



SERBIA

2024-2025 IFRC network country plan

6 August 2024

Multi-Year Funding Requirement **CHF 1.94M**

In support of Red Cross of Serbia



Црвени крст Србије
Red Cross of Serbia



185

National Society branches



893

National Society staff



45,861

National Society volunteers

People to be reached



8,000

Climate and environment



100

Disasters and crises



32,000

Health and wellbeing



6,000

Migration & Displacement



45,000

Values, power and inclusion

IFRC network multi-year focus

Emergency response

- Population movement crisis

Longer-term needs

- Disaster preparedness
- Climate change adaptation

Capacity development

- Humanitarian diplomacy
- National Society development

Key country data

Population **6.8M**

INFORM Climate Risk Index **Low**

Human Development Index rank **63**

Population below poverty level **21.2%**

IFRC Country Cluster Delegation for Central
& South-eastern Europe, Sarajevo

Funding requirements

2024

2025**

Total 1.03M CHF

Through IFRC

460,000 CHF

Through Participating National Societies

262,000 CHF

Through Host National Society

310,000 CHF

IFRC Breakdown

Longer-term needs

50,000 CHF

Climate and environment

100,000 CHF

Disasters and crises

60,000 CHF

Health and wellbeing

150,000 CHF

Migration & displacement

100,000 CHF

Enabling local actors

Total 910,000 CHF

Through IFRC

400,000 CHF

Through Participating National Societies

70,000 CHF

Through Host National Society

440,000 CHF

**Projected funding requirements

Participating National Societies

Austrian Red Cross

Italian Red Cross*

Swiss Red Cross

**National Societies which have contributed only multilaterally through the IFRC in the first half of 2023.*

IFRC Appeal codes

Longer-term needs:

MAARS002

Hazards



Floods



Earthquakes



Storm



Epidemics



Drought



Population movement

NATIONAL SOCIETY PROFILE

The **Red Cross of Serbia** was founded in February 1876. It is the largest and oldest humanitarian organization in the Republic of Serbia and was recognized by the International Committee of Red Cross (ICRC) in June 1876. The National Society was admitted to the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) in its current form in 1919. The programmes of the Red Cross of Serbia are implemented through its strong volunteer base and staff in collaboration with its donors and partners. By 2022, the National Society reached 859,000 people by its long-term services and development programmes and 197,000 people by disaster response and early recovery programmes over time.

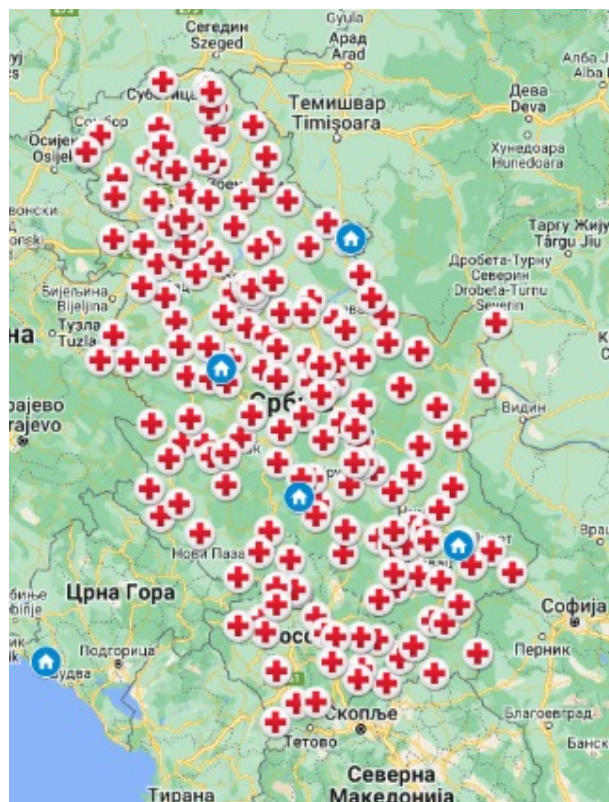
The position of the Red Cross of Serbia is defined by the Law on the Red Cross of Serbia, which outlines its auxiliary role to public authorities in the humanitarian field. Public authorities at all levels must support the work of the Red Cross. Other laws also affirm its special status in various areas such as:

- The law on entrusting public powers to the Yugoslav Red Cross defines the scope of tracing service
- The law on the use and protection of the Red Cross emblem and the law on disaster risk reduction and emergency management recognizes its role in disaster risk reduction, emergency management and assistance during disasters
- The law on safety and health at work designates the Red Cross of Serbia to train first aid trainers
- The law on transfusion medicine involves the National Society in promoting voluntary blood donation
- The law on road traffic includes the Red Cross in first aid training and testing for driving licenses

The auxiliary role of the Red Cross of Serbia involves disaster risk reduction, preparedness and response including evacuation, shelter, search and rescue, distribution of emergency items, water supply, sanitation, recovery support, first aid training and restoring family links. It complies with national laws and the international Red Cross Red Crescent Movement regulations on international humanitarian operations.

The Red Cross of Serbia develops its annual plans based on five main strategic goals set by its Strategic Plan 2022-2026 as follows:

- Continue with further development (transformation) of the Red Cross of Serbia into a modern, strong organization able to respond to humanitarian challenges



Map of the National Society branches

- Strengthen organizational and community capacities to respond to basic life needs and dignified life of the most vulnerable population, improve work with marginalized groups and promote social inclusion
- Improve organizational and community capacities to prepare and respond to health risks, crises, chronic non-communicable diseases, epidemics and influence the improvement of health status of the population
- Improve capacities to contribute to disaster risk reduction and emergency management at the tactical, operational, and strategic levels with the aim of reducing harmful impacts, saving lives and emergency response to accidents, early recovery of the most vulnerable and building the resilience of local communities to respond to challenges
- Continue to promote the protection of humanitarian values, fundamental principles of the Red Cross Red Crescent Movement and international humanitarian law

IFRC NETWORK ACTION

JOINT SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS

The Republic of Serbia is a landlocked country in Southeastern and Central Europe, situated at the crossroads of the Pannonian Basin and the Balkans. It shares land borders with Hungary to the north, Romania to the northeast, Bulgaria to the southeast, North Macedonia and Albania to the south, Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina to the west, and Montenegro to the southwest.

The country covers a total of 88,499 square kilometres, which places it at 113th place in the world. The capital of Serbia is Belgrade, which is located at the confluence of the Sava and Danube rivers. The Pannonian Plain covers the northern third of the country. The terrain of the central part of the country consists chiefly of hills traversed by rivers. Mountains dominate the southern third of Serbia. The highest risk related to the geographical and typological in Serbia are [floods \(8.9\)](#) and [earthquakes \(8.3\)](#).

In 2022 The Republic of Serbia had an estimated population of 6.6 million. 51.38 per cent of the country's population were women (3,415,025) and 48.62 per cent were men (3,231,978). Population growth rates were negative in the period between 2011 and 2021, during which the total population shrunk by 7.5 per cent (539,859 people). Since the beginning of the 1990s, Serbia's death rate has continuously exceeded its birth rate. It is estimated that [300,000 people left Serbia](#) during the 1990s, out of whom 20 per cent had higher education. Currently, the ratio of educated people among those who emigrate is not estimated to be much different from those who [stay behind](#).

The proportion of the population aged under 15 (0-14) fell from 14.4 per cent in 2011 to 14.37 per cent in 2022, while the population aged 65 and over grew from [17.3 per cent \(2011\)](#) to [22.10 per cent \(2022\)](#). The average age of the population increased from 42.1 years (2011) to 43.8 (2022). Life expectancy declined from 74.3 in 2010 to 73 in 2021 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, but the median age of the Serbian population is expected to continue [rising over the next decades](#). A fifth of all households consist of only one person, and just one-fourth of four and more persons. The latest Statistical Yearbook estimates that by 2040, 24 per cent of the population of Serbia will be over 65 while 7.4 per cent will be over 80 ([this share was 4.6 per cent in 2021](#)).

Serbia is a parliamentary democracy in which the President is elected for 5 years. Serbian National Assembly is a unicameral legislature consisting of 250 seats and parliamentary elections are held every 4 years. The country is a unitary state composed of municipalities/cities, districts, and two autonomous provinces, Vojvodina, and Kosovo and Metohija. The southern Serbian province of Kosovo and Metohija has been under the UN mandate since 1999 according to resolution 1244.

Regionally, the concept of the Open Balkans is a key part of Serbia's political narrative, as an economic and political initiative that includes Albania, North Macedonia, and Serbia. The initiative aims at increasing trade and cooperation as well as improving bilateral relations between the states. More broadly, within Europe Serbia's primary strategic goal is EU membership. In this context, full membership negotiations with the EU started on 14 December 2015. The political and economic reforms carried out within the scope of the EU membership process constitute the driving force of the country's social and economic development. Beyond Europe, Serbia has traditionally maintained good relations with partners from both the West and the East, with the USA, but also with the People's Republic of China and the Russian Federation.

According to data from the [World Bank](#), Serbia has rebounded strongly from the impact of the global pandemic, with growth reaching 7.4 percent in 2021. After a strong recovery in 2021, however, inflation and the Europe-wide negative impacts of the international armed conflict between Russia and Ukraine have caused an economic slowdown. Domestically, inflation has increased significantly, with adverse effects on the incomes of the poor and vulnerable. Over the medium term, the Serbian economy is expected to slow down and return to pre-pandemic growth levels after 2024 at the earliest. The outlook depends on the international armed conflict, further economic shocks, and the implementation of the [domestic reform agenda](#).

The post-COVID-19 situation in Serbia has been marked by different social problems, including economic inequalities, high unemployment rate, and high risk of poverty. Children are the part of the population most at risk, especially those who belong to marginalized groups. Children in Serbia might be at higher risk due to factors such as low socioeconomic status, inadequate healthcare access, and limited educational opportunities. Malnutrition, exposure to violence, and unstable living conditions can also contribute to their vulnerability. Marginalized groups in Serbia encompass among others ethnic minorities (e.g., Roma), refugees, and internally displaced persons. People with disabilities, especially those in rural areas, encounter challenges in accessing services. Low-income families lack proper healthcare.

According to the data of the [Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia](#), 6.2 per cent of the population of Serbia live in absolute poverty, while about one and a half million people, or 21.2 per cent of the population of Serbia, are at risk of poverty. About 28,000 children fell below the absolute poverty line in Serbia in 2022, according to a UNICEF report that dealt with the projection of poverty due to the economic crisis caused by [the war in Ukraine](#).

Increased isolation, social exclusion, new forms of vulnerability and a significant increase in psychosocial stress due to the COVID-19 pandemic add to the humanitarian problems caused by poverty and inequality.

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES



Climate and environment

The Republic of Serbia has a moderate continental climate with July as the warmest month, and January the coldest. June is the month with the most rainfall. The months with the least rain are February and October. Snow typically occurs from November to March, with the highest snowfall recorded in January.

Climate scenarios predict rising temperatures in Serbia in the coming years. Under [IPCC/SRES scenarios](#), temperatures will rise by 0.5-0.9 °C in the period 2011-2040 and 1.8-2.0 °C in the period [2041-2070](#). There will be increasingly frequent and longer droughts and more frequent wildfires.

At the global level, Serbia does not significantly contribute to the increase in greenhouse gas emissions (0.1-0.2 per cent). At the national level, total greenhouse gas emissions are dominated by the energy sector (80 per cent). Agriculture is in the second place, followed by waste and industrial processes.

According to Serbia's [Climate Risk Profile](#), major climate stressors are expected to impact the region. If some of the worst-case scenarios come true, [countries in the Western Balkans region](#) can expect a warming of up to 3°C by mid-century, combined with increased precipitation, frequency, and duration of heat waves and droughts.

The rising temperatures and increased heat waves result in increases in diseases transmitted by mosquitos, as well as increased illness and mortality because of heat strokes. In the agriculture sector as well, rising temperatures will decrease yield in important crops such as maize and fruits, with increased intensity and frequency of heavy rainfall events causing fungal diseases and pests affecting grain and fruit produce, and increased drought conditions and dry spell reducing soil fertility.

According to IQ Air's [2019 World Air Quality Report](#) which aggregated air quality data for over 4000 cities globally (based on PM 2.5) Serbia ranked as the 32nd most polluted country worldwide. Serbia's air pollution stems from a range of sources, including Serbia's reliance on lignite and coal-fuelled power stations, in addition solid fuels such as coal and wood frequently used to heat homes. Emissions from an ageing transport fleet, industrial activities, waste dump sites and agriculture significantly add to the problem.

Soil degradation in the Republic of Serbia is mainly driven by land conversion, abandonment of agricultural fields, and overexploitation of soil in agriculture. Climate change exacerbates the degradation process by triggering or accelerating natural soil degradation. Erosion is also a major contributor to [soil degradation in Serbia](#). Deforestation is also a factor in soil degradation in Serbia.

The municipal waste management system in Serbia is still in its initial phase of development, dominated by waste disposal in unsanitary landfills/dump sites and illegal landfills without prior selection or treatment. Illegal landfills for municipal waste are often put on fire with [little or no concern for the environment](#).

The Ministry of Environmental Protection is responsible for [climate change on a national level](#) and for reporting under the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). The Republic of Serbia has ratified the UNFCCC, as well as the [Kyoto Protocol](#) to the UNFCCC and the [Doha Amendment](#) to the Kyoto Protocol. By adopting the [Paris Agreement](#), Serbia had committed to contribute to the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions on a global level in the future. Due to the ratification of this relevant international agreement, and to fulfill its obligations from [Chapter 27 Environment and Climate Change of the EU accession](#), the Republic of Serbia adopted the [Law on Climate Change in 2021](#) and established the National Council for Climate Change, adopted the [Low-Carbon Development Strategy and Action Plan](#), and began the development of a programme of adaptation to changing climate.

Multi-year high level objectives of the National Society

The Red Cross of Serbia focuses on the directions set by its strategic document and aims to:

- Improve its capacities for enhanced response to humanitarian needs and help people to adapt to the impacts of the climate and environmental crisis
- Improve existing and develop additional programmes and activities for the most vulnerable groups that are at risk of climate change to assist their adaptation and mitigation approaches especially focusing on engaging children and youth at the local level
- Reduce greenhouse gas emissions of its activities in line with the broader understanding of the "do no harm" principle
- Develop an approach for adapting and defining climate-smart programmes and projects

The Red Cross of Serbia has signed the [Climate and Environment charter](#) and therefore committed to scaling up its responses to the consequences of climate change. Besides this, the Governing board of the Red Cross of Serbia has adopted the Strategic orientation on climate change and climate action in October 2022 and is committed to mitigating the current and future impact of climate change on the most vulnerable individuals and communities, supporting people to adapt and face the consequences and improve the

adaptation to climate change and strengthen its contribution to the preservation of the environment. This complements the state's efforts in the climate change and climate action domain since they are mainly directed towards adaptation while current state focus is towards mitigation and decrease of CO2 emissions according to its commitments undertaken by adopting the Paris agreement.

Planned activities in 2024

- Minimize its carbon footprint and any adverse environmental impacts resulting from its operations
- Implement early warning systems, raise awareness of climate and environmental risks, as well as develop a forecast-based financing approach
- Improve understanding of heatwaves and their consequences on individuals and communities in urban areas
- Raise awareness and conduct behavioural change activities focusing on the most vulnerable groups such as older people, babies, children and youth, and people with disabilities
- Develop, adapt and contextualize climate action in children and youth programmes using local knowledge and practices and globally developed approaches
- Implement advocacy and awareness raising activities on climate change and protection of the environment, with

a specific focus on youth-led advocacy activities at the local level

- Develop the environmental policy of the Red Cross of Serbia, conducting regular assessments and calculations of CO2 emissions and develop a training approach
- Improve waste management including management of electronic waste
- Reduce or eliminate single-use plastics in branches and develop a plan for sustainable and environmentally safe disposal of fuel, oil, tires, and other products
- Adopt sustainable methods of organizing events, meetings, seminars, and training to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from transportation and waste

Longer-term support from the IFRC network

The IFRC supports the Red Cross of Serbia to collaborate with key partners, including participating National Societies, IFRC reference centres, hubs, and labs. This partnership supports the priorities of the National Society by providing expertise and resources. The IFRC offers technical guidance, training, and coordination assistance to ensure effective strategy implementation. Participating National Societies contribute experience, resources, and volunteers, bolstering emergency response and community-based programmes. IFRC reference centres, hubs, and labs bring specialized knowledge, aiding in disaster management, health initiatives, and innovation.



Following heavy flooding in Serbia in June 2023, the Red Cross of Serbia volunteers and staff assisted 2,700 people and over 500 households with evacuations, food, hygiene items, disinfectants, and installed dehumidifiers in homes. (Photo: Red Cross of Serbia)



Disasters and crises

For real-time information on emergencies, see IFRC GO page [Serbia](#)

Serbia is highly susceptible to a variety of natural hazards, with significant impacts on agriculture and rural development. The country is ranked 130th by [INFORM](#), with a risk value of 2.8, making it one of the most exposed and vulnerable countries in the Western Balkans. The primary risks include floods (risk score of 8.9), earthquakes (5.5), epidemics (3.9), and droughts (2.9). Over the past three years, Serbia has faced [numerous disasters and crises](#), including epidemics, floods, droughts, and technological incidents.

Poverty is a significant risk factor in Serbia, with [21.2 per cent of the population at risk of poverty](#), particularly in central and southern regions where about [30 per cent of the population](#) faces financial distress. This economic vulnerability severely limits their capacity to cope with disasters, especially multi-hazard emergencies such as the combination of COVID-19 and floods in 2020.

Serbia has made strides towards sustainable development, notably through the implementation of the [National Sustainable Development Strategy](#). Specific attention has been given to “SDG 2 – Zero Hunger” and “SDG 3 – Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages,” particularly relevant for the Food Systems Summit. However, numerous challenges remain that require joint efforts from the state social welfare system and the business sector to address effectively.

[Food security remains a pressing issue in Serbia](#). According to the Global Food Security Index (GFSI) data for 2019, [Serbia ranks poorly](#) among neighbouring countries, positioned at 59th place globally. Factors such as affordability, availability, food quality, safety, natural resources, and resilience to adverse climate conditions all contribute to this ranking. UN data indicate that spending on agriculture has decreased relative to its contribution to GDP since the early 2000s.

Since 2014, there has been increased attention towards strengthening emergency management capacities at both national and local levels. However, disaster protection, response, and recovery systems require substantial technical and infrastructural enhancements to ensure they are fully functional.

In response to large-scale floods in May 2014, which affected over 1.6 million people (22 per cent of the total population) in 38 municipalities, the Serbian government has worked towards legal improvements in disaster risk reduction and emergency management. The lessons learned from implementing the Law on Emergency Situations have been fundamental in developing a more comprehensive Law on Disaster Risk Reduction and Emergency Management, adopted in November 2018. The National Disaster Risk Reduction Management Programme,

approved in 2014, provides a [comprehensive framework for building disaster resilience](#).

The National Disaster Risk Reduction Platform, managed by the Sector for Emergency Management under the Ministry of Interior, aligns with United Nations recommendations on Disaster Risk Reduction and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction. Sector for Emergency Management is also a focal point for the EU Civil Protection Mechanism and is legally responsible for enhancing the nation's capacity to reduce risks, respond to emergencies, and recover from disasters. However, Sector for Emergency Management currently lacks a central command and control facility to integrate all aspects of disaster management, from risk management to [decision-making during emergency responses](#).

Multi-year high level objectives of the National Society

The Red Cross of Serbia has adopted the Law on Fire Protection, a National Strategy for Emergency Response, and a Fire Protection Strategy, in addition to the [law on emergency situations](#).

The strategic goals of the Red Cross of Serbia are to:

- Improve capacities to contribute to disaster risk reduction and emergency management at the tactical, operational, and strategic levels
- Reduce harmful impacts, saving lives and emergency response to accidents and disasters, early recovery of the most vulnerable and building the resilience of local communities to respond to challenges and problems themselves
- Increase the capacity of staff and volunteers to support mental health resilience of affected population by following mental health in emergencies and protect and support staff and volunteers' mental health and psychosocial wellbeing so they can respond safely and effectively
- Integrate mental health and psychosocial support ([MHPSS](#)) in all activities and training programmes for volunteers and staff
- Improve disaster management systems that contribute to effective disaster response in the country at all operational and coordination levels internationally
- Strengthen operation and coordination capacities for disaster preparedness and response, including water rescue and mountain rescue
- Build a culture of local community safety, with reduced risk of disasters and reduced number of drownings and injuries in the mountains

Planned activities in 2024

- Formalize and strengthen effective coordination and information sharing and mutual support in case of emergencies on municipal, national level and cross border level
- Coordinate cluster-based training, cross border cooperation, engagement, and joint proposal development
- Provide support in renewing technical and logistic capacity of the Red Cross of Serbia (fleet, warehouse, etc.), as well as develop contingency planning
- Increase use of digital tools and AI, develop real time information and analytics systems, pre disaster mapping of needs/vulnerabilities, cross-border, and multi-stakeholder tools (Common Alert Protocol, Hazard App)

- Scale up local use of X-stock platform and expand support to existing online platforms for disaster preparedness online training
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Longer-term support from the IFRC network

The IFRC supports the Red Cross of Serbia in collaborating with partners to address disaster-related priorities within the disasters and crises sector. The IFRC offers continued technical expertise, guidance, and resources to assist the Red Cross of Serbia in creating effective disaster response strategies and programmes. The IFRC will guide the National Society in digitalization in disaster preparedness and response to ensure quick response and optimize the use of human and other resources.

Participating National Societies provide experience, resources, and volunteers, and facilitate knowledge exchange, training, and coordination enhancing the capacity of the National Society during emergencies.



Health and wellbeing

Serbia faces a significant public health challenge due to the increased prevalence of chronic non-communicable diseases. Cardiovascular diseases are the leading cause of death, accounting for 53.2 per cent of all fatalities. Data from 2018 highlight the widespread nature of these conditions, with high blood pressure affecting 29.6 per cent of the population, chronic lower back problems reported by 17.2 per cent, chronic cervical spine issues impacting 12.1 per cent, elevated blood fats present in 10.8 per cent, coronary heart disease or angina pectoris affecting 8.9 per cent, diabetes reported by 7.8 per cent, allergies affecting 7.3 per cent, degenerative joint disease (arthrosis) impacting 6.9 per cent and depression affecting 4.3 per cent.

In 2021, 56,610 people (26,306 males and 30,304 females) died from cardiovascular diseases in Serbia. Acute coronary syndrome resulted in 4,385 deaths, and there are approximately 5,000 cases of sudden cardiac arrest annually. Notably, around 70 per cent of sudden cardiac arrests which occur outside hospitals, highlighting the critical importance of immediate and correct action by bystanders to improve survival rates.

In 2021, there were 1,127 workplace injuries and 19,905 traffic accident injuries in Serbia, including 6,587 individuals aged 15 to 30. A total of 521 people were killed in traffic accidents, with young people (15 to 30 years old) accounting for nearly one-third of the injured, indicating a higher risk of injury in this demographic.

First aid in Serbia is regulated by the law on health and care protection, which mandates that every citizen is responsible for providing first aid within their capabilities. The law on road

traffic safety requires first aid training for drivers, and the law on health and safety at work mandates that at least two per cent of employees in companies (depending on risk) receive first aid training. Additionally, professionals who respond to accidents and disasters must attend first aid training as per the law on disaster risk reduction and emergency situation management.

The health and wellbeing of Serbia's population are significantly affected by the rising incidence of chronic non-communicable diseases, particularly cardiovascular conditions. The COVID-19 pandemic has further strained mental health, contributing to widespread symptoms of psychological distress. The country's legislative framework mandates first aid training and emergency response readiness, yet high rates of injuries in workplaces and traffic accidents, particularly among young people, underscore ongoing challenges.

The prolonged COVID-19 crisis has exacerbated mental health issues, leading to higher degrees of alienation and various symptoms of impaired mental health. The stress and isolation caused by the pandemic have significantly impacted the population's overall mental wellbeing.

Multi-year high level objectives of the National Society

The Red Cross of Serbia aims to improve organizational and community capacities to prepare and respond to health risks, crises, chronic non-communicable diseases, epidemics and influence the improvement of the health status of the population.

The National Society also aims to scale up its mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) efforts and increase its ability to respond to emerging mental health and psychosocial needs in all segments of the population. This is to be achieved through provision of basic psychosocial support in the work of National Society with beneficiaries of its programmes and by mainstreaming MHPSS in the key humanitarian activities while protecting and promoting the mental health and psychosocial well-being of staff and volunteers.

Planned activities in 2024

- Raise awareness of the importance of practicing healthy lifestyles and the importance of disease prevention with special emphasis on vulnerable groups (young persons, older persons, socially vulnerable persons and migrants)
- Implement general prevention programmes with focus on mental health and general wellbeing, healthy lifestyles including healthy ageing and long-term care through support to informal caregivers
- Reduce the number of deaths, reduce the consequences of accidents, protect human life and health, and prevent accidents
- Improve its first aid capacities to ensure that all drivers in the country are trained in first aid, that at least one person in every household and every company has been trained
- Reach at least 25,000 people per year with first aid awareness raising activities, including school children, driver candidates, employees, and people in local community
- Develop adequate digital tools for blended learning, such as an e-learning platforms and various educational materials, as well as a marketing strategy for commercial first aid trainings (driver candidates and employees), and advanced first aid training programmes for volunteers and staff providing first aid at public events
- Increase collection and contribution of blood units to 70 per cent by the end of 2026 following voluntary non-remunerated blood donation principles
- Promote, recruit and retain 4,000 educated volunteers in branches to be involved in selection of blood donors and blood drive organization
- Mainstream MHPSS and integrate it in all the health preventive activities over the coming period to protect and strengthen psychological wellbeing of both beneficiaries and staff
- Train volunteers and staff on both providing MHPSS to beneficiaries in a variety of settings and on self-care and protection of own mental health

Longer-term support from the IFRC network

The IFRC supports the Red Cross of Serbia in developing its e-platform and different web tools for e-learning, as well as in the development and delivery of training of trainers for advanced first aid, building capacities for providing advanced first aid at public events, and acquiring first aid equipment. The IFRC also supports the National Society in developing training schemes for volunteers and staff as well as developing procedures to guide voluntary blood donation during emergencies.



Migration and displacement

Serbia, part of the Western Balkans, serves as a key transit area for irregular migration flows towards EU member states. Migrants typically enter the EU through the Greek-Turkish border and then proceed through the Western Balkan route towards their destinations in the EU. As of April 2023, the UNHCR reported 2,771 migrants in Serbia, with 2,158 accommodated in government centres. The first four months of 2023 saw 31,545 new entries into these centres, marking a 21.68 per cent increase from the previous year. Most of these migrants originate from Afghanistan (34 per cent), Syria (28 per cent), Morocco (13 per cent), Pakistan (7 per cent), and Burundi (5 per cent).

Serbia's migration landscape has been shaped by several factors over the past three decades, including the influx of refugees from the former Yugoslavia and internally displaced persons

from Kosovo and Metohija during the 1990s. Additionally, many Serbian citizens have emigrated to Western Europe and North America. The country has also seen an increase in asylum seekers from Asia and Africa, irregular migrants, and returnees under the Readmission Agreement. Serbia has naturalized over 350,000 refugees and war-affected persons from the 1996 census, but some still require integration assistance, particularly regarding housing and property rights in their countries of origin.

Serbia adheres to international laws and conventions related to refugees and migrants, including the UN Refugee Convention. The legal framework includes laws on migration management, asylum, welfare, healthcare, and anti-discrimination, among others.

One pressing issue is the short average stay of migrants (16 days), which complicates efforts to identify and support victims of human trafficking and exploitation. In 2022, 10per cent of trafficking victims identified were migrants, with 80per cent exploited along the migration route.

Serbia's strategic location as a transit country for migrants heading to the EU underscores its critical role in managing migration and displacement. While significant progress has been made, particularly in legal frameworks and support systems, ongoing challenges remain in managing migration and displacement.

Multi-year high level objectives of the National Society

The Red Cross of Serbia is part of the IFRC three-year Global Route-Based Migration Programme, which aims to improve the safety and dignity of people on the move along deadly and dangerous land and sea-based migration routes across Africa, the Americas, Europe, and the Middle East and North Africa. The programme aims to support 4.7 million people on the move and people in host communities annually through three operational pillars: (1) improving access to assistance and protection, including through humanitarian service points; (2) strengthening National Society capacities; and (3) local to global humanitarian diplomacy.

The Red Cross of Serbia also addresses issues of migration and displacement through its national strategy and action plan for 2023, although a dedicated migration and displacement strategy is yet to be developed. Since 1992, Serbia has been hosting refugees in collective centres, now comprising 19 government-run facilities, including seven asylum centres and 12 reception centres. The Red Cross of Serbia plays a crucial role in these centres, working closely with the Commissariat for Refugees and Migration to provide essential services and support.

The Red Cross of Serbia aims to:

- Provide humanitarian assistance and protection for migrants and host communities at key locations of the route through Serbia
- Strengthen the capacities of its branches to analyse and address the needs of migrants and influence policy change through humanitarian diplomacy and advocacy
- Ensure needs for protection and assistance are met, especially for unaccompanied children, who are at risk

of violence, abuse, human trafficking, and other kinds of exploitation

- Integrate MHPSS in all activities to protect and strengthen psychological wellbeing of both people on the move as well as the staff and volunteers providing support

Planned activities in 2024

- Provide guidelines and information for migrant population in simple relevant languages on how to approach relevant services from trustworthy sources
- Engage migrants and host communities by raising their awareness on risks faced by people on the move and provide them with necessary knowledge and skills to address them
- Disseminate information on the problems faced by migrants and refugees and the vulnerabilities along migratory routes to general population in Serbia
- Enable local branches to access all transit and detention centres in Serbia and provide access to relevant institutions for unaccompanied minors
- Enhance empathy of domestic population and empower them to have better understanding and knowledge of dangerous situations and protection measures
- Influence the actions of children and youth among people on the move, as well as the general population in Serbia, to create a more accepting, inclusive and safe environment
- Educate professionals, future professionals and students of relevant faculties as part of the dissemination work
- Cooperate with relevant partners, provide training, exchange experiences and activities for staff and volunteers

Longer-term support from the IFRC network

The IFRC offers strategic coordination, policy development, and technical assistance to the Red Cross of Serbia. Participating National Societies provide training, resources, and expertise in providing essential services to migrants and refugees, including emergency relief, healthcare, MHPSS and legal aid. IFRC reference centres, hubs, and labs offer specialized knowledge, innovation, and research to address specific migration-related challenges, enriching the National Society's responses.



Values, power and inclusion

Serbia's commitment to combating human trafficking is underscored by its ratification of the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its Protocol, and the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings. From 2017 to 2022, Serbia identified 320 victims of human trafficking, including 150 children, with an additional 367 presumed victims. The primary forms of exploitation are sexual and labour exploitation, forced begging, and forced criminality. Vulnerable groups include women, children, victims of gender-based violence, migrants, refugees, ethnic minorities, and people with disabilities, with unaccompanied minors and the Roma community at heightened risk. Most victims are Serbian nationals, primarily involved in internal trafficking, though foreign victims from neighbouring and distant countries are also present.

The UN Sustainable Development Goal 5 aims to eliminate all forms of violence against women by 2030. Research by the Red Cross of Serbia reveals that 16 per cent of women aged 65 to 74 have experienced violence, primarily psychological. Due to fear, shame, economic dependence, and societal norms, many incidents go unreported. Additionally, 40 per cent of women have faced violence from partners since age 15, with 7.7 per cent experiencing such violence in the last year. Data from 2018 indicates that 56.2 per cent of women over 65 in the region have experienced gender-based violence (GBV).

Children from marginalized backgrounds, including underprivileged families, Roma settlements, and rural areas often face educational setbacks and higher dropout rates. The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated these issues, increasing stress and reducing motivation among these children. Disadvantaged youth have limited participation in societal activities, influencing their values and increasing the potential for radical ideas. A significant percentage (48 per cent) of students experience peer violence, often based on ethnicity, politics, gender, and sports affiliations. Over 60 per cent are exposed to digital violence.

The formal education system in Serbia faces several challenges, including inadequate resources, socio-economic disparities, and limited inclusivity for children with special needs. The education system struggles to keep pace with job market demands and technological advancements, resulting in disparities in digital literacy. Non-formal education also encounters barriers such as inconsistent funding, accessibility issues, varying quality, and lack of coordination and evaluation.

Serbia's efforts to combat human trafficking and gender-based violence highlight significant strides towards inclusion and protection of vulnerable groups. However, persistent challenges remain, especially in the realms of educational and social inclusion for marginalized communities. Addressing these issues requires continued commitment to legal frameworks,

enhanced support systems, and targeted interventions to bridge educational and socio-economic gaps.

Multi-year high level objectives of the National Society

In the coming years, the Red Cross of Serbia will focus on achieving the following objectives:

- Respond to the needs of identified and potential victims of human trafficking
- Reduce the risk of human trafficking, alleviate human suffering caused by this phenomenon and contribute to the implementation of the strategy for the prevention and suppression of human trafficking, especially among women and children
- Improve protection of women from gender-based violence and abuse throughout their life cycle, as well as contribute to better institutional protection of women of all ages from gender-based violence and abuse through accredited training curriculum
- Strengthen the professional organizational capacities of all branches, including building of volunteer resources, promoting humanitarian values and supporting sensitive groups, especially children and youth
- Establish and nurture cooperation with partners on all levels

Planned activities in 2024

- Strengthen its capacities to address the phenomenon of human trafficking and support identified victims
- Increase public awareness of human trafficking and measures to prevent it, especially among children, young people, people on the move, and other socially vulnerable target groups
- Organize awareness-raising campaigns and public events aimed at prevention of trafficking
- Partner and cooperate with civil society organizations, system institutions and donors including corporate sector and citizens to establish and nurture relevant joint projects
- Equip professionals and future professionals who might encounter a victim of human trafficking to adequately recognize and respond to the situation
- Prepare and improve manuals, programmes and working procedures, and implement activities aimed at strengthening organizational capacities for identifying and reacting in case of violence against children
- Conduct a series of standardized workshops to train young volunteers in promoting healthy lifestyle, non-violence, empathy, and solidarity among children

Longer-term support from the IFRC network

The IFRC supports the Red Cross of Serbia in capacity building through training of trainers (ToT) and educators and exchange of experience with relevant partners and participating National Societies. The IFRC also supports the National Society in organizing awareness-raising campaigns and public events, as well as in developing educational and promotional material.

The IFRC provides technical guidance and financial support to the National Society for activities aimed at institutional protection of women from gender-based violence and abuse through accredited training curriculum. The support also extends for planned production of manuals, organizing camps, seminars and training. The IFRC assists the National Society in its advocacy work to improve visibility in local communities, as well as access to expertise and tools that help its branches improve the quality of programmes and services.

ENABLING LOCAL ACTORS

The Red Cross of Serbia is committed to the Preparedness for Effective Response (PER) process and is currently in the assessment phase. The PER Approach is a continuous and flexible process that enables National Societies to assess, measure and analyse the strengths and gaps of its preparedness and response mechanism, and take necessary action to improve it.

The IFRC is committed to support the National Society in its development according to its priorities.

activities and programmes, including with Ministry of Health, Ministry of Social Welfare, Serbian Armed Forces, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Commissariat for Refugees and Migrations, academic circles, among others

- Strengthen exchanges and cooperation with neighbouring National Societies, participating National Societies in European countries, and the regional and cluster offices of the IFRC
- Strengthen domestic and international fundraising and resource mobilization



Strategic and operational coordination

Multi-year high level objectives of the National Society

- Develop new and existing partnerships with governmental institutions and NGOs along with implementation of core

Longer-term support from the IFRC network

The IFRC supports the National Society to increase cooperation with the private sector by establishing partnerships to enhance resource mobilization and contribute to inter-agency coordination. It supports the Red Cross of Serbia in continued exchange and cooperation within the “Neighbours Help First Network of National Societies of South-eastern Europe” in disasters and crises by focusing on sustainable resource mobilization and fundraising.



The Red Cross of Serbia supports the most vulnerable, including the homeless, with staff and volunteers from the Ivanjica branch providing provisions to locals stranded by snow when Serbia grapples with severe winter weather and sub-zero temperatures. (Photo: Red Cross of Serbia)



National Society development

Multi-year high level objectives of the National Society

- Implement structured assessment processes including organization capacity assessment and certification ([OCAC](#)) and branch organizational capacity assessment ([BOCA](#)) and preparedness for effective response ([PER](#)) in the coming period
- Continue to work toward the full implementation of the law on the Red Cross of Serbia, ensuring commitment by authorities and the realization of funds
- Increase the number of members and volunteers who actively support the organization's work and create new programmes and adopt a volunteer work policy
- Increase revenue and improve vulnerability assessment capacities to ensure the sustainability of branches
- Promote learning among staff and volunteers, focusing on distance training (e-learning)

Longer-term support from the IFRC network

The IFRC supports the Red Cross of Serbia in creating new [statutes and policies](#). The IFRC provides resources for the continuous development of the organization and will support in strengthening human capacities through continuous training of employees, volunteers and financial resources through projects and finding potential donors and continued support for the digitization process and National Society development.

It will also support the National Society in the creation of a volunteer policy and a National Society development policy. The IFRC will help the National Society in managing its financial resources and strengthening of human capacities in the implementation of the self-assessment processes ([OCAC/BOCA](#)).



Humanitarian diplomacy

Multi-year high level objectives of the National Society

- Develop existing capacities for positioning the Red Cross at all organizational levels to strengthen the credibility and image of the National Society
- Apply, promote and develop international humanitarian law through constant communication and cooperation with its various partners
- Develop communication with external target groups in connection with the promotion of the mandate, mission, roles of the Red Cross, protection of the Red Cross emblem and protection and promotion of the organization's identity including staff and volunteers

- Reach high degree of acceptance among key stakeholders by providing relevant, context-sensitive humanitarian assistance and protection for people and communities in a manner consistent with the [fundamental principles](#) and other Movement policies

Longer-term support from the IFRC network

The IFRC supports the Red Cross of Serbia in the development and implementation of internal and external communication strategies and [policies](#) that provide a basis from which to carry out their humanitarian mandate and roles in conformity with Movement policies, international humanitarian law (IHL) and the domestic legislation.



Accountability and agility (cross-cutting)

Multi-year high level objectives of the National Society

- Focus on financial management and establish strong planning, monitoring, evaluation and reporting system
- Implement policies including the code of conduct, policy of prevention and protection against sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEA), child protection policy; and rulebooks on prevention of corruption and conflicts of interest, regulation of procurement procedures, and internal whistle-blowing procedure in the Red Cross of Serbia

- Continue digitalization of the processes of data collection, reporting and administrative and financial procedures

Longer-term support from the IFRC network

The IFRC supports the Red Cross of Serbia with financial resources for the purchase of IT equipment and the operation of the business and financial system. It also supports [digital transformation](#) of the National Society in the adaptation of the business-financial system and provides required programme licenses.

THE IFRC NETWORK

The IFRC

The IFRC supports the National Society through its Central and South-Eastern Europe Country Cluster Delegation located in Sarajevo and its regional office for Europe based in Budapest in the implementation of its migration-related projects. The IFRC is a key supporter in both financial and technical aspects in the event of crises and disasters affecting Serbia.

The IFRC launched a disaster response emergency fund (DREF) to respond to the floods that hit [Serbia in 2020](#), as well as for the floods for 2022 and [2023](#). The IFRC supported the national response plan for the crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic from 2020 to 2022. The IFRC supported the National Society in 2022 with the [capacity building fund \(CBF\)](#) for [digital transformation](#).


IFRC membership coordination

The IFRC membership coordination involves working with member National Societies to assess the humanitarian context, humanitarian situations and needs; agreeing on common priorities; jointly 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, links with development assistance,

and efforts to reinforce National Societies in their respective countries, including through their auxiliary role.

The cooperation with the [IFRC reference centre for psychosocial support](#) is based on sharing of knowledge and expertise. The centre provides inputs for training and other interventions by the Red Cross of Serbia in the [mental health and psychosocial support \(MHPSS\)](#) area, including support for training events, while the activities of the Red Cross of Serbia in this area are fed back to the centre to serve as experience sharing and case studies.

Participating National Society Support

National Society name	Funding Requirement	Climate	Disasters and crises	Health and wellbeing	Migration	Values, power and inclusion	Enabling local actors
Austrian Red Cross	192,000						
Swiss Red Cross	70,000						

Total Funding requirement

262,000

Movement coordination

The Red Cross of Serbia ensures regular exchanges with the IFRC, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and participating National Societies, for the alignment of support and action between Movement partners. In times of emergencies, closer coordination is organized. This is carried out in line with the Strengthening Movement Coordination and Cooperation (SMCC) principles, and the newly adopted [Seville Agreement 2.0](#).

The ICRC provides ongoing support in addressing [restoring family links \(RFL\)](#) needs of migrants, the [Safer Access framework](#), IHL promotion and implementation and MHPSS project. The ICRC and Red Cross of Serbia collaborate through SMCC mechanisms.

Coordination with other actors

The Red Cross of Serbia actively participates in various international and national networks, focusing on first aid education, disaster preparedness, and humanitarian response. It is involved in the European First Aid Education European Network (FAEEN), collaborates with the Global First Aid Reference Centre (GFARC), and is a member of the Global Advisory Panel on Voluntary Non-Remunerated Blood Donation (VNRBD) and the South-eastern Europe National Society Network Neighbours Helps First. The organization coordinates with UN agencies, the European Commission, and

several international and national entities, including UNICEF, UNFPA, and various academic institutions in Serbia. Locally, it cooperates with government institutions, NGOs, the private sector and civil society to enhance disaster preparedness, infrastructure and the development of a comprehensive migration and displacement strategy. The Red Cross of Serbia plays a crucial role in providing essential services and advocating for the rights and well-being of migrants and displaced persons, working under the Government's Working Group for Solving the Problems of Mixed Migration Flows.



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.

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](#)

This plan reflects the priorities of the Red Cross of Serbia, the IFRC and National Societies providing international support for 2024 and subsequent years. It is aligned with [IFRC Strategy 2030](#), representing the collective ambitions of the IFRC membership, and is the result of a joint planning process and will serve joint monitoring and reporting. It will be revised on an annual basis to adjust priorities and funding requirements to the needs in-country.

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