launched on 26 March 2020. They aim to respond to the emerging scale and scope of the current and projected impacts of the crisis.

THE RED CROSS AND RED CRESCENT APPROACH:

The components of the Movement have rapidly adjusted to the evolving reality of the pandemic, **adapting their programmes and stepping up their response** to the crisis, to address the needs and challenges emerging from the pandemic and as a result of the measures taken to curb its progress.

At the global and local levels, the Movement components are strengthening their collaboration with each other as well as with States, the United Nations (UN) and other organizations to achieve impact at scale, building on their complementarities.

National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies are present in all contexts and, as auxiliaries to their governments in the humanitarian field, are at the forefront of the battle against COVID-19. They are an integral part of national efforts to respond to the pandemic. In most contexts, National Societies have expanded the scope of their work, in support of national public health responses, focusing on epidemic control measures, risk communication, community engagement, health and hygiene promotion, community-based surveillance, infection prevention and control, mental health and psychosocial support services, isolation and clinical case management, ambulance services, access to health services and management of the dead.

Within the Movement, the **IFRC** is primarily responsible for supporting all National Societies in their COVID-19 response, allocating resources according to their needs, capacity and role in responding to the pandemic and its secondary health impact and socio-economic impact affecting the most vulnerable. The response to COVID-19 is **mobilizing the collective resources of the IFRC network** in support of its National Societies. The IFRC-wide response to COVID-19 also involves the **provision of peer support between National Societies**, through the deployment of country support teams to assist a National Society in its domestic response.

The **ICRC**, in close consultation with the IFRC and the host National Societies, coordinates the international Movement response in situations of armed conflict and internal disturbances. The ICRC's response to the pandemic focuses on maintaining and adapting activities that are at the heart of its mission and part of the organization's initial 2020 Appeal as well as activities that bring the most benefit to the people it seeks to serve. The ICRC has scaled up its response to the pandemic, with a strong focus on areas and contexts where it has most added value (armed conflict and other violence, and places of detention). Its operational response to COVID-19, carried out in support of or in close cooperation with other Movement components, is aimed at **strengthening the resilience of people and communities and systems and services affected by armed conflict and violence** now also having to face the COVID-19 pandemic and adapt to the complex circumstances generated by it.

This structured, yet agile, coordination aims to **ensure local relevance within global coherence**. Through the complementary use of the assets and capacities of the various Movement components, we collectively seek to increase the cost-efficiency, timeliness and meaningfulness of the operations we conduct and the services we provide to affected people.

The Movement components also collaborate to support the **sustainable development of National Societies**. Now, more than ever, we can appreciate the importance of strong National Societies as crucial local humanitarian responders, whose resilience will be severely tested by the effects of the crisis. The partnership between the ICRC and the IFRC around National Society domestic response plans is needed today, as never before, to improve the operational sustainability and accountability of National Societies so that they are able to serve communities in need now and in the future.

REGIONAL UPDATES

AFRICA

In Africa, the effects of COVID-19 are compounding continuing and recurrent crises, such as armed conflicts, eruptions of violence, other ongoing epidemics and natural disasters. The outbreak is expected to be prolonged in Africa, overstressing weaker health systems that are already straining under the heavy burden of diseases such as HIV/AIDS, cholera, measles and Ebola. The impacts could therefore be devastating for Africa's most vulnerable people, eroding community resilience and forcing the adoption of negative coping strategies.

The continent hosts an estimated 27 million refugees and internally displaced people as well as over one million detainees, many of whom live in overcrowded displacement camps or places of detention, often with poor access to health care, clean water and sanitation. Similarly, millions of people are living in congested slum settings and other urban areas, which present considerable additional risks due to overcrowding and inadequate hygiene conditions. These populations are particularly vulnerable to the effects of COVID-19 but are often not taken into account in national response plans.

Protecting and ensuring the dignity of affected populations in disasters, armed conflicts and disturbances and tensions continues to be a priority for the Movement across Africa. Jointly, the IFRC, the ICRC and National Societies are supporting African National Societies in their COVID-19 response, aiming at a complementary approach that takes into account the diversity of the National Societies' respective operational capacities and their role in national response plans. The IFRC is focusing on limiting the spread of the virus through outbreak control measures, while helping to maintain access to essential health-care services, strengthening gender-sensitive protection and improving the socio-economic well-being of the most vulnerable. At the same time, the ICRC continues to work to serve people affected by armed conflict and violence and to help people to protect themselves from the disease, particularly in places where few other organizations have access, such as in places of detention.



Uganda Red Cross Society volunteers are establishing handwashing stations in public places like markets.

IFRC

Democratic Republic of Congo

The Democratic Republic of the Congo is still reeling from an outbreak of Ebola. It also suffers from chronic outbreaks of diseases such as cholera and measles. These outbreaks put a further strain on local health services, which are now also having to cope with COVID-19. In addition, there have been indiscriminate attacks on health-care services and humanitarian aid.

In order to address the crisis in North Kivu, the IFRC and the ICRC have built on the working partnership established through the Ebola operation to extend concerted support to the National Society in their response to COVID-19. Given the complexity of the context, this joint approach, which capitalizes on the strengths of each Movement component, is essential in mobilizing an at-scale response built on the lessons learnt from a previous public health emergency.

AMERICAS

COVID-19 is placing enormous strain on already weak health systems and structures across the Americas and the Caribbean. In addition to the health emergency, there are now increasing socio-economic consequences, which will be long-lasting. Restrictions on movement, the disruption of the informal job sector and a sharp reduction in remittances from the diaspora exacerbate existing inequalities. Violence is also a major concern, affecting the most vulnerable groups, such as women and girls. Many countries also face immense challenges in coping with the large number of deaths related to COVID-19 and providing the necessary means to protect the dignity of the dead and their loved ones. Already overcrowded prison systems are poorly equipped to prevent or cope with the increasing number of infections, resulting in riots and violence in places of detention in some countries. At the same time, countries with migrant and refugee populations now face additional challenges in responding to their needs. At a time when many National Societies need to increase their capacity, they are struggling to maintain the status quo because their own national funding streams are also being severely impacted.

In the Americas, the IFRC and the ICRC have set up strong coordination mechanisms to ensure a timely, effective and meaningful response to humanitarian needs in the region, working closely with the National Societies of the Americas and the Caribbean, the communities at risk and the authorities to help them respond to the huge needs arising from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Colombia

The COVID-19 pandemic adds another degree of difficulty to an already complex and multi-layered humanitarian environment, with challenges ranging from armed conflict and other violence to migration, the impact of natural hazards and climate change. Movement partners in Colombia have managed to maintain their regular operations and to support the Colombian Red Cross response throughout the country.

Volunteers from the Ecuadorian Red Cross are providing support to the public health system in taking temperatures from people.



Ecuador

The Ecuadorian Red Cross is supporting local authorities with a field hospital and the provision of relevant services, including psychosocial support, blood and risk communication. The ICRC is supporting the Ecuadorian government with technical assistance in forensics, biosafety equipment, masks and management of the dead. The IFRC is supplying the Ecuadorian Red Cross with body bags, personal protective equipment for volunteers and water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) support from ongoing programmes through *force majeure* agreements with donors.

ASIA PACIFIC

As the COVID-19 pandemic continues to spread and intensify in a region that is home to 60 per cent of the world's population, it is compounding the situation of vulnerable groups on multiple fronts. The operational context in the region has become increasingly complex over the past decades, with challenges related to rapid (and in some cases unplanned) urbanization, increased migration and displacement, widening societal divisions and inequities, and enhanced frequency and intensity of climate-related disasters. In addition to effects on health and health systems, the pandemic will have negative socio-economic impacts, including on social cohesion, food security, livelihoods and the resilience of vulnerable people. This will be more pronounced in countries that rely heavily on remittances from citizens who are migrant workers within and beyond the region and in countries that are fragile and affected by internal armed conflict or other violence.

Against this backdrop, the IFRC and the ICRC are working closely in a complementary manner to support and enhance the efforts of National Societies responding to the immediate humanitarian consequences and anticipated longer-term impacts of COVID-19. The IFRC is providing funding and technical and membership coordination support to National Societies for them to scale up their response operations in line with their domestic mandates as auxiliaries to the public authorities. In addition to undertaking direct COVID-19 response activities relating to its mandate, the ICRC is complementing support to National Societies specifically in areas where it has technical expertise, such as Restoring Family Links and dignified management of the dead.

In countries experiencing internal armed conflict or other violence, the ICRC is providing funding and technical support to National Societies for the most affected parts of their territory, while the IFRC supports their activities in the rest of the country and overall membership coordination.

Philippines

The Philippine Red Cross COVID-19 response efforts in parts of Mindanao are supported by the ICRC to reach people affected by violence, while the IFRC is supporting the National Society's domestic response plan across the country. Furthermore, the National Society has provided support to the ICRC's COVID-19 detention activities by deploying and setting up tents to act as quarantine facilities in prisons.

Philippine Red Cross food distribution.



EUROPE AND CENTRAL ASIA

The impact of the pandemic in countries such as Italy, France or Spain has demonstrated that even developed economies are affected and will suffer long-lasting consequences, including the psychological impact on society. The spread of the virus poses new challenges to the lives of vulnerable individuals and communities across the region and is further compounding the vulnerabilities of displaced people and migrants, especially in Turkey and Greece. Whether affected by past or ongoing armed conflicts, deprivation of liberty, climate change or limited access to critical health services, vulnerable communities across the region are experiencing new difficulties in accessing essential services and humanitarian support and facing serious consequences caused by COVID-19, due to poor economic conditions and a lack of universal access to public health, safe water, hygiene and sanitation services. The situation is even more acute in conflict-affected countries.

In the medium to long term, the region is expected to face even more complex challenges related to the negative impact of the pandemic on national health-care systems, economies and the personal well-being of the most vulnerable groups, who are disproportionately affected by COVID-19.

To be prepared for this scenario, National Societies and their Movement partners must be well placed to support community-level public health measures aimed at preventing and controlling outbreaks over the medium to long term. Together, the ICRC and the IFRC focus on the most vulnerable groups and people living in fragile contexts, complementing each other based on their presence, access and expertise. The ICRC and the IFRC coordinate their support for National Societies based on complementarity, transparency, expertise and access, especially in the case of conflict-affected regions. At country and regional level, efforts are carefully coordinated in the areas of physical health, mental health and psychosocial support, risk communication and community engagement, first aid, migration, Restoring Family Links and the missing, National Society capacity development and communication.

Bosnia and Herzegovina

In addition to the ongoing operations to assist the migrant community, Movement partners support the National Society in implementing its COVID-19 response plan, focusing on infection prevention and control, provision of personal protective equipment, disinfection and basic needs assistance.

Ukraine

The coordination mechanisms in place allowed the Movement partners to adapt or develop their response strategy in a complementary way, based on their field presence, access, expertise and resources. For example, the ICRC focuses its direct action on the eastern part of the country, while all Movement partners are contributing to the country-wide risk communication campaign.

Ukrainian Red Cross is supporting the elderly with food kits and information prevention campaign.



MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA

The emergence of COVID-19 in the Middle East and North Africa poses major threats not only to people's health and the health system, but also in terms of its social and economic consequences and its impact on security and regional politics.

From a health perspective, in countries with armed conflict and fragile contexts (e.g. Iraq, Libya, Palestine, Syria and Yemen), the already weak health systems have limited capacity to carry out preventive, curative and mitigation measures, which contributes to an increased risk of community transmission. At the same time, in the typically overstretched health facilities, COVID-19 further hampers the treatment of pre-existing health conditions and efforts to meet the general health needs of the population, including mothers and children. The overall delivery of health care in the region is beginning to decline.

From a socio-economic perspective, lockdowns, curfews and restricted movement are having a significant impact on people and already fragile economies. Food security is threatened, and there is an increase in unemployment and underemployment. The impact on mental health is also unprecedented, and there are increasing levels of violence at home, gender-based violence and violence against children.

Several National Societies in the region play a vital role, in support of local public authorities, in health care and emergency medical services. Collaboration among the Movement partners at country level includes emergency front-line activities, such as the transportation of patients to and from hospitals (e.g. Lebanon, Palestine and Saudi Arabia), support for the safe management of quarantine centres (e.g. Egypt, Iran and Yemen), risk communication, health promotion, ongoing assistance to vulnerable communities, such as refugees, migrants and internally displaced people (e.g. Kuwait, Iraq, Qatar, Yemen, Lebanon, Jordan and Syria), and the prevention and containment of COVID-19 in places of detention (e.g. Lebanon, Syria, Iraq and Yemen).

The IFRC and the ICRC as well as the National Societies are well coordinated at country level in their response to the crisis. The Movement is coordinating with various stakeholders in the region, including the authorities, States, the UN and international agencies.

ICRC food distribution for displaced families in Yemen, while keeping social distance.



IFRC APPEAL

The IFRC's combined domestic and international financial ask is CHF 1.9 billion, out of which CHF 450 million is raised through the IFRC Secretariat in support of National Societies.

The overall objective of the COVID-19 operation is to contribute to reducing loss of life, while protecting the safety, well-being and livelihoods of the most vulnerable people. This revised Emergency Appeal highlights a continuous focus on the work of National Societies to deliver this response. The operational framework for the COVID-19 response is set out according to the three operational priorities.

- **Curb the pandemic – Sustaining health and WASH**
- **Tackle poverty and exclusion – Addressing the socio-economic impact**
- **Strengthen National Societies**

Curb the pandemic – Sustaining health and WASH

National Societies continue to play a key role in managing and reducing transmission. The key focus is to support National Societies in their role of “detecting, isolating, testing and treating” cases, which includes their role in community surveillance, contact tracing, infection prevention and control in health facilities, etc. At the community level, this involves National Society and community preparedness to mitigate and prevent transmission and supporting National Societies to continue their key role in educating and engaging with communities.

Tackle poverty and exclusion – Addressing the socio-economic impact

To respond to the massive socio-economic impacts, the IFRC network is scaling up its existing livelihoods and food security support and adapting or developing new programmes to address the fall-out from COVID-19 in many countries across the world, with a focus on social inclusion, cohesion and protection. This includes providing both immediate in-kind (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 and supporting early recovery and adaptation to the pandemic threat.

Strengthen National Societies

This priority combines our work to strengthen our member National Societies during these challenging times of the pandemic as local organizations able to rapidly develop, adapt, scale up and maintain readiness and prepare for emergency operations, including those for COVID-19 and for other emerging disasters or crises, and as 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.



Bangladesh Red Crescent volunteers are raising awareness on how to prevent COVID-19 and to counter rumours and misinformation.

ICRC APPEAL

Following a global review of its operations and adjustments to its programmes, the ICRC is appealing for CHF 1.2 billion for its response to COVID-19 and its broader impact on people affected by armed conflict and other violence. This includes CHF 366 million to support its **critical and immediate response to COVID-19**, and CHF 828 million to support **activities to address the broader impact of the pandemic**.

The ICRC is making a particular effort to ensure that the focus of its response extends beyond the immediate effects of the pandemic to include the economic and social consequences of the international response and policies, which have outpaced and outnumbered the health challenges and must also be urgently addressed.

- **Critical 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 disease in places of detention while safeguarding the rights and dignity of detainees, ensuring access to clean water and sanitary living conditions, supporting the safe and dignified management of human remains and enabling communities at risk to have access to life-saving services and information.

- **Activities to address the broader impact of the pandemic**

Alongside direct efforts to contain the COVID-19 pandemic, sustaining access to other essential services and protecting people's livelihoods and dignity is also crucial to the survival and well-being of communities. These activities, which are included in the plans of action set out in the 2020 Appeals, have been adapted according to 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 this 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. The operational effectiveness of National Societies 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 and where relevant, the ICRC is providing material support and training to specific National Societies so they can effectively and safely carry out their activities in response to this crisis.

CALL FOR ACTION

To date, there have been enormous efforts to cover the Movement response, and while there has been significant progress, more still needs to be done. The revised appeals will enable further support to be secured to tackle the pandemic. Rapid and targeted actions are required to save lives, and we call for your support to enable the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement to further scale up its ongoing response.