

# PACIFIC ISLANDS

2023 IFRC network multi-country plan

Funding Requirement **CHF 5.9M**

Appeal number **MAA55001**

## In support of ten Pacific Island Red Cross National Societies



**64**

National Society branches



**174**

National Society staff



**2,830**

National Society volunteers

## People to be reached



**38,000**

Climate and environment



**61,000**

Disasters and crises



**200,000**

Health and wellbeing



**4,000**

Migration and displacement



**30,000**

Values, power and inclusion

## IFRC network multiyear focus

### Longer term needs

- Disaster risk management
- Climate change adaptation
  - Health care
  - Social inclusion

### Capacity development

- Branch development
- Financial sustainability
- Financial management
- Volunteer development and youth engagement

## Population

<b>Cook Islands</b>	<b>17,000</b>	<b>Palau</b>	<b>18,000</b>
<b>Fiji</b>	<b>902,000</b>	<b>Samoa</b>	<b>200,000</b>
<b>Kiribati</b>	<b>121,000</b>	<b>Solomon Islands</b>	<b>703,000</b>
<b>Marshall Islands</b>	<b>59,000</b>	<b>Tuvalu</b>	<b>11,000</b>
<b>Micronesia</b>	<b>116,000</b>	<b>Vanuatu</b>	<b>314,000</b>

## Hazards



Climate change



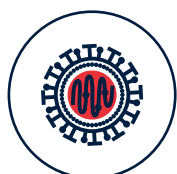
Cyclones



Earthquakes



Volcanic eruptions



Disease outbreaks



Tsunamis

## Funding requirements

**Total 5.9M** CHF

Through the IFRC

**5.6M** CHF

Through Participating National Societies

**337,000** CHF

### IFRC Breakdown

#### Longer term needs

**425,000** CHF  
Climate and environment

**2.6M** CHF  
Disasters and crises

**415,000** CHF  
Health and wellbeing

**20,000** CHF  
Migration and displacement

**270,000** CHF  
Values, power and inclusion

**1.9M** CHF  
Enabling local actors

## Participating National Societies

Australian Red Cross\*

French Red Cross\*

Italian Red Cross

Japanese Red Cross Society

New Zealand Red Cross





© IFRC

## NATIONAL SOCIETY PROFILES

While varying in size, the 10 Pacific Island National Societies covered by this plan face similar challenges, and share common values and principles. They all act as auxiliaries to their governments in the humanitarian

field, focusing on disaster response and contributing to their respective national disaster management frameworks.

	Pacific Red Cross Societies	When established	No. of volunteers (approximation)	No. of staff	No. of branches (local units)
<b>Polynesia</b>	Cook Islands Red Cross	1989	10	11	12
	Samoa Red Cross	1952	100	5	2
	Tuvalu Red Cross	1981	470	5	8
<b>Melanesia</b>	Fiji Red Cross	1971	500	37	18
	The Solomon Islands Red Cross	1983	180	25	5
	Vanuatu Red Cross	1982	310	41	9
<b>Micronesia</b>	Kiribati Red Cross	1965	230	18	1
	Marshall Islands Red Cross	2013	150	8	3
	Micronesia Red Cross	2000	540	13	4
	Palau Red Cross	1997	340	11	2
	<b>Total</b>		<b>2,830</b>	<b>174</b>	<b>64</b>

Red Cross leaders in the Pacific region have committed to a range of outcomes relevant to their regional context, as well as to the challenges and strategies outlined in the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) Strategy 2030. These commitments include maintaining community and partner trust through locally led humanitarian action, initiatives on integrity and accountability, building skills and improving knowledge so that the National Societies

can continue to deliver effective services in a rapidly changing world.

The leaders have committed to engaging more with their governments and using the platforms available to them to advocate for the collective work that Pacific island nations are doing in the areas of climate resilience, non-communicable diseases and health outbreaks, and youth engagement in Pacific regional policy platforms.

## Joint situational analysis

	Long-term Climate Risk Index	Human Development Index rank	Population below poverty line
Cook Islands			
Fiji	19	99	29.9%
Kiribati	131	136	21.9%
Marshall Islands	172	131	
Micronesia, Federated States of	40	134	41.2%
Palau		80	24.9%
Samoa	70	111	25.0%
Solomon Islands	71	155	12.7%
Tuvalu	125	130	26.3%
Vanuatu	37	140	15.9%

The Pacific Islands covered in this plan are spread across a vast and diverse region which represents more than 15 per cent of the earth's surface. Largely made up of small island and archipelago states, these island countries face a range of external shocks which affect the lives and livelihoods of their populations. Their geographic locations make them vulnerable to disasters and environmental degradation, and the global climate crisis exacerbates these vulnerabilities. The economies of these countries face challenges from their remoteness, small populations and shrinking resources. These challenges also have impacts on their systems of governance, compounding the challenges of coping with external shocks. Communicable and non-communicable diseases and weak health systems mean that, in many parts of the Pacific, communities face water insecurity, food insecurity and reduced life expectancy. Access to quality education is also a challenge, with remote communities particularly affected by a poverty of opportunity. Where development gains can be made, the high prevalence of gender-based violence and social norms that perpetuate inequality threaten to hold back progress.

While these Pacific states face a range of challenges, their rich cultural, social and ecological connections underpin the importance of their ocean homelands and resources. Their values-based traditions and social structures are solid foundations for building community-based resilience through stewardship and collaboration. Pacific communities and institutions have strong, complex traditions based on reciprocity and volunteerism, and operate within the prevailing norms

of their broader context. For these reasons, they face challenges with governance, inclusion, financial sustainability and the ever-present need to respond to crises and disasters in lengthening cycles.

The last year has again proven that the Pacific is one of the most disaster-prone regions in the world, facing tropical cyclones, earthquakes, tsunamis, volcanic eruptions, health crises and drought. The World Risk Index 2020 ranks Vanuatu as the most at-risk country globally.

Pacific Island countries are extremely vulnerable to climate change, which is causing the loss of coastal infrastructure and land, extreme rainfall events, intense tropical cyclones in the South Pacific, rising sea levels and ocean acidification. Communities across the region are also experiencing more intense periods of drought, leading to problems such as failed subsistence crops, damage to coastal fisheries, the loss of coral reefs and mangroves, and the spread of disease.

Higher temperatures, shifts in rainfall patterns and the changing frequency of extreme events mean climate change affects peoples' lives and livelihoods. So far this year in 2022, the Cook Islands, Kiribati, the Solomon Islands and Tuvalu have been on high alert for excessively dry conditions due to La Niña, and Tuvalu has implemented its first use of the Disaster Response Emergency Fund (DREF) for a potentially worsening drought. Meanwhile, Fiji and Vanuatu have been on alert for excessively wet conditions. Fiji has experienced flooding in areas that were previously not prone to it, while Vanuatu experienced extreme weather and minor flooding from January to March. Communities are

increasingly being affected by multiple hazards, and this challenging weather makes it more difficult to access communities and implement programmes.

The impacts of climate change are also causing the progressive, long-term degradation of the natural environment and critical ecosystems such as coral reefs. This affects the social and economic systems that Pacific Island communities depend on for subsistence and livelihoods. As a result, poverty is increasing and health issues are worsening due to poor diet, lack of food and lack of income. COVID-19 restrictions are compounding this further. As of May 2022, 43 per cent of communities in Fiji were using stress coping strategies, 16 per cent were using crisis coping strategies, and five per cent were using emergency strategies. This pattern is likely to continue to get worse.

The Pacific Islands' vulnerability has been compounded over the last 18 months by the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. When the pandemic was declared in March 2020, many of these nations implemented border closures and developed strict quarantine rules for returning residents, ensuring that cases of COVID-19 were contained at their borders. This has kept some Pacific Island

countries shielded from the primary health effects of the pandemic; however, the threat of COVID-19 persists. These countries often have both fragile health care systems and a high prevalence of non-communicable diseases, so there is still a critical need to protect the population through a comprehensive COVID-19 vaccination programme. Continued awareness raising around public health interventions that can reduce the spread of the virus is also important.

While most Pacific nations are currently free from community transmission, the socio-economic impacts of COVID-19 are a heavy burden for countries that depend heavily on tourism, remittances, imports and exports. Many households are struggling with reduced incomes, and some businesses are facing permanent closure. Governments have seen reduced tax revenue, which affects their funding for essential public services. Across the world, the impacts of COVID-19 are increasing poverty and inequality and, for the Pacific nations, they threaten to set back recent development by decades. A successful COVID-19 vaccination programme has played an important role in reopening borders and restarting parts of the economy.

---

## Strategic priorities

### Climate and environment

According to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, global temperatures are likely to increase continuously above pre-industrial levels between 2030 and 2052. This is expected to cause an increase in extreme temperatures over both land and sea, increased sea level inundations, changes in precipitation patterns, and more frequent and intense tropical cyclones.

These changes will exacerbate droughts, coastal flooding and saltwater intrusion on freshwater lenses. The Pacific climate is strongly influenced by the naturally occurring El Niño Southern Oscillation (ENSO) cycle, which consists of El Niño, the warmer-than-normal tropical Pacific Sea surface temperatures, and La Niña, the cooler-than-normal tropical Pacific Sea surface temperatures. These varied temperatures lead to a more severe and prolonged period of extreme natural events than usual. The effects of tropical cyclones and coastal flooding could also increase ocean warming and rising sea levels, exacerbating coral bleaching and reducing the protection provided by coral reefs.

Increasingly intense tropical cyclones in the Southwest Pacific and worsening droughts in the atoll nations of the North Pacific are both due to changes in the ENSO cycle. From 2015 to 2016, extremely low precipitation and an intense El Niño event resulted in a severe drought in the Marshall Islands which affected 21,000 people. The drought had a negative impact on economic activity, school attendance and nutrition rates, and its economic cost was put at US\$4.9 million.

The prolonged La Niña period in 2022 has meant that countries, including the Cook Islands, Kiribati, the Solomon Islands and Tuvalu, have been on high alert for excessive dry conditions, with Tuvalu triggering its first use of DREF assistance for a potentially worsening drought. Conversely, Fiji, the Federated States of Micronesia (Micronesia) and Vanuatu have been on high alert for excessively wet conditions.

The Pacific Island nations have developed and aligned climate change policies and regulations within their own countries, in order to adapt to the impacts of climate change. Regionally, the Framework for Resilient Development in the Pacific 2017–2030 provides key guidelines for these nations. The framework is governed

by the Pacific Resilience Partnership and provides specific guidance on localization, risk finance, human mobility and risk governance.

Other key strategies include the Pacific Islands Meteorological Strategy 2017–2026 and the Pacific Roadmap for Strengthened Climate Services 2017–2026.

### Main actions and areas of support

The National Societies of the Cook Islands, Marshall Islands, Palau, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tuvalu and Vanuatu are part of the IFRC [Global Climate Resilience Programme](#), which aims to foster an unprecedented scale-up in locally led climate-smart disaster risk reduction and adaptation efforts to prevent and reduce climate-related disaster impacts, and build community-level climate resilience. The programme aims to support 500 million people in 100 of the most climate-vulnerable countries, focusing on the least supported and marginalized communities. This holistic, multi-year programmatic approach consists of four operational pillars: (1) scaling up climate-smart disaster risk reduction, anticipatory action and preparedness; (2) reducing the public health impacts of climate change; (3) addressing climate displacement; and (4) enabling climate-resilient livelihoods and ecosystem services.

The IFRC will work with partners in the region to continue to deepen the collective impact approach to climate, using the theory of change developed with partners through the IFRC-hosted Pacific Climate Hub. The culture of the Pacific people ties them closely to their natural resources, and with this comes a sense of responsible environmental stewardship. The IFRC will foster existing partnerships by working with communities through National Societies, adapting to the impacts of climate change through low-cost, environmentally traditional practices.

Early warning early action in the Pacific region will remain a focus in 2023. Some Pacific Island National Societies have been involved in projects throughout 2022 which provide the foundations for more action. These include the Palau Red Cross Society's work with the Climate Risk and Early Warning Systems and the Tuvalu Red Cross Society's work on early action for potential drought. The IFRC will continue to enable support for early action based on early warning information. By building capacity in this area, National Societies will be able to access the information and knowledge they need around contextually appropriate early actions to take for both slow and rapid onset hazards. They will also build the capacity and skills necessary to implement these actions,

increasing community preparedness and reducing loss and damage to life, property and livelihoods.

Early Action Rainfall Watch (EARWatch) is a regional monthly weather outlook for the Pacific. It provides a precipitation forecast three months in advance, as well as looking back at rainfall over the previous three months. This gives the IFRC and Pacific National Societies an early indication of prolonged periods of wet or dry weather, including drought. It also helps to identify and prioritize countries and geographic areas where branches, volunteers and communities might need support. Since 2021, EARWatch has evolved, continually developing and being used more. Last year, it was revised to provide additional guidance on early actions in line with different levels of alert. To make the system more user-friendly in the future, actions will need to be reviewed based on practical experience and expertise, and National Societies will need support to integrate these actions into their general preparedness and response procedures. DREF support for slow onset drought-based forecasts is currently underway.

Building on the Tuvalu Red Cross's experience of accessing DREF support, work has taken place in 2022 to ensure that DREF support is also accessible to other small island National Societies. The IFRC will support this with access to resources and a plan for early action, and it will support National Societies to understand the process. It will also provide real-time guidance and run preparedness training sessions.

Through the Managing Coastal Aquifers project, the Pacific Community (SPC) has initiated a citizen science approach to resilience programming, youth and volunteer work. This project will engage communities in collecting data and information along with partner organizations.

Established in 2021, the Pacific Green Team is made up of staff focused on health, shelter, logistics, disaster management and climate resilience. The team has established an approach for green response and recovery initiatives to present to National Societies, and it has developed a pilot green fund for National Societies with the support of the Australian Red Cross. The fund will be assessed and monitored for uptake, implementation and impact, taking into account opportunities to scale up and integrate activities into other processes and plans. Good practices from the Pacific are being shared, in terms of greening organizations, emergency response and advocacy.

As part of the early warning early action advancement in the Pacific, the IFRC will collect evidence that

communicates the impacts of climate change and the needs being faced by the Pacific National Societies. This evidence will be used to advocate for awareness and improved understanding of the situation in the region, highlighting the greatest risks to the most vulnerable groups.

The Pacific Resilience Partnership Risk Financing Group will continue to collaborate with and support national authorities to establish risk financing mechanisms, advocate for contextually relevant and appropriate tools, and share examples of disaster and climate risk financing from within the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement.

## Disasters and crises

For real-time information on emergencies, see IFRC Go pages:

[Cook Islands](#)

[Fiji](#)

[Kiribati](#)

[Marshall Islands](#)

[Micronesia, Federated States of](#)

[Palau](#)

[Samoa](#)

[Solomon Islands](#)

[Tuvalu](#)

[Vanuatu](#)

Along with the known threat of tropical cyclones in the Pacific, other common hazards in the region include droughts, earthquakes, flash floods, landslides, flooding, tsunamis and king tides.

Tropical cyclones are increasing in intensity. In February 2016, Tropical Cyclone Winston was the first Category 5 cyclone to make landfall in the Southern Hemisphere, directly affecting Fiji. Forty-four people died and 40,000 people either lost their homes, or suffered damage to their homes and most of their personal belongings. The losses and damages amounted to US\$1.3 billion. In February 2018, Tropical Cyclone Gita made landfall in the region, directly affecting 80,000 people on the nearby island of Tonga. The economic impact amounted to US\$164.1 million, equating to 37.8 per cent of GDP.

In early April 2020, Tropical Cyclone Harold struck the Pacific, making landfall on the Solomon Islands at Category 1. Twenty-seven people died and agricultural crops were damaged, which had an impact on food security. By the time Tropical Cyclone Harold reached Vanuatu, it had escalated to Category 5. More than

159,000 people were affected and there was significant damage to schools, crops, buildings, power, telecommunications and the local boat fleet. Tropical Cyclone Harold then reached Fiji, where it was downgraded to Category 4. It caused significant damage, affecting the homes and livelihoods of more than 180,000 people. Nine hundred homes were completely destroyed and 3,000 more were severely damaged. Agriculture was seriously affected and there was widespread damage to infrastructure, schools and health centres, especially on Kadavu and the Lau Islands. Later in April, Tropical Cyclone Gita re-intensified to Category 5 and made landfall in Tonga, affecting the western coast of Tongatapu and 'Eua coastal communities, damaging schools and other coastal infrastructures including the 'Eua island wharf.

These Pacific Island nations are located in the Pacific Ring of Fire, characterized by major volcanoes and seismic events. Approximately 73 per cent of the population and 65 per cent of economic stock are exposed to seismic hazards. Tsunamis generated by seismic activity pose devastating threats to low-lying islands. On land, seismic activity can cause landslides and damage to infrastructure such as buildings, transport, power lines and information and communication technology infrastructure.

Disasters significantly disrupt social sectors, disproportionately affecting poor and vulnerable groups and exacerbating inequalities of opportunity. The damage caused by Tropical Cyclone Winston disrupted economic activity and access to education, and this affected people differently by gender. School attendance declined for older children, as boys helped to rebuild homes and re-establish livelihoods, while girls stayed at home to help with domestic activities. Female-headed households, households of widows, older people, people living with disabilities and single women all struggled to rebuild their homes, lacking the resources to do it quickly.

During the 2015–2016 Marshall Islands drought, there was major concern over declining nutrition rates in vulnerable groups such as children, pregnant and breastfeeding women, and people with chronic diseases. Lack of water disrupted educational access, as schools closed due to insufficient drinking water and children staying at home to collect water. Other households kept children at home as they had too little water to bathe in or wash school uniforms.

The Solomon Islands responded to an outbreak of civil unrest in November 2021 and it remains on alert as

geo-political tensions play out against a backdrop of local politics. Nations such as Fiji, which have volatile political histories, are under heightened tensions as they face elections in the year ahead.

Despite some progress, significant challenges remain in generating enough early response action to prevent predicted slow-onset weather events from turning into major humanitarian emergencies. The populations and resources of these islands are small compared with other countries around the world. Although Micronesian countries are often spared from major disasters, they continue to face significant impacts from slow-onset climate-related disasters. Lacking the drama of major emergencies, these slower-onset disasters draw less media attention until the situation becomes severe. There is a strong need for resilience programming that brings global attention to the plight of small island developing countries, and an even stronger need to support these nations to enhance their resilience.

The Pacific Islands Forum's recently approved 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent advocates for regionalism as a strategic approach to foster collective impact. The strategy covers five strategic pathways:

- Partnership and cooperation
- Resilience and well-being
- Education
- Research and technology
- Inclusion, equity and governance

Over the years, regional organizations have greatly enhanced regionalism by producing relevant roadmaps and policies. The Pacific Island Forum Secretariat leads much of this collaborative work, providing platforms such as the Pacific Resilience Partnership, in which IFRC is a key participant.

### **Main actions and areas of support**

The IFRC will adopt a learning-based approach with National Societies to work towards continual improvement, while at the same time advocating for locally led action. The [Preparedness for Effective Response \(PER\)](#) approach will assess operations; run simulations to familiarize people with the roles, responsibilities and processes necessary for an effective response; and use on-task learning as part of DREF lessons learned during and after operations.

The IFRC will enhance resilience by supporting National Societies and communities with both technical sectors

and the disaster response continuum of preparedness, response, recovery and risk reduction. It will also integrate early action into general preparedness.

The IFRC will support dedicated preparedness work around cash and voucher assistance, piloting it in emergency operations where feasible. Together with key National Societies, it will take a practical approach to pilot activities. It will prioritize establishing framework agreements with financial service providers, piloting delivery mechanisms, training in core competencies and developing standard operating procedures. The IFRC will specifically promote cross-programme integration in shelter, response, resilience, logistics and finance.

The Pacific Emergency Responder Capacity Initiative will be developed to resolve challenges identified in the Pacific, which include:

- Training for emergency responders being out of date with current adult learning approaches misaligned to the skills needed
- Training for emergency responders being a one-off annual event, rather than being connected to other levels of training
- The lack of a clear pathway for volunteers to progress through training
- Minimal opportunities for experiential and peer learning
- Inadequate systems to support emergency responders

This work will support National Society staff and volunteers involved in emergency response at all levels to develop the competencies, skills and experience they need to be safe, effective and efficient in their roles. The IFRC will establish a pathway for this, help emergency responders develop themselves professionally within the Movement and ensure responses are locally led by building capacity, clarifying responsibilities and understanding the support that is needed.

The IFRC will continue to support successes in [disaster law](#) through reviews and policy formulation, ensuring that protection, gender and inclusion are mainstreamed in planning and risk data collection for Community Disaster Risk Management Committees, such as in Fiji's Community Based Disaster Risk Management Policy. The IFRC will ensure that National Society roles are well defined and recognized within their national systems, providing advice to support this role in practice.

## Health and wellbeing

Fiji was the only Pacific Island country to have widespread community transmission of COVID-19 in 2021, but the pandemic affected all Pacific countries. Most of the islands closed their borders throughout 2021, which had significant socio-economic consequences, and most have seen further outbreaks in 2022. Health systems are stretched as health workers are redeployed to respond to COVID-19, leaving them unavailable to deliver essential services. The domestic resources available for providing essential health, education and water, sanitation and hygiene services have also been negatively affected.

UNICEF and the World Health Organization (WHO) have issued a joint letter to 14 ministers of health in the region highlighting the downward trend in immunization coverage and urging immediate action to improve rates. Eight Pacific Island countries meet the global target of 90 per cent coverage for vaccines against diphtheria, pertussis and tetanus. Half of the countries fell significantly below global targets for the measles-containing vaccine second dose of 90 per cent coverage (Kiribati at 57 per cent, Micronesia at 67 per cent, Palau at 83 per cent, Samoa at 44 per cent, the Solomon Islands at 51 per cent, Tuvalu at 85 per cent and Vanuatu at 78 per cent). Declining immunization coverage has led to measles cases in Fiji and pertussis cases in Kiribati, and is expected to lead to further outbreaks in the region.

Non-communicable diseases remain a challenge for Pacific Island countries. Their health budgets and systems are unable to accommodate the growing burden of non-communicable disease, which represent the single most significant cause of premature death in the region. As with the COVID-19 pandemic, people living with pre-existing conditions are hit the hardest by secondary illnesses.

While some Pacific countries have seen a reduction in diet-related risk factors for non-communicable disease over time, most have not. Eighty-eight per cent of adults in the region consume insufficient fruit and vegetables and 82 per cent are overweight or obese. Thirty-three per cent live with high blood pressure and 40 per cent with high cholesterol. Stronger population-wide approaches are needed to promote eating more fruit and vegetables and to reduce sugar, salt and fat intake.

Water, sanitation and hygiene coverage is generally improving but remains off-track for achieving universal basic services in many Pacific countries. The latest Joint Monitoring Programme estimates that the basic drinking

water service levels are above 90 per cent in many Pacific Island countries, with the exception of Kiribati (78 per cent), the Marshall Islands (89 per cent), Micronesia (88 per cent) and the Solomon Islands (67 per cent). Access to sanitation remains a challenge, particularly in Kiribati, the Marshall Islands and the Solomon Islands, with basic sanitation coverage below 60 per cent. Open defecation rates are 30 per cent in Kiribati, 10 per cent in the Marshall Islands and 45 per cent in the Solomon Islands. Fourteen per cent of the population in Kiribati and 28 per cent of the population of the Solomon Islands do not have access to handwashing facilities. Efforts to improve water, sanitation and hygiene in schools and health care facilities are hampered by significant data gaps.

Data from UNICEF reveals that one in 10 children in the Pacific does not have access to clean drinking water, and one in three does not have adequate sanitation. These are both essential to health and well-being, and diseases relating to water and sanitation are the leading cause of death in children under five years of age. Baseline water security is a challenge and is also affected by both climate change and natural disasters.

Health budgets and systems in the Pacific struggle to accommodate persistent health security threats, including climate-exacerbated disasters. The region has difficulties achieving the levels of health service delivery needed for universal health coverage and for progressing towards sustainable development goals 3 (good health and well-being) and 6 (clean water and sanitation). Keeping a focus on strengthening health systems and universal health coverage will be essential to regional health security, alongside the current pandemic response.

The 2014 Pacific Non-Communicable Disease Roadmap gives guidance on implementing strategies to combat the region's epidemic of non-communicable diseases. It outlines a multi-sectoral approach for each country, as well as regional coordination.

Established in 2019, the Pacific First Aid Roadmap aims to ensure that first aid programmes reach as many households as possible through commercial and community approaches, increasing first aid knowledge, skills and confidence. This will be achieved through quality commercial first aid along with low-tech, low-cost, low-waste community first aid using locally available resources. The roadmap recognizes that first aid should be part of a broader development approach and that, where possible, it should be incorporated into wider community resilience programmes, emergency response training, health and community-based programmes.

## Main actions and areas of support

The pandemic has significantly influenced the work of many National Societies in the region, particularly around health, water, sanitation and hygiene. For many, responding to COVID-19 remains a priority. In 2023, National Societies will focus on integrating COVID-19 activities and considerations into their existing programmes, moving it from a response activity to a mainstreamed activity. This continuing work will be absorbed into programmes around epidemic control, community-based surveillance, and water, sanitation and hygiene.

Mental health and psychosocial support will remain a focus in 2023. The pandemic highlighted this as an area of need, compounded by a lack of National Society knowledge and skills. It is important to note that mental health and psychosocial support relate as much to staff and volunteers carrying out their roles, as to the communities they serve. The National Societies have been supported to train their staff and volunteers in psychological first aid so they have the resources to support their communities. This work will continue in 2023. More psychological first aid trainer capacity is also needed in the region, and the IFRC will work with the Psychosocial Reference Centre to ensure candidates from the Pacific are put forward for train the trainer courses.

First aid is a core programme for all National Societies in the region, enabling resilience at a community level in a range of settings by:

- Enhancing community preparedness to deal with both daily crises and large-scale disasters
- Promoting healthy behaviours
- Involving different audiences and stakeholders who can act for their individual communities
- Being context-based and respectful of local challenges and cultures

The 2019 Pacific First Aid Roadmap aims to ensure National Societies reach as many households as possible to improve first aid knowledge, skills and the willingness to act. It includes a commitment to developing National Societies' capacity to plan, promote and develop context-specific first aid and life-saving skills for communities. Strong financial and administrative procedures will also increase their skills, knowledge and confidence to establish a sustainable first aid programme based on market analysis and business strategy. The goal is for each National Society to have systems in place to move towards a strengthened, sustainable first aid programme that is independent of external funding.

The IFRC provides support and technical guidance to National Societies to implement the First Aid Roadmap. This will be a key area of continued support in 2023, with the focus on first aid and community-based first aid, integrated with a shared leadership approach for financial sustainability, with the Australian Red Cross.

Water, sanitation and hygiene activities have all been significant components of COVID-19 readiness and response and will continue under integrated community resilience and disaster risk reduction programming. National Societies will be encouraged to continue to collaborate and coordinate with partners in-country to improve access to health, water, sanitation and hygiene services, especially for the most vulnerable and hard-to-reach communities. National Societies will continue to advocate and influence national policies and strategies and to support their governments to ensure that access to health as a basic human right is recognized as a goal for all.

Globally, the pandemic has affected blood services, and this is reflected in reduced donations and shortages in many Pacific countries. As part of their auxiliary role to their governments, National Societies play a critical role in motivating and enabling blood donors. Their support can be integral to the success of a blood service, through activities including education and awareness raising, recruitment and recall of donors, and support with services like transport and donor care.

There has been great progress across the region towards blood donations being entirely voluntary and non-remunerated. Donors who give voluntarily are not usually motivated by money or concern for loved ones, and this means the supply of blood becomes safer. Many blood services in Pacific countries have historically paid donors and relied heavily on family donors. No countries supported by the IFRC provide remuneration for donations anymore, partly due to National Societies advocating and supporting their blood services on this. Family donations do continue in some settings, and this remains an important area of work.

The pandemic has prompted some National Societies to reinvigorate or increase support for their blood programme. The IFRC will continue to support National Societies and to ensure they can access advice and expertise from the IFRC and the Global Advisory Panel on Corporate Governance and Risk Management of Blood Services. This will allow them to work safely and mitigate risks. Some National Societies are well supported to continue their blood programme work through funding from their ministries of health, but others are

not. In many National Societies, the blood programme is closely linked with youth and volunteering, which can provide a funding avenue in some settings.

Non-communicable diseases (NCDs) remain a challenge across Pacific Island countries and represent the single most significant cause of premature death in the region. NCD-related health promotion and prevention are already part of the community health and first aid programmes delivered in some areas. Some National Societies are engaged in specific NCD programmes or projects that make a difference in their communities. Ideally, programmes should not be driven by vertical disease-specific approaches but instead implemented in an integrated way that results in healthy, resilient individuals and communities. Many National Societies are interested in developing or progressing their work around NCDs. To have the best chance of understanding how and where to deliver support, they will need to align with their ministries of health and with the Pacific Community (SPC). The IFRC will facilitate and broker relationships with ministries of health and SPC to leverage knowledge and tools within the contexts of specific countries. A Regional NCD forum is planned for 2023, to establish existing support and plans, and to explore ways to move forward and progress NCDs as an area of health programme focus at a National Society level.

## Migration and displacement

Worker emigration creates shortages in key professions in Pacific Island countries, but it also benefits communities through remittances sent back by migrants and new skills that arrive with returnees. The emigration of health professionals from Fiji and Samoa has contributed to a shortage of health workers, but remittances account for a significant share of the region's GDP. According to the World Bank, seven of the top 10 remittance-receiving countries in the world in 2020 (by share of GDP) were in the Pacific region.

Many Pacific Island countries are acutely vulnerable to the impacts of climate and environmental change, and this drives migration. While planned relocation is the least preferred option, governments agree that migration linked to adverse climate conditions will become more common, as disasters become more severe and make land less habitable. Kiribati is already expected to be unfit for human habitation by 2035, with existing internal displacement from low-lying islands and coastal regions causing overcrowding and limited access to basic resources. Planned relocations of communities in Fiji and Vanuatu have already taken place and several Pacific countries have developed national frameworks to plan for similar moves.

## Main actions and areas of support

National Societies in the Pacific continue to support displaced people with shelter, health, water, sanitation and hygiene during emergencies. The Pacific National Societies are committed to ensuring citizens are safe, treated humanely and with dignity, and can access the support they need to thrive in inclusive societies. The IFRC will support this and build interest by taking an integrated approach to migration, linking it to work around climate action and supporting National Societies with labour mobility programmes across the region.

Several National Societies in the Pacific have expressed an interest in developing approaches to better support people displaced by climate change. In 2023, the IFRC will complete national-level needs assessments around migration and displacement, analyzing the context of migration and displacement as well as relevant migratory routes and displacement patterns. These assessments are an essential foundation that will inform the National Societies' strategic direction and support principled humanitarian programming and response based on a solid understanding of the needs, comparative strengths and roles of each National Society.

## Values, power and inclusion

The Pacific region has the one of the highest rates of violence against women and girls in the world, at about twice the global average. Up to 68 per cent of women in the Pacific have reported experiencing physical and sexual violence by a partner during their lifetime. Data from the United Nations Population Fund shows an alarming picture for many Pacific women. The prevalence of childhood sexual abuse in the Solomon Islands sits at 37 per cent (2008), while in Vanuatu, 33 per cent of women and girls over 15 years of age reported non-partner sexual violence (2009). In Samoa, rates of physical violence among women and girls over 15 were measured at 62 per cent in 2000. It is clear that violence against women is a persistent and prevalent problem in Pacific communities. Gender inequalities are further exacerbated by the effects of climate change, which affects women more negatively than men. During and after disasters, women and girls face much greater risk of sexual and gender-based violence including rape, sexual exploitation and assault.

Many people will be displaced during and after disasters, but the impact of this is experienced differently by women, girls, boys and men, each having distinct coping mechanisms. Displacement can lead to increased violence, and pre-existing violence becomes more visible in the overcrowded, unsafe living conditions of evacuation

centres, temporary housing and shelters. Women and girls in temporary campsites have reported that the distance they have to go to reach water was too great, that men had started to wait around water sites and that they feel unsafe when bathing.

After two tropical cyclones hit western Fiji in 2012, women in relief centres were reported as being violently forced into sex by their husbands, in spite of their reluctance due to overcrowding and the lack of privacy. Cultural factors such as shame, stigma and a culture of silence impede reporting, as well as hampering the response to sexual and gender-based violence. The protection assessment for the 2014 tropical cyclone in nearby Tonga, for example, found that stigma around sexual and gender-based violence extended beyond the family to the village level, resulting in a strong collective disincentive to report or refer sexual and gender-based violence.

Experience shows that public services such as police and health services are less effective following disasters, as staff and resources are strained and critical infrastructure is damaged. This means there may be nowhere for survivors to seek help. Already overwhelmed by an emergency response, medical services often do not meet the needs of the survivors of violence. Where those services are available, there is often a lack of privacy for women. The loss of homes, livelihoods, community and family protection increase vulnerability to violence, and increased poverty and scarcity of resources due to loss of assets and income can limit choices and opportunities for women.

The impacts of sexual and gender-based violence are severe and affect all members of the community. These impacts include sexually transmitted infections (including HIV/AIDS), unwanted pregnancies, pain, mental health issues and post-traumatic stress disorder. Children raised in families where violence is present are much more likely to be abusive or become abused, continuing the cycle. The risks of sexual and gender-based violence are not limited to those directly affected by disasters, and they affect national and regional economies as well as individual families and communities. Violence holds back economic productivity, increasing poverty and health expenditure. In turn, this deepens the severity of problems caused by disasters, impeding recovery and threatening sustainable development.

### Youth participation and engagement

The populations of Pacific Island countries are young, and the average age is falling over time. Youth unemployment stands at 23 per cent and young people are

more than five times less likely to secure jobs than older workers. National youth unemployment rates range from 63.7 per cent in Tuvalu and 58.5 per cent in the Marshall Islands to just 8.9 per cent in Vanuatu.

As such a large proportion of Pacific Island populations are young, there are not enough opportunities within existing labour markets or job creation strategies. Across the region, the 15–24 age category makes up half of the unemployed population. In Fiji alone, 26,000 young people registered with the National Employment Centre in 2012 in the hope of securing employment.

The unemployment rate for young women in every Pacific Island country and territory is higher than that of young men. Instead, they are often engaged in childcare, assisting with parenting and in domestic work.

Youth education in the Pacific varies according to location, gender, infrastructure and the quality of delivery. Not all young people between the ages of 15 and 19 are in school, but more young people, and especially young women, are remaining in school for longer, attaining more formal education than their older peers. Despite this, few young people access tertiary education, as the rate of post-high school completion is low. Of those who do access tertiary education in the Pacific, more are male than female.

High youth unemployment leads to physical and mental health issues, including suicide and attempted suicide, alcohol and drug abuse, teenage pregnancy, HIV/AIDS and non-communicable diseases. In the Pacific, 75 per cent of all deaths are due to non-communicable diseases. Individuals who are overweight or obese as children are likely to remain so into adulthood and are more likely to develop non-communicable diseases such as diabetes and cardiovascular disease at a younger age. In particular, obesity and diabetes appear to be increasing among young people in urban areas as a result of changing dietary patterns and low levels of physical activity.

The State of the Pacific Youth Report highlights a lack of investment targeted towards meeting the needs of young people in the region. This means that a significant proportion of the youth population is marginalized from mainstream development efforts, creating a development burden and hindering the region's progress.

In relation to protection, gender and inclusion, the Pacific Partnership to End Violence Against Women and Girls is coordinated through SPC, with the United Nations Women and Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat bringing together governments, civil society organizations,

communities and other partners to promote gender equality, prevent violence against women and girls, and increase access to quality response services for survivors.

Thirteen Pacific Island countries have ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, which has been embedded into key Pacific Regional Policy frameworks. This includes a strengthened commitment under the 2012 Pacific Leaders' Gender Equality Declaration and Pacific Platform for Action (2018–2030). Each Pacific nation also has a ministry or department of women which works with relevant non-governmental organizations, civil society organizations and other regional and international organizations in their country to reduce and alleviate the root causes of gender inequality.

To strengthen youth participation and engagement and to coordinate the work with youth in the region, a Pacific Youth Development Framework 2014–2023 is led by SPC and the Pacific Youth Council. Each Pacific Island country has its own youth council, and a ministry or department of youth which guides youth policy and works with other key government stakeholders, non-governmental organizations, and regional and international organizations to implement strategies centred on young people, reducing and alleviating issues faced by youth in their country and across the wider region.

### **Main actions and areas of support**

Mainstreaming protection, gender and inclusion is an important objective for Pacific Island National Societies. Protection and inclusion of key vulnerable groups such as children, women, people living with disabilities and people of diverse sexual orientation, gender identity, expression and sex characteristics are crucial, especially in emergencies. Post-disaster needs assessments from previous emergencies in the Pacific indicate that children, women, people living with disabilities and other key marginalized groups are often disproportionately affected. The use of disaggregated data around sex and age will be strengthened in 2023, with training for National Societies on the importance of such data, on integrating data collection into programming, and on processes for monitoring, evaluation and learning.

Increased socialization and training on gender and inclusion will enhance the knowledge and skills of Red Cross Red Crescent Movement staff, volunteers and community members, ensuring the principles of inclusion are applied in the Movement's work and practice.

The IFRC will increase its support to education, networks and commitments in 2023, specifically through the Quantum Leap Leveraging Enhanced Pacific Programming (QLEaPP) approach. This approach and toolkit will support National Societies to improve aspects of quality programming, including safeguarding, community engagement and accountability, inclusion, working to Movement principles, financial accountability and power analysis.

Pacific National Societies are well placed to support their governments and to complement civil societies by enabling volunteering platforms and supporting youth engagement and activities. The IFRC will focus on:

- Supporting National Societies to strengthen youth structures and youth leadership at national and branch level
- Supporting youth actions in resilience by implementing the youth and volunteering action plan and upscaling key flagship youth programmes such as Youth as Agents of Behavioural Change and Y-Adapt
- Supporting national youth fora, camps and assemblies to strengthen youth engagement and participation

These activities will be implemented in line with the IFRC and National Society Youth Engagement Strategy and Youth Policy.

Education for young people and children is becoming vital in the Pacific, including in emergencies, when children are often the most vulnerable and affected group. To address this need, the IFRC and National Societies will build on the existing school programme in the Pacific, using it as an entry point to enhance the relationships and partnerships with ministries of education and youth, as well as with civil society organizations engaging with children and young people in emergencies.

At a regional level, the IFRC has extensive networks and active partnerships with regional inter-governmental and non-government organizations on social and youth development. It also has existing partnerships with the Pacific Youth Council and Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, SPC, Pacific Islands Association of Non-Governmental Organizations and with United Nations agencies. These include health partnerships with WHO, UNICEF and the International Planned Parenthood Federation. It also has partnerships focused on climate resilience and disaster risk management, in which the IFRC plays an active role through the Pacific Resilience Taskforce.

At a national level, National Societies have good relationships and partnerships with their local government authorities and non-government organizations, which will harness and complement youth programmes and services for local communities. They will strengthen this work by engaging in existing mechanisms such as the

Pacific Resilience Partnership's Working Group on Youth, which has an extensive network of partners. The IFRC network will regularly take part, engage and consult with these vital partners and stakeholders in order to complement youth programmes and services offered by other organizations in the region.

---

## Enabling local actors

The Pacific National Societies are committed to pursuing National Society development. With the exception of the Marshall Islands Red Cross Society, all National Societies covered by this plan have carried out a self-assessment as part of the Organisational Capacity Assessment and Certification (OCAC) process. The self-assessment process is intended to capture the strengths and weaknesses of National Societies as a whole, in relation to a wide range of organizational capacities. The National Societies are also committed to the Preparedness for Effective Response (PER) process, and seven of them are at different phases of completion of the process. This approach is a continuous and flexible process that enables National Societies to assess, measure and analyze the strengths and gaps of their preparedness and response mechanisms, and take the necessary actions to improve them.

### Branch development

Most of the Pacific National Societies would like to strengthen their branches further and have requested support to implement the Branch Organizational Capacity Assessment (BOCA). The Fiji Red Cross Society is the only National Society in the Pacific to conduct a BOCA analysis workshop so far, and now has the capacity of BOCA trainer and BOCA analysis, which it can offer to other Pacific National Societies.

### Financial sustainability

It is important that the Pacific National Societies lay the foundations for achieving long-term financial sustainability. To support this, the IFRC has put forward a mixture of support mechanisms, acknowledging the differences between each country. This will continue in 2023. The IFRC network and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) have designed an independent and common model of support for Pacific National Societies. Under this model, National Societies can receive regular annual contributions towards covering the gap in core cost expenses, while increasing and diversifying sustainable income streams and supporting financial sustainability. Many National Societies in the Pacific

already run commercial first aid activities. In 2023, the focus will be on improving the effectiveness of Pacific National Societies in an increasingly competitive marketplace and building local income.

Established in August 2020, the Pacific Red Cross Resource Mobilization Network will continue to build peer learning and support.

### Effective financial management system

National Societies in the Pacific have a finance development plan which aims at improving financial management, bringing greater transparency and accountability, and delivering quality and timely reporting to beneficiaries, members, donors and partners. In return, this fosters increased confidence and support for them as individual organizations.

### Volunteer development and youth engagement

The IFRC will continue to prioritize volunteer development and youth engagement, contributing to building stronger Pacific National Societies. It will support National Societies to undertake participatory action research to better understand volunteering in the Pacific and to identify new ways of volunteering. The IFRC will also support National Societies to:

- Review their volunteering policies
- Strengthen their existing volunteer management systems and processes
- Encourage the documentation of volunteering success stories
- Support the Pacific Volunteering Working Group as a mechanism to strengthen peer support, share information, and exchange ideas and best practices

The IFRC will focus on engaging with state and civil society partners to enhance engagement, learning, innovation and coordination. It will also support the digitalization of National Societies as far as local infrastructure will allow.

# THE IFRC NETWORK

---

## The IFRC

**The IFRC** Pacific Country Cluster Delegation supports the Cook Islands Red Cross, Fiji Red Cross, Kiribati Red Cross, Samoa Red Cross, the Solomon Islands Red Cross, Tonga Red Cross, Tuvalu Red Cross and Vanuatu Red Cross. Its sub-office in the North Pacific supports the Marshall Islands Red Cross, Micronesia Red Cross and Palau Red Cross.

The IFRC also provides secretariat services to the Australian Red Cross and New Zealand Red Cross, and it helps facilitate a connection between the 14 members in the Pacific, including the Papua New Guinea Red Cross Society.

The IFRC's ongoing focus is on enabling National Societies to have strong organizational foundations, emphasizing transformative behaviour change through support to peer networks. The IFRC will work with key regional partners to leverage their collective resources, experience and tools to benefit all National Societies. It will meet them at their current level of performance and provide tailored support that helps them to improve continually. A parallel approach to National Society development and programme quality will underscore all support over the coming year, including testing a small number of innovative and agile initiatives designed to create and adapt tools and approaches specific to the Pacific context.

## IFRC membership coordination

The IFRC coordination involves working with member National Societies to assess the humanitarian context, humanitarian situations and needs; agreeing common

priorities; co-developing common strategies to address issues such as obtaining greater humanitarian access, acceptance and space; mobilizing funding and other resources; clarifying consistent public messaging; and monitoring progress. This also means ensuring that strategies and programmes in support of people in need incorporate clarity of humanitarian action, development assistance, and reinforcing the National Societies' auxiliary roles in their respective countries.

IFRC network partners in the Pacific support various multilateral and bilateral initiatives to scale and improve National Society development, programme and service delivery. Active partners include the Australian Red Cross, French Red Cross, Italian Red Cross, Japanese Red Cross and New Zealand Red Cross. A relationship is also being developed with the American Red Cross, based around their interest in climate change programming and partnerships.

The **Australian Red Cross** supports with strengthening National Society preparedness and response capacity (including pandemic preparedness), National Society development, financial sustainability and core cost support, shelter, logistics, and protection, gender and inclusion.

The **Italian Red Cross** supports on youth, volunteering and health activities.

The **Japanese Red Cross** supports readiness and response roles and youth activities.

The **New Zealand Red Cross** supports first aid; communications; the protection, gender and inclusion role and activities; and the climate resilience role.

---

## Movement coordination

The IFRC liaises as appropriate with the ICRC, which supports countries from its delegation in Suva. This is done within the Strengthening Movement Coordination and Cooperation (SMCC) principles, and the newly adopted [Seville Agreement 2.0](#).

The ICRC supports the promotion of international humanitarian law and raises other humanitarian issues with governments, security forces, academic circles, the media and civil society.

---

## Coordination with other actors

Collaboration with external partners is critical to providing multilateral and complementary bilateral support to the Pacific region's National Societies. The IFRC will support National Societies to be a part of their national humanitarian coordination systems and will provide partners with information on the IFRC network's capacity to contribute to broader national and regional goals. Key partnerships include:

- The Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat to advance disaster law, resilience and risk governance
- The Pacific Resilience Partnership, which exists to implement the Framework for Resilient Development in the Pacific
- The Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environmental Programme, to improve climate information and services for improved preparedness and reduced disaster risk for Pacific Islanders
- SPC, for disaster preparedness and response, health, water, sanitation and hygiene

Through collaboration and active engagement in the priority technical working groups of the Pacific Regional Partnership on human mobility, localization, risk governance, risk financing and youth resilience, the IFRC network will highlight the perspectives of the most

vulnerable at national, regional and global level dialogue and policy discussions.

The IFRC will continue its role as a member of the Pacific Humanitarian Team and as the chair of the Pacific Shelter Cluster. The global shelter cluster is an Inter-Agency Standing Committee coordination mechanism and the IFRC has led the shelter cluster in disaster contexts since the cluster approach was established in 2005. This critical mandate places the IFRC as a lead agency in the international humanitarian coordination system. The IFRC leverages its leadership position in the global shelter cluster to improve coordination, strengthen policies and standards across the sector, and advocate for better support for affected people in their recovery.

The IFRC will guide any review of the humanitarian architecture at a Pacific level and will support National Societies to be active members of the humanitarian community, along with UN and non-governmental organizations and the cluster system for coordinated, efficient response at country level. Partnership agreements may be developed with key emergency response UN and non-governmental organization partners in-country in order to enhance operational effectiveness.

### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

- [IFRC Global Plan and Country Plans](#)
- [Subscribe for updates](#)
- [Donor response](#) on IFRC website
- [Live Disaster Response Emergency Fund \(DREF\)](#) data
- Operational information: [IFRC GO platform](#)
- National Society data: [IFRC Federation-wide Databank and Reporting System](#)



**The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC)** is the world's largest humanitarian network, with **192 National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies** and around **14 million volunteers**. Our volunteers are present in communities before, during and after a crisis or disaster. We work in the most hard to reach and complex settings in the world, saving lives and promoting human dignity. We support communities to become stronger and more resilient places where people can live safe and healthy lives, and have opportunities to thrive.

---

## Contact Information

### **Katie Greenwood**

Head of Delegation  
IFRC Country Cluster Delegation  
for Pacific Islands, based in Suva  
**T** +61 415 224 156  
[katie.greenwood@ifrc.org](mailto:katie.greenwood@ifrc.org)

### **Robert Laprade**

Head of Strategic Engagement  
& Partnerships  
IFRC Regional Office for Asia Pacific,  
Kuala Lumpur  
**T** +6012 204 3410  
[robert.laprade@ifrc.org](mailto:robert.laprade@ifrc.org)

### **Fiji Red Cross Society**

**W** [fjiredcross.org](http://fjiredcross.org)

### **Marshall Islands**

**W** [marshallredcross.org](http://marshallredcross.org)

### **Micronesia Red Cross**

**W** [redcross.fm](http://redcross.fm)

### **Palau**

**W** [palauredcross.org](http://palauredcross.org)

### **Vanuatu**

**W** [vanuaturedcross.squarespace.com](http://vanuaturedcross.squarespace.com)

---