Strengthening the resilience of urban communities: Our way forward

BACKGROUND DOCUMENT

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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 192 National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (National Societies) with thousands of branches and millions of volunteers in cities who respond to urban shocks and contribute significantly to rehabilitation, reconstruction and recovery efforts. This has been most evident in recent times, with 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. A 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 shock and stresses caused by disasters and crises. 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.

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, 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 overpopulated. The creation of slums, road accidents, violence and crime 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 the root causes, to address the needs of poor, marginalized and otherwise vulnerable communities in urban contexts 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 International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and National Society champions in recent years, the objective is to:

1) *strengthen partnerships* with relevant urban stakeholders (local authorities, other NGOs, academia and the private sector)
2) *scale up services* and successful approaches to build resilience (focusing especially on the sustainability of the efforts, with the involvement of communities in finding solutions)
3) *use the Movement's strengths and experience* to lead thinking and innovation on humanitarian action in urban contexts.

The 2022 Council of Delegates presents a timely opportunity for all components of the Movement to declare their commitment to scaling up efforts to strengthen the resilience of urban communities to sudden onset disasters, climate crises, population movements, pandemics, urban violence, internal disturbances and tensions, and armed conflicts, 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, 56% of the estimated world population lives in cities.[1] However, urban populations grow by roughly 1.4 million people every week

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[1] https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.URB.TOTL.IN.ZS

and are projected to reach two-thirds of the world's population by 2050.[2] 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.[3]

These risks are aggravated 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.[4] The effects of climate change in rural areas – such as changed cropping patterns, forest fires, 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".[5]

The COVID-19 pandemic has affected urban centres disproportionately,[6] 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, the setting up of hand washing stations in informal settlements, the delivery of 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, such as unequal access to (digital) education, a sharp rise in violence, an increase in mental health problems, homelessness and obstacles to finding employment.

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.[7] These changes are expected to be more drastic and happen faster in dynamic urban contexts. The IFRC's focus over the coming decade will be on reducing the impact of current and future humanitarian shocks and stresses, including emergencies – both acute and protracted – and supporting people, wherever needed, so that they can cope with these impacts and thrive.

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[2] UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA) (2018), *2018 Revision of World Urbanization Prospects*
[3] Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery (GFDRR) (2016), *The making of a riskier future: How our decisions are shaping future disaster risk*
[4] R. Singh, J. Arrighi, E. Jjemba, K. Strachan, M. Spires and A. Kadihasanoglu (2019), *Heatwave Guide for Cities*, Red Cross Red Crescent Climate Centre
[5] 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
[6] IFRC (2021), *Drowning just below the surface: The socioeconomic consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic*
[7] *Ibid.*

3. ANALYSIS AND 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 could find 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.[8] 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.[9] The ICRC has been working in urban conflict zones, including Iraq, occupied Palestinian territory, 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 Movement were taken into account in the New Urban Agenda that was adopted at Habitat III in 2016 in Quito, Ecuador.

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:**

1. **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 key in identifying these different entities and determining their varying degrees of impact and influence; this allows co-ownership of the outcomes and promotes collaboration in the risk reduction process.

2. 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

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[8] IFRC (2017), *Building urban resilience: A guide for Red Cross and Red Crescent engagement and contribution*
[9] Settlements Approaches in Urban Areas Working Group of the Global Shelter Cluster

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.

3. 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.

4. 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.

5. **Risk exposure and vulnerability characteristics can greatly vary** between cities, based on scale (i.e. "megacities", medium-smaller sized)*,* their geographic location, the level/quality of infrastructure development, the capacities of urban governance systems and the coping capacities of affected urban communities. Analysis of parameters such as (a) exposure to disasters, (b) disaster mortality and (c) economic losses due to disasters should be factored into urban resilience strategies for the development of both common and context-specific approaches and solutions.

6. 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.

7. 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, with rural population exodus now being accelerated by the impacts of climate change.

8. **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.

9. **Innovative solutions for developing new resources** using existing assets and building non-traditional partnerships, especially with academia and the private sector, are crucial. For instance, the development of community interactive hubs improves the linkage between service providers and targeted community members. Furthermore, this will empower community members who will have access to information and data that will improve decision making.

B. Addressing the systemic nature of urban risk and vulnerabilities

Urban areas are highly complex systems with many sub-systems co-existing and interacting at a variety of levels. Disasters and 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.

Urban communities 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.[10]

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,[11] a role that can be interpreted and applied at local level. This constitutes a unique opportunity, as well as a responsibility, to engage with the most vulnerable and often invisible people and communities to jointly identify needs, find appropriate ways to voice them and strengthen community agency. 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.

Sharing relevant and timely information from risk, vulnerability and capacity assessments could further help government authorities address acute conditions in specific urban areas while also empowering communities to engage with planners and decision makers on their needs and define viable solutions.

Determining *how* basic 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, and with the Climate and Environment Charter for Humanitarian Organizations.

Ultimately, new humanitarian needs in cities call for innovative initiatives that transform our action and adapt our approaches. In a digital era, interactive platforms, such as What now?, 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, can reach millions of people within hours. The digitalization of essential public services and employment means 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 to connect to digital platforms from livelihood opportunities or essential information on safety and disaster risks. Improving the digital literacy of vulnerable people, with training and tailored support to different age groups, would facilitate their integration in society, access to the job market and involvement in disaster response.

The RCRC toolkit for Building Urban Resilience aims to assist National Societies in initiating and co-leading a civic engagement process with local governments and some key stakeholders 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.[12]

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[10] IFRC (2010), *World Disasters Report 2010*
[11] IFRC (2021), *Guide to Strengthening the Auxiliary Role through Law and Policy*
[12] 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 that foster cohesion and liveability. Urban areas must be understood by looking at their entire systems rather than just their individual parts, which requires more holistic and intersectoral 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 specific target group of people, but also reduce overall community vulnerability and increase community resilience. Increasingly, cities are becoming the destination for migrants and displaced people, where they often face discrimination. In urban areas, 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.

Cohesive social structures providing support at individual, household and local community level are an integral part of community resilience and city resilience.[13] 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 access,[14] 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, exclusion and isolation. 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.

Working together with local governments, National Societies can advocate for increased DRR investment, climate change adaptation measures, use of the IFRC disaster law checklist,[15] 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

In order to move ahead with these commitments, the following resources, capacities and investments will be needed:

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[13] Arup City Resilience Index
[14] The Safer Access Framework (SAF) is key to reducing and mitigating the risks that National Societies may face in sensitive and insecure contexts and to earning the trust and acceptance of people and communities with humanitarian needs.
[15] IFRC (2019), *The Checklist on Law and Disaster Preparedness and Response*

- The IFRC, in close collaboration with National Societies and the ICRC, will establish and lead a Movement Urban Resilience Working Group (MURWG) whose aim will be to produce a set of principles of action for urban resilience to be presented to the 35th International Conference to encourage a stronger focus on urban resilience.
- The IFRC will strive to have dedicated capacity for urban programming and funded urban focal points for each region as well as in Geneva.
- Efforts will be made to mainstream urban responsibilities into all relevant technical, management and leadership positions, briefings and job descriptions.
- People with specific skillsets, such as climate change experts, city planners and infrastructure experts, will be engaged, and their roles properly defined based on the National Society mandate, capacities and context requirements.
- Strategic and efficient global and country-level partnerships with other agencies and stakeholders specializing in urban programming will be pursued. Current global partnerships will be extended to cover the anticipation and reduction of climate-induced disaster risks, such as heatwaves, floods and storm surges.
- The opportunities that ongoing global partnerships such as the One Billion Coalition for Resilience (1BC), UN-Habitat and the Risk-informed Early Action Partnership (REAP) afford will be leveraged in order to do more in urban settings.

5. IMPLEMENTATION AND MONITORING

The work to establish a set of principles of action and the required frameworks for implementation will be led by the MURWG in accordance with clear modalities and result-oriented terms of reference.

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 and action on urban resilience. The 2022 Council of Delegates presents a unique opportunity to rise to the challenge and reassert and further institutionalize our commitment to strengthening Movement-wide preparedness and response to disasters and crises in urban areas, making urban communities, especially those most at risk, more resilient.

The proposed resolution identifies **four 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.

1. Advocate for increased investment in sustainable and environmentally responsible approaches to humanitarian action in urban contexts

Beyond its role in providing humanitarian assistance, the Red Cross and Red Crescent increasingly plays a *facilitator role* to help identify and raise the concerns of vulnerable groups, making sure their voices are heard, mediate between different interest groups in urban settings and support and strengthen community structures. Furthermore, this *enabler role* can also involve co-designing solutions and providing information, guidance on rights, referrals and assistance on mechanisms and procedures for accessing services and benefits provided by public institutions, other NGOs and private entities, including activities carried out directly by the Red Cross and Red Crescent (such as access to decent homes, health services, digital literacy and psychosocial support). In the response

to humanitarian needs, vulnerable urban communities and individuals are empowered through social and community mobilization and the scaling up of the use of the IFRC's participatory tools.[16]

2. Reinforce the auxiliary role of National Societies

The National Societies should strengthen their auxiliary status vis-a-vis public authorities and build on existing agreements at national and city-branch levels. Although this role is reflected in the actions carried out in close coordination with government entities in areas such as public health care, disaster risk management, preparedness and risk education, National Societies could strengthen it by acting as an *advisory body* in the development of public policies on urban risk reduction, risk education and social inclusion. As new urban dynamics and needs arise, in order to remain relevant, National Societies can orient their efforts towards climate-smart initiatives, humanitarian service points to assist people on the move, access to basic services in urban slums and marginalized neighbourhoods and domestic violence, among other activities.

3. Define common approaches to urban strategies, based on partnerships, innovation and specialized urban systems knowledge

Urban stakeholder analysis and coalition-building are prerequisites for better understanding the characteristics and dynamics of urban systems, local expertise, structures and actors and their capacities and networks. Creating new partnerships and alliances will, in addition, offer "*windows of opportunity*" to accelerate urban change. For instance, youth leaders and RCRC urban branch volunteers can catalyse participation to reduce risk and vulnerabilities in their neighbourhoods, and humanitarian and disaster risk awareness and education in the community can be increased by targeting children and adolescents, using social media outreach.

4. Integrate and mainstream community resilience into action

It is necessary to scale up efforts to mainstream urban community resilience into regular programming, promoting a multisectoral and whole-of-society approach and providing National Societies with technical, methodological and financial support. The Movement should advocate with partners for climate-smart approaches to humanitarian action, in particular, increased investment in urban anticipatory action, nature-based solutions and efforts to reduce the sector's own carbon and environmental risks. This will promote support for locally led action that is principled, sustainable and brings positive change to the lives of the most vulnerable, influencing individuals and communities to make choices that increase their own safety and well-being and help build a more inclusive society.

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[16] They include Community Engagement and Accountability (CEA), Urban Action Toolkit, Vulnerability and Capacity Assessments (urban and climate-inclusive e-VCA,) and the Participatory Approach for Safe Shelter and Settlements Awareness (PASSA).

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 systems 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 (TRCS) Community Centres (CCs) have been providing services to help migrants live with dignity and in harmony with host communities. The key objective is to increase community resilience by empowering the physical, psychological, social and economic well-being of communities and individuals. TRCS has established 19 CCs in 18 different urban settings with programmes which enhance:

1. protection and social cohesion (support services to facilitate access to legal services, legal counselling, providing special needs, materials and equipment, rental support for housing,

        schooling efforts for out-of-school children and those at risk of dropping out and social cohesion activities to ensure peaceful co-existence between different communities)

2. health and psychosocial support (psychological and psychiatric counselling and support to individuals and communities, basic health training and follow-up, hygiene awareness and the distribution of hygiene packages, special programmes for children and child-friendly spaces)

3. socio-economic empowerment (language courses, vocational courses, guidance on employment opportunities and entrepreneurship support to create new job opportunities).

All CC activities are conducted with strong local partnerships with relevant stakeholders from local and national authorities, the private sector, other NGOs and academia. Volunteers and community leaders are also strongly engaged in the activities. Although the CCs were originally established to serve the Syrian population, today, the focus is on social inclusion and CCs are open to all vulnerable groups in urban settings. Since 2015, the CCs have reached over 1.7 million beneficiaries. Communities are engaged in all stages of CC efforts from decision making to implementation via advisory committees, volunteering and committees on specific topics.

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.