



SOUTH AFRICA

2026 IFRC network country plan



5 March 2026

In support of the South African Red Cross Society



51

National Society branches



93

National Society local units



263

National Society staff



10,700

National Society volunteers

People to be reached in 2026



38,000

Climate and environment



20,000

Disasters and crises



38,000

Health and wellbeing



800

Migration and displacement



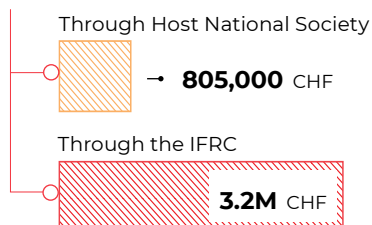
20,000

Values, power and inclusion

IFRC network Funding Requirements

2026

Total 4M CHF



IFRC Appeal codes

Emergency Appeal:

MDRS1003

African Regional Mpox Epidemic

Longer-term needs:

MAAZA003

Hazards



Landslides



Floods



Disease outbreak



Tropical storms



Civil unrest

IFRC network multi-year focus

Emergency response

- Disease outbreak

Longer term needs

- Disaster risk reduction
 - Health and care
 - Community resilience
- Protection, gender and inclusion

Capacity development

- Humanitarian diplomacy
- Digital transformation
- Financial sustainability
- Planning, monitoring, evaluation and reporting
 - Youth and volunteer development

Key country data links

INFORM Climate Change Risk Index **Medium**

Human Development Index rank **106**

World Bank Population figure **64M**

World Bank Population below poverty line **56%**



South African Red Cross Society volunteers conducting a health education session among students to address stigma and help prevent further spread of Mpox (Photo: South African Red Cross Society)

Detailed funding requirements

2026

	Host National Society	IFRC
Ongoing emergencies		NA <i>Funding requirement for African Regional Mpox Epidemic not available</i>
Longer-term needs		
Climate and environment	100,000	250,000
Disasters & crises	160,000	813,000
Health & wellbeing	400,000	1M
Migration & displacement	15,000	575,000
Values, power & inclusion	50,000	310,000
Enabling local actors	80,000	274,000
Total	805,000	3.2M

See back page for explanatory note on funding requirements

NATIONAL SOCIETY PROFILE

The **South African Red Cross Society** was admitted to the IFRC in 1919. It was established in 1921 by the Parliament of South Africa as a voluntary humanitarian relief and development organization and an auxiliary to the public authorities in the humanitarian field.

The South African Red Cross Society is a key partner of the Government of South Africa, in times of peace and crisis and seeks to complement the Government's efforts by executing its auxiliary role to address humanitarian needs and issues in South Africa. The National Society is known for the capacities of its first responders, who act in coordination with the Government's disaster management committee. As a result, the South African Red Cross Society has earned the trust of the communities it works with, enabling its continued access to and ability to reach vulnerable groups.

The South African Red Cross Society works with local authorities and other humanitarian partners in line with the

Fundamental Principles of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, paying special attention to the neutrality, impartiality, independence and sustainability of its interventions.

The South African Red Cross Society operates 51 branches across the nine provinces of South Africa, with a database of 10,700 volunteers and 263 staff members. The National Society Secretary General's office is supported by a senior management team comprising managers from different departments, including disaster management, health and care, branch development, finance and organizational development. The team supports its decentralized provincial and branch offices with the implementation of activities and community engagements.

In 2024, the South African Red Cross Society reached 7,529 people affected by thunderstorms and floods.

IFRC NETWORK ACTION

JOINT SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS

South Africa, situated at the southernmost point of the African continent, shares borders with Namibia, Botswana, Zimbabwe, Mozambique and Eswatini while encompassing the enclave country of Lesotho. Covering an area of approximately 1.22 million square kilometers, it stands among the most significant nations in Africa by landmass. With the Indian Ocean to its east and the Atlantic Ocean to its west, South Africa experiences a diverse climate, from arid landscapes to subtropical coastal zones. As of 2025, the country's population is estimated at around 60 million, marked by a predominantly young demographic with a median age of 28. The annual population growth rate is approximately 1.2 per cent, though this has slowed recently due to lower fertility rates and significant emigration. About 67 per cent of the population resides in urban areas, particularly within major metropolitan hubs such as Johannesburg, Cape Town and Durban.

Despite relative political stability, South Africa faces challenges, including governance issues, public unrest and a growing sense of voter dissatisfaction due to corruption and inadequate public services. Social grievances, primarily related to economic hardship, frequently spark protests and sometimes escalate into violence. Economically, South Africa holds the position of Africa's second-largest economy, with a mixed economic structure that includes advanced industries and emerging sectors. However, economic growth has stagnated recently, with a GDP growth rate of around 0.9 per cent. Unemployment remains high at about 32 per cent, with youth unemployment exceeding 50 per cent. Although the World Bank classifies South Africa as an upper-middle-income country, it is one of the most unequal societies globally, with a Gini coefficient of 0.63 (World Bank, 2023).

South Africa's vulnerability to climate change adds to its complex challenges. Increasingly severe climate events, such as floods, cyclones, prolonged droughts and uncontrollable fires, have resulted in widespread displacement, escalating the humanitarian crisis. Disasters continue to jeopardize human lives and exacerbate food insecurity. Parts of Eastern Cape have witnessed a surge in cases of malnutrition, particularly among rural communities and children. Tragically, malnutrition has emerged as a leading cause of death among young children.

South Africa currently faces a convergence of complex challenges spanning political, social, demographic and economic dimensions, reflecting a critical juncture in the nation's history. Politically, the country is grappling with heightened social unrest and protests. These incidents often involve tensions between local citizens and foreign nationals, occasionally escalating to hostile takeovers of settlements and mining towns. The root causes are multifaceted, with a prominent factor being the economic hardships faced by the citizens coupled with elevated rates of youth unemployment.

A notable development is the emergence of mobilization groups such as 'Operation Dudula', which have targeted undocumented foreign nationals across South Africa. This has exacerbated social instability, particularly in regions primarily situated in Gauteng townships and peri-urban settings, namely Alexandra, Diepsloot, Johannesburg and Soweto. These areas have witnessed incidents of social unrest directly linked to the activities of 'Operation Dudula'. Consequently, migrant communities have occasionally hesitated to seek refuge in community shelters, as observed during recent floods in KwaZulu Natal. The prevailing situation underscores the imperative for a comprehensive and harmonized approach to migration, protection and management policies.

ONGOING EMERGENCY RESPONSE

For real-time information on IFRC emergencies, visit IFRC GO page: [South Africa](#)

Emergency Appeal name	Africa Regional Mpox Epidemic
IFRC Emergency Appeal code	MDRS1003
People affected	300 million people
People to be assisted	30 million people
Duration	18 months (20 August 2024 to 31 March 2026)
Funding requirements	Total IFRC funding requirement through the Appeal: CHF 30 million Total Federation-wide funding requirements: CHF 40 million
Link to Emergency Appeal	Africa – Regional Mpox Epidemic
Link to Operational Strategy	Operational Strategy
Link to Operational Update	Operational Update No. 4

In 2024, Mpox cases and deaths surged significantly in Africa, with over 17,000 cases and 500 deaths reported across 12 countries, marking a sharp increase from 2023. The Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) remains the epicentre, contributing 92 per cent of cases, with transmission spreading across all its provinces and into neighbouring Burundi, Rwanda, Uganda and Kenya. Non-endemic countries such as South Africa have also reported cases, while endemic regions, including Nigeria and Côte d'Ivoire, continue to see expanding outbreaks. The emergence of Clades 1a, 1b and 2 in disparate areas highlights the heightened risk, prompting organizations such as the Africa CDC, WHO and the IFRC to declare the outbreak a public emergency. Red Cross Red Crescent Societies are working closely with governments to provide community-based surveillance, risk communication and community engagement and vaccination support to mitigate the spread and reduce mortality.

Short description of the emergency operational strategy

The regional Mpox emergency appeal aims to assist National Societies in preparing for and responding to the Mpox epidemic. The strategy includes scaling up health and water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) services, community engagement and accountability (CEA) and addressing socio-economic impacts. The operation will be guided by a risk-based approach and regional coordination, prioritizing preparedness, readiness and response. The South African Red Cross Society will receive support to develop country-specific response plan, enhance community-based advocacy and mitigate the spread of the virus, particularly in areas with imported cases or established transmission. The operation will also target vulnerable populations, including marginalized and immunocompromised

groups, with a focus on protection, gender and inclusion. The highlights of the assistance are:

Integrated assistance

Affected people and families are provided with a safety net scheme, including multipurpose cash to meet immediate needs and cover basic necessities while recovering from Mpox infections. Affected people who have lost their livelihoods due to Mpox are aided in reintegrating into the labour market through skills enhancement and diversification.

Health and care, including water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH)

Affected people are provided with community-based surveillance to detect and actively find suspected Mpox cases, feeding into existing surveillance systems. Clinical care pathways for screening, triage, isolation, testing and assessment are identified through national plans and guidelines, ensuring awareness among clinical facilities. Communities are engaged on Mpox transmission, symptoms and preventive actions. Health services ensure individuals with Mpox symptoms seek care, with support for isolation and referral. Vaccination efforts are supported through community engagement. WASH facilities are improved in health centres, with ongoing hygiene promotion to reduce transmission.

Cross-cutting approaches: the operational strategy integrates **community engagement and accountability (CEA)** and **protection, gender and inclusion (PGI)** as pivotal elements, in an approach that recognizes and values all community members as equal partners, with their diverse needs shaping the response. Activities includes the provision of dignity kits and establishment of two-way feedback mechanisms.

For the period [22 August 2024 to 21 August 2025](#), the following assistance was provided by the South African Red Cross Society:

In this period, South Africa faced overlapping crises including continued Mpox transmission, a resurgence of Hand, Foot and Mouth Disease in KwaZulu-Natal, recurring cholera and diarrhoeal outbreaks and rising childhood malnutrition, all exacerbated by climate-related water insecurity and major disruptions to HIV services following USAID's withdrawal and PEPFAR. The South African Red Cross Society strengthened community-level resilience by supporting national health authorities through demand creation for the Mpox vaccination campaign, extensive multilingual risk communication and door-to-door health promotion that reached more than 130,000 people. It provided psychosocial support, reinforced

immunization uptake and delivered nutrition and food safety education. The National Society expanded water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) services including installing JoJo tank-equipped handwashing stations benefiting over 12,000 people, distributing household hygiene kits and escalating community-reported water issues to municipalities while advocating for long-term infrastructure investment. It reached more than 280,000 people through localized messaging, radio, social media, community dialogues and real-time feedback systems using KoboTool. The South African Red Cross Society also mainstreamed Protection, Gender and Inclusion across all activities, delivering anti-stigma campaigns, gender-responsive health programming, inclusive information materials, accessible WASH infrastructure and child protection measures.

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES



Climate and environment

Climate change presents a palpable and growing reality, bringing forth substantial social, economic and environmental risks and challenges on a global scale. South Africa, like many other developing nations, finds itself particularly susceptible to the far-reaching impacts of [climate change](#).

South Africa is already exposed to a high degree of risk from [natural hazards and disasters](#), including droughts, floods and storm-related events such as high winds, coastal storm surges and hail. These extreme weather events are likely to be exacerbated by climate change. Extreme rainfall has already resulted in costly infrastructure damage, road closures and reduced access to electricity. It has also overwhelmed sewage and stormwater systems, causing flooding and pollution.

Temperature anomalies are already affecting South Africa's critical infrastructure such as roads and rail lines. Rainfall and temperature changes will continue to have a negative impact on agriculture and food security. Additionally, extreme weather events pose a potential threat to the [tourism sector](#), thereby impacting the livelihoods dependent on this industry. Notably, previous instances of flooding have already resulted in the contamination of water supplies. Reduction in rainfall and higher temperatures, including heatwaves, have led to significant water restrictions and an increased demand for water and energy for cooling systems across all sectors. Concurrently, extreme rainfall had led to soil erosion, land degradation and placed ecosystems and their associated services in jeopardy. Moreover, heightened sedimentation rates resulting from more intense rainfall events pose a threat

the storage capacity of dams, further exacerbating water resource challenges.

The [South Africa National Development Plan \(NDP\) 2030](#) recognizes that the preservation of ecosystems, particularly those essential for providing food and clean water, regulating climate and disease, supporting crop pollination and nutrient cycles and delivering cultural benefits such as recreational opportunities, is fundamental to the realization of South Africa's social and economic development objectives.

The Department of Forestry, Fisheries and Environment is responsible for the greening strategy in South Africa. The work takes place at a local government level, in partnership with local government institutions, non-governmental and community-based organizations. [Greening activities](#) are undertaken in line with chapter four of the National Forest Act of 1996 and South Africa's National Greening Strategy. In addition, the [National Arbor Month](#) campaign aims to sensitize South African communities to the need to conserve, protect and plant trees for environmental and humanitarian purposes.

Multi-year high level objectives of the National Society

The South African Red Cross Society is 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 South African Red Cross Society seeks to position environmental stewardship as a central element of its humanitarian mandate, recognising that ecological health underpins long-term community wellbeing. It aims to champion nature-based and ecosystem-based approaches that enhance the resilience of vulnerable populations to climate-related shocks. It also plans to embed sustainability principles into its climate adaptation and disaster risk reduction frameworks to address persistent environmental vulnerabilities.

The National Society will focus on strengthening community-driven environmental initiatives that support greener, healthier living conditions. It further aims to cultivate strategic partnerships with public and private sector actors to broaden the reach and impact of environmentally focused humanitarian action. By fostering local ownership and valuing indigenous knowledge systems alongside scientific approaches, it seeks to promote environmental responsibility as a foundation for social justice and future resilience.

Planned activities in 2026

- Promote community-centred ecosystem restoration through practical, locally driven initiatives
- Support sustainable waste management by encouraging recycling and regular community clean-ups
- Organize tree planting activities that improve environmental health and support soil stabilization



Disasters and crises

For real-time information on IFRC emergencies, visit IFRC GO page [South Africa](#).

[South Africa](#) is susceptible to a variety of natural and man-made hazards, including floods, landslides, tropical storms, storm surges, thunderstorms, civil unrest and urban violence. It is particularly prone to disasters and hazards that result in substantial damage to infrastructure, loss of human lives and impact on livestock, directly affecting the economy. The heightened intensity of these disasters is aggravated by rapid urbanization and the impacts of climate.

- Facilitate partnerships with government and private sector stakeholders to expand environmental action
- Apply nature-based solutions within disaster risk reduction and climate adaptation programming
- Encourage the use of indigenous knowledge in designing accessible, low-cost environmental interventions
- Strengthen community capacity to address pollution, urban flooding and related environmental risks

Longer-term support from the IFRC network

The IFRC will mobilize and coordinate diverse funding streams to ensure sustained financial resources for green response initiatives that include community clean-ups, reforestation efforts and other environmentally focused interventions. This support will be directed toward strengthening long-term environmental programming while enabling flexible, scalable action in communities facing escalating climate risks.

The IFRC will also facilitate knowledge exchange and the sharing of best practice on climate adaptation, disaster risk reduction and environmental stewardship. This will include creating opportunities for peer learning, technical exchanges and cross-country collaboration to strengthen collective capacity across the network. Through this effort, practical and contextually relevant approaches will be made more accessible to National Societies that are advancing environmentally responsible humanitarian action.

Additionally, the IFRC will support the development and expansion of early warning systems and early action protocols tailored to climate induced hazards affecting vulnerable communities. By reinforcing early action mechanisms, it will support the National Society to reduce the human and environmental impacts of increasingly frequent climate shocks.

On [7 January 2024](#), storm surges and flooding in the Ladysmith area of KwaZulu-Natal and the Free State province affected 1,226 households and caused 41 fatalities. Severe damage and displacements were reported, particularly in KwaZulu-Natal's uThukela, uMzinyathi and Amajuba districts. Between 15 and 17 April 2024, violent storms and heavy rains hit KwaZulu-Natal's Ugu District and Northwest Province's Moshana Village, affecting an additional 279 families (1,395 people). This coupled with El Niño's influence heightened vulnerabilities and necessitated continued intervention. Additionally, [in June 2024](#), severe weather events struck South Africa, leaving 46,565 people affected across Eastern Cape and KwaZulu-Natal

provinces. Heavy rainfall in the Eastern Cape breached dam walls and canals, causing flash floods that displaced 2,500 people and claimed seven lives, with 10 others missing. On 3 June, two tornadoes devastated KwaZulu-Natal, destroying over 7,000 houses in Tongaat and displacing more than 5,000 individuals.

South Africa also faces [heightened political tensions during elections](#). The country held its seventh general elections on 29 May 2024 to select a new National Assembly and provincial legislatures. These elections, anticipated to be the most contested since 1994, saw a surge in protests and unrest. From January, at least nine protests were recorded, some marked by violence and disruption. Surveys predicted the ruling party might lose its outright majority, potentially leading to a hung government, coalitions and challenges to its dominance in Gauteng and KwaZulu-Natal. Tensions escalated further following a Constitutional Court appeal regarding a former president's candidacy under the newly established uMkhonto weSizwe Party. The legal uncertainty and intense campaigning raised fears of further violence, recalling the unrest of July 2021, one of the worst since the end of apartheid.

South Africa has a well-established [disaster management framework](#), which promotes engagement in disaster risk reduction across the three levels of government: national, provincial and municipal. Institutions such as the Inter-Governmental Committee on Disaster Management, the National Disaster Management Advisory Forum and the National Disaster Management Centre are responsible for the overall coordination of disaster management across the country.

Multi-year high level objectives of the National Society

The South African Red Cross Society aims to strengthen its institutional capacity so that staff and volunteers are equipped with the technical competence required to advance transformative climate action. It seeks to cultivate internal systems that support innovation, adaptive learning and sustained engagement in climate related programming. It plans to deepen community resilience by fostering genuine local ownership of climate solutions and by ensuring that communities are empowered to lead sustainable environmental initiatives beyond project lifecycles. It will focus on promoting approaches that integrate indigenous knowledge and scientific insights to ensure that resilience is anchored in lived experience.

The National Society aims to integrate Climate Change Adaptation and Disaster Risk Reduction into coherent policy and practice frameworks to guide future programming. It also seeks to build inclusive partnerships across government, civil society, academia and the private sector to address environmental and climate risks more effectively. Furthermore, it plans to strengthen anticipatory systems by supporting improved early warning and early action mechanisms while

advancing advocacy for an equitable Just Energy Transition that prioritizes vulnerable populations.

Planned activities in 2026

- Equip staff and volunteers with technical skills to implement climate programmes
- Facilitate community-led planning processes that reinforce ownership of resilience initiatives
- Integrate indigenous knowledge into the design of climate and environmental interventions
- Develop internal tools that unify Climate Change Adaptation and Disaster Risk Reduction practices
- Engage strategic partners across sectors to enhance climate risk management
- Enhance community-level early warning capacities and trigger-based early action
- Promote accessible low carbon solutions that support equitable energy transitions

Longer-term support from the IFRC network

The IFRC will provide the National Society technical support in [disaster law](#) training as well as in designing programmes such as livelihood support, distribution of food and non-food items to those affected by drought, floods, conflicts and other disasters in South Africa. Additionally, the IFRC will work with the South African Red Cross Society in reducing the risk of disasters through implementation of the preparedness for early response ([PER](#)) approach. It will also provide support in conducting training and workshops on disaster preparedness including contingency planning as well as improving [early warning_early action](#) systems to save lives and property.

The IFRC will also provide technical and financial assistance through targeted funding and specialized advisory support to reinforce the South African Red Cross Society's capacities in climate adaptation and disaster risk reduction. This includes enhancing programme design, strengthening technical competencies and ensuring that the National Society is equipped to deliver effective and scalable climate-resilient interventions.

IFRC mechanisms such as the Disaster Response Emergency Fund ([IFRC-DREF](#)) and Emergency Appeals will be drawn on as needed for the National Society to respond to disasters and crises. In 2024, IFRC provided DREF allocations for a floods in South Africa.

- **South Africa Floods:** the [DREF](#) allocation of CHF 497,202 in May 2025 supported the South African Red Cross Society to assist 11,000 people impacted by flooding resulting extreme weather events including

river overflows, flash floods and destructive storms across multiple provinces including Eastern Cape, Free State, Kwazulu-natal, North-west and Northern Cape. The National Society supported the targeted people over a six-month period through interventions such as distribution of essential items including mattresses, blankets and kitchen sets, as well as provision of hot

meals and multi-purpose cash assistance. Support also included provision of psychological first aid to affected communities and distribution of hygiene kits comprising sanitary pads, bleach, toothbrush sets, bath soap, body lotions and washing powder. This was complemented with awareness sessions focused on health and hygiene.



South African Red Cross Society providing food support to communities affected by devastating fires in Durban (Photo: IFRC)



Health and wellbeing

Health disparities in South Africa are deeply rooted in the social determinants of health, influenced by the broader social and economic conditions to which individuals are exposed over the course of their lives. These determinants encompass the circumstances of one's birth, the environment they live in, the work they engage in and the conditions one faces as one ages. What has become evident is the presence of a social gradient across many of these determinants, whereby individuals with lower socioeconomic status experience more pronounced health disparities.

Recurring disasters exacerbate health vulnerabilities in South Africa. Many people are struggling to access healthcare due to the extensive infrastructural damage and the demands of daily survival. The trauma experienced by affected families coupled with the distress stemming from the concerns about the loss of

their assets, has resulted in a significant need for psychosocial support among these individuals.

In 2025, South Africa continued to face overlapping public health challenges marked by continued Mpox transmission, with 10 new cases confirmed in 2025, following 25 cases and 3 deaths in 2024. Notably, recent cases in Cape Town and Johannesburg occurred without travel history, indicating sustained local transmission. Surveillance remained concentrated in Gauteng, KwaZulu-Natal and Western Cape. In parallel, a resurgence of Hand, Foot and Mouth Disease (HFMD) struck KwaZulu-Natal in early 2025, spreading across eThekweni and Pietermaritzburg, affecting children and schools. The Department of Health highlighted growing concerns around childhood malnutrition, which is closely linked to diarrhoeal diseases.

Another notable challenge in South Africa is the insufficient access to proper [sanitation facilities](#). Despite improvements, a significant number of households still lack access to adequate sanitation, as revealed by the General Household Survey (GHS) of 2018. Inadequate sanitation facilities contribute to a range of [health issues](#), including the spread of waterborne diseases such as cholera and diarrhoeal outbreaks and gastrointestinal infections compound health risks, especially in informal settlements where climate shocks and weak water infrastructure persist. Ensuring access to clean and safe sanitation facilities is a critical step in promoting public health and mitigating health disparities. The quality of water and access to clean water are closely intertwined with sanitation concerns.

Multi-year high-level objectives of the National Society

The South African Red Cross Society aims to strengthen equitable access to immunization by prioritising zero dose and under immunized children in communities with persistently low coverage. It seeks to reduce preventable disease risks by improving uptake of routine vaccinations and aligning its efforts with national health priorities to address gaps in child health and protection.

The National Society plans to enhance community resilience by addressing malnutrition and its underlying drivers, particularly high rates of stunting and undernutrition among children. It will focus on promoting sustainable food security approaches that encourage balanced nutrition, responsible resource use and long term household wellbeing.

Additionally, the South African Red Cross Society aims to reduce the growing burden of non communicable diseases by strengthening prevention efforts and supporting early detection. It seeks to respond to the health challenges associated with lifestyle changes and urbanization by encouraging more active, healthier living across vulnerable groups.

The National Society will also focus on improving water, sanitation and hygiene conditions in rural and peri urban communities with limited or unreliable access. It plans to strengthen WASH infrastructure, expand hygiene education and mitigate health risks associated with waterborne diseases and climate change impacts.

Planned activities in 2026

- Expand immunization outreach to increase coverage among zero dose and under immunized children
- Introduce sustainable food security initiatives that reduce malnutrition and promote balanced nutrition
- Deliver health awareness campaigns and community screenings focused on non communicable disease prevention
- Improve WASH infrastructure and broaden hygiene education in underserved communities
- Strengthen public health messaging linking hygiene, nutrition and disease prevention
- Enhance community based approaches that reduce vulnerability to waterborne and gastrointestinal diseases
- Support equitable access to essential health and WASH services consistent with national health priorities

Longer-term support from the IFRC network

The IFRC will help the National Society reinforce community health as a central pillar of assistance by supporting the four components of the global health and care strategic framework. This includes strengthening global health security through investment in community based surveillance systems, developing the capacity of the community health workforce for preparedness and response and supporting reactive immunization activities where needed. The IFRC will further support the advancement of global health protection and universal health coverage by bolstering community health resilience and expanding opportunities for workforce development that enable sustainable, community driven care.

The IFRC will enhance global water, sanitation and hygiene services with a specific emphasis on preventing and controlling water borne diseases across the resilience nexus. This support will reinforce integrated approaches in communities where climate related and environmental risks compound public health vulnerabilities. It will also strengthen transformative partnerships by advancing the auxiliary role of National Societies, ensuring that community health remains integral to emergency response, public health in emergencies, disaster recovery and comprehensive resilience programming. Through these efforts, the IFRC will help ensure that community centred systems form the backbone of preparedness, response and long term wellbeing.



South Africa remains a prime destination for a diverse array of migrants, yet this influx brings migration-related challenges. These include a rise in irregular migration, with women and unaccompanied minors facing increased risks. Economic migrants from other African nations, particularly in Southern Africa, are drawn to South Africa for employment and better living conditions, with many working in mining, agriculture and domestic sectors. South Africa's traditionally liberal asylum policy has also made it a haven for thousands of refugees and asylum seekers, mainly from Zimbabwe, Nigeria, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Somalia, Ethiopia and Eritrea. Internal displacement also occurs, though to a lesser extent, driven by natural disasters, political violence and community conflict, with climate change emerging as a growing displacement factor. The country currently hosts around 4 million migrants, with a significant portion originating from Zimbabwe, Mozambique and Malawi. This migrant population is diverse in age and gender; while adult males are predominant in labor-intensive jobs, there is an increasing presence of women and children, especially in urban areas. Migration is primarily driven by economic instability, political unrest in neighboring countries and environmental changes, which intensify the pressure on essential services like healthcare, housing and education, particularly for migrant workers.

UNHCR data reports over 250,000 registered refugees and asylum seekers in South Africa, with substantial yearly inflows. These populations include vulnerable groups such as unaccompanied minors, women and persons with disabilities who face challenges in legal protection, housing, health services and social integration. Lengthy asylum processes exacerbate these vulnerabilities, with thousands displaced annually due to environmental hazards, especially during the rainy season. Primary Drivers of Displacement Natural disasters, including floods, droughts and community violence, are the main drivers of displacement, highlighting an urgent need for emergency shelter, water, sanitation and healthcare. However, resource gaps in South Africa's disaster preparedness and response capacities remain a significant concern. Humanitarian Needs The most critically affected groups include asylum seekers, refugees, particularly unaccompanied minors, the elderly and persons with disabilities as well as individuals displaced by climate-related events. They require legal aid, housing, healthcare and employment support. Migrant workers face additional challenges, particularly in securing labor protections and accessing essential services, while climate-displaced individuals are in immediate need of temporary shelter and medical assistance.

South Africa has implemented various policies to manage migration and displacement, aiming to regularize undocumented migrants and manage economic migration

flows. Nonetheless, enforcement and resource limitations continue to hinder progress. Organizations like the Department of Home Affairs, the South African Human Rights Commission (SAHRC), UNHCR, IOM and various NGOs work to support displaced individuals. However, limited resources often constrain their efforts.

Multi-year high-level objectives of the National Society

The South African Red Cross Society aims to support the government in responding to migration challenges by strengthening access to essential humanitarian, health and protection services for migrants and displaced persons. It seeks to promote their wellbeing by providing assistance that includes restoring family links, psychological and social support and health and care services that help individuals navigate the complex realities they face within South Africa's borders.

The South African Red Cross Society plans to ensure that migrants and displaced persons are actively engaged and that their needs are prioritized. It will focus on promoting protection, inclusion and dignity for people on the move, while supporting opportunities for resilience and safer integration. Through these efforts, the National Society seeks to improve access to assistance and protection and reinforce the meaningful participation of migrants in shaping the support they receive.

Planned activities in 2026

- Map migration services and establish coordination teams for assistance of these services for migrants
- Implement activities that foster social cohesion and interaction between migrants and host community members
- Effectively engage with migrants and displaced persons by giving due priority to their needs and concerns
- Strengthen referral systems that deal with migration
- Train staff and volunteers in RFL

Longer-term support from the IFRC network

The IFRC will support the National Society to strengthen the implementation of an integrated approach that responds effectively to the needs of migrants and displaced populations. This will include reinforcing systems, tools and practices that enable timely, safe and dignified assistance across protection, health, psychosocial support and essential services.

The IFRC will also assist the National Society in advocating for the rights of migrants and displaced persons by deepening collaboration with governments and other key stakeholders. Through this support, the National Society will be better positioned to promote respect for rights, expand safe access to services and ensure that the needs of people on the move are recognized and prioritized.

It will further enhance the National Society's capacity to address migration related needs by providing training, technical guidance and financial support in partnership with relevant donors. This will help strengthen staff and volunteer competencies, improve operational readiness and enable sustainable, principled and community centred assistance for migrants and displaced persons.



Values, power and inclusion

South Africa has a history of exclusion and discrimination on the grounds of race and gender, among others. As a result, the Government has developed one of the most inclusive constitutions globally, incorporating a bill of rights that expressly advocates for equal treatment for all irrespective of race, age, disability, socio-economic status and gender.

Other forms of legislation, such as the [Employment Equity Act of 1998](#), have facilitated access to formal employment for women. As a result, employers are legally required to work towards a more equitable workforce representation based on gender, race and disability. While great strides have been made towards equality for women, many challenges remain. There is a need for continued measurement, policy changes and programmatic interventions. Beyond monitoring the country's progress towards gender equality, a deeper understanding of gender gaps will advance the agenda of ensuring that no one is left behind.

[Poverty levels](#) have consistently been highest among female-headed households, black South African communities and children under the age of 15. These groups also tend to be at a higher risk of getting pushed into poverty. Members of female-headed households face up to a 10 per cent higher likelihood of falling into [poverty](#) and are two per cent less likely to uplift themselves from poverty compared with those of male-headed households. In South Africa, race strongly correlates with the risk of living in poverty, with black Africans at the [highest](#) risk. Large families, children and individuals residing in rural areas are especially susceptible to experiencing prolonged poverty.

Protection issues in South Africa are also exacerbated due to recurring disasters, leading to a breakdown in community structures, law and order and a lack of physical protection. This frequently culminates in instances of gender-based violence.

Multi-year high level objectives of the National Society

The National Society will aim to ensure that its programmes promote the dignity, access, participation and safety of everyone it supports, regardless of their race, sex, language,

nationality, disability and age. Its high-level objectives include to:

- Provide improved access to equitable and quality education to boys and girls affected by disasters
- Use the [Community Engagement and Accountability \(CEA\)](#) approach to engage communities in conflict resolutions and promote peaceful local level advocacy
- Use existing community structures to implement the response operation, ensuring the involvement of key stakeholders such as community leaders, while prioritizing the involvement of individuals with special needs
- Focus on improving the understanding, ownership and concrete application of humanitarian values and the [Fundamental Principles](#) among the youth in communities
- Continue to support the youth by funding projects for their ideas and innovations through its youth empowerment activities

Planned activities in 2026

- Support women youth enterprises to apply for funding opportunities with Government and private sector
- Support youth enterprises to form linkages based on identified market opportunities
- Enhance access to and support for equitable and high-quality education for both boys and girls affected by disasters
- Conduct needs assessments to ensure that out of school children are provided access to relevant educational materials to facilitate their return to school
- Facilitate forums to bring together duty bearers and discuss improved processes for [Protection, Gender and Inclusion \(PGI\)](#) in emergency response
- Sensitize communities on inclusiveness and protection

Longer-term support from the IFRC network

The IFRC will support the South African Red Cross Society in consistently adopting and implementing to [PGI](#) and [CEA minimum actions for emergencies](#), using participatory approaches and in drafting prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEA) and child safeguarding policies. It will support the National Society in developing referral systems to ensure secure and sensitive handling of sexual and gender-based

violence (SGBV) cases, taking into account and all gender identities and addressing the specific needs of individuals living with disabilities. The IFRC will also provide assistance in setting up community feedback systems capable of handling investigations of sensitive complaints. Additionally, it will build the capacity of the South African Red Cross Society to sort, analyze and report qualitative and quantitative data points collected through community feedback.

ENABLING LOCAL ACTORS

The South African Red Cross Society is committed to its institutional strengthening and is engaged in the [IFRC Preparedness for Effective Response \(PER\)](#) process. It is currently at the orientation phase. The 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 mechanism and ultimately take necessary action to improve it.



Key Institutional Indicators

The National Society has put in place the following:

- Strategy to strengthen its auxiliary role
- National Society development plan
- Youth engagement strategies
- Health, accident and death compensation for volunteers
- Protection against sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEA) policy
- PSEA Action Plan
- Digital transformation roadmap
- Data management system



Strategic and operational coordination

Multi-year high level objectives of the National Society

- Strengthen engagement with partners within and outside the network to work collectively on the key challenges facing communities
- Focus on resource mobilization

Longer-term support from the IFRC network

The IFRC will support the National Society in its efforts to build additional self-generating revenue streams with the aim of becoming more self-sufficient.



Multi-year high level objectives of the National Society

- Strengthen governance systems across all structures to ensure accountability and integrity
- Enhance youth engagement and expand volunteer participation
- Develop targeted membership approaches that improve membership growth and retention
- Increase presence in more communities and priority focus areas
- Improve internal controls to ensure smooth and effective organizational functioning
- Promote stronger community engagement and accountability that supports resilient communities
- Connect branches, provincial offices and national structures to strengthen overall operational coherence

Longer-term support from the IFRC network

The IFRC will provide continuous support to the National Society with transformational leadership approaches. It will encourage and support the review of [statutes](#) and promote [youth programming and engagement](#) within the National Society. It will also provide technical support for reviewing and developing National Society development plans and its strategic plan, as well as ongoing operations, while ensuring that the National Society's capacity is strengthened. Additionally, the IFRC will support the South African Red Cross Society with financial sustainability approaches such as its core cost policy.

The IFRC also support the National Society through various grants such as the [IFRC Capacity Building Fund](#) which was granted in 2024, supporting the South African Red Cross Society in systems development, youth engagement, volunteering as well as branch development, financial sustainability and integrity, transparency and accountability. Additionally, the National Society also received the [Empress Shoken Fund](#) in 2024, which provided assistance in youth, first aid and rescue, disaster preparedness, dissemination of humanitarian ideals, blood transfusion services and National Society development.



Multi-year high level objectives of the National Society

- Strengthen relations with authorities and decision makers in the country by establishing relationships at local, provincial and national levels
- Strengthen its public profile to influence both public behaviour and policy at domestic, regional and global levels
- Enhance humanitarian efforts in alignment with governmental key priorities
- Intensify collaboration and partnerships with key partners and stakeholders in upholding its auxiliary role

Longer-term support from the IFRC network

The IFRC will support and encourage engagement of the South African Red Cross Society with public authorities. It will also support the National Society's leadership in diplomatic engagements and connect it with strategic partners. Additionally, it will support the National Society in strengthening its auxiliary role by meeting key stakeholders at government level on a regular basis.



Accountability and agility (cross-cutting)

Multi-year high level objectives of the National Society

- Conduct regular audits to demonstrate transparency, ensure compliance and spotlight areas for improvement
- Ensure that human resource guidelines and practices align with the IFRC code of conduct and in-country guidance
- Refine and develop data collection tools to streamline data compilation, allowing for concurrent data input and improved accessibility

- Organize comprehensive training sessions for programme teams at branch and provincial levels to enhance their proficiency in utilizing planning, monitoring, evaluation and reporting (PMER) tools

Longer-term support from the IFRC network

The IFRC will encourage the South African Red Cross Society to promote understanding among staff and volunteers of anti-fraud and corruption measures and culture. It will support the National Society in innovating its monitoring, evaluation and reporting structure. It will also support the National Society in enhancing its information management capacity through digital transformation.

THE IFRC NETWORK

The IFRC

The IFRC supports the South African Red Cross Society through its country cluster delegation based in Pretoria, South Africa, which covers South Africa, Botswana, Lesotho, Namibia and the Kingdom of Eswatini. The IFRC supports the South African Red Cross Society with strategic and operational coordination, National Society development and humanitarian

diplomacy. It also supports accountability as a cross-cutting theme. In recent years the IFRC has supported the National Society through several Disaster Response Emergency Fund (DREF) and Emergency Appeal operations in relation to disease outbreaks, floods and thunderstorms.

IFRC membership coordination

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 South African Red Cross Society is part of the four IFRC Pan-African Initiatives focusing on Tree Planting and Care; Zero Hunger; Red Ready and National Society development. These initiatives are reflected under the relevant sections of this plan.

The South African Red Cross Society does not have in-country presence of any participating National Societies. However, it receives support from the **Australian Red Cross**, **Belgian Red Cross** and the **Netherlands Red Cross**.

Movement coordination

The South African Red Cross Society 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's Pretoria Regional Delegation carries out humanitarian activities in Angola, Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Namibia, South Africa, Eswatini, Zambia and Zimbabwe. Using

innovative tools, its humanitarian action aims to address the humanitarian consequences of armed violence and migration; to support authorities to trace missing persons, to reconnect separated families; to strengthen respect for and compliance with International Humanitarian Law (IHL) and international standards of policing; and to improve the capacity of National Red Cross Societies in the region to be first responders to natural and man-made disasters. Through humanitarian diplomacy, the ICRC in Southern Africa builds support for humanitarian action, norms and values amongst policy and decision-makers.

Coordination with other actors

In line with its auxiliary role, the South African Red Cross Society collaborates closely with the public authorities. During emergencies, the National Disaster Management Centre coordinates the interventions from all humanitarian agencies, with support from UN agencies, through the Command-and-Control Centre. During episodes of urban violence, the South African Red Cross Society also works closely with the Cooperative of Governance and Traditional Affairs. The South African Red Cross Society partners with the government to build its capacity in climate change adaptation, disaster management and health.

It also partners with UN agencies and other national and international organizations to deliver its programmes and

operations. UNICEF supports the National Society in disaster relief and capacity building, while the UNDP supports disaster relief and gender integration programming. Santam supports disaster relief and capacity building across disaster management, first aid and communications. Old Mutual supports disaster relief and capacity building in the areas of cash and voucher assistance, small, medium and micro-sized enterprises and life skills. Nedbank collaborates with the National Society to deliver disaster relief and capacity-building for the information management of cash and voucher assistance.



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 16 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.

About the plan

The plan reflects the priorities of the host National Society, the IFRC and National Societies providing international support, for 2026 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 for joint monitoring and reporting. It will be revised on an annual basis to adjust priorities and funding requirements to the needs in-country.

Explanatory note on funding requirements and definitions

- The total funding requirements show what the IFRC network seeks to raise for the given year through different channels: funding through the IFRC, through participating National Societies as bilateral support, and through the host National Society from non-IFRC network sources. All figures should include the administrative and operational costs of the different entities
- Host National Society funding requirements not coming from IFRC network sources can comprise a variety of sources, as demonstrated when reporting on income in the [IFRC network databank](#)
- Participating National Society funding requirements for bilateral support are those validated by respective headquarters, and often represent mainly secured funding
- IFRC funding requirements comprise both what is sourced from the IFRC core budget and what is sought through emergency and thematic funding. This includes participating National Societies' multilateral support through IFRC, and all other IFRC sources of funding
- Figures for the years beyond 2026 most often represent partial requirements that are known at time of publication. Many National Societies have annual internal approval processes for funding requirements, and lower figures do not mean a decrease in funding requirements in future years
- Missing data and breakdowns: data may not be available from all IFRC network members for funding requirements. This may lead to inconsistencies across different reporting tools as well as potential under-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) 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
- **Definitions:**
 - » **Local units:** ALL subdivisions of a National Society that coordinate and deliver services to people. These include ALL levels (provincial, state, city, district branches, sections or chapters, headquarters, and regional and intermediate offices, as well as community-based units)
 - » **Branches:** A Branch has its roles, responsibilities and relationship with the National Headquarters defined through the National Society's Statutes, including the level of autonomy given, especially in the area of its legal status, mobilising local resources and building local partnerships, and the decisions it makes. It has a local-level decision-making mechanism through its Branch members, board and volunteers, equally defined through the National Society's Statutes

Additional information

- [IFRC network country plans](#) • [All plans and reports](#)
- Data on National Societies on [IFRC network databank](#)
- Live data on active emergency operations on [IFRC GO platform](#)
- Live data on [IFRC-Disaster Response Emergency Fund Response and Anticipatory pillars](#)
- [Evaluations and research bank](#) • [Donor response reports](#)

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