

**International
Strategy**

2015-2020



Norwegian Red Cross

INTRODUCTION 1

1. WHO WE ARE..... 1

2. CONTEXTS AND CHALLENGES 3

3. THE CHANGE WE WANT TO ACHIEVE 6

4. HOW WE WORK 11

NORWEGIAN RED CROSS INTERNATIONAL STRATEGY 2015-2020

INTRODUCTION

This strategy will guide the international work of the Norwegian Red Cross (NorCross) for the period 2015-20. It applies to all of NorCross’ international activities and informs NorCross’ contributions to the development of new policy for the Red Cross Red Crescent Movement.

The purpose of the strategy is three-fold, namely to:

- establish the strategic direction and goals for NorCross’ international work;
- recall and elaborate on principles and parameters for how NorCross works internationally;
- set priorities for improving the way NorCross works.

As part of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent (RCRC) Movement, NorCross operates exclusively through the RCRC Movement in its humanitarian engagement internationally. It works in partnership with other National RCRC Societies, the International Federation of RCRC Societies and the International Committee of the Red Cross. NorCross’ key strength derives from its access to people in vulnerable situations through this global network.

1. WHO WE ARE

NorCross’ mission and strategic frameworks

NorCross’ mission is to “reveal, prevent and alleviate human suffering and distress”. As an auxiliary to the Norwegian authorities in the humanitarian field, NorCross’ activities in Norway aim to assist and supplement relevant public services. NorCross is a membership organisation with a country-wide presence through 400 local branches in 19 district branches. NorCross’ activities are grounded in local needs, resources and competencies, and carried out by volunteers working in their own communities. The experience that NorCross has developed as a humanitarian organisation mobilising thousands of volunteers in Norway is a foundation for working internationally and partnering with other National Societies.

NorCross is part of the RCRC Movement, the world's largest humanitarian network with millions of volunteers¹ in 189 countries. The Movement's mission is to alleviate human suffering, protect life and health, and uphold human dignity especially during armed conflicts and other emergencies.

The RCRC Movement consists of 189 National Societies, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (the Federation) and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC).

- **National Societies** act as auxiliaries to their national authorities in the humanitarian field and provide a range of services including disaster relief, health and social programmes. In situations of armed conflict, National Societies may assist the civilian population and support the medical services of the armed forces. The Norwegian Red Cross was founded in 1865 and is one of the oldest National Societies in the RCRC Movement.
- **The Federation**, founded in 1919, is an umbrella organization for all National Societies. It directs and coordinates its member National Societies' actions to assist the victims of disasters and supports the development of National Societies. The IFRC's work focuses on four core areas: promoting humanitarian values, disaster response, disaster preparedness, and health and community care.
- **The ICRC**, established in 1863, is at the origin of the RCRC Movement. The mission of the ICRC is to protect the lives and dignity of victims of armed conflict and other situations of violence and to provide them with assistance. The ICRC directs and coordinates the RCRC Movement's international relief activities during armed conflicts. It also promotes respect for and strengthening of international humanitarian law. The ICRC's mandate during armed conflicts is established in the 1949 Geneva Conventions and their Additional Protocols.

All the components of the RCRC Movement are guided by seven Fundamental Principles: humanity, impartiality, neutrality, independence, voluntary service, unity and universality. The first four principles have now been accepted by the international humanitarian community at large, while the last three remain unique to the RCRC Movement.

As a member of the Federation, NorCross' activities are informed by its Strategy 2020 "Saving lives – changing minds". Adopted in 2009, it establishes as a common vision "to inspire, encourage, facilitate and promote at all times all forms of humanitarian activities by National Societies, with a view to preventing and alleviating human suffering, and thereby contributing to the maintenance and promotion of human dignity and peace in the world". The Federation Youth Engagement Strategy is also informing our work ensuring strong youth engagement.

NorCross' international work is also directed by NorCross' Long-Term Plan of Action 2011-2020 and the Main Strategy 2014-2017. These documents establish four criteria guiding the organisational priorities and tasks both nationally and internationally:

- There are unmet needs among people in vulnerable situations;
- The task follows naturally from our mission and is in accordance with our principles;

¹ At present, the 189 National Societies represent over 17 million active volunteers. About half are youth volunteers and approximately 50 per cent of the RCRC Movement's volunteers are women.

- The needs are not met by others with greater competency or that are better placed to respond;
- The Red Cross has the competency and resources to carry out the task;

In line with these criteria, a central consideration for NorCross to engage internationally is whether NorCross has an added value to bring to the specific partnership, programme or operation.

2. CONTEXTS AND CHALLENGES

This strategy aims to ensure that NorCross' international work remains relevant and effective given the context in which we operate and that it contributes to strengthening and adapting the RCRC Movement's collective response to humanitarian needs in the years ahead. Towards 2020, the humanitarian environment will continue to be shaped by a number of on-going trends.

Population growth

The global population continues to grow rapidly and is projected to reach 8.1 billion in 2025, and to pass 9 billion by 2050.² The majority of this population growth will take place in developing countries. The youth population is the highest ever and growing the fastest in the poorest countries. The global population growth has a number of implications that also affect humanitarian response, including growing pressure on scarce resources, accelerating migration, increasing urbanisation and an unprecedented demand for education and employment opportunities for young people.

Gains in poverty reduction and global health

Despite the rapidly growing global population, considerable gains continue to be made towards improving the lives of people around the globe. The Millennium Development Goals (2000 – 2015) have been a catalyst for concerted action around global challenges. Global poverty has been halved, great strides have been made to eliminate infectious diseases like polio and malaria, and maternal and child mortality has been dramatically reduced. Many low-income countries are today among the fastest growing economies and several have graduated into the middle-income bracket.

Increasing inequality and social exclusion

While progress is significant towards these common goals, positive developments do not always benefit the whole population as inequality is rising both between and within countries. The gap between the rich and poor is increasing and particular groups find themselves excluded, marginalised or without equal opportunities (e.g. due to differences in gender, sexual orientation, age, disability, HIV status, socio-economic status, religion, nationality or ethnic origin, including migrant or minority groups). This is contributing to increased social and political tensions in several contexts.

Communicable and non-communicable diseases

Conflict-affected, weak and fragile states fail to ensure universal health coverage due to poor security, social exclusion, insufficient funds, or poor governance. Communicable diseases such as

² UNFPA 2014: <http://www.unfpa.org/pds/trends.htm>

HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria therefore still pose a severe threat in many countries, in particular for the most vulnerable and hardest to reach groups. Non-communicable diseases (heart disease, cancer, diabetes, etc.) represent a growing burden in low- and middle-income countries, and many of these are preventable through lifestyle changes.

Inadequate protection of civilians and difficult humanitarian access in armed conflicts

While there has been a steady and significant decrease in the number and severity of armed conflicts after the Cold War, this trend has stalled and been partly reversed over the last decade. The Middle East and North Africa, Sub-Saharan Africa and South- and Central-Asia are the most conflict-affected regions. The majority of current conflicts are intra-state, between the state's armed forces and armed groups, or between various armed groups, and while they are often low-intensity, many are protracted and lasts for years or even decades. Civilians often bear the brunt in these conflicts as there is widespread disregard for international humanitarian law and hostilities increasingly take place in densely populated urban areas. Deliberate attacks on civilians, as well as on medical facilities, medical staff, and humanitarian workers, are common. For humanitarian organisations, high levels of insecurity, as well as the politicisation or obstruction of aid, increasingly hamper access.

Violence in non-conflict settings

The vast majority of deaths and injuries caused by violence continue to occur in non-conflict settings. Countries in Central America suffer from extremely high levels of homicide, with more deaths each year than in many contemporary wars.³ The problem is often particularly acute in urban areas with large concentrations of poor and marginalized youth, exacerbated by the illegal trade in drugs and easy access to weapons.

Climate change and environmental degradation

Climate change is accelerating the frequency of disasters and extreme weather. There has been a steady increase in the number of disasters recorded since the 1980s with climate-related disasters⁴ accounting for the bulk of the increase.⁵ While large-scale disasters like earthquakes, typhoons, tsunamis and floods still cause massive death and destruction, small- and medium-sized disasters are becoming more frequent. Slow-onset disasters like drought and environmental degradation are also affecting more people and an increasing number of areas are exposed to recurring disasters.

Urban crises

Due to the high rate of urbanisation, natural disasters and conflict affect big cities more frequently. This puts greater numbers of people at risk and creates new challenges for humanitarian response. In 2007, the global population living in urban areas passed the 50 percent mark and is projected to have increased to 66 percent by 2050⁶. Due to growing pressure on cities, many are facing major

³ The Global Burden of Armed Violence 2011, Geneva Declaration on Armed Violence and Development, 2011

⁴ Hydrological, meteorological and climatological disasters. Advances in the recording of disasters also likely account for some of this upward trend.

⁵ Centre for Research on the Epidemiology of Disasters (CRED), <http://www.emdat.be/disaster-trends>.

⁶ United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division (2014).

World Urbanization Prospects: The 2014 Revision, Highlights (ST/ESA/SER.A/352),

<http://esa.un.org/unpd/wup/Highlights/WUP2014-Highlights.pdf>

challenges with poverty, violence and inadequate access to health care and education. When disasters and conflicts occur in cities, it is often slums and other poor urban areas that are exposed most.

Complex emergencies

Increasingly, natural disasters, conflict and fragility coincide, creating complex crises that challenge traditional humanitarian response. From 2005-2009, more than 50% of people affected by natural disasters lived in fragile and conflict-affected states.⁷ Emergencies – whether disasters or conflict – have severe health consequences as disrupted water and sanitation infrastructure, interrupted electricity or supply chains, insufficient health-care resources, population displacement, and food shortages all contribute to increased morbidity and mortality. Affected populations are also more susceptible to communicable diseases, face impaired maternal and child health services, and obstructed management of chronic diseases.

“Localisation” and diversification of humanitarian response

There is growing rejection of international actors and norms by many states and armed groups. The importance of local organisations is growing and is increasingly a prerequisite for access and acceptance.⁸ A much broader range of states, organisations and other actors (e.g. private foundations; companies) have entered the humanitarian field, in some cases challenging the traditional principles and methods—such as the impartial and neutral character of humanitarian aid.

Advances in information and communications technology

People are increasingly connected. Active mobile-broadband subscriptions increased to 2.3 billion in 2014 with 55 percent coming from developing countries.⁹ There are almost seven billion mobile-cellular subscriptions worldwide and by the end of 2014, three billion people will have access to the internet. Advances in technology provides tremendous opportunities, including for humanitarian actors, for example in terms of connecting directly with vulnerable people and communities, collecting and sharing information, increasing transparency and providing new means of delivering aid (e.g. through mobile phones). However, it also creates challenges such as assessing the relevance and reliability of available information.

The forthcoming Sustainable Development Goals (2015 – 2030) and the post-2015 Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction will provide the key global frameworks for addressing many of the trends and challenges listed here. The RCRC Movement has an important role to play in contributing to the achievement of these frameworks.

⁷ Katie Harris, David Keen and Tom Mitchell, “When disasters and conflicts collide: Improving links between disaster resilience and conflict prevention”, Overseas Development Institute, 2013.

⁸ ICRC: “The future of humanitarian action” International Review of the Red Cross, Volume 93 Number 884 December 2011

⁹ ITU 2014 <http://www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Statistics/Documents/facts/ICTFactsFigures2014-e.pdf>

3. THE CHANGE WE WANT TO ACHIEVE

The ambitions that underpin this strategy are to:

- Enable the delivery of humanitarian action through RCRC volunteers
- Focus our support on areas where NorCross brings a clear added value
- Be a reliable, competent and trusted partner within the RCRC Movement
- Enhance our support for National Society partners in becoming strong and sustainable organisations in their own domestic contexts
- Contribute to strengthening the quality of the programmes and activities we support
- Better demonstrate and communicate the results we achieve

To fulfill these ambitions, this strategy sets goals representing the outcomes NorCross seeks to achieve through the humanitarian activities we support. It outlines how NorCross will work with its partners to achieve these goals and the areas NorCross will strengthen within its own organisation.

NorCross' strategic goals for the period 2015-20

The overall objective of NorCross international work in the coming period is to:

Strengthen the resilience of communities exposed to disasters, crises and underlying vulnerabilities

NorCross International Strategy echoes NorCross' Main Strategy 2014-17 which establishes the strengthening of local resilience and preparedness as one of NorCross' five priority areas.

The Federation's definition of resilience is "The ability of individuals, communities, organisations, or countries exposed to disasters and crises and underlying vulnerabilities to anticipate, prepare for, reduce the impact of, cope with, and recover from the effects of shocks and stresses without compromising their long-term prospects."¹⁰ Resilience can be strengthened at individual, household, community, national and global level. NorCross' focus is on the community level in line with the Federation's Strategy 2020 assertion to contribute to sustainable development through strengthening community resilience.

Resilience is a central concept in the proposed sustainable development goals and targets post-2015, which demonstrates the relevance of the concept to address current development challenges and the contribution the RCRC Movement can make.¹¹ The RCRC Movement is uniquely placed to contribute to community resilience due to its continuous presence through National Societies and their volunteers in communities before, during and after disasters, conflicts and other crises.

RCRC volunteers have a crucial role as first responders during disasters, conflicts and other crises. This work must be maintained and strengthened. At the same time, it is possible to prevent and

¹⁰ IFRC, Framework for community resilience, Geneva 2014.

¹¹ Open Working Group Proposal for Sustainable Development Goals, available at <http://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/focussdgs.html>

reduce the consequences of such events significantly by systematically addressing underlying vulnerabilities and strengthen local capacities to better cope with future shocks and stresses.

The RCRC Movement is one of few humanitarian actors that is able to support communities throughout the prevention-preparedness-relief-recovery continuum to strengthen resilience. This approach combines the humanitarian concern for imminent threats with the sustainable and longer-term approaches and institutional strengthening traditionally associated with development.

Efforts to increase community resilience are becoming even more relevant in the context of climate change and environmental degradation, as well as in situations of protracted conflict and violence. As communities increasingly face recurrent shocks and chronic stresses, the traditional humanitarian focus on emergency response and recovery must be expanded to include efforts to support communities in preparing for, coping with and adapting to adversity.

NorCross will promote and support the following principles that further describe and operationalise RCRC approach to strengthening resilience¹²:

Strengthening the links between prevention, preparedness, response, recovery and longer-term development: Resilience is not just the immediate ability to respond to negative events, but a process of positive adaptation before, during and after disasters and crises. This implies the need for sustained, long-term engagement at the community-level and for bringing approaches from the humanitarian and development sectors closer together.

Promoting holistic analysis and cross-sectorial programming: To understand vulnerabilities, risks and capacities in a particular community in order to improve resilience, a holistic approach to assessments, planning and programming is required. While single sector interventions can strengthen resilience, they are unlikely to be as effective if designed and implementation is isolated from other sectors. The RCRC resilience approach thus implies a gradual move towards more integrated cross-sectorial programming.

Working in partnerships both within and outside the RCRC Movement: Strengthening community resilience cannot be achieved by any one actor. It will require engagement and contributions by a range of stakeholders, including the communities themselves, government institutions, civil society, the business community, religious leaders, and humanitarian and development organisations. The RCRC Movement can play an important role in brokering partnerships and promoting coordination with external actors. It ensures good cooperation within the RCRC Movement and advocates for engagement by local and national authorities. Partnerships within the RCRC Movement need to be strengthened to ensure a common approach to strengthening resilience.

Adapting programmes to the local context and respecting local ownership: The RCRC Movement cannot “bring” community resilience to communities. It can seek to contribute and assist communities in their efforts to become resilient. It is recognised that each community is different and requires a contextualised approach. Local ownership, assets and capacities must be fully respected. RCRC tools for beneficiary communications can contribute to community engagement and accountability.

Focusing on the most vulnerable and ensuring the inclusion of all: Specific groups may be vulnerable or marginalised due to for example their gender, sexual orientation, age, disability, HIV status, socio-economic status, religion, nationality and ethnic origin (including minority and migrant groups). All programmes, services and tools must therefore systematically incorporate gender and diversity issues. Targeted actions must also be

¹² These principles are based on tools and resources developed by the Federation and by other National Societies, including the IFRC Framework for Community Resilience, Geneva, 2014; and The Red Cross Approach to Resilience, Fact sheet, Red Cross EU Office, April, 2014.

taken to ensure that programmes reach the most vulnerable and that marginalised groups are included in their communities and in efforts to build community resilience without discrimination.

Building RCRC capacity: At the local level, where the Red Cross branch forms part of the community preparedness and response structure, building Red Cross capacity through branch and volunteer development can directly contribute to community resilience. Strengthening National Societies is thus both a means and an end in the RCRC Movement's approach to resilience.

Engaging in humanitarian diplomacy to prevent and reduce vulnerability: Due to its presence in vulnerable communities combined with its auxiliary role and internationally recognised mandate, the RCRC Movement can bring the needs and challenges of vulnerable communities and groups to the attention of authorities, as well as into regional and global fora through humanitarian diplomacy. By engaging directly with decision-makers and through public awareness and communication, the RCRC Movement advocates for strengthened disaster laws and policies, and promotes the rights of victims of armed conflict and other violence.

Measuring results, strengthening the evidence-base and scaling up what works: Understanding and measuring a multi-dimensional phenomenon like community resilience is challenging. It requires strengthening the evidence-base for interventions. The Federation has defined common characteristics of resilient communities through community-based studies in different regions. It is now developing new approaches to measure resilience and the RCRC's contribution to it. Other initiatives by non-Movement actors on how to strengthen and measure resilience are also underway. As the evidence-base on strengthening community resilience grows, new tools and guidance will inform programme development, monitoring and evaluation.

Strategic goals for NorCross thematic areas

Below its overall aim of strengthening resilience, NorCross has consolidated its work into five thematic areas, each articulated as a goal.

National Society Development:

Strengthening National Societies' ability to respond to the needs of vulnerable people

NorCross supports National Society partners in becoming *organisations that consistently deliver, through volunteers and staff, relevant country wide services to vulnerable people sustained for as long as needed and that contributes to the strength of IFRC and the Movement.*¹³ NorCross supports the organisational development of partner National Societies in: strategy and policy development; finance development and leadership; volunteer and branch development, and planning, monitoring, evaluation and reporting. NorCross further contributes to National Society development through active engagement in international branch-to-branch and youth cooperation.

Disaster management and disaster risk reduction:

Reducing the impact of natural hazards, man-made disasters and crises on vulnerable communities

¹³ National Society Development framework. International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies. 19th Session of the General Assembly, Sydney, Australia, 12-15 November 2013

NorCross supports efforts to save lives and meet immediate needs in response to disasters, focusing on providing health, water and sanitation, and recovery assistance. Moreover NorCross supports programmes addressing vulnerabilities and reducing the risk and impact of natural hazards. This includes strengthening the preparedness and capacities of communities to respond better when a disaster occurs and promoting activities and actions that mitigate the adverse effects of hazards.

Health:

Improving the health of vulnerable people

NorCross supports longer term community-based health programmes as well as emergency health interventions related to conflicts, disasters or other crises. Longer term programmes focus primarily on health prevention and promotion through community mobilisation, health education, and first aid. Emergency health interventions focus on deployment of Emergency Response Units, community-based health promotion and disease monitoring and improving water and sanitation.

Protection:

Reducing the impact of armed conflict and violence

NorCross supports programmes to ensure respect for the rights of those affected by armed conflict and violence with focus on prevention and mitigation of violence, including gender-based violence; strengthening safe access to health care; and promotion of implementation and development of law regulating the use of certain weapons. This work includes efforts to promote adherence to and implementation of international humanitarian law and human rights law, as well as operational activities that reduce vulnerability and exposure to risks arising from armed conflict and violence.

Social inclusion:

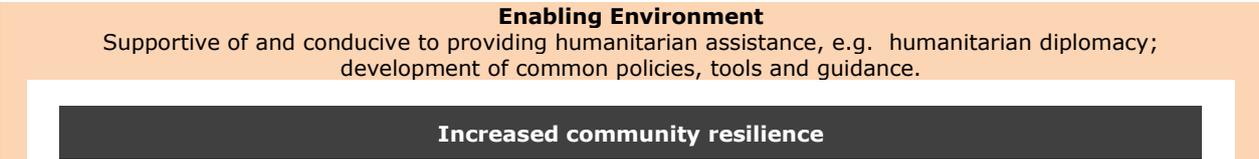
Promoting the social inclusion of vulnerable and marginalised people

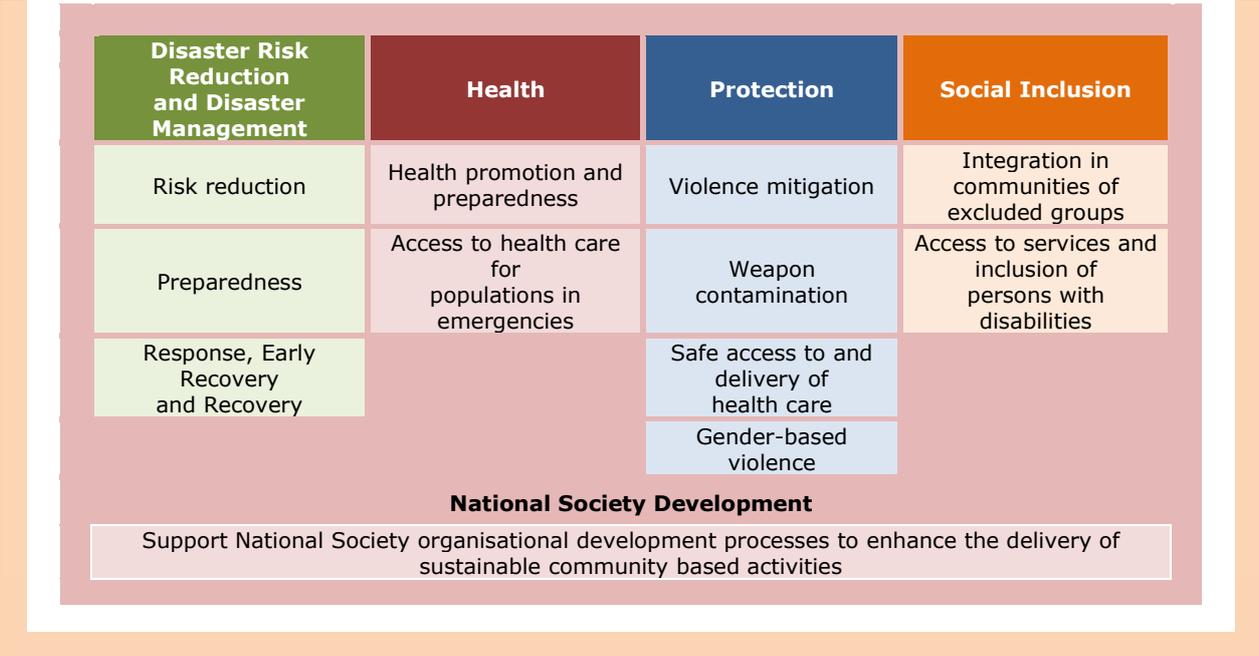
NorCross supports activities that promote respect for diversity and better integration of vulnerable and marginalised groups. This includes empowering girls and women and promoting the inclusion of persons with disabilities.

Within each area, NorCross also seeks to strengthen the “Enabling Environment” through non-operational activities that are supportive of achieving the goal. This includes the development of common tools, policies and guidelines within the RCRC Movement that facilitate and enhance the work of National Societies.

It also includes engaging in humanitarian diplomacy to persuade decision makers to act, at all times, in the interests of vulnerable people, and with full respect for fundamental humanitarian principles. This is integral to NorCross approach ensuring that humanitarian goals can be achieved, and includes the promotion of international humanitarian law, human rights law and disaster response law.

The figure below illustrates the totality of NorCross international work, the relationship between the different components, and the main focus areas within each thematic goal. It reflects structure of the NorCross “Common Results Framework”. This results framework establishes common objectives for NorCross’ international work to monitor progress and report on the results achieved.





Core competencies

To combine the requirement to be needs-based and responsive to the priorities of NorCross partners with a wish to develop greater thematic expertise, NorCross has defined a set of core competencies. These are sub-areas within the broader thematic areas in which NorCross wishes to excel.

NorCross’ core competencies fall into two categories:

- Areas in which NorCross’ competency is already recognized and in demand, and in which the focus will be on maintaining and further developing this competency;
- New or emerging areas in which NorCross wishes to develop additional knowledge and expertise.

By defining a set of core competencies, NorCross responds to a demand for more technical support among its partners.¹⁴ It further seeks to stimulate cooperation and more effective task-sharing within the RCRC Movement. In the areas defined as core competencies, NorCross will build on and further develop its capacity. To achieve this, it will prioritise and invest in: competency development, including recruitment and training; learning and innovation in relevant methodologies, approaches and tools; and participation in relevant communities of practice within and outside the RCRC Movement. This will enable NorCross to provide relevant quality support to partners and to enhance the RCRC Movement’s capacity within these areas.

While the core competencies will be prioritised in NorCross’ own development efforts, NorCross will still provide support to its partners in other areas, provided that they fall within the five thematic areas identified in this strategy and the results areas identified in NorCross’ Common Results Framework.¹⁵ NorCross will need to maintain a good general level of competency within all the areas it works to be able to monitor and quality assure its support. However, when support is provided

¹⁴ Summary of findings, survey conducted among selected NorCross’ National Society partners, February-March 2014.

¹⁵ Only in exceptional cases should support be provided to activities that fall outside the strategy and the Common Results Framework. Approval criteria should be established for this purpose.

outside the core competencies, NorCross may also seek to draw upon the expertise of RCRC Movement and non-Movement partners.

The table below identifies core competencies within each of the five thematic areas, in addition to cross-cutting competencies. This list might be further refined and narrowed down over time.

Thematic areas	Core competencies	Current level of competency
National Society development	Finance development and leadership Branch-to-branch development (twinning) Exchange of young volunteers (YDEP)	Existing Existing Existing
Health	Emergency health (Emergency Response Units; community-based disease monitoring) Water and sanitation Community health (CBHFA - Community-based Health and First Aid programmes) Reproductive, Maternal, Newborn and Child health	Existing Existing Existing Existing Existing
Disaster management and disaster risk reduction	Water and sanitation Urban risk reduction Climate change adaptation	Existing Developing Developing
Protection	International humanitarian law with a particular focus on weapons Violence prevention and mitigation Safe access to and delivery of healthcare (“Health Care in Danger”)	Existing Developing Developing
Social inclusion	Disability inclusion	Developing
Cross-cutting	Gender and diversity mainstreaming Integrated community-based programme design Use of new technologies	Developing Developing Developing

4. HOW WE WORK

NorCross operates exclusively inside the framework of the RCRC Movement. Within the RCRC Movement, NorCross works through different channels:

- NorCross provides support to National Society partners to enable them to effectively respond to humanitarian needs in their own countries. NorCross supports activities that are mainly carried out by volunteers, while paid staff act as catalysts, facilitators, ensuring quality control and programme support.¹⁶ Norcross’ support can be provided bilaterally, i.e. directly between NorCross and the National Society; or multilaterally, where it is channeled through the Federation or the ICRC.
- NorCross supports and cooperates with the ICRC and the Federation, with the aim of strengthening the RCRC Movement’s humanitarian action. It has developed agreements with both the ICRC and the Federation that define the modalities of the partnership and establish priority areas of cooperation.

¹⁶ NorCross will support activities implemented by paid staff in some exceptional cases, for example where services are life-saving or cannot be provided by volunteers alone due to professional requirements (e.g. medical services).

- NorCross may directly implement emergency response and recovery activities after disasters and crises based on the consent of the host National Society. In these situations, NorCross deploys under the auspices of the Federation, the ICRC, or the host National Society.¹⁷

International branch-to-branch and youth cooperation

NorCross districts, branches and other components contribute to NorCross international work in general and to the support to National Societies specifically.

NorCross' district and local branches engage in "twinning", i.e. cooperation with branches in other National Societies. Reciprocity and mutual benefit are at the core of the twinning cooperation. This is a long-term cooperation with three main objectives:

1. capacity-building to strengthen and develop the branches involved in the cooperation;
2. financial and other support for local activities;
3. enhancement of international knowledge and understanding within NorCross domestically.

Many twinning projects, in particular in Europe, focus on social inclusion (including of minority and migrant groups), inter-cultural dialogue and poverty reduction. This is an example where NorCross' international work benefits from its competence and experience nationally (e.g. on migration).

The Red Cross Youth contributes to primarily NorCross international work through its Youth Delegate Exchange Programme as well as participation and youth representation of the NorCross in international RCRC fora. The Youth Delegate Exchange Programme strengthens youth structures within National Societies and builds capacity of RCRC youth volunteers through the mutual exchange of young volunteers. The primary focus of their engagement is the promotion of youth participation in the RCRC movement, and the promotion of international humanitarian law. NorCross Youth is actively engaged in the implementation of the Federation's Youth Engagement Strategy in international RCRC fora and through the Youth Delegate Exchange Programme. The Federation's Youth Engagement Strategy emphasizes that youth play a vital role in strengthening National Societies and in contributing to community resilience. Young people can be important agents of change in their communities, and should therefore be engaged at all levels of governance, management and service delivery in their National Societies. RCRC volunteerism is an effective and meaningful way to encourage civic engagement among youth. As the global youth population continues to grow rapidly, National Societies depend on recruiting and engaging young people to maintain their future relevance.

Partnership approach:

NorCross partnership approach is defined in the NorCross Partnership Guidelines. These outline principles for selecting new partners and provide guidance on how to sustain, develop and phase out partnerships. The guidelines are based on the premise that focusing on a certain number of durable, stable and targeted partnerships, increases the potential for impact-oriented humanitarian support.

¹⁷ The Principles and Rules for Red Cross and Red Crescent Humanitarian Assistance govern National Societies and the Federation in disaster relief and early recovery *excluding armed conflicts, internal strife and their direct results#

NorCross has two defined forms of partnerships: long-term partners and short-term partners, each with specific criteria for entering into, managing and ending the partnership. In addition to these defined forms of partnerships, NorCross actively engages in cooperation and strategic dialogue with a range of other National Societies. The purpose can be operational, e.g. to enter into coordination mechanisms with other donor National Societies such as a consortium. It can also be strategic, e.g. to discuss humanitarian and Movement policy; to exchange knowledge and experience through thematic networks; or to engage in joint humanitarian diplomacy efforts.

The aim of NorCross' partnerships is to build capacity to enable partner National Societies to reach more beneficiaries and build more resilient local communities in their countries. NorCross partnerships are based on shared interests and reciprocity, including an emphasis on mutual benefits and complementarity, and a genuine wish to exchange ideas, experiences and practices.

Where do we work?

NorCross' geographic priorities and choice of partners are based on an assessment of needs and value added in that specific context. NorCross works where:

- There are significant humanitarian challenges
- There is a high risk of natural disasters
- The National Society wants and has the potential to develop its organisation to respond to humanitarian needs;
- The National Society has absorption capacity;
- NorCross can add value as a partner; and
- NorCross has access to adequate funding.

NorCross is represented internationally through several offices at regional or country level. NorCross delegates liaison closely with the National Society and other RCRC Movement partners in-country. NorCross offices monitor the support provided, and represent NorCross with RCRC Movement partners, donors and other stakeholders. Where possible, NorCross co-locates its office with the National Society or the Federation to facilitate cooperation and coordination.

National Society Development

To fulfill the goal of strengthening National Societies' ability to respond to the needs of vulnerable people, organisational development and capacity-building are central components of NorCross support to National Society partners.¹⁸

The Federation National Society Development Framework 2013 defines a strong National Society as: "an organisation that consistently delivers, through volunteers and staff, relevant country wide

¹⁸ Capacity-building is an on-going process that focuses on improving what already exists, typically through training, development of better tools and improving communications. Organizational development is a strategic process aimed at undertaking changes that will shape the organization in the medium- and long-term. This requires high-level engagement and often addresses the organization as a whole.

services¹⁹ to vulnerable people sustained for as long as needed and that contributes to the strength of the IFRC and the Movement”.

National Society development is a means to improve the relevance, quality, reach and sustainability of services to vulnerable people. Ensuring that adequate organisational structures are in place and that staff and volunteers have the requisite skills and training are key determinants of National Societies’ ability to fulfill their auxiliary role, whether by responding in a crisis or working longer-term to strengthen community resilience.

The primary responsibility for National Society development lies with the senior leadership of National Societies. When requested, NorCross is committed to support partner National Societies in their efforts to develop a strong and responsive organisation. NorCross considers predictable, open and transparent engagement with partners essential to build the relationships and trust necessary to support National Society development processes.

While many National Societies are strong and stable, other face significant challenges in terms of their organisational capacities and financial sustainability. This has serious implications not only for the individual National Societies, but also for the Movement’s collective capacities and for the vulnerable people that have needs and expectations of their humanitarian services. This requires NorCross and others that support National Society development to ensure that their approaches are effective and adapted to environment in which each National Society operates.

Working effectively

NorCross is committed to continuously improve the way it works to achieve greater effectiveness, efficiency and relevance. The current strategy sets out five organisational priority areas, each with key measures to be undertaken in the coming period.²⁰

Partnerships, cooperation and coordination within the RCRC Movement

The Federation National Society Development Framework 2013 is a key reference for NorCross’ partnerships with National Societies. NorCross is committed to a focused, systematic and principled partnership approach and it will further develop and refine its partnership tools to this end. It will seek to strengthen coordination and complementarity with other partners supporting the same National Society, including the IFRC and the ICRC, and to promote and participate in joint initiatives such as assessments, reviews and evaluations. Together with other partners, NorCross will explore innovative approaches to promoting National Society development.

The Federation Organizational Capacity Assessment and Certification (OCAC) process for National Societies provides a factual basis for development efforts. It is to ensure that external support is aligned with the analysis and intended direction of the National Society and fully owned by the National Society. The objective is for the support to be sustainable in the environment in which the

¹⁹ The word “services” here is taken to mean both direct services to, and activities such as humanitarian diplomacy on behalf of, vulnerable people.

²⁰ This is not an exhaustive list of organizational initiatives and processes within the organization, but simply those that are considered strategic priorities for NorCross’ international work. There are many others that can be considered part of the general running of the organization.

National Society is operating. NorCross will carry out the OCAC within its own organisation, and support National Society partners in undertaking this process.

NorCross will continue to support and seek to further develop its partnership with the ICRC and the Federation within their respective mandates. It will seek to expand cooperation within mutually agreed geographic and thematic priority areas. NorCross will actively contribute to the on-going process to strengthen coordination and cooperation within the RCRC Movement with the aim of enhancing and scaling up its collective humanitarian action. It will promote effective coordination mechanisms such as consortiums where these support and complement the work of the National Society. NorCross will promote more effective task-sharing within the Movement. To contribute to this, it will develop more clearly defined core competencies as outlined in this strategy and promote increased exchanges and sharing of expertise among donor National Societies.

NorCross seeks to support the most effective RCRC channel at all times. It will establish and apply criteria to assist in decisions regarding the choice of channel, including considerations of access, efficiency, sustainability and impact. Accordingly, NorCross will finetune its own organisational set-up towards maximising the relevance, effectiveness and efficiency of its support to partners.

External partnerships and resource mobilisation

Outside the RCRC Movement, NorCross works in cooperation with a range of actors, including the Norwegian Government, the EU, the UN, other organisations and corporate partners. The aim of such partnerships include cooperation and coordination, as well as the mobilisation of political will, expertise and resources in support of humanitarian priorities.

NorCross will continue to invest in resource mobilisation efforts to ensure a stable funding base for its international activities, the ICRC, the Federation and National Society partners.

NorCross will strengthen its strategic partnership with the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) and the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (Norad) through multi-annual cooperation agreements and strategic dialogue on humanitarian and development issues.

NorCross will aim to expand and diversify its donor base, including through its cooperation with the European Commission's Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection Department (ECHO) and EuropeAid and through outreach to corporate and private donors. NorCross will further develop its approach to partnerships with the corporate sector, including by engaging in joint initiatives that can create shared value. When engaging in corporate sector partnerships, NorCross strictly adheres to the RCRC Movement Policy for Corporate Sector Partnerships.

NorCross' own funds remain essential to ensure that it may respond independently to humanitarian needs when funding from other sources is not available.

Working in partnership is a central component in the RCRC resilience approach. The resources, knowledge and expertise of a range of different actors are required to strengthen community resilience. For this purpose, NorCross will seek to promote and expand cooperation with external partners, including with the corporate sector, the research community and other organisations. NorCross will maintain its dialogue and networks with other civil society actors in Norway.

Evaluation, learning and innovation

NorCross is committed to learning and innovation for improving programme quality and results.

Effective knowledge management is critical for learning, and for retaining, sharing, transferring and using knowledge within the organisation. For this purpose, Norcross' International Department will be rolling out a Programme and Information Management System (PIMS) to improve work efficiency, effectiveness, knowledge sharing and learning. To improve the way NorCross plans, carries out and uses evaluations, it will create a more structured system for collecting, disseminating and following up on findings from assessments, reviews, evaluations, audits and field visits.

NorCross will promote the transfer of relevant knowledge and experience between its national and international work. It will mobilise the competencies of volunteers, through twinning and the youth delegate programme, or when National Society partners have identified the need for specific knowledge and skills that NorCross can contribute with based on its national activities. NorCross will strengthen networks both internally and externally to improve learning, exchange of experiences and cross-fertilisation among different actors, sectors and regions.

NorCross will improve internal guidance and resources for good programming. It will seek to expand the dialogue with partners on programme development in order to improve effectiveness, including through better use of evidence and research in programme design. As part of these efforts, NorCross will work together with its partners in the Movement to apply and enhance the RCRC community resilience approach. It will also ensure the systematic incorporation of gender and diversity in all programmes, services and tools.

The context in which humanitarian action takes place is affected by rapid changes, including in science, technology and communication. NorCross will encourage the adoption and development of new approaches and tools where these can enhance activities and results. It will prioritise investments in innovation within its core competency areas.

Accountability

NorCross is committed to being accountable to all of its stakeholders, first and foremost to the people and communities it serves, but also to its donors, RCRC partners, staff, and volunteers. This commitment is reflected in the ninth principle of the Code of Conduct for the International RCRC Movement and NGOs in Disaster Relief, which states that: "We hold ourselves accountable to both those we seek to assist and those from whom we accept resources."

The performance and accountability of a partner National Society is in the first instance the responsibility of each sovereign National Society. At the same time, NorCross expects all partners to focus on good governance, risk management, and compliance.

Conversely, NorCross is accountable towards its own partners. Key elements of its approach are transparency, stakeholder participation and good planning, monitoring, evaluation and reporting (PMER). The aim of PMER is to strengthen the ability of NorCross and its partners to provide effective and relevant support to people and communities in need. NorCross will support partners in strengthening PMER capacities and promote greater harmonisation among donors in aligning their requirements. It will strive to promote flexible PMER systems and to build on and support

Federation-wide systems where these exist. NorCross will promote enhanced community engagement in the programmes it supports, including through beneficiary communications.

NorCross will enhance its ability to document and communicate results. The Common Results Framework for NorCross international activities will be further developed and rolled out in the period ahead. The Results Framework will provide a tool to focus NorCross' support to partners towards set strategic objectives. It will also allow NorCross to compile and present the results achieved with the totality of resources mobilised within a particular thematic or geographic area, and in time, to publish one annual results report for all its international activities.

NorCross shall strengthen the awareness on Fraud and Corruption and preventive and reactive measures to such, including risk mitigation and punitive measures. NorCross adheres to a principle of zero-tolerance.

Similarly, NorCross adheres to a principle of zero-tolerance of sexual exploitation and abuse of beneficiaries. NorCross will proactively work to prevent and respond to cases perpetrated by delegates, staff and volunteers within NorCross. NorCross will promote this principle of zero tolerance of sexual exploitation and abuse in the cooperation with National Societies.

Competency development

One of NorCross' greatest assets are its qualified and highly motivated staff and volunteers.

Providing opportunities for competency development is important to strengthen programme quality and relevance, to recruit and retain qualified personnel and volunteers, and to increase motivation and job satisfaction. It is a joint responsibility of management and employees to prioritise competency development and to foster an organisational culture of continual learning.

NorCross will strengthen recruitment and training in its five thematic areas, with a particular focus on the areas defined as core competencies. It will also expand its competence in programme development, including in multi-sectorial programming, as well as in the use of new approaches and technologies. Participation in relevant networks and fora, as well as exchanges of competency and expertise with partners within and outside the RCRC Movement will be encouraged.

NorCross will invest in leadership development for managers both at headquarters and in the field.

NorCross will ensure that it is an inclusive workplace by continuing to strive for improved gender and diversity composition at all levels. It will encourage rotation of staff between headquarters and field.

In cooperation with the Federation and the ICRC, NorCross will ensure that it has adequate routines and systems to ensure the security and safety of personnel while acknowledging the inherent risks of working in fragile contexts. It will continuously work to improve these as the context evolves. Staff and volunteers are responsible for ensuring that they act in accordance with such procedures.