



ALBANIA

IFRC network mid-year report, January – June 2023

14 December 2023

IN SUPPORT OF THE ALBANIAN RED CROSS



39

National Society branches



62

National Society staff



2,225

National Society volunteers

PEOPLE REACHED

Climate and environment



21,000

Disasters and crises



15,000

Health and wellbeing



48,000

Migration and displacement



220






Values, power and inclusion



6,000

FINANCIAL OVERVIEW

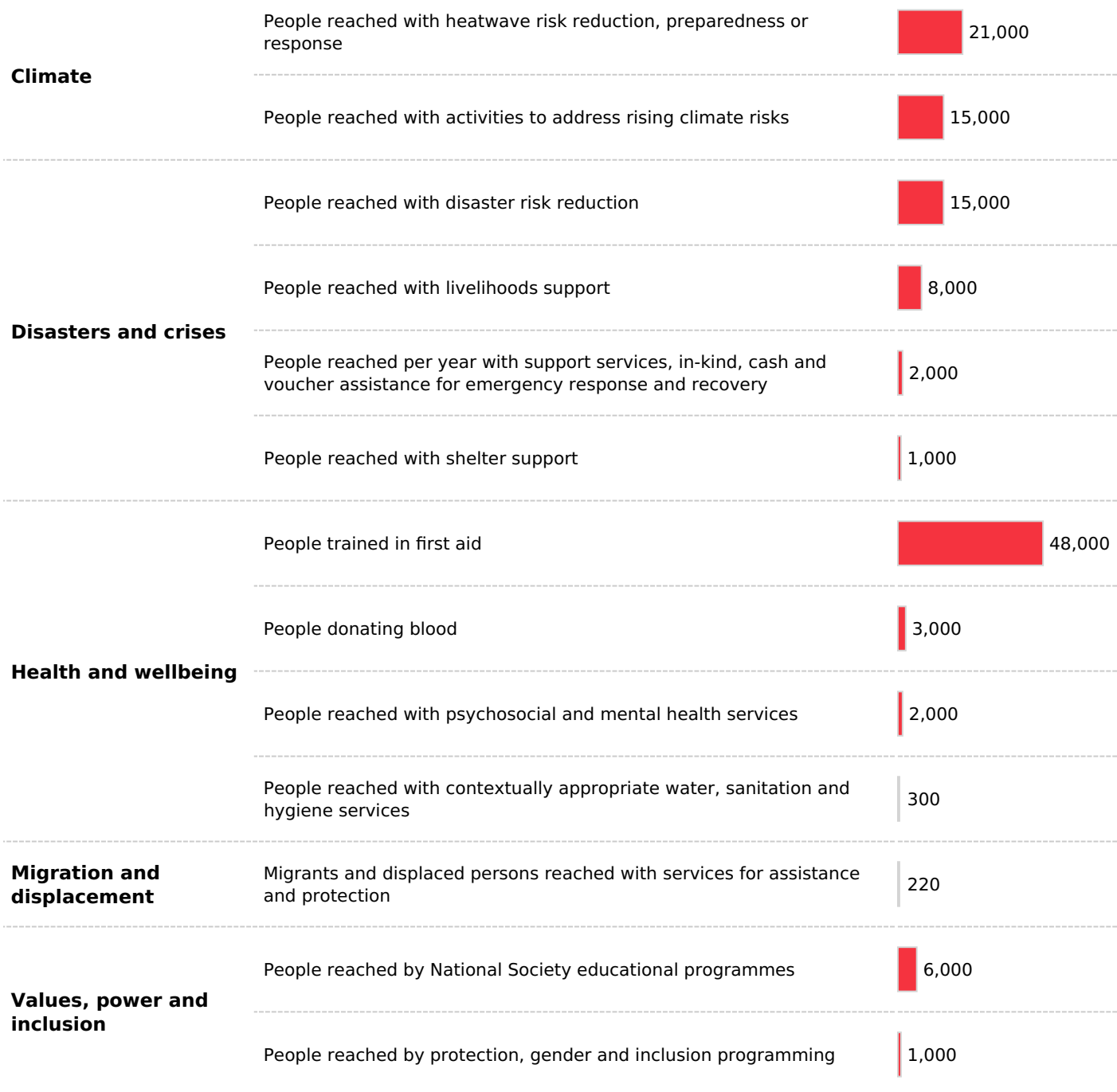
in Swiss francs (CHF)

Total		Funding requirements	 2M
IFRC	Longer-term	Funding requirements	 741,000
Participating National Societies		Funding requirements	 164,000
		Income	 92,000
Host National Society other funding sources		Funding requirements	 1.1M

[Click here for more financial information](#)

Appeal number **MAAAL003**

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES



ENABLING FUNCTIONS

Strategic and operational coordination	Number of formal interagency/international coordination platforms the IFRC network is part of	3
	Number of government led coordination platforms the National Society is part of	2
National Society Development	All volunteers are covered by health, accident and death compensation	Applicable data not available
	One National Society Development plan is in place	Yes
	Strategy for strengthening the auxiliary role developed or implemented	Yes
	Youth engagement strategy is developed or in place	Yes
Humanitarian diplomacy	National Society is participating in IFRC-led communication campaigns	Yes
Accountability and agility	National Society has strengthened integrity and reputational risk mechanisms	Yes

IFRC NETWORK SUPPORTED ACTIVITIES

	Multilateral Support	Bilateral Support					
		Climate	Migration and displacement	Values, power and inclusion	Enabling Functions	Disasters and crises	Health and wellbeing
National Society							
Austrian Red Cross	●				●	●	
British Red Cross	●						
Canadian Red Cross Society	●						
Italian Red Cross							●
Qatar Red Crescent Society							●

■ Planned ■ Supported

OVERALL PROGRESS

Context

Albania is classified as a middle-income country and became an official candidate for accession to the European Union in 2014. Albania's population is projected to drop to 2.7 million people by 2030 and 2.3 million people by 2050. The decline in population results from a combination of falling birth-rates and emigration of younger generations. This trend is common to all countries in central and south-eastern Europe to a varying degree and represents a major threat to future prosperity and security.

The gap in economic and social inequality has widened and diversified even further. The Albanian economy was hit by two significant shocks within a relatively short period of time: a severe earthquake in November 2019 that killed 51 people and caused substantial economic damage, estimated at about 6.7 per cent of GDP, and the onset of the Covid 19 pandemic, accompanied by strict lockdown measures, especially during the first half of 2020. These two shocks brought the first recession in Albania in more than two decades, with the economy contracting by 3.4 per cent compared to a pre-pandemic predicted growth of 3.5 percent (IMF, 2019).

According to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) Albania's poverty rate is one of the highest in the Western Balkans, while its social protection coverage is among the lowest. Economic growth is expected to decelerate to 3.2 percent in 2022 under the baseline scenario. Inclusion of vulnerable people in the labour market is a challenge. More than half of the poor population is inactive or unemployed, and people living in remote areas are often completely excluded.

Due to a combination of political, geographic, and social factors, Albania is recognized as being vulnerable to climate change impacts, ranked 75 out of 181 countries in the 2020 University of Notre Dame Global Adaptation Initiative (ND-GAIN) Index. Infrastructure needs, and poverty in rural areas exacerbate its vulnerability to numerous natural hazards, including hydro-meteorological hazards such as floods, droughts, forest fires and landslides. The country is also at high-risk to geophysical hazards such as earthquakes. Changes to Albania's climate, specifically the frequency of extreme weather events and temperature variations, are expected to have significant impacts on the economy and population.

Like other Western Balkan countries, Albania has also been affected by mixed population flows, the reasons for which are not only socio-economic conditions but also the effects of various conflicts taking place around the world. The number of irregular migrants apprehended in Albania is increasing every year, and there is generally an insufficient number of border and migration officers, reception centre personnel and asylum officials, to cope with the increased number of arrivals and asylum requests in recent years.

Key achievements

Albanian Red Cross provides humanitarian support in a changing context to the most vulnerable groups through its activities and programmes which promote volunteering and respect for human dignity.

Some of the major achievements in the first half of 2023 include:

1. Implementation of the project "Strengthening Volunteering in First Aid and Disaster Response" (VolFAID). There were 175 volunteers trained in advanced first aid, and 183 volunteers trained in first aid as a team. Two simulation exercises were conducted by Albanian Red Cross for advanced first aid teams from nine branches to test and assess techniques in case of mass casualties during a disaster. There were 69 trained volunteers (35 women, 34 men) and 106 volunteers participated
2. Implementation of the project "Flood Resilience Alliance 2.0". A Bailey bridge was constructed that connects residential areas in Dartz, Fire Municipality
3. Relief assistance was provided to 1,520 vulnerable families supported with standard food packages to improve their life conditions.
4. During record high temperatures in July, Albanian Red Cross volunteers teams set up six distribution posts, handing out more than 12,000 bottles of water and distributing informative leaflets to people at higher risk of severe health issues due to the heat

5. Integrated health and social support was provided to 900 older people, aiming at maintaining and restoring older people's ability to live independently and stay in their familiar environment for as long as possible. There were 2500 home care visits carried out
6. The 26th National Art Exhibit "Children and the Red Cross" was carried out across the country, with participation of children in primary and secondary schools (totalling 3,000 young people)

IFRC NETWORK ACTION

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES



Climate and environment

Due to climate change, the Albanian Red Cross will be called to lead more and larger operations, and will face disasters of a different nature, adding greater pressure on its capacities. Risk-reduction activities and early-warning procedures are being adapted to the changing hazards, including the need to communicate effectively to those at risk to more frequent, intense, or unfamiliar types of disasters.

Urgent action is needed so that Albania Red Cross staff and volunteers and the affected communities can adapt to the evolving risks from climate and environmental crises. As part of its cooperation with the IFRC on climate change initiatives, the Albanian Red Cross is working with IFRC's Central and South-East Europe country cluster delegation in Sarajevo to build long term resilience to climate disasters. Part of this cooperation is the ongoing application for anticipatory funds to respond to heat waves through the IFRC's Disaster Response Emergency Fund (DREF) Simplified Early Action Protocol.

Information on the prevention and early recognition of the consequences of heat waves were shared across social media during the summer period. During record high temperatures in July, Albanian Red Cross volunteer teams set up six distribution posts, handing out more than 12,000 bottles of water and distributing information leaflets to people at higher risk of severe health issues due to the heat.



Disasters and crises

Albania is prone to numerous natural hazards including, hydro-meteorological hazards such as floods, droughts, forest fires and landslides. The country is also at high risk to geophysical hazards such as earthquakes.

Disaster management is one of the core functions of the Albanian Red Cross. Its auxiliary role aims to support the state with humanitarian assistance, save lives and assist people hit by disasters, as well as prepare to respond to future emergencies and reduce people's vulnerability to typically expected hazards.

The Albanian Red Cross cooperates closely with governmental authorities especially on disaster preparedness and response. According to the National Plan of Civil Protection, the Albanian Red Cross is a member of the Albanian disaster management structure at local, regional and national levels.

Core activities of the Albanian Red Cross disaster management program include raising awareness and disaster risk mitigation to enhance community resilience. This includes reaching a significant number of community members with awareness and effective mitigation activities to allow them to better analyse their vulnerabilities to disaster, including floods. Community members may also enhance their capacities to prepare for, respond to and reduce the impact of their vulnerabilities.

The Albanian Red Cross supports people affected by crises and disasters through access to assistance and support that is timely, adequate, flexible and strengthens their resilience. This includes reaching up to 10,000 people (in any disaster events) with needs-based emergency relief packages, restoring family links (RFL), and the provision of psychosocial support and health services.

Additionally, the Albanian Red Cross is improving accessibility and availability of relevant information for populations during and after emergencies by establishing community feedback mechanisms.

In order to maintain effective response mechanisms, trainings and refresher trainings for staff and volunteers are organized on a regular basis. Topics include disaster and emergency response, as well as other humanitarian crises including human mobility.

Additionally, the Albanian Red Cross has established an Operational Emergency Centre to better manage and coordinate with government institutions and neighbouring National Societies.

The Albanian Red Cross advanced first aid teams from nine branches participated in two simulation exercises. Their abilities to apply advanced first aid techniques in cases of mass casualties in disasters were tested and assessed.

The purpose of the simulations was to strengthen coordination, improve efficiency and define roles and responsibilities between the Albanian Red Cross, advanced first aid teams and relevant governmental institutions during emergencies. The selected simulation scenario was an earthquake event that caused multiple casualties. Sixty nine trained volunteers (35 women, 34 men) and 106 volunteers participated.

The Austrian Red Cross and the Italian Red Cross provided expertise and essential feedback to support the Albanian Red Cross in strengthening coordination among key relevant actors in the Civil Protection System.

Based on the implementation framework for the “Flood Resilience Alliance 2.0” project, and in cooperation with the Municipality of Fier and the Ministry of Defence, a Bailey bridge was constructed to connect residential areas in Darzeze, Fier.

There were four community response teams composed of 15 members established in Shkoder. These teams are ready to intervene in the case of floods.

There was a distribution of food parcels to support 300 families (1,500 people) affected by small scale local disasters.

There were 300 families (1,200 people) affected by small scale local disasters who were provided with support for their accommodation.



Health and wellbeing

Social welfare

A 2021 assessment on the impact of COVID-19 conducted by UNICEF indicated that the most vulnerable groups were the same as from the pre-pandemic period. This includes families in the social assistance scheme, families with people living with disabilities and older people living alone. However, the number of individuals and households in need increased dramatically all over the country, and new challenges emerged regarding access to education for children and youth. Members of ethnic minorities and informal workers also face additional challenges because of disrupted livelihoods. There is a heightened need for stress management and psychosocial support for many other members of the community.

Communities and vulnerable populations remain the focus of the Albanian Red Cross. Overcoming inequity and addressing vulnerability requires a multi-pronged, well-coordinated and integrated approach in service delivery. The Social Welfare Program focuses on the implementation of country-wide projects aiming to improve the standard of living for targeted vulnerable groups, as well as empower them through their involvement in development programmes.

Albania is experiencing an aging population, emigration of youth and loneliness among the elderly in various regions. Addressing the needs of the increasingly ageing population is an area where further policy interventions are required.

Most evidence so far indicates increased needs for health care for the elderly. This will require investment in tertiary care, as well as in prevention.

The Albanian Red Cross develops several projects that contribute to improving the quality of life and social inclusion of older people. These consist of daily centres where elderly people can meet other people socially and receive support. The National Society carries out home care visits to increase the autonomy and independence of older people so that they may stay in their homes as long as possible and they also provide basic assistance. In addition, branches share information on healthy aging, healthy lifestyles and the prevention of non-communicable diseases through community-based presentations for the elderly and students. Promotion and prevention activities on healthy aging, healthy lifestyle and non-communicable diseases (NCD's) are provided to older people and young students by local branches. Every year, 1,000 elderly people are provided with health care and social welfare support.

The Albanian Red Cross provides vocational training courses for economically disadvantaged women and girls to increase their professional skills and access to employment. These courses are complemented with health activities, such as general check-ups.

Relief assistance is provided to more than 3,000 vulnerable families. They receive standard food packages and other basic non-food items to improve their situation.

Health care

Extreme weather events, air quality and communicable diseases are identified as priority health risks amidst a changing climate. Heat-related deaths, especially amongst the elderly, present the most immediate threat in the Balkans. Albania is additionally vulnerable to climate-health impacts due to its current under-developed public health system. Primary healthcare lacks appropriate funding and human resources. The coverage of insurance-based care is low, the public hospital sector remains underdeveloped, and the private sector is growing without proper regulation.

The Albanian Red Cross strives to continue its flagship programmes within the health sector, including first aid and road safety, blood donation promotion, communicable and non-communicable disease interventions and psychosocial support programmes. As a strategic goal, the Albanian Red Cross continues to strengthen its complementary role, supporting the government, communities, and other organizations to alleviate suffering and promote a healthier and happier population.

The National Society contributes to reducing the vulnerability of individuals and communities through activities that raise awareness about personal and community hygiene, as well as about the prevention of infectious diseases such as HIV/AIDS and tuberculosis. Additional education activities increase awareness of road safety, promote protecting the environment, through the improvement of conditions at work, at home and on the street.

The National Society continues to strengthen communities' capacity to provide first aid by offering quality, science-based training. In the first half of 2023, nine local branches increased their capacities in providing advanced first aid in case of disasters or crises.

The capacities of the National Society in the area of mental health are continuously strengthened through the support of the IFRC Reference Centre for Psychosocial Support. Psychosocial support is provided to at-risk communities and vulnerable groups, as well as to volunteers and staff engaged in responding to disasters or humanitarian crises. Psychosocial support is an integral part of the entire range of the National Society's humanitarian activities, such as disaster preparedness and response, social projects, first aid and community health programmes.

Blood donation

The Albanian Red Cross continues to contribute to the promotion of voluntary blood donation to meet the needs of the sick and injured in the country. More than 5,000 blood units are collected yearly. In total, 2,500 units of blood were donated from January to June 2023, and a total of 210 blood donation sessions organized.

Health preventive activities

Some 3,000 students from primary and high schools were provided with prevention educational sessions that included personal and community hygiene, prevention of the use of addictive substances and prevention of HIV/AIDS.

Over 10,000 information, education and communication (materials were distributed, with updated information on healthy living, preventing non-communicable diseases and risk factors for disease.

First aid activities

Approximately 47,600 candidates for drivers and work organizations were trained in first aid.

Nine local branches have increased their capacities in provision of advanced first aid. There were; 175 volunteers trained in advanced first aid, and 183 volunteers trained in advanced first aid as a team in the framework of the “Strengthening Volunteering in First Aid and Disaster Response” (VolFAID) project.

Social care

Relief assistance was provided to 1,520 vulnerable families, who were supported with standard food packages to improve their living conditions. There were 250 elderly people who visited the Albanian Red Cross daily centres, and 120 elderly people were provided a hot meal at the branches in Vlora and Tirana. Integrated health and social support was provided to 900 elderly people, aimed at maintaining and restoring their ability to live independently and stay in their familiar environment for as long as possible. There were 2,500 home care visits across seven branches. During home visits, the mobile teams identified 120 elderly high risk patients, and referred them to the closest public health centre for follow up with specialists.

Within the framework of the “Strengthening Resilience of Older Persons and Persons with Disabilities during COVID-19 and Future Disasters” project, and through sub grants, 10 grass-roots micro projects were supported in order to increase social inclusion and participation of older people and people with disabilities at the community level.

Over 10,000 pieces of information, education and communication materials were distributed, with information on healthy aging and home care. Additionally, home care guidelines were developed for volunteers and eight volunteers were trained in home care services.

Mental health activities

More than 200 elderly were provided remote psychosocial support via phone. Additional psychosocial support and mental health activities related to peer support and healthy aging were organized with 300 elderly and persons with disabilities. Seven branches implemented activities for the elderly around healthy aging, reaching more than 300 people. There were 15 psycho-educational sessions which reached 280 elderly and 500 young people from the high schools. Four new volunteers/employees received training in psychological first aid and psychosocial support.

Psychosocial support services were provided to 200 migrants.

Hygiene items were provided to 300 families (1,200 people) affected by small scale local disasters.



Migration and displacement

During COVID-19, despite restrictive measures closing borders, Albania continued to experience a growing influx of irregular migrants, mostly from Greece on the way to other European Union countries. The number of irregular migrants entering Albania is increasing every year. However, there is generally an insufficient number of border and migration officers, reception centre personnel and asylum officials to cope with the increased number of arrivals and asylum requests.

The Albanian Red Cross aims to increase collaboration with local and national authorities, as well as other organizations, to develop, coordinate and deliver humanitarian assistance and protection services for migrants.

The Albanian Red Cross supports migrants and displaced people in accessing humanitarian assistance and protection at key points along migratory routes, as well access to durable solutions when appropriate. As part of its operations and programs, the National Society ensures safe and equitable provision of basic services, such as food assistance and non-food items, and provision of restoring family links services.

Two hundred migrants were reached with relief assistance, and Restoring Family Links services were provided for 20 migrants.



Values, power and inclusion

The Albanian Red Cross helps and supports people in need through activities and programs promoting volunteering and respecting human dignity.

To promote volunteering and humanitarian values, the Albanian Red Cross works with the most marginalized populations, and raises public awareness of their needs. Placing the National Society and its role in the country at the centre of its work bolsters the way the Albanian Red Cross delivers humanitarian assistance and social services. By investing the necessary time and resources into Red Cross membership development across the country, the National Society aims to provide communities with the knowledge and skills needed to ensure their resilience in times of emergency, and provide sustainable support for those who are most in need of help.

Efforts are made to integrate community engagement and accountability (CEA) activities at the headquarters and branch levels. This includes increasing the number of people from the general population given information on the Red Cross and Red Crescent emblems, the Fundamental Principles, and international humanitarian law. This helps ensure safe access of staff and volunteers during any humanitarian intervention.

More than 100 at-risk communities are reached annually through community-based interventions, including behaviour and social change communication and evidence-based advocacy. However, implementing community engagement and accountability (CEA) to improve interventions and define approaches remains a challenge at both the National Society and community levels.

650 elderly people were identified and supported with protection, gender and inclusion activities. Psychosocial support and health information was provided to 200 elderly and socially isolated people, and 30 at-risk women. The 120 elderly people identified as having high health risks were referred the closest public health centre for follow up with specialists.

One hundred at-risk children were provided socio-emotional and educational support. Twenty people took advantage of the Restoring Family Links services.

An updated volunteer management guideline was produced with the support of the Austrian Red Cross. The guidelines will support branches in reaching their volunteer management goals and objectives, as well as increasing their knowledge about the entire volunteer management process. The most important stages were discussed, such as registration, information, engagement, motivation and turn over.

An updated volunteer database was developed with support of the Austrian Red Cross and the Spanish Red Cross.

The 26th National Art Exhibit “Children and the Red Cross” was carried out across the country, with participation of children in primary and secondary schools (totalling 3,000 young people).

ENABLING LOCAL ACTORS



Strategic and operational coordination

The Albanian Red Cross is continuously working to develop as a National Society by increasing its presence within the country. To ensure it is as close to communities as possible, the National Society has built and expanded its network of volunteers to more than 2,500 people. This has increased the level of transparency, strengthened accountability and supported the extension of sustainable partnerships. The Albanian Red Cross collaborates with partners to increase the effectiveness of service delivery. Its combined, collaborative efforts have a positive impact in the lives of vulnerable people. The National Society aims to expand collaboration and focus more attention on the humanitarian and development needs in Albania.

The National Society works to establish and maintain effective cooperation and coordination mechanism with Red Cross Red Crescent Movement partners present in the country and/or other supporting partners. Cooperation across the Red Cross Movement was strong in the emergency operation after the earthquake in 2019.



National Society development

In order to fulfil its mission of preventing and alleviating suffering and protecting the dignity of every individual, the Albanian Red Cross mobilises across three main strategic actions: be a strong National Society, develop humanitarian diplomacy and collaborate efficiently and transparently with all partners.

Activities include expanding, Albanian Red Cross cooperation on service provision with state institutions and the private sector. Secondly, focusing on engaging new volunteers and members at the community level, and increasing expertise and quality in the National Society's existing work.

The Albanian Red Cross also works to increase development efforts in domestic fundraising with individuals, corporations, via digital platforms. Regular reviews are conducted to map domestic and international partnerships, as well as to develop and firmly establish resource mobilisation and income generating activities. Emphasis is placed on strengthening and improving the functionality of branches.

Communications mechanisms are strengthened by adopting modern technologies and digitalizing information. This ensures effective and efficient internal and external communications.



Humanitarian diplomacy

The Albanian Red Cross enjoys a high level of autonomy and independence to act in accordance with its mandate and auxiliary role in Albania. The auxiliary role in the field of humanitarian action demonstrates the National Society's neutrality and provides the ability to carry out activities freely and serve the most vulnerable. The National Society continuously makes efforts to promote its auxiliary role and to develop written agreements with local and central governments defining the Albanian Red Cross' role. The Albanian Red Cross takes special measures to identify ways to standardize communications and advocacy within the organization, and advocate for stronger partnerships between the National Society and public authorities in the expansion of services.

The National Society continues to work on upgrading humanitarian diplomacy capacities, based on good practices, strategies and knowledge. This helps improve the National Society's approach to humanitarian diplomacy, strengthening its integrity and building better partnerships with governmental and non-governmental actors in providing adequate care, protection and rights of people facing exceptional humanitarian challenges.



Accountability and agility

The Albanian Red Cross will continue to ensure sustainable and quality services are delivered to individuals and communities, to create a lasting impact. Activities include institutional development; sustainable resource mobilization and fundraising; financial management; branch development; increasing communication capacities; establishing strong planning, monitoring, evaluation, and reporting (PMER) systems and reinforcing domestic and international cooperation.

The National Society will continue ensuring that harmonized PMER standards and guidelines are followed, standardizing frameworks and guidelines across all levels. As part of its PMER capacity building efforts, the Albanian Red Cross will also ensure that PMER training is provided to relevant staff and volunteers. This further contributes to the development of PMER structures and systems within the National Society and within the Red Cross Red Crescent Movement context.

The National Society establishes new partnerships to ensure alternative sources of capital and funding. This also helps achieve the organization's goal of enhancing financial stability. The Albanian Red Cross invested significant efforts to improve financial accountability at national and branch levels. This will lead to improving the implementation of the organization's programs.

The Albanian Red Cross is developing strategies and systems to quickly adapt to changing humanitarian contexts. This includes providing guidance on emergency preparedness and response, enabling the Albanian Red Cross to efficiently mobilize resources, activate response mechanisms and coordinate with relevant stakeholders during emergencies.

Furthermore, with the support of IFRC, the Albanian Red Cross is strengthening training programs focused on enhancing the organization's agility and responsiveness.



The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC)

is the world's largest humanitarian network, with 191 National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and around 15 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.

DATA SCOPE AND LIMITATIONS

- **Timeframe and alignment:** The reporting timeframe for this overview is covering the period from 1 January to 30 June 2023. However, due to the diversity of the IFRC and differences in fiscal years, this coverage may not fully align for some National Societies. Mid-year reporting data may have been based on estimations, with plans to submit more robust numbers at the annual reporting stage.
- **Missing data and breakdowns:** National Societies have diverse data collection systems and processes that may not align with the standardized indicators. Data may not be available for some indicators, for some National Societies. This may lead to inconsistencies across different reporting tools as well as potential under or over-estimation of the efforts led by all.
- **Reporting bias:** The data informing this Federation-wide overview is self-reported by each National Society (or its designated support entity) and which is the owner and gatekeeper, and responsible for accuracy and updating. IFRC tries to triangulate the data provided by the National Societies with previous data and other data in the public domain.

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](#)
- [Evaluations database](#)

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