

Re-imagining the Local to Global Disaster Management System National Society strategic insights for an Architecture for Evolution

We are experiencing a major shift in the humanitarian system. There are more crises and complex emergencies, many of which are protracted, along with frequent environmental change related crises. These new challenges are pushing us to take a closer look at how the Red Cross Red Crescent responds to ensure we meet the needs of affected communities now and in the future.

While individual countries investments in disaster risk reduction continues to decrease, we are witnessing increasing frequency of crises that are overlapping with systems that are fragile. Food security, water and sanitation, and durable shelters at community levels are strained due to lack of consistent investments. Governments and inter-agency institutions such as World Bank are struggling to spend the needed resources amidst economic uncertainty. As we anticipated, urbanization is increasing, and global migration continues to put strains on delicate systems. As shocks in the form of disasters and crises affect everyone, the most vulnerable continue to struggle due to low resilience investments and humanitarian action resources continue to decrease.

The whole system is challenging disaster risk management and operations. The global strategy all National Societies are following, Strategy 2030, calls for increased investment and focus on localization and the global disaster response system is undergoing adjustments to reinforce the central role of National Societies in disaster response.

Over the years, we continue to see some challenges with investments at the national, regional, and global levels for disaster preparedness and response. As leadership in National Societies continue to evolve, at the disaster management and executive levels, there continues to be a need to orient, adjust and inform the local to global system, and re-imagine the system focusing on locally owned leadership in emergency operations. National Society leaders, as decision makers, hold responsibilities to face this challenge in an effective way – their core mandates rely on providing sustainable humanitarian assistance as auxiliaries to the authorities.

While the response landscape is changing, as a Federation wide network we must evolve with it. To do so, we need to better understand the perspectives of National Societies receiving support, ensuring we meet the needs of those affected by crises. This includes identifying the tools and support needed and ensuring our collective disaster response system is fit for purpose, continually modernizing and adapting. It's crucial to be open to new ways of supporting, leveraging the movement's vast capacity, and acting as a broker to deliver support through the most effective channels. Our system should be demand-driven, focusing on meeting affected National Society needs rather than supplying resources, while also improving coordination for greater efficiency. Unpacking the root causes of what is not working in our local to global response system is important.

We need to reflect on how the Red Cross Red Crescent Network can work effectively to enhance the local-to-global response system as the nature of crises continues to change. It means fostering a system which is demand driven and continually adjusting and finding areas of efficiency in what response tools were available through improved coordination structures.

Positioning National Societies within their own emergency management structures, and country level inter-agency coordination mechanisms is key to IFRC Strategy 2030. For IFRC network to

support National Society leaders, concrete actions to strengthen the local system, and linkages with regional and global systems to harness the power of the Movement is needed.

Challenges of the current humanitarian system architecture

The current global humanitarian system architecture, composed of UN agencies, Red Cross Red Crescent Movement, Non-Governmental organisations, Governments, Intra and interagency, and private sector, is under pressure. At the country level, scale of humanitarian needs, gaps in available resources, access to affected populations, strain on social services, and increase in cost of living and economic growth reductions are contributing to the strain.

Governments, as the primary actor responsible for humanitarian assistance, are increasingly demonstrating assertive positions on humanitarian space, and increasingly putting restrictions on how and what type of assistance may be provided. Sub-regional systems are seeing fluctuations of expansion and contraction, and in many regions, taking on important coordination mechanisms for humanitarian assistance. In all these scenarios, National Societies auxiliary roles continue to be of critical importance, and our Federation has taken steps towards strengthening localization principles and putting them into action through the National Society. We believe National Societies to be the key element in the global humanitarian system architecture, as a liaison with Governments, UN, sub regional systems, private sector, and other humanitarian agencies.

One of the challenges in a strong local to global disaster response system are gaps in investment and National Society participation in the system. Decision makers in National Societies require support to prioritize and invest in disaster management structures and coordination mechanisms. Gaps in understanding and investment in this system, and how to contribute to and benefit from the regional and global system of support continue to challenge effective response and humanitarian impact.

Based on a review of evaluations and reports, some barriers to ensure a strong disaster response system require us to address:

1. What investments are required for National Societies to prioritize community, national, and regional disaster response structures?
2. How will we collectively scale up humanitarian assistance to meet the increasing number and diversity of crises?
3. How can we provide space and resources to National Society decision makers to effectively strengthen disaster managers at the local level?
4. Where are the opportunities for peer exchange across neighbouring National Societies and to receive and integrate international assistance in a National Society led response?
5. What investments are needed to link local to national, and national to regional and global support mechanisms?

Initiative Objectives

We recognize the need for a demand driven operational response model, appreciating the need for National Society preparedness and response capacity. The aim is for a global response system which is fit for purpose for the changing humanitarian landscape and enables greater impact through collective action. We aim to undertake this through engaging in the following actions:

- **Engage National Society Leadership:** Encourage dialogue with National Society leaders to understand their realities and their expectations from the IFRC Wide Network in times of emergency requiring international assistance.
- **Enhance Local Response Tools and Systems:** Gain deeper insights into the tools and systems that can strengthen locally led disaster responses, identifying barriers and challenges National Societies face in leveraging these resources effectively.
- **Deepen Understanding of Evolving Realities:** Equip National Society leaders with a comprehensive understanding of new challenges in disaster response and highlight how regional and global solidarity mechanisms can bolster locally led operations management.
- **Identify and Capitalize New Opportunities for Impact:** Explore new opportunities within the IFRC Wide disaster response system to enhance its impact on locally led operations management and gather feedback on how the system should evolve to better support National Society needs.
- **Reinforce the Core Role of National Societies in Disaster Response:** Create platforms for sharing experiences, challenges, and lessons learned to strengthen the locally led disaster response mechanisms, with a focus on country-level coordination and collaboration.
- **Equip National Society Leaders for Change:** Provide National Society leaders with knowledge and tools to navigate and influence the evolution of the global disaster response system, empowering them to reinforce local leadership in emergency response.