

Strategy

2021
2025

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Mission

The Climate Centre supports the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement (“the Movement”) and its partners in reducing the impacts of climate change and extreme-weather events on vulnerable people

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1. Introduction

This strategy comes at a pivotal moment. The 2019 International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent and the IFRC's Strategy 2030 have identified climate change as a critical humanitarian priority for the coming decade, also expressed in the [Movement Ambitions to Address the Climate Crisis](#). Through its network of 192 National Societies, 165,000 local branches and 14 million volunteers, the IFRC has committed to reduce current and future humanitarian impacts of climate and environmental crises and to supporting people to adapt in the face of them. The IFRC secretariat has committed to ambitious climate goals, making “addressing the climate and environmental crises” the first strategic priority of its 2021–2025 Plan and Budget. The Climate Centre, as an IFRC reference centre and the principal technical resource for the Movement on climate-related issues, will be instrumental in the realization of these ambitions.

2. Context

We have begun a decisive decade. The climate crisis is here, risks are rising. The effects of a world that has already warmed by over a full degree Celsius are clear: we are facing more shocks, more surprises, and more compound risks. We are seeing disasters and gradual climate stresses exacerbate rapid and unplanned urbanization, environmental degradation and depletion of natural resources, conflict, displacement, migration, and health risks including heat stress and public health emergencies.

The COVID-19 pandemic and its indirect economic impacts have laid bare our strengths as well as our vulnerability to shocks. It is the poorest and most vulnerable that are most impacted by colliding risks, and it is the humanitarian system that is being stretched to a breaking point. Decisive action must be taken to ensure recovery that is green, resilient, and inclusive.

Part of this paradigm shift requires developing a greater ability to anticipate risks and build resilience as part of development – especially in the most vulnerable places, such as in situations of armed conflict as well as in fragile settings. At the same time, we must prevent growing climate hazards by quickly bending the curve on rising greenhouse gas emissions.

While ambition to address the climate crisis exists at the global level, the level and quality of practical action are falling short. Too often we work in silos, both among international organizations and within national governments. A disconnection between global, national and local implementation is resulting in failure to address the needs and harness the capacities of front-line communities. Innovative approaches to better anticipate and manage risk such as forecast-based financing, known to work in a variety of local settings, are not yet pursued at scale. While public concern is growing, accountability for these shortcomings is lacking.

Since its inception in 2002, the Climate Centre has played an important role in shaping global policy, as well as innovations to address the rising risks in practice. In the coming five years, we are guided by a clear focus on supporting local-level *implementation* at scale.

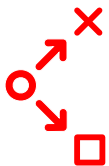
This effort will be greatly facilitated by our diverse global team including 28 nationalities across six continents. In 2019 alone, the Climate Centre team directly supported 103 National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and other stakeholders in 97 countries. As we look ahead, we are energized and inspired by the opportunity to join forces with the ever-expanding network of climate focal points and experts across the IFRC secretariat and in National Societies to deliver on our mission and on this strategy in particular.

3. Pathways to change

Over the next five years, the Climate Centre will continue to provide thought leadership, with a focus on addressing the needs of the most vulnerable, and fostering resilience including the most fragile contexts. We will do this through three pathways to change:



- *Harness scientific knowledge and influence research agendas* to generate actionable insights on climate hazards, exposure and vulnerability of people and their livelihoods, and to shape adaptation to rising risks. We will continue to work with top scientists and talented young researchers from around the world, and provide major contributions to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change.



- *Inform policy* within the Red Cross Red Crescent, the UNFCCC and its related financing mechanisms, and the wider interfaces between climate, humanitarian and development domains. We will do this as trusted technical experts, but also as representatives of humanitarian concerns about rising risks. We will continue to do this from local to global levels, working across sectors and relevant themes.

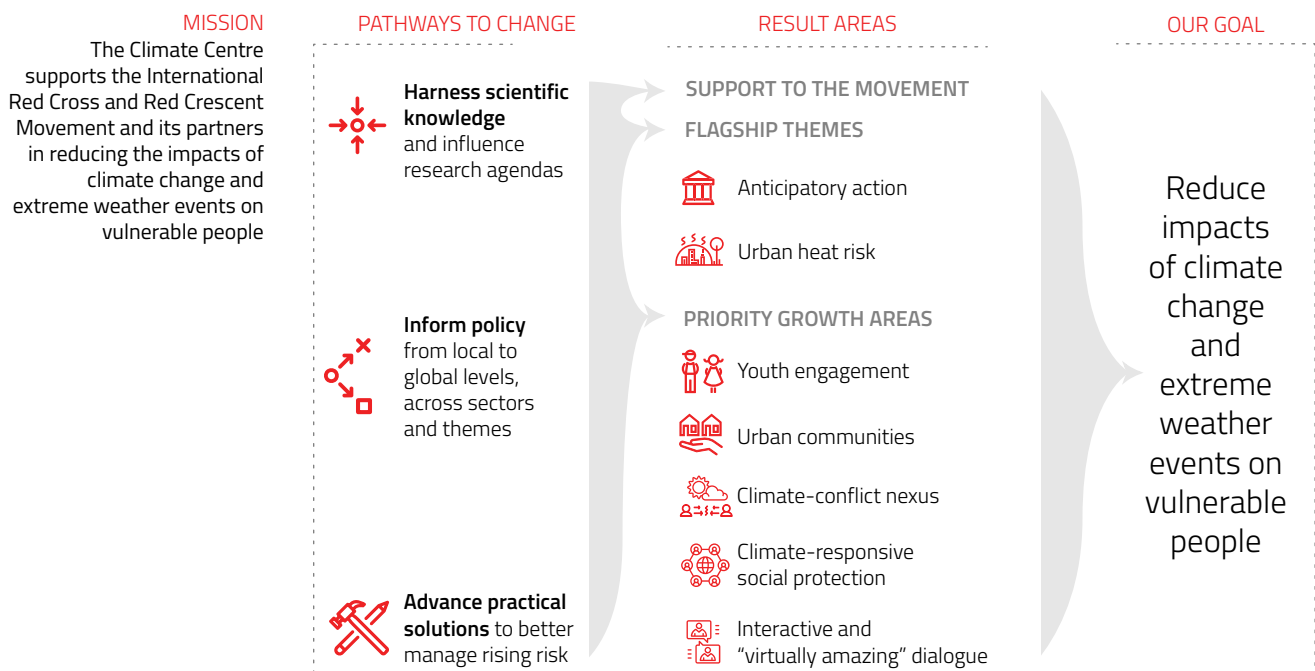


- *Advance practical solutions to better manage rising risks* through work with the IFRC and individual National Societies, the ICRC, and many partners from the World Bank to local communities.

4. Our priorities

The priority themes the Climate Centre will address reflect areas where we have a specific added value and a niche, with partners both within and beyond the Red Cross Red Crescent. A central part of the work of the Climate Centre will continue to be cross-cutting support to the Movement, based on need and demand. In addition to such cross-cutting support, we have identified two *flagship themes* and a selection of *priority areas of growth*.

Aside from these categories, we see a need for continued engagement with the private sector regarding its role in climate-risk management, and in the emerging discussions on solar geoengineering and we will continue to monitor these areas, engaging where possible in a low-intensity, high-impact way.



4.1 Ongoing support to the Movement and its partners

The Climate Centre will continue to support the Movement in achieving its climate ambitions as laid out in the [Movement Ambitions to Address the Climate Crisis](#), and in the implementation of the IFRC Strategy 2030, its Plan and Budget 2021–2025, and its climate-related priorities, as well as the climate priorities in the ICRC’s Strategy 2019–2022.

This support will be delivered where demand and funding are clear. Our engagement will help shape nascent or existing agendas with the humanitarian perspective through brokering dialogues, providing technical guidance, and where possible, helping to shape relevant partnerships. Annex 1 presents a list of thematic areas that will be considered part of this ongoing support.

4.2 Flagship themes

In addition to our cross-cutting support to the Red Cross Red Crescent, we have identified two *flagship themes* where we are already recognized leaders and where we plan to continue to invest heavily, given continued traction of the work, as well as anticipated demand and potential for further growth.



- *Institutionalizing anticipatory action*

Anticipatory approaches enable people to receive assistance ahead of predictable shocks and have become a key ingredient of comprehensive risk management in the face of rising risks. However, initiatives to implement anticipatory approaches such as forecast-based assistance have remained in “project mode” or are confined to relatively small scales of geographic or demographic reach. In addition, risk information generated to drive forecast-based action is often limited to humanitarian interventions, and seldom effectively informs longer-term risk reduction and adaptation.

Building on our pioneering work to make anticipatory humanitarian action a reality, the Climate Centre will continue to drive the strategic shift to anticipatory thinking and action. Our vision is to institutionalize anticipation, to make it a key modus operandi for humanitarian work, but also to link it to risk-informed development ranging from community-based disaster risk reduction (DRR) to urban planning and social protection systems.

With its partners, including especially the Anticipation Hub, the Climate Centre will (a) convene stakeholders across the humanitarian, development and private sectors to facilitate a step-change towards anticipation, building global momentum for local action, (b) build and expand institutional partnerships to anchor anticipatory action within the broader DRR, climate finance and social protection landscapes, and (c) work with Movement partners to take anticipatory action to scale in their respective countries and regions by providing strategic foresight, actionable programme design and management guidance, and coalition-building support to solidify momentum.



- *Addressing urban heat risk*

Heatwaves are among the deadliest disasters and they are getting stronger and more frequent. Heatwave impacts are felt most acutely in urban areas where two-thirds of the world’s people will live by 2050. Despite this staggering global toll, there is a lack of global awareness and action to combat heat risks. However, heatwaves are predictable, and many adverse effects are preventable with simple, low-cost actions.

The Climate Centre will support the IFRC's 2025 goal to ensure that 250 million people are covered by new or improved heat action plans and/or early warning systems in at least 150 cities and towns. The Climate Centre will strengthen its position as a thought leader in this space and foster leadership and action among its partners to scale up its efforts to reduce heat impacts.

With its partners, the Climate Centre will accelerate city-level action at a global scale to prevent urban heat-impacts, now and in the future. This includes raising awareness of heat risks, supporting planning for action on heat and early warning systems, promoting urban planning to reduce heat risks, shaping heatwave research, advocating for increased funding, and fostering policy to underpin that action. The Climate Centre will facilitate connections, strengthen capacity, highlight gaps and success stories.

4.3 Priority areas of growth

The following thematic areas embody strong potential over the coming five years, based on demand from within the Red Cross Red Crescent and beyond. We are already in the process of growing our capacity and comparative advantage on these themes by...



- *Strengthening youth engagement* with the aim of providing inspiration and direction to Red Cross Red Crescent Movement youth and others to take meaningful climate action, through increased awareness, action and advocacy.



- *Supporting vulnerable urban communities* to be knowledgeable about the climate risks they face and adaptive actions to take and help equip National Societies and partners with the necessary tools and guidance to foster urban climate action at scale. Work under this theme will address short- and long-term climate risks, such as heat and extreme rainfall, but also rising sea levels and changing migration patterns. The focus under this theme also includes promoting partnerships between cities and the Red Cross Red Crescent to reduce rising climate risks.



- *Addressing the "climate-conflict nexus"* by working with the ICRC in its efforts to "reinforce conflict-affected communities' ability to absorb the combined consequences of conflict and climate shocks", and helping its delegations "support communities to adapt and transform their capacities and resources to better manage future stresses caused by the combined effects of conflict and climate change", in practice as well as through policy engagement and analysis.



- *Making social protection responsive to climate* with the aim of helping countries more effectively manage climate risks while reducing poverty and vulnerability.



- *Pilot and scale interactive and "virtually amazing" dialogue*, making innovative virtual and hybrid engagements a new norm for the humanitarian sector and its partners. These approaches are to serve as an alternative to carbon-intensive travel and enable new economies of scale in building capacity and brokering solutions.

5. Achieving impact at scale

The new ambitions on climate action in the Movement and the scale of support needed across all National Societies means the Climate Centre’s support to the system will evolve. Reflecting on the current landscape of actors as well as our past successes in promoting climate risk management for the most vulnerable, we have identified five *implementation approaches* for achieving impact in the coming five years:



- *Leverage local leadership:* By working closely with the IFRC, ICRC and National Society leadership, the Climate Centre will continue to facilitate effective communication on rising climate risks with an emphasis on those facing the most vulnerable. We will continue to leverage the Red Cross Red Crescent network to highlight locally led and scalable solutions to addressing the humanitarian implications of climate change; and we will continue to strengthen local voices in global debates by linking perspectives and networks, and connecting different levels of governance. We will continue to provide advice to the network and its partners, and play a representational and convening role in climate policy processes. Providing capacity-building support to ensure strong local leadership will continue to be a primary avenue for strengthening the Red Cross Red Crescent’s capacity to grow its leadership role in the area of climate risk management.



- *Provide self-guided and peer-to-peer support:* A large part of this support will be provided through development and delivery of state of the art, off-the-shelf/self-guided capacity-building tools and interactive trainings, including for leadership, as well as by actively nurturing peer-to-peer support models among National Societies and within the IFRC and ICRC.

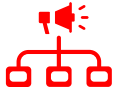


- *Innovate to improve:* The Climate Centre will continue to develop out-of-the-box approaches to enable partners to notice and confront what is unacceptable yet accepted, while building trust and creating solutions. We will continue to innovate to promote ambition-oriented learning and dialogue, and to inform and influence decision-making processes related to science, policy and practice. This includes using innovative approaches (like harnessing the power of art, music, games and humour) to help bridge divides, broker new connections, and strengthen existing partnerships from local to global levels, across sectors and disciplines.



- *Incubate for long-term impact:* In order to widen its impact, the Climate Centre follows an “incubation model”, whereby expertise is fluid and people move in and out of the team rather than just aiming for growth of the centre itself. In designing new projects and attracting human resources, we aim to develop and strengthen existing incubation structures such as mentorship, secondment and joint implementation, and a robust alumni network to

promote the climate risk management agenda, and strengthen the capacity of the Movement and its partners. In an effort to serve as a knowledge hub, the expanding network of climate focal points across the IFRC secretariat and in National Societies, and in the ICRC, will be treated as an extended part of the global Climate Centre team, able to connect and draw on the skills and capacity of the Climate Centre in a fluid and flexible way.



- *Communicate to connect:* We will share our humanitarian perspective on the climate crisis and what's needed to address it. Key channels include our website, media interviews, social media such as Twitter and LinkedIn, podcasts, and of course our support to effective climate communication by and for the IFRC, ICRC, National Societies and our wider network of partners, including through original research on the humanitarian consequences of climate change and support to science such as the attribution of the role of climate change in recent extreme weather events.

6. Resourcing our ambitions

To deliver on our vision, it is key for the Climate Centre is to help to raise resources for the wider Movement, ensuring that climate resources reach the most vulnerable. This is an integral objective of our work outlined above. Resourcing includes securing financial resources, but also the *pro bono* provision of intellectual capital, for instance through our research networks and internship programmes. In addition, we must also resource the capacities of our own work as a reference centre.

Annex 2 presents possible funding and partnership modalities for the Climate Centre, including the advantages each offers in terms of flexibility, and opportunities for partnership development, shaping key agendas and delivering high-quality technical assistance to partners within the Movement and more broadly.

The Climate Centre's current resource base consists mainly of earmarked or project-specific funding. Increased flexible funding will be critical to enable the Climate Centre to provide the diverse array of technical assistance sought from partners across the Movement, especially towards the most vulnerable with the least capacity and funding.

7. Demonstrating delivery

Our results can be difficult to distinguish from those of our partners. Nevertheless, we will track our added value and be sure to apply our modest resources for the biggest impact.

On an annual basis, our work plan will list our project portfolio and highlight how it contributes to our flagships and thematic-work areas (outlined in Sections 3, 4 and 5). For each project, we will also track (a) the number of countries we are directly impacting with our work, (b) the number of partner organizations we are directly working with, (c) the amount of total programme value we are influencing or helping to deliver, and (d) our own Climate Centre time and resource investment into a project.

This approach allows us to assess our geographic, organizational and financial influence per project and per priority thematic area. In addition, we will capture the most impactful and innovative stories of change under each thematic priority area, enabling us to convey the substantive results we are achieving. We will track the evolution of our portfolio and flexible resources to optimally align with the aspirations in this strategy.

Annex 1: Support to the Movement and its partners

In 2020, the IFRC, the ICRC and the Climate Centre produced a set of [Movement Ambitions to Address the Climate Crisis](#), indicating how the Movement intends to scale up its climate action, and integrate an understanding of evolving climate risks across all areas of its work. Table 2 describes how the Climate Centre envisages supporting the Movement to realize its ambitions, where there is need and demand. For each theme, the table presents the impact we intend to have by 2025.

Theme	Intended impact
Health	National Societies and their partners have increased understanding of the links between climate and health, and are mainstreaming these links into policy, planning, capacity building and action on the ground.
Displacement	National Societies and their partners have increased understanding of the links between climate and displacement, and are mainstreaming these links into policy, planning, capacity building and action on the ground.
Attribution	Increased awareness of the linkage between climate change and specific extreme weather events. This allows us to leverage attention for changing risks when a disaster has just occurred, and enables a more nuanced conversation on how climate risks are manifested and adaptation implemented to reduce risks for the most vulnerable people.
Climate-resilient livelihoods	National Societies and their partners have increased understanding of how the livelihoods of the most vulnerable are affected by climate change, and are mainstreaming these links into policy, planning, capacity-building and action on the ground.
Nature-based solutions	National Societies and their partners are implementing nature-based solutions focused on reducing disaster risks and adapting to and mitigating climate change.
WASH	National Societies and their partners are supported to systematically integrate and anticipate short- and longer-term climate risks into programmes on water, sanitation and hygiene.
Greening the Red	National Societies and their partners are greening their operations more effectively, through linkages with the IFRC's Green Response working group, leading National Societies' and ICRC capacities in this area; light-touch, on-demand support is provided.
Private sector	Increased attention in the private sector for its role in building resilience, specifically with regards to the role National Societies can play in supporting the private sector to comprehensively address the vulnerability component in climate-risk analyses.
Solar geoengineering	Increased attention for the humanitarian perspective on solar geoengineering, including risks and ethical and governance aspects.

Table 2. Ongoing support to the Movement and its partners, based on demand.

Annex 2: Resourcing modalities

There are several options for resourcing the Climate Centre's work. Each offers different advantages in terms of flexibility and opportunities for partnership development, shaping key agendas, and delivering high-quality technical assistance to partners within the Movement and beyond.

- *Direct project funding.* This is funding from National Societies, bilateral and multilateral donor agencies, research bodies, foundations or other institutions, and is tied to the delivery of specific technical assistance or research in projects. It allows us to deliver in close partnership and is related to clear demands, but it also comes with constraints, especially when responding to high-priority requests for support beyond the geographical or thematic scope of the specific projects.
- *Unearmarked funding, often from Partner National Societies.* This is typically delivered on an annual basis or for strategic activities. This type of funding is the most valuable and offers the potential for delivering greatest impact given its inherent flexibility; this enables the Climate Centre to leverage the expertise of the entire team to capitalize on existing and new opportunities and deepen partnerships (with governments, for example), and respond to high-priority requests for support from the network, including in vulnerable and underserved places. This type of funding will need to increase in order for the Centre to effectively meet its mission in support to the Movement's ambitions to address the Climate Crisis.
- *Joint positions.* Under this funding modality, the IFRC or a National Society or external partner organization shares the cost with the Climate Centre of a technical expert to function as a fully fledged member of our team as a regional and thematic focal point. This modality can be an innovative way to build capacity on climate across the system while attracting specific technical expertise – on health, for example – that may not already exist on the Climate Centre team.
- *Seconded staff.* Similar to the above but with the technical expert's position fully covered by the IFRC or a Partner National Society or an external partner. This model offers the Climate Centre the opportunity to incubate talent and learn from the experience and expertise of the secondees.
- *Funding recipient as a partner in a larger consortium.* Due to its small size, the Climate Centre typically seeks out specific roles in line with its technical expertise, rather than opting to lead large consortia. This has been an excellent way to establish and/or nurture an array of influential partnerships and be part of larger efforts to shape systems across the science-policy-practice nexus.

- *IFRC appeals.* Through the provision of technical support by the Climate Centre, activities funded through an IFRC appeal are informed on risk and generally “climate-smart”.
- *Philanthropy and private sector.* This is an emerging area of growth whereby the Climate Centre is exploring opportunities to partner with interested National Societies to advance a corporate climate agenda, based on the unique expertise the Red Cross Red Crescent can offer on vulnerability and resilience-building to philanthropy and private sector entities.
- *Professional volunteers.* We are starting an experiment with engaging professionals who wish to develop a career in climate change on a *pro bono* basis, but for projects clearly defined in scope and time. These could be in the field of private-sector engagement, philanthropic fund-raising, and innovative approaches to learning and dialogue.