

for Red Cross and Red Crescent National Societies

An integrated approach to scaling up climate action and locally led adaptation

Climate change is contributing to humanitarian crises and reducing people's ability to cope, affecting lives and livelihoods, especially in the poorest and most marginalized communities. It is increasing food and water insecurity, driving displacement and impacting health. It is increasing the frequency, magnitude and intensity of climate and weather extremes, highlighting the difficult necessity for people, communities, and organizations to adapt to a rapidly changing world.

Red Cross and Red Crescent National Societies are confronted with unprecedented, record-breaking events that directly impact the communities they serve. As the [Climate and Environment Charter for humanitarian organizations](#) says, our ability to protect future generations depends on our choices now – to cut greenhouse gas emissions (*mitigation*), adapt to rising risks (*adaptation*), and avert loss and damage.

National Societies are embarking on a dedicated climate action journey to enable them to initiate, deepen, and scale-up climate action and locally led adaptation through increasing their climate-risk knowledge and capacity, strengthening partnerships for action, and accessing climate finance.

What is climate action?

Reducing greenhouse gas emissions that cause climate change (*mitigation*) and addressing the impacts of climate change (*adaptation*).

What are climate-smart programmes and operations?

Integrating available climate and weather information, both short-term weather and seasonal forecasts, and long-term climate projections, in designing and/or adjusting all programmes and operations to ensure that, at a minimum, they do not place people at increased risk from new climate extremes and if possible/ appropriate, empower communities to anticipate, absorb and adapt to climate shocks and long-term changes.

What is locally led adaptation?

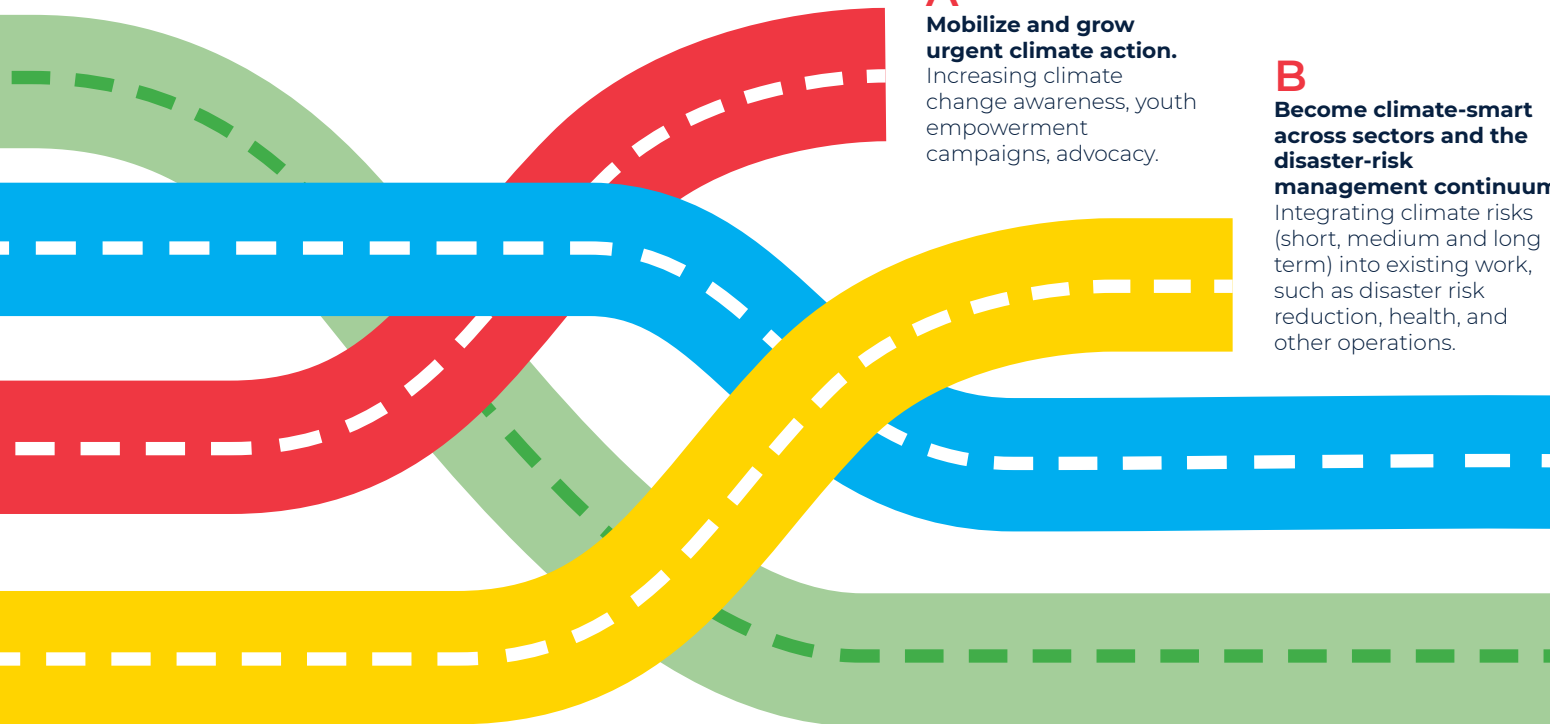
Climate change adaptation is about taking action focused on increasing resilience to current and future effects of climate change; locally led adaptation is simply owned by local partners: [eight principles](#) were developed to help ensure that local communities are empowered to lead sustainable and effective adaptation to climate change at the local level (Global Centre on Adaptation, 2021).

Figure 1. Different climate action strategic pathways for National Societies.

The climate action journey proposes different pathways for Red Cross Red Crescent National Societies, depending on their ambition, capacities and resources.

They may focus on raising awareness on the humanitarian impacts of climate change (Pathway A), or they may decide to follow the complete journey

and develop locally led adaptation programmes (Pathway C). The pathways of a National Society can evolve and expand over time and are not mutually exclusive.



A
Mobilize and grow urgent climate action.
 Increasing climate change awareness, youth empowerment campaigns, advocacy.

B
Become climate-smart across sectors and the disaster-risk management continuum.
 Integrating climate risks (short, medium and long term) into existing work, such as disaster risk reduction, health, and other operations.

C
Facilitate locally led adaptation at scale.
 Addressing the most urgent needs of communities to help them anticipate, absorb and adapt to climate shocks.

D
Increase environmental sustainability, green response and climate change mitigation (parallel trajectory). Integrate environmental sustainability across sectors and in the DRM continuum.

Most National Societies are strong actors when it comes to DRM (DRR, preparedness, anticipatory action, response and recovery) and already address a range of climate-relevant activities (health, WASH, livelihoods). These allow for a clear entry point for deeper climate programming and offer the foundation for integrating climate change considerations into ongoing activities (Pathway B).

The climate action journey methodology encourages National Societies to scale up their action and ambition from an initial climate-awareness pathway through to a climate-smart programming and operations pathway, to scaling up locally led climate action and adaptation. The steps are led by a National Society working group with the support, where needed, of the IFRC network and in-country experts and partners; ideally with resources from ongoing climate projects and programmes.

The journey starts with ensuring **key enablers** are in place:

- ◇ **Institutional buy-in:** from leadership and across different departments through the signing of the charter.
- ◇ **Resources:** a dedicated climate working group; promoting a climate focal point and, where possible, putting in place a climate action officer; seed funding.
- ◇ **Awareness:** of the importance of the climate crisis, engagement and mobilization of youth and volunteers.

Climate-smart programmes and operations require a deep understanding of current and future climate risks (national climate risk assessment) and potential impacts on National Society operations, programmes and strategies (climate-smart screening). This then leads to the design of climate-smart programmes and operations. The basic principles of integrating

climate risks are the use of climate information on all timescales and the partnerships this requires. These principles and steps are further explained in the IFRC Guide on climate-smart programmes and operations (IFRC and Climate Centre, 2023).

As a next step in the proposed methodology, National Societies set their own long-term climate objectives in a multi-year climate strategy that aligns with their planning. It identifies priorities for climate action at scale and for fundraising, as well as potential national partnerships and donors. It sets a climate vision.

Local risk perceptions and solutions are then identified through community risk assessments and trainings. And lastly, all of these steps then equip National Societies to design and implement evidence-based locally led adaptation focused on increasing community resilience to climate risks.

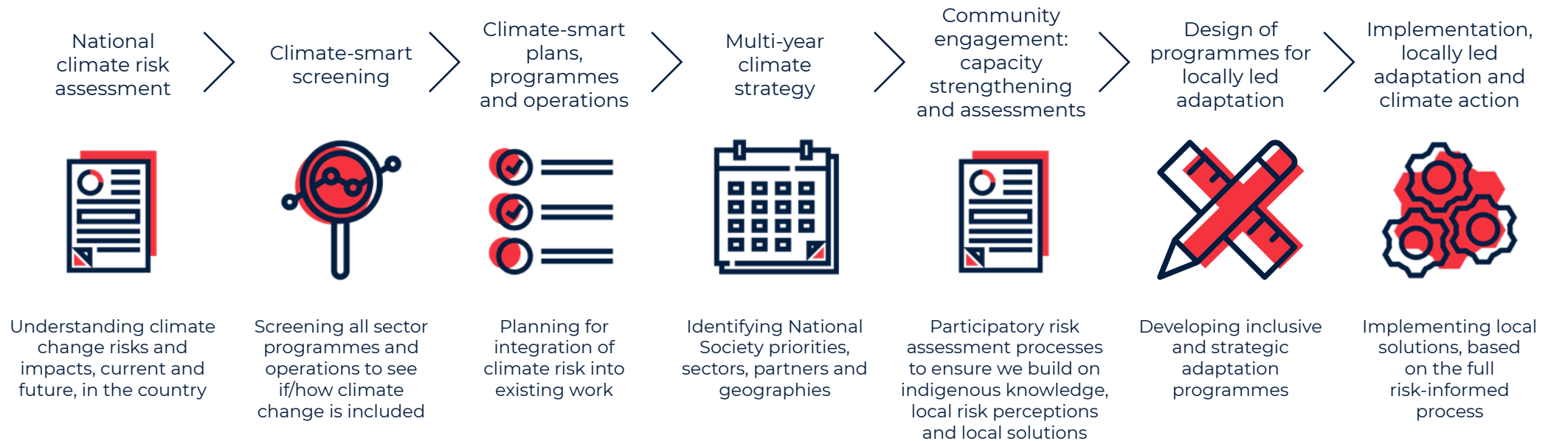
The overarching aim of the climate action journey is to position National Societies as **champions** of locally led adaptation, enabling them to...

- ◇ Assess and understand climate change science and climate risks.
- ◇ Increase institutional capacity to address climate risks from short- to long-term.
- ◇ Design climate-smart programmes and operations.
- ◇ Design, implement and scale up locally led adaptation and climate action that increases community resilience.
- ◇ Access international climate finance.

Steps for climate-smart programmes and operations

Figure 2. The steps of the Climate Action Journey

FROM NATIONAL TO LOCAL



FROM LOCAL TO NATIONAL

ENABLERS:
 Institutional buy-in
 Resources
 Awareness
 Capacity building
 Learning and evaluation

Basic principles:
 Working with climate information across timescales and partnerships

Amplifying through influencing:
 Climate and disaster laws, policies and plans at national level

Parallel trajectories:
 Integrating environmental sustainability and climate change mitigation