

Power of humanity

Council of Delegates of the International
Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement



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**COUNCIL OF DELEGATES
OF THE INTERNATIONAL RED CROSS
AND RED CRESCENT MOVEMENT**

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**Strengthening the resilience of urban communities:
Our way forward**

Background document

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1. INTRODUCTION

Operating in urban settings is not new to the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement (Movement). The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) network has thousands of branches and millions of volunteers in cities who respond to urban shocks and contribute significantly to rehabilitation, reconstruction and recovery efforts (Annex 1 provides examples of urban resilience projects implemented by National Societies). This has been evident in recent times, with National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (National Societies) working alongside local governments and city health service providers to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic in urban areas around the world.

The IFRC Plan and Budget 2021–2025, drawing on Strategy 2030, sets out specific commitments on adopting a multi-hazard approach and building the capabilities needed to respond to disasters and crises in urban contexts. This includes supporting 50 cities in adapting to longer-term impacts of climate change, including sea level rise, and protecting 250 million people from heat by 2025. Another significant target that has been set is for at least 50 National Societies to have context-specific urban strategies in place to enable them to prepare for and respond effectively to disasters and crises.

The background paper on shifting vulnerabilities and the final report of the 33rd International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent (IC33) mention urban contexts in relation to internal displacement yet fall short of addressing the exponential and multi-dimensional challenges that cities face when dealing with a rapidly growing population and the capacity of local governments to quickly adapt critical facilities, such as water systems, energy distribution, waste management and sanitation systems to the needs of urban residents. Access to services such as health and care, education, basic infrastructure and formal jobs can be difficult in many cities, especially when they are heavily overpopulated. Road accidents, violence, crime and the creation of urban slums can be both a result of these issues and a cause of many further problems for urban populations.

In view of these growing challenges, much more needs to be done to understand and address the needs of poor, marginalized and otherwise vulnerable communities in urban areas and to examine not only our added value but also how we can transform to meet these needs. Building on the successful efforts of the IFRC, the ICRC and National Society champions in recent years, the objective now is to agree on a comprehensive strategy and plan of action to 1) strengthen partnerships with relevant authorities, 2) scale up services and successful approaches and 3) use our strengths and experience to lead thinking and innovation on humanitarian action in urban settings.

The 2022 Council of Delegates presents a timely opportunity for the IFRC membership to declare its commitment to scaling up efforts to strengthen the resilience of urban communities to disasters, climate crises, population movements and pandemics, with a strong emphasis on leveraging the National Society auxiliary role at national and municipal levels, and to reinforce the role of local actors as partners of choice.

2. BACKGROUND

Throughout history, the higher level of development of cities has attracted people migrating from rural areas in search of opportunities and better living conditions. Today, the global population is estimated at roughly 7.6 billion people, and around 54% of them live in cities (according to United Nations data). However, urban populations grow by roughly 1.4 million

people every week and are projected to reach two-thirds of the world's population by 2050.¹ This rapid urban growth forces poor, marginalized and otherwise vulnerable communities to settle in the most hazardous areas, facing multiple risks stemming from lack of access to basic services and exclusion from support provided by local municipalities, whose budgets are often insufficient to meet the growing population's needs. Many people in such unsafe locations lack property rights and a strong, stable livelihood, and this can lead to competition and tension among communities or a rise in urban violence.

In Indonesia, for instance, research has suggested that the river flood risk could increase by 166% over the next 30 years due to the rapid expansion of urban areas, and the coastal flood risk could be 4.5 times higher by the end of this period. The risk of damage due to earthquakes in Kathmandu – measured as the proportion of buildings that collapse in an earthquake – is expected to double to 50% by 2045 due to informal building expansion resulting from rapid urbanization.²

These risks are compounded by other factors. The IFRC [World Disasters Report 2020](#) highlights the compounding effect of climate change on poverty, displacement and health. More frequent and extreme weather and climate events caused by the changing climate hit cities the hardest. Many of the world's largest cities are located in deltas and are highly prone to flooding, sea level rise and other hazards due to the expansion of impermeable surfaces, increased groundwater extraction and destruction of the natural environment. People living in urban areas, particularly in the densest parts of the city with the fewest green spaces, are among the hardest hit when a heatwave occurs.³ The effects of climate change in rural areas – such as changed cropping patterns, depleted fish stocks and dried up water sources – push people to migrate to cities. A study in Mozambique suggested that 40% of migrants moving to urban areas had left their rural homes, in part, because of environmental problems, including “those likely to result from climate change”.⁴

The COVID-19 pandemic has affected urban centres disproportionately, compared to rural areas, and has served as a precursor to what humanitarians can expect the “new normal” to be. In addition to the lack of access to health care, educational facilities, an adequate supply of safe water and sanitation services, widespread lockdown measures put unprecedented pressure on vulnerable urban communities and strained National Society capacities. Since the beginning of the pandemic, National Societies have stepped up programming and have supported their respective national and local governments and city service providers in delivering a wide range of critical activities, such as risk communication, remote psychological support, setting up hand washing stations in informal settlements, delivering food and hygiene materials and cash distributions to help people who have lost their livelihoods to survive and pay the rent. In addition, new issues compounded by the pandemic have emerged in the cities of both developing and developed countries.

For instance, National Societies in the European Union have together explored the issue of homelessness and new vulnerabilities that impact specific groups, providing an opportunity to establish closer links between national and international programmes. Another new challenge is that advances in the digitalization of urban services mean that residents must comply with complex legal and/or administrative requirements (such as online payment of utility bills or taxes). This may exclude people who do not have access to mobile networks or are less able

¹ UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA) (2018), [2018 Revision of World Urbanization Prospects](#)

² Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery (GFDRR) (2016), [The making of a riskier future: How our decisions are shaping future disaster risk](#)

³ R. Singh, J. Arrighi, E. Jjemba, K. Strachan, M. Spires and A. Kadihasanoglu (2019), [Heatwave Guide for Cities](#), Red Cross Red Crescent Climate Centre

⁴ United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) (2009), [Climate Change and Humanitarian Action: Key Emerging Trends and Challenges](#), OCHA Occasional Policy Briefing Series No. 2

to connect to digital platforms from livelihood opportunities or essential information on safety and disaster risks.

The IFRC's Strategy 2030 anticipates many changes in the way people will need to deal with the impact of climate change, disasters, migration and pandemics and their direct and secondary socio-economic impacts, as we are learning from COVID-19. These changes are expected to be more drastic and happen faster in dynamic urban contexts. As the IFRC, our focus over the coming decade will be on reducing the impact of current and future humanitarian shocks associated with disasters and crises, including emergencies – both acute and protracted – and supporting people, wherever needed, so that they can cope with these impacts and thrive.

3. ANALYSIS/PROGRESS

A. Building on the experience of National Societies in urban programming

The IFRC dedicated the *World Disasters Report 2010* to urban risk. In addition to putting a spotlight on rising vulnerabilities, the report highlighted that urban communities are capable of finding their own solutions, asserting their rights and playing a full role in post-disaster recovery and risk reduction. In 2012, the IFRC Asia Pacific region completed [a strategic direction](#) study to explore the Red Cross and Red Crescent (RCRC) niche and services in urban settings in the region. The Global Disaster Preparedness Centre (GDPC) conducted [Urban Risk Dialogues](#) and organized a series of workshops in 2013 and 2014. These workshops highlighted existing challenges and developed a vision for urban resilience for National Societies. The IFRC Urban Disaster Risk Reduction initiative resulted in the Tehran Call for Action, adopted in May 2015, and a comprehensive guide for urban resilience.⁵ The publication [No time for doubt: Tackling urban risk](#) profiled key urban initiatives in the Latin America region. To deliver local humanitarian action in a fast-changing world in Asia Pacific, the [Manila Declaration](#) (2018) calls for innovative approaches and technologies, the revitalization of volunteerism and youth mobilization and engagement in urban coalitions and multi-stakeholder partnerships as key requirements for becoming partners of choice and improving the efficiency and effectiveness of action in highly complex urbanized areas.

The IFRC has also actively engaged in the multi-stakeholder Global Alliance for Urban Crises ([GAUC](#)) and the UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR) Making Cities Resilient initiative ([MCR2030](#)) as a member of the Steering Committees of both. The [Urban Collaboration Platform](#) has served as the Movement's technical-level knowledge sharing platform on urban risk and programming since 2015 and has many National Societies and the ICRC as members. At the regional level, the IFRC [Asia Pacific Urban Community Resilience Hub](#) serves as both a platform and network to strengthen connections among urban resilience actors, promote knowledge sharing and improve organizational resilience for National Societies in the region with many partners.

As the co-lead of the [Global Shelter Cluster](#), the IFRC has had a significant influence on shifting the focus of the sector towards urban contexts and has been promoting equitable land and housing rights and leading area-based approaches in urban recovery efforts. The ICRC has been working in urban conflict zones, including Iraq, Gaza, Ukraine, Syria and Yemen, for 30 years, maintaining essential infrastructure and delivering humanitarian services. Representation from all components of the Movement has been increasingly strong and active over the years at the biannual World Urban Forum, organized by UN-Habitat, and the RCRC voice and insights from across the Movement⁶ were taken into account in the [New Urban Agenda](#) that was adopted at Habitat III in 2016 in Quito, Ecuador.

⁵ IFRC (2017), *Building urban resilience: A guide for Red Cross and Red Crescent engagement and contribution*

⁶ IFRC at Habitat III; ICRC at Habitat III

Annex 1 provides a summary of some of the initiatives and projects implemented by National Societies. Based on what we have learned from these experiences, we have identified the following overarching features of the urban context to inform our approach and operational framework:

- **Cities are complex systems.** There are many interrelated, co-existing formal and informal networks, diverse communities and a much larger range of actors making decisions and taking action. There are also a multitude of “communities of identity” that often overlap (e.g. people can be part of different religious, professional and family networks) in cities. A stakeholder analysis, conducted mainly through the assessment phase and coalition-building, is of utmost importance in identifying these different entities, which have varying degrees of impact and influence. This will help create ownership of the outcomes and promote collaboration in the risk reduction process.
- **A lack of adequate and reliable access to basic services**, when coupled with exposure to hazards and limited economic means, **is one of the most important determinants of vulnerability in cities.** Access to formal and informal systems in cities is controlled and enabled by laws and policies as well as by culture and social norms during disaster and non-disaster times.
- The complexity of urban environments requires **repeated engagement with a larger, more diverse group of stakeholders and partners** and over longer periods to build relationships to ensure the sustainability of the initiatives undertaken and better preparedness for future urban shocks and crises.
- **Many of the hazards, risks and vulnerabilities that communities face in cities and towns cannot be fully mapped or understood without a city-scale perspective.** Similarly, community-based resilience efforts will not have the desired impact unless they are linked to key city-level stakeholders, most prominently local governments and municipal authorities.
- Urban disasters and crises are intrinsically fluid and dynamic; the changing level of severity and needs and the emergence of new vulnerabilities mean that response capacities and **preparedness plans must be flexible** and allow for complementarity and redundancy.
- **Understanding interlinkages with rural and peri-urban areas and taking them into account in action plans is critical.** Urban areas do not exist in isolation, and disasters do not have administrative boundaries. Cities often serve larger catchment areas around them.
- **The fast-growing urban youth population is a key driver of change.** Digitally connected and eager to learn and share innovative solutions to improve the quality of their living environments, they are playing a pivotal role in building smarter and socially more inclusive cities. Young volunteers serving urban National Society branches promote a culture of non-violence, humanitarian education and social justice as antidotes to crime, poverty and exclusion.

B. Addressing the systemic nature of urban risk and vulnerabilities

Cities are highly complex systems with many sub-systems co-existing and interacting at a variety of levels. Disasters and other crises act like a magnifying glass, exposing pre-existing inequalities and weaknesses in these systems. In urban disasters and crises, humanitarians find themselves face to face with systemic challenges, conventionally deemed to be “development” issues, such as complex infrastructure, city governance, poverty and markets.

Displacement from conflict, persecution and violence is at its highest level in 70 years. According to UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, at the end of 2018, 70.8 million people were forcibly displaced worldwide. Over 80% of refugees are in low- and middle-income countries,

which are also experiencing the fastest rates of urbanization, and increasingly refugees are settling in urban areas. The Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030 stresses the need for more dedicated action on tackling underlying disaster risk drivers and strengthening good governance at all levels, including the city.

Cities are often lauded as places of opportunity and engines of growth, but significant inequalities exist in access to these opportunities. Informality is woven into the fabric of the many systems in cities. In developing countries, 30% of the urban population live in slums, and 80% of the urban workforce is informally employed. In Africa, the figure for the informally employed is as high as 86% in Kampala, Uganda. Informality is an important risk driver not only because people live and work in unregulated and unsafe conditions and earn significantly less money, but also because these workers are often invisible and have no legal rights. Women are more exposed to informal employment in more than 90% of sub-Saharan African countries.

The risks and difficulties urban residents face in securing even the basic necessities – safe, dignified shelter, nutritious food, clean water and sanitation – maintaining good health, finding a sustainable livelihood and organizing childcare, amidst challenges ranging from poor air quality and traffic accidents to a lack of protection, put an enormous and persistent strain on them, and often these everyday needs are prioritized over long-term disaster risks.⁷

National Societies are well positioned to convene partners around resilience and enable a greater level of multi-stakeholder problem-solving and local investment in community and household resilience. National Societies are also auxiliaries to their governments in the humanitarian field, a role that can be interpreted and applied at local level. This provides a unique opportunity to engage with the most vulnerable and often invisible people and communities and improve conditions for individual and community resilience. They can also engage with city authorities, planners and decision makers, providing information from vulnerability and capacity assessments that could help government authorities address acute conditions of vulnerability and risk. In urban areas, working closely with city authorities and municipalities is particularly important since they have direct influence over the well-being of urban communities and the sustainability of cities through their role in urban planning and the delivery of basic services, transportation, the energy supply and solid waste management.

Determining how such services can be delivered in a more environmentally sustainable way is a pressing question and one that aligns with the IFRC's new direction on Green Response, which aims to ensure that our work protects the environment and does not contribute to climate change.

Ultimately, new needs in cities call for innovative initiatives, such as the [What now?](#) Platform, which develops key safety messages, or the partnership with [AirBnB open homes](#), which offers free accommodation in cities to relief workers deployed to help fight the COVID-19 pandemic.

The RCRC toolkit for [Building Urban Resilience](#) aims to assist National Societies in initiating and co-leading a civic engagement process with local governments in cities. It is based on the premise that coalitions are necessary to address problems in complex settings like cities and that no organization can do it alone. As [experiences](#) in Indonesia and Vanuatu have shown, this kind of coalition-building process enables National Societies to engage a wide set of interested stakeholders including local government, civil society organizations, the private sector, academia and community volunteers to identify and pursue locally developed solutions for resilience.⁸

⁷ IFRC (2010), *World Disasters Report 2010*

⁸ [Video on Coalition-building in Coastal Cities in Indonesia](#)

C. Strengthening inclusion, equity and social capital as the glue for urban resilience

The IFRC prioritizes and fosters inclusive growth and diversity so that all people feel represented, seen and heard and can fully participate in the improvement of their neighbourhoods and cities. The IFRC is committed to leaving no one behind, which is the fundamental concept behind the inclusive cities commitment stipulated in the Sustainable Development Goals ([SDG 11](#)) and the [New Urban Agenda](#), which was endorsed at the Habitat III Conference in 2016 by over 165 governments. The concept of inclusive cities involves a complex web of multiple spatial, social and economic factors. Socially inclusive cities are places where equity is translated into three-dimensional physical reality in the form of affordable and equitable housing, public transport solutions, public spaces that are open for street vendors and open green areas. Urban areas must be understood by looking at their entire systems rather than just their individual parts, which requires more holistic approaches, such as the integrated neighbourhood approach increasingly promoted by the IFRC network.

Gender- and diversity-sensitive disaster risk reduction (DRR) and resilience efforts not only improve the conditions for one particular target group of people, but also reduce overall community vulnerability and increase community resilience. In cities and towns, there is a higher level of diversity and resources as well as conflict and, in some places, widespread violence, due to competition over access to limited resources. Increasingly, cities are becoming the destination for migrants and displaced people, where they often face discrimination.

Cohesive social structures providing support at individual, household and local community level are an integral part of community resilience and city resilience.⁹ National Societies are well placed to help urban communities strengthen inclusion and social capital, ease tensions between host and migrant communities and prevent violence in urban areas by promoting community mobilization and facilitating dialogue and interaction between different community groups, city authorities and other stakeholders. Young RCRC volunteers create opportunities to engage and participate in co-planning community spaces, such as playgrounds and child-friendly spaces, conducive to building a sense of safety and belonging.

In addition to promoting civic engagement in city disaster and emergency planning, response and recovery mechanisms, National Societies can also make a difference by addressing urban inequity, another aspect of the urban development process. Working together with local governments, National Societies can advocate for increased DRR investment, climate change adaptation measures, use of the IFRC disaster law checklist,¹⁰ the strengthening of local disaster management capacities and the inclusion of disadvantaged urban residents in policy decisions to resolve the unequal and unfair distribution of services and resources or health outcomes. The IFRC is a member of the Global Coordinating Committee of UNDRR's Making Cities Resilient 2030 ([MCR2030](#)) initiative, and there are contributions from all National Societies to local DRR and resilience actions.

4. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

The IFRC will strive to have dedicated capacity for urban programming and capacity-building/support in each region as well as in Geneva. In addition, a network of urban specialists will be established at National Societies for technical and peer-to-peer support, with clear linkages and complementarities with the ICRC in cities affected by conflict.

Urban thinking and responsibilities will be mainstreamed into all relevant technical, management and leadership positions and job descriptions.

⁹ [Arup City Resilience Index](#)

¹⁰ IFRC (2019), [The Checklist on Law and Disaster Preparedness and Response](#)

Strategic and efficient global and country-level partnerships with other agencies and stakeholders specializing in urban programming will also be enhanced. Current global partnerships can be extended to cover the anticipation and reduction of climate-induced disaster risks, such as heatwaves, floods and storm surges. Finally, we should also find ways to better leverage the opportunities that ongoing global partnerships such as the One Billion Coalition for Resilience (1BC) and the Risk-informed Early Action Partnership (REAP) afford us to do more in urban settings.

5. IMPLEMENTATION AND MONITORING

The monitoring and implementation phase will be discussed, and the necessary next steps identified through the consultation process.

6. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In view of the challenges and opportunities posed by urban areas worldwide, there is a need for the Movement to step up its engagement on this issue. The 2022 Council of Delegates presents a timely opportunity to boost, reassert and further institutionalize our commitment to strengthening Movement-wide preparedness and response to disasters and crises in urban areas, making city residents, especially those most at risk, more resilient. The growing auxiliary role of National Societies, along with new city-led initiatives and effective urban resilience efforts, should be emphasized as a catalyst for action. A strong commitment by the Movement to strengthening the catalyst role of National Societies in addressing urban resilience more broadly and systematically will contribute to achieving the goal of “leaving no one behind”.

The proposed resolution identifies **three areas of commitment** and provides a set of concrete measures to enhance the quality and coherence of the Movement’s response. These are consistent with the IC33 Declaration and IFRC urban position paper, the Sendai Framework and the New Urban Agenda and seek synergies with the IFRC’s internal work on migration and anticipatory action and with the ICRC’s work on cities in conflict. On the basis on these measures, the resolution will set up a working group to agree on a comprehensive strategy and plan of action to be adopted at the next Council of Delegates in 2023.

1. **Plan better: strengthen the roles and key functions of National Societies through existing or new partnerships with municipalities and city stakeholders** including, but not limited to, DRR and risk management, climate-smart initiatives at different levels, road safety, humanitarian service points to assist people on the move, pre-hospital care, first aid, water and sanitation in urban slums and marginalized neighbourhoods, domestic violence and disaster response scenarios, which should increase the relevance of National Societies.

In view of the interdependency of urban systems (infrastructure and services networks, social networks, built spaces), these coalitions/partnerships will lead to a better understanding of the characteristics and dynamics of urban contexts, local expertise, structures and actors (city administrations, municipalities and the private sector) and their capacities, including the exchange of skills, expertise and advice, the provision of manpower, networking/contacts, equipment and supply chains. Specific National Society assets can also be made “fit for purpose”, for example, by tailoring their urban search and rescue capacities, as many have traditionally focused on rural, coastal or mountain search and rescue.

2. **Support better: diversify and promote RCRC service delivery in cities for the most vulnerable groups and build resilience using inclusive approaches.** There

is no doubt about the importance of social ties in cities in combating isolation and marginalization, and the role of National Societies in restoring social links could be made more effective in the future, by supporting at-risk and vulnerable people. This involves providing information, guidance and assistance on mechanisms and procedures for accessing services provided by public institutions and private entities, including both activities carried out directly by the Red Cross and Red Crescent to assist people in need and support to enable them to access the services and benefits provided by other public and private actors (access to decent homes, health services, digital literacy, psychosocial support). It is necessary to identify relevant services for people with less access to public services or who could benefit from the quality services National Societies can provide. This could be related to health or social services.

3. **Implement better:** collaborate with city innovation partners, youth leaders and RCRC urban branch volunteers to accelerate citizen-led participation, the co-planning of safer neighbourhoods and humanitarian education to reduce inequality and vulnerability. Humanitarian and disaster risk awareness and education in the community can be achieved by targeting children and adolescents, in particular, to improve their knowledge of hazards, vulnerability and response capacities and tools. IFRC targets for climate and health and youth-led climate activities can drive this collaboration and calls for increased action.

Annex 1: Examples of IFRC urban initiatives

Urban Empowerment and Resilience Project – Bangladesh Red Crescent Society

The Urban Resilience and Empowerment project aims to build community and stakeholder ownership, with a view to creating a sustainable governance structure in urban slums in Gazipura in Bangladesh. The main threats faced in the area are identified by the community as lack of sanitation, waste management and safe water, high drug usage, poverty and unemployment. The application of the resilience radar methodology led the Bangladesh Red Crescent Society to focus on the development of a city governance system consisting of cluster committees at the community level up to the city corporation at the city level and the inclusion of a cost-sharing mechanism in their actions. The achievements include improved waste management and sanitation awareness, increased knowledge about rights and entitlements and higher school attendance.

Urban Disaster Risk Reduction Project in China – Hong Kong Red Cross

Due to rapid urbanization, different types of settlements, such as urban villages, old towns, shantytowns, villages turned into communities and rural-urban fringes, have emerged in China. These towns shared common challenges, such as low potential for disaster mitigation, low self-help capacity, a high-density living environment prone to security risks, inadequate infrastructure and ineffective urban governance systems. The project activities included building community clinics and warehouses, with the provision of equipment, and training and community awareness activities. As a result, communities were able to manage the clinics and warehouses and gained a stronger sense of cohesiveness and connection. The challenges encountered during project implementation were mainly difficulties in mobilizing the community, building trust and ensuring effective coordination between different stakeholders.

Coalition-Building for Urban Climate Resilience – Indonesian Red Cross Society, Vanuatu Red Cross Society and Myanmar Red Cross Society

The Indonesian Red Cross Society (PMI) piloted the Coalition-Building in Cities Programme in two very different cities. Semarang is a large city in Java that has already carried out some coalition- and resilience-building work through the Rockefeller 100 Resilient Cities initiative. Ternate, on the other hand, is a small city located on a small island in North Maluku in eastern Indonesia where the project was a very new concept. The PMI learned that although city size may make a difference to whether the project activities have city-wide reach and impact (due to project resources and funding), overall, the key factor for a successful coalition was the commitment of the coalition partners. The Vanuatu Red Cross Society (VRC) implemented a similar approach in the city of Luganville. Working collaboratively

with a wide range of partners and facilitating a coalition was a new experience for both the PMI and the VRC, involving a new and challenging methodology that led to strengthened relationships at city level, community-level action and a renewed commitment to working together. The same model is being implemented in Mawlamyine, a coastal city in Myanmar.

Community Mobilization in Urban Areas – Red Cross Society of Côte d'Ivoire

The emerging settlements around the capital city Abidjan have common characteristics, such as a lack of proper electricity, water, sanitation and waste management and non-existent or ineffective urban development plans. The project aimed to address the sanitation issue and flooding risks by increasing the resilience of communities to the challenges identified. Activities focused on training and awareness campaigns, including training for community volunteers, clubs in schools and simulation drills. The biggest challenges were demotivated volunteers and weak community participation and cohesion. Activities to overcome these problems included the organization of football games and cooking, dancing, sketching and hygiene competitions in which different age and gender groups participated.

Sarafu Community Inclusion Currency: Localized Credit Supporting the Most Vulnerable – Kenya Red Cross Society

Through Community Inclusion Currencies, people have a way to exchange goods and services and incubate businesses, without relying on scarce national currency and volatile markets. The Kenya Red Cross Society supports and implements the Sarafu network in Kenya which provides local credit to communities, allowing small businesses to accept Sarafu as payment for goods and services. As of March 2020, Sarafu had a rapidly growing distribution network with 11,000 (mostly very small) businesses located in informal settlements in urban areas and in some of the poorest regions of the country. On the consumer side, any Kenyan can sign up to use Sarafu and receive 100 Sarafu credits which they can redeem with participating vendors. Additional Sarafu are distributed on a weekly basis, and the number of users is growing; the more Sarafu circulates, the more resilient local economies and vulnerable households become.

Urban Resilience Project and Youth Innovation – Kenya Red Cross Society

The Kenya Red Cross Society has been operating in informal settlements in Nairobi since 2008 with the support of the Danish Red Cross. These settlements face multiple challenges, such as congestion, illegal and undesignated dumping sites, water contamination, drainage blockages and the disposal of non-biodegradable waste. The project aims to make urban communities in seven informal settlements in Nairobi more resilient through community-level activities including DRR and livelihood improvement.

The National Society was able to engage young people through hackathons, a type of innovation competition focusing on three thematic areas: environmental conservation and water use; open and public space innovation; and livelihood/business solutions to youth unemployment. The winning ideas include the eco-briquette, a compressed block of combustible biomass material, and creating safe, affordable, healthy and child-friendly play spaces for children and nursing mothers in marketplace contexts.

Urban Resilience in Saida – Lebanese Red Cross

The Community-Based Disaster Risk Management (CBDRM) project aims to build the resilience of vulnerable people and communities through collaboration in the city of Saida. The project activities include creating safe spaces for children, improving the infrastructure of schools, providing firefighting and disaster awareness training and conducting school evacuation drills. It was seen that when communities are engaged early on, they become aware of their ability to achieve change, which creates a sense of ownership of the programme being implemented. The Lebanese Red Cross is also implementing projects targeting refugees in the old city of Saida in collaboration with local government authorities.

The activities include creating community emergency response teams and renovating water supply points. One of the lessons learned is the importance of working with existing entities and creating space for communities to manage their internal challenges. It is also important to provide services in an integrated manner, bringing together host and refugee communities to build social cohesion.

COVID-19 response in cities – Lebanese Red Cross

The implementation of COVID-19 measures in urban settings in Lebanon was deemed unique. The inclusion of all stakeholders ensured an effective response at the decision-making level, along with the adoption of preventive measures at the individual level. The Lebanese Red Cross DRR Unit engaged

with all government entities following an “onion-like model” (national Disaster Risk Management Unit, ministries, governorates, Ka’emakams, unions of municipalities and municipalities). Additionally, youth and community groups have been involved and have played an active leading role. For instance, with lockdown measures easing and businesses re-opening, an initiative was designed with the Ministry of Labour under which university students were trained to monitor the implementation of precautionary measures at operating premises. This highlighted the importance of establishing extensive coordination mechanisms to respond to emergencies and crises in urban settings.

Challenges of Data Collection in the Urban Context – Mexican Red Cross

The Flood Resilience Programme consisted of two phases (from 2013 to 2018 and from 2018 to 2023) focusing on enhancing community flood resilience and improving resilience measurement in semi-urban communities. Currently, there is no empirically verified measurement tool for disaster resilience, and the Flood Resilience Measurement Framework developed under the project aimed to provide the means to assess and demonstrate the impact of our activities, with a view to achieving increased social, political and financial investment in building flood resilience. The lessons learned include the importance of involving decision makers, local authorities and key stakeholders in the design phase, complementing the data collection process with vulnerability and capacity assessments and repeatedly sharing information on the programme to increase community ownership.

Urban Disaster Risk Reduction and Resilience – Myanmar Red Cross Society

The project aimed to strengthen resilience and reduce vulnerability in targeted communities in the cities of Yangon and Mandalay. The project activities included small-scale mitigation activities approved and included in the community action plans that were developed, conducting risk reduction awareness sessions and activities in communities and schools and continuing to develop the competencies and capacities of the Red Cross township branches and their volunteers to manage DRR activities at the community level. The DRR activities and action plans developed by the community members based on multi-sector risk and needs assessments targeted the most vulnerable people in selected wards. A city-wide risk assessment was conducted by the Red Cross branch and other stakeholders under the Coastal Cities Resilience project implemented in the city of Mawlamyine.

Strengthening Urban Resilience and Engagement (SURE) – Nepal Red Cross Society

The SURE programme, implemented by the Nepal Red Cross Society in partnership with the British Red Cross, focuses on multiple natural and man-made hazards. It has supported seven municipalities across three of Nepal’s major urban centres over a five-year period (2016–2021) to improve the urban disaster resilience of municipal governments, the Nepal Red Cross Society and citizens, including specific vulnerable groups in the targeted municipalities. Heavily emphasizing participatory approaches aimed at engaging urban populations, the programme uses citizen voices, targeting the most vulnerable groups, and encourages “champions” to create bottom-up demand for local governments to improve disaster resilience. The SURE programme has directly reached 973,000 people so far and generated 1,080 champions (739 of them female) trained in urban DRR and the dissemination of messages in the local community and strongly involved in municipal- and ward-level planning activities. It has also reached 7,178 students and teachers engaged in the urban DRR safer school package. SURE moves away from geospatially-defined programme activities and uses a network-based approach. SURE also works with the “missing middle” or local government (municipalities) to provide technical disaster management support and create linkages between government and hard-to-reach and vulnerable communities who are hardest hit by disasters.

Damascus Water Emergency Response Project – Syrian Arab Red Crescent

The Syrian Arab Red Crescent (SARC) developed the Damascus Water Cut and Emergency Response Plan to address the dire water situation in Damascus in December 2016 when 4.5 to 5 million people in the city and the surrounding area were left without water for 40 days. The SARC, working closely with the city authorities and the affected communities, developed a contingency plan and started work immediately on rehabilitating the main water sources and tunnels and pipelines once the area was safely accessible. The experience demonstrated the importance of having a contingency plan in place, identifying the skills and availability of community members and communicating all the steps of the plan to relevant stakeholders, including community members and the authorities, to ensure funding, technical support and effective implementation.

Urban Community Centres for Refugees and Host Communities – Turkish Red Crescent Society

The Turkish Red Crescent Society Community Centres have been providing services to help migrants live with dignity and in harmony with host communities. The activities carried out by the Community Centres also cater specifically to children, who are among the most vulnerable and who are key in facilitating social cohesion and development among communities. These efforts aim to reduce vulnerabilities by increasing understanding of their needs and taking the necessary action to strengthen individual and social well-being. In one of these initiatives, the Kızılay Community Centre in the city of Şanlıurfa brought refugee children with hearing impairments together with students at the School for Children with Impairments for a four-week social cohesion workshop.

Pioneering Urban Anticipatory Action for Heatwaves: Viet Nam Red Cross Society

The Viet Nam Red Cross Society (VNRC) is a pioneer in Community-based Disaster Risk Assessment (CBDRA) and Management (CBDRM) in urban areas, linking ward-level CBDRM reports to urban planning processes, such as the Climate Action Plan, Urban Master Plans and Socio-economic Development Plans. In addition, in recent years, the VNRC has become widely recognized as the first National Society to develop an Early Action Protocol for Heatwaves in urban areas. The VNRC's efforts in this field began in 2018, supported by the German Red Cross forecast-based financing project – FbF Ready – in Hanoi, where the average daily temperatures have risen in recent years; past heatwaves led to a 20% increase in hospital admissions for all causes and 45.9% for respiratory diseases. The VNRC applied a suite of tools to map urban stakeholders and identify heat vulnerability and exposure in urban areas and worked closely with the Institute of Meteorology, Hydrology and Environment (IMHEN) to set triggers for early action, while training volunteers in unique urban heatwave standard operating procedures. The VNRC's successful efforts have been scaled up in multiple cities, as reflected in its approved 2021 Early Action Protocol.