



# PANAMA

## 2026-2028 IFRC network country plan



5 February 2026

### In support of the Red Cross Society of Panama



23

National Society branches



28

National Society local units



109

National Society staff



1,300

National Society volunteers

### People to be reached in 2026



5,000

Climate and environment



35,000

Disasters and crises



40,000

Health and wellbeing



15,000

Migration and displacement



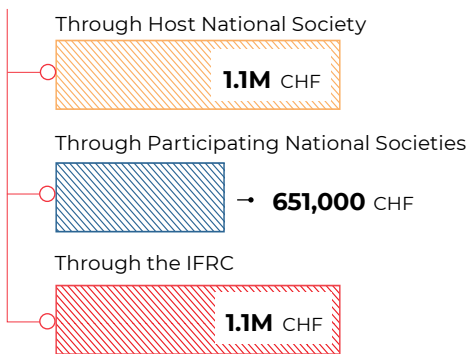
10,000

Values, power and inclusion

### IFRC network Funding Requirements

2026

Total 2.8M CHF



2027

2028

Total 2.4M CHF

2.6M CHF

Projected funding requirements

### Participating National Societies

American Red Cross\*

Canadian Red Cross

Italian Red Cross

The Netherlands Red Cross\*

Spanish Red Cross

Swiss Red Cross

### IFRC Appeal code

Longer-term needs:

**MAAPA002**

\*National Societies which have contributed only multilaterally through the IFRC in 2025.

## Hazards



Drought



Floods



Population movement



Hurricanes & cyclones



Economic hardship

## IFRC network multi-year focus

### Longer term needs

- Disaster risk management
- Climate change adaptation
- Violence prevention and protection
- Epidemic preparedness and response

### Capacity development

- Humanitarian diplomacy and advocacy
- Partnerships and resource mobilization
- Quality and upgraded management systems

## Key country data links

INFORM Severity rating

**Medium**

INFORM Climate Change Risk Index

**Medium**

Human Development Index rank

**59**

World Bank Population figure

**4.5M**

World Bank Population below poverty line

**22%**



Volunteers from the Red Cross Society of Panama are conducting assessments in Pacora, Panama Este, to identify families affected by past floods and provide them with essential cash support (Photo: Red Cross Society of Panama)

## Detailed funding requirements

	2026		2027		2028	
	Host National Society	IFRC	Host National Society	IFRC	Host National Society	IFRC
<b>Longer-term needs</b>						
Climate and environment	50,000	50,000	55,000	55,000	60,000	60,000
Disasters & crises	50,000	150,000	55,000	165,000	60,000	182,000
Health & wellbeing	300,000	40,000	330,000	44,000	363,000	48,000
Migration & displacement	600,000	350,000	660,000	385,000	726,000	424,000
Values, power & inclusion	35,000	90,000	38,000	99,000	42,000	109,000
<b>Enabling local actors</b>	15,000	450,000	16,000	495,000	18,000	544,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>1.1M</b>	<b>1.1M</b>	<b>1.2M</b>	<b>1.2M</b>	<b>1.3M</b>	<b>1.4M</b>

### Participating National Societies bilateral support

National Society	Year	Funding Requirement	Confirmed Funding	Climate and environment	Disasters and crises	Health and wellbeing	Migration and displacement	Values, power and inclusion	Enabling Functions
Canadian Red Cross Society	2026	250,000			-		250,000		
	2027								
	2028								
Italian Red Cross	2026	50,000						50,000	-
	2027								
	2028								
Spanish Red Cross	2026	351,000	351,000	33,000	-	285,000	33,000		-
Swiss Red Cross	2026				-		-		

See back page for explanatory note on funding requirements

# NATIONAL SOCIETY PROFILE

The **Red Cross Society of Panama** was established in 1917 and was admitted to the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) in 1925. Recognized by the government as an autonomous volunteer-based humanitarian organization, it acts as an auxiliary to public authorities, providing critical support in emergency response, disaster preparedness, health services and community development. The National Society plays a vital role in the protection and relief of communities, focusing on emergency and disaster relief, health services, education and training, community development and volunteering. It provides medical care, disease prevention campaigns, first aid services and support for migrant reception centres and host communities. Additionally, it engages in capacity-building efforts through first aid training, disaster preparedness and advocacy, while also running social and economic support projects for vulnerable populations. Volunteers play an essential role in the Red Cross Society of Panama's humanitarian efforts, undergoing recruitment, training and mobilization.

The Red Cross Society of Panama has made significant advancements in disaster preparedness and response, including the implementation of a national disaster risk plan approved at the cabinet level. Its health initiatives have had a tangible impact, particularly in Panama North, Colon, and Panama West, where disease prevention programmes have benefitted many communities. The National Society has also been instrumental in reconnecting separated families through the restoring family links (RFL) services. Strengthening its internal structure, the National Society has standardized local committee communication channels and social networks. Policy advancements have also been a priority, with the adoption of a National Migration Policy, a National Policy on Safer Access and Operational Risk Management, a National Policy for the Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA), a Community Engagement and Accountability (CEA)

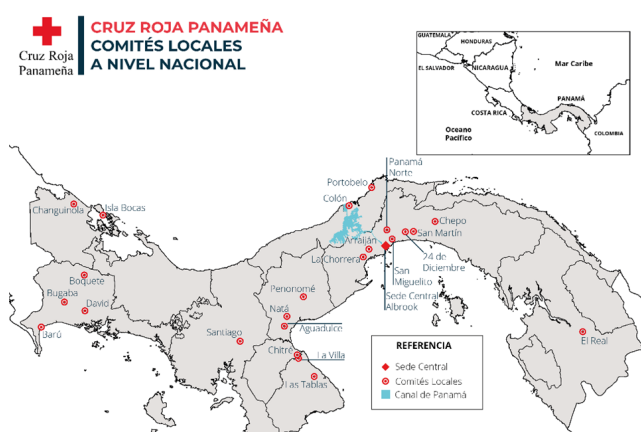
Policy, a Fraud Prevention Policy and an Environmental Policy and Health Strategy. In 2025, the National Society also finalized its Volunteering Policy and Resource Mobilization Policy.

The Red Cross Society of Panama is currently developing its Strategic Plan for 2026–2030, building upon the achievements of its Strategic Plan for 2021-2025. The previous plan focused on strengthening risk reduction, emergency response, and environmental conservation; enabling healthy, safe, and dignified lives for communities; promoting social inclusion and support for disadvantaged groups; and enhancing institutional values, accountability, and public trust. Through the new Strategic Plan, the National Society aims to further enhance its institutional capacity, improve emergency response capabilities, and increase its positive impact on vulnerable communities.

The National Society actively assesses its capabilities through structured evaluations such as the Organizational Capacity Assessment and Certification (OCAC), which identifies areas for improvement and the Preparedness for Effective Response (PER) assessment. The 2022 PER evaluation demonstrated significant progress, reducing non-existent preparedness components from 54 per cent to 7 per cent, leading to a structured work plan for improving migration response efforts.

The Red Cross Society of Panama faces ongoing challenges, including adapting to evolving humanitarian needs, particularly in migration and climate change adaptation and securing funding for sustainable community development. Despite these challenges, the National Society has strengthened its disaster response capacity, expanded community programmes and improved organizational efficiency through strategic planning and policy implementation.

In 2023, the Red Cross Society of Panama reached about 117,000 people through its migration services.



Map showing the Red Cross Society of Panama branches

The map does not imply the expression of any opinion on the part of the IFRC or the National Society concerning the legal status of a territory or its authorities

# IFRC NETWORK ACTION

## JOINT SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS

Panama is a country located on the Central American isthmus, with coasts on both the Pacific Ocean and the Caribbean Sea and with a strategic position due to the operation of the Panama Canal. Its geography combines densely populated urban areas, hard-to-reach rural regions and indigenous territories with their own governance systems. The tropical climate has a rainy season of approximately nine months of the year, which generates a recurrent risk of floods and landslides, while in different regions there is a lack of drinking water and scarcity in the dry season. These phenomena are aggravated by environmental pollution problems, limitations in the management of water resources and increasing pressures related to climate change.

The population exceeds 4 million inhabitants, with a tendency to aging and a high concentration in the metropolitan strip of Panama City. In contrast, indigenous regions and rural areas have lower densities and higher rates of poverty and exclusion. Migration, although relevant in regional dynamics, is not the only challenge: the country faces structural gaps in access to safe water and sanitation (WASH), as thousands of communities lack reliable supply and basic services on a daily basis. These shortcomings limit public health, community resilience and opportunities for sustainable development.

On the political level, Panama maintains democratic stability, although with tensions linked to social demands for greater transparency, governance and access to basic services. In the economic sphere, the country continues to depend on the Canal, trade and logistics services, with growth rates higher than the regional average. However, this macroeconomic performance has led to Panama being removed from the lists of priority countries for international cooperation, reducing its access to external funds. This contrasts with an internal reality where high levels of inequality persist and where entire communities lack adequate infrastructure, quality social services, and equitable opportunities.

The main social challenges include multidimensional poverty, food insecurity in rural communities, lack of access to quality health and education services, and limited connectivity in remote regions. Added to this are the risks associated with climate change, with an increase in the frequency and intensity of floods, droughts and pollution of water sources that affect both urban and rural areas. These factors, together with growing social inequalities and the pressure of variable migration flows, reinforce the need to strengthen community resilience, invest in sustainable WASH systems, ensure inclusive education services, and improve institutional capacity to deal with emergencies and disasters in a comprehensive manner.

## STRATEGIC PRIORITIES



### Climate and environment

Panama, strategically located on the Central American isthmus, is experiencing an increasingly variable and warmer climate. Recent decades have seen a consistent rise in temperatures, projected to increase by 1.5°C to 2.5°C by mid-century, alongside erratic rainfall that disrupts the traditional dry and rainy seasons. These changes have led to intensified extreme weather events, such as torrential downpours, storms, landslides, prolonged droughts (notably in the Dry Arc), and even forest fires. The country's resilience is being tested as water scarcity, food insecurity, and public health risks become more acute, particularly in vulnerable rural, indigenous, and coastal communities.

Panama's exposure to the El Niño–Southern Oscillation (ENSO) phenomenon has repeatedly impacted agriculture and livestock, with major droughts in recent decades reducing Panama Canal revenues and imposing operational restrictions. While the Caribbean slope faces frequent floods and landslides, the Pacific side suffers from prolonged droughts, threatening agricultural productivity and water access. Rising sea levels in regions like Guna Yala have forced the relocation of entire island communities, highlighting the ongoing challenges of internal climate displacement. Urban informal settlements, often in flood-prone areas, are also at heightened risk due to extreme rainfall and unplanned development.

Despite a robust regulatory framework including a National Land Use Plan, updated environmental monitoring systems, and participation in international climate agreements environmental degradation remains a concern. [Deforestation](#) continues at an estimated rate of over 8,000 hectares annually, alongside soil degradation, loss of biodiversity, and pollution affecting both terrestrial and marine ecosystems. While efforts such as satellite mapping and reforestation projects are underway, these issues persistently threaten Panama's natural resources and ecosystem services.

The impacts of climate change directly affect human security and livelihoods. Subsistence farming in drought-prone areas is increasingly unviable, water availability in the Canal Basin is under strain, and outbreaks of vector-borne diseases like dengue and malaria are rising with weather variability. Health, education, and infrastructure systems face mounting challenges as climate hazards intensify. Panama's situation underscores the urgent need for anticipatory and adaptive strategies, effective land and water management, and coordinated action across all sectors to enhance community resilience and ensure sustainable development.

### Multi-year high level objectives of the National Society

The Red Cross Society of Panama is part of the [IFRC Global Climate Resilience Platform](#), 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; (4) enabling climate-resilient livelihoods and ecosystem services.

The Red Cross Society of Panama has aligned itself with the universal call for climate resilience through its commitment to poverty reduction, inequality mitigation and sustainable development. Article 8, paragraph 11 of Law 422 of 8 February 2024 highlights its role in addressing humanitarian consequences linked to climate change. This includes environmental education, sustainable development initiatives and the promotion of resilience-building strategies in local communities. By aligning with the 17 SDGs, the National Society aims to implement both short- and long-term strategies to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and strengthen Panama's climate adaptability.

The Red Cross Society of Panama also aims to enhance community resilience by strengthening local capacities to anticipate, cope with and recover from climate-related

shocks. The National Society seeks to reinforce public health protection by integrating climate-sensitive disease risks into its institutional vision and promoting approaches that reduce vulnerability to vector-borne illnesses. It also plans to deepen institutional preparedness by embedding climate risk considerations into organisational planning and by improving internal mechanisms that support effective responses to extreme weather events.

Additionally, the Red Cross Society of Panama will focus on cultivating a culture of environmental responsibility by encouraging sustainable behaviours, promoting environmental education and expanding opportunities for volunteer engagement in climate adaptation efforts. The National Society further aims to advance sustainable resource management by supporting practices that protect natural ecosystems and contribute to long-term environmental stability.

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### Planned activities in 2026

- Design local plans that build community capacity to face droughts, floods and extreme weather
- Implement surveillance and response mechanisms to reduce climate-linked vector-borne disease risks
- Integrate climate risk into institutional plans through preparedness drills and coordination with authorities
- Deliver environmental education in schools and communities and promote sustainable practices
- Carry out reforestation initiatives and support climate-resilient water and agricultural management
- Engage in national adaptation processes by forming strategic alliances and securing resources for resilience projects

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### Longer-term support from the IFRC network

The IFRC will support the National Society with the technical implementation of the guide on climate-smart operations and programmes and workshops. It will provide technical support for the development of '[green' sectoral interventions](#) through pilot projects such as waste management in communities. The National Society will also be supported in developing digital content and campaigns to catalyse social conversations about addressing climate crises and their impact on livelihoods, communities and ecosystems.

The IFRC will promote increased financing for the implementation of pilot initiatives that strengthen climate resilience through nature-based solutions and climate smart livelihood models. It will provide strategic direction by supporting stronger alignment and greater synergy across global frameworks related to climate resilience, community health and anticipatory action, ensuring that national and local priorities are coherently connected with wider movements in

these areas. It will further foster strategic alliances at both the local and regional level and maintain sustained communication channels that enable regular sharing of progress, identification

of evolving needs and exploration of opportunities for collaboration among partners.



## Disasters and crises

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

Panama faces a complex risk landscape, primarily driven by hydrometeorological, seismic, and climatic hazards. The country is highly exposed to floods, storms, droughts and landslides, with these threats intensified by social vulnerabilities such as poverty, deforestation and unplanned urbanisation. Rural and indigenous communities are especially at risk due to limited resilient infrastructure, making them more susceptible to disasters when natural events occur.

The consequences of these crises are severe, including loss of life, damage to essential infrastructure, disruption of basic services, and economic setbacks. Flooding, compounded by inadequate sanitation, has led to an increase in vector-borne diseases, while ongoing droughts have undermined agricultural livelihoods, heightening reliance on social support in rural areas. Although nationwide food insecurity remains moderate, high-risk pockets persist, particularly in indigenous regions where repeated climate events create ongoing humanitarian needs.

Panama's institutional framework for disaster risk management is robust, with comprehensive legislation and strategic plans in place to guide prevention, mitigation and response efforts. Notable challenges include insufficient coverage of early warning systems, a lack of resilient infrastructure in key facilities such as hospitals and schools, and technical and logistical gaps, especially in remote areas. Improved inter-institutional coordination is necessary to ensure that all levels of government and local communities work together effectively.

Key priorities for strengthening disaster risk management in Panama include enhancing early warning systems, especially for rural and coastal populations; expanding community education and preparedness initiatives; upgrading critical infrastructure; fostering more effective coordination among government bodies, NGOs and local communities; and building technical and logistical capacity for rapid and efficient response. Addressing these areas will be crucial to reducing the country's vulnerability and building long-term resilience against future disasters.

### Multi-year high level objectives of the National Society

Under Law 422 (2024), the Red Cross Society of Panama collaborates with national, provincial and local authorities to provide emergency and disaster response, leveraging its human and material resources. It supports security forces and the National Civil Protection System in humanitarian crises and public emergencies.

The Red Cross Society of Panama aims to strengthen community resilience by expanding local capacities in first aid, early warning and emergency preparedness, ensuring that vulnerable groups are equipped to anticipate and withstand crises. The National Society seeks to reinforce the effectiveness of its humanitarian response by enhancing the readiness, reach and coordination of its multidisciplinary teams so that assistance is timely and comprehensive during major emergencies across the country. It also plans to support sustained recovery by shaping programmes that help disaster-affected communities rebuild livelihoods, restore well-being and adopt practices that reduce future risk.

The National Society further aims to strengthen institutional systems by advancing digital tools that improve risk monitoring, information flows and decision making, ensuring continuous learning and improvement. It also seeks to cultivate a committed and diverse volunteer base by promoting leadership opportunities, safeguarding volunteer well-being and expanding competencies in risk management.

### Planned activities in 2026

- Form community brigades and conduct annual drills and continuous training in first aid shelter management and early warning
- Activate National Intervention Teams covering health water and sanitation psychosocial support and protection for vulnerable groups during major emergencies
- Implement early recovery and resilience initiatives in at least fifty disaster affected communities including livelihood rehabilitation psychosocial support sustainable practices and vector control

- Develop and operationalise a digital system for risk monitoring emergency data management and community communication while systematising information for continuous improvement
- Expand volunteer participation through ongoing training well-being measures recognition mechanisms and leadership development with a focus on diversity

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### Longer-term support from the IFRC network

The IFRC will assist the National Society with developing training on community resilience for its staff and volunteers. This will include adapting, contextualizing and sharing information in local languages, and putting in place community feedback systems and participatory approaches to all operations. The National Society will also be supported in developing protocols for formulating contingency plans and the Emergency Operation Centres (EOCs).

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.

IFRC will also support the integration of national plans with strategic priorities in climate resilience, community health, anticipatory action, inclusion and protection, ensuring alignment with the IFRC 2030 Strategy. It will invest in strengthening technical capabilities, knowledge management and the use of technology so that national systems are better equipped to anticipate, prepare for and respond to humanitarian challenges.

It will promote the participation of National Societies in networks such as CREPD and the National Society Capacity Building initiative, supporting technical exchanges, alongside training in anticipatory action. Additionally, the IFRC will encourage the enhanced use of digital tools to communicate community impact and demonstrate the value of volunteering through strategic and clear presentation of achievements and needs.



## Health and wellbeing

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Panama has made significant advances in public health in recent decades, reflected in a life expectancy of 79.8 years, one of the highest in Latin America. This progress has been made possible by expanding health coverage, strengthening hospital infrastructure and vaccination programmes that maintain levels above the regional average.

The country's [epidemiological profile](#) shows a marked transition: while infectious diseases have decreased in urban areas, non-communicable diseases (NCDs) such as diabetes, hypertension, cancer and cardiovascular diseases account for more than 75 per cent of annual deaths. Added to this burden is a double nutritional challenge: although child malnutrition has decreased, pockets of high prevalence persist in indigenous populations, while overweight and obesity increase, reflecting changes in eating habits and lifestyles.

Recurrent epidemics continue to be a risk. In [2024](#), more than 32,077 confirmed cases of dengue and 52 deaths were reported, which evidenced vulnerabilities in epidemiological surveillance and vector control in urban and peri-urban areas. In addition, new threats such as the Oropouche virus are emerging. Climate change intensifies these health risks by favouring the proliferation of vectors and increasing exposure to floods and contamination of water sources, which has a direct impact on public health and access to safe water.

The vaccination system is one of the country's strengths, with high coverage for most preventable diseases, although gaps persist in unvaccinated children or those with incomplete schedules in indigenous communities and isolated rural areas. On the other hand, [mental health](#) continues to be a weak area with cases of anxiety, depression and suicide being rising, while specialized services are scarce, with low investment and strong social stigma.

### Multi-year high-level objectives of the National Society

The Red Cross Society of Panama aims to advance community health by deepening public participation in primary health care initiatives and by strengthening the capacities of volunteers and staff who support field interventions. The National Society seeks to reinforce the quality and timeliness of emergency health services by improving systems for epidemiological surveillance and by ensuring that logistical support and frontline health actions are responsive and well-coordinated.

The Red Cross Society of Panama seeks to promote emotional well-being by [reducing mental health](#) needs across communities and within its own teams through stronger support networks resilience-building initiatives and improved organisational care systems.

It also plans to enhance access to safe water sanitation and hygiene by expanding technical knowledge within its volunteer base and by ensuring that vulnerable communities benefit from consistent and reliable services during crises and in stable periods. The National Society will focus on providing dignified and inclusive health care for migrants and host communities by strengthening its humanitarian approach and by ensuring that services remain comprehensive and equitable.

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### Planned activities in 2026

- Conduct regular community outreach campaigns to strengthen local engagement
- Operate mobile teams to support emergency health actions including targeted vaccination support and rapid surveillance
- Install and rehabilitate water points handwashing stations and sanitation facilities in high risk or underserved areas
- Establish health service points along migration routes to provide consistent humanitarian care for migrants and host communities
- Deliver structured psychosocial activities in communities affected by crisis to reinforce coping mechanisms and mutual support
- Set up internal peer support mechanisms and facilitated sessions to improve volunteer and staff emotional well being
- Develop tailored educational materials that reinforce public understanding of hygiene safe water practices and preventive health

### Longer-term support from the IFRC network

The IFRC will support the Red Cross Society of Panama in strengthening community health systems by supporting the updating of its curriculum and facilitating the dissemination of community-based health and first aid (CBHFA) modules across its health network. It will contribute to the systematization and implementation of the health strategy of the National Armed Forces, ensuring that approaches are coherent with broader humanitarian and health priorities. The IFRC will also reinforce mental health and psychosocial support through assistance for emotional and psychological support during and after emergencies, the expansion of Community Emotional Resilience Programmes, the integration of these services into primary health care and the alignment of mental health training with newly updated curricula.

The IFRC will advance disease prevention and the promotion of healthy lifestyles through technical guidance and coordinated actions that strengthen community-level health promotion. It will enhance preparedness and response capacity for health emergencies by supporting pandemic and epidemic preparedness. It will also help reinforce water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) promotion by facilitating coordination with national authorities to ensure that activities remain aligned with national protocols and priority needs. In addition, IFRC will support the creation of new strategic alliances and partnerships and will help strengthen community feedback mechanisms that enable needs to be identified early and systematically addressed.



Red Cross Society of Panama facilitating workshops that promote community engagement and improve access to humanitarian services, especially within indigenous communities (Photo: Red Cross Society of Panama)



Panama continues to play a central role in regional migration dynamics as a transit country, although in the last two years there have been significant transformations in mobility flows and patterns. Traditionally, the country has received a high number of migrants who move from the south to the north of the continent, many of them crossing through irregular routes and in conditions of extreme vulnerability.

In 2024, the [National Migration Service \(SNM\)](#) reported the irregular entry of more than 302,000 people, mainly through the eastern border, mostly from Venezuela, Haiti, Ecuador and Colombia, including extracontinental nationals from Africa and Asia. This flow, however, began to vary drastically towards the end of that same year as a result of new migration policies in the United States, bilateral agreements and forced return mechanisms, which gave way to the emergence of an inverse phenomenon: the north-south flow.

The tightening of U.S. asylum and border control policies, coupled with the memorandum of understanding signed in July 2024 through which the United States finances repatriation flights for people with irregular immigration status, directly influenced the reduction of irregular entries to Panama. By May 2025, the Panamanian government confirmed the closure of the Temporary Migrant Reception Station (ETRM) in Lajas Blancas, after registering a reduction of more than [99 per cent](#) in irregular entries through the border with Colombia. At the same time, return routes to the south were identified, particularly in coastal communities of Colón, where migrants try to return to Colombia by sea in precarious boats and without constant humanitarian accompaniment, which poses new protection risks and gaps in assistance.

Panama also hosts a number of refugees and asylum seekers. According to [UNHCR data](#), at the end of 2024, nearly 10,800 refugees and asylum seekers resided in the country, mainly from Colombia, Cuba, El Salvador, Nicaragua and Venezuela. Of these, the [National Office for Refugee Assistance \(ONPAR\)](#) recognizes more than 2,601 people with formal refugee status, guaranteeing access to basic rights such as health, education and housing. However, regulatory constraints prevent applicants for refugee status from accessing work permits, exacerbating their socio-economic exclusion. This situation has been further compromised since March 2025, when UNHCR-funded programmes to cover basic needs were suspended, leaving these populations without essential economic support and increasing their exposure to social and protection risks.

The humanitarian needs of groups on the move remain multiple and complex. Migrants require access to health services, safe water, sanitation and hygiene, protection from violence and exploitation, and mechanisms for restoring

family links. Refugees and asylum seekers also face barriers to local integration, with difficulties in accessing employment, housing and psychosocial assistance. Women, children and adolescents, as well as people with disabilities and older adults, represent groups with higher levels of vulnerability.

### Multi-year high-level objectives of the National Society

The National Society is part of the IFRC's [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. The programme aims to support 4.7 million people annually across the world who are either on the move or living in host communities. It will do so 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 Society of Panama aims to strengthen its national approach to humanitarian assistance for migrants by consolidating a strategy that enhances institutional capacity, promotes coordinated action and ensures responses that are safe, dignified and sustainable. The National Society seeks to expand the quality and reach of essential services for migrants and vulnerable communities by advancing equitable access to primary health care, psychosocial support and mechanisms that reconnect separated families.

The National Society plans to reinforce the economic stability and protection of people in vulnerable situations by improving pathways that support legal regularization, safeguard rights and enable sustainable livelihoods, particularly for refugees and asylum seekers. It will focus on advancing gender-sensitive and community-centred protection by promoting environments where women feel safe and supported and by ensuring that prevention of violence is embedded across its humanitarian actions.

The Red Cross Society of Panama further seeks to cultivate peaceful and respectful coexistence within communities by promoting intercultural dialogue and educational initiatives that counter xenophobia and strengthen inclusion. It also aims to deepen engagement with local and national actors to build coordinated and resilient systems capable of addressing humanitarian needs in a comprehensive and sustainable manner.

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### Planned activities in 2026

- Maintain fixed and mobile [humanitarian service points](#) providing medical care protection support and essential services in key migration and return areas

- Deliver continuous primary health care psychosocial support and family-link restoration services at migrant reception stations and community settings
- Operate cash-based assistance initiatives to support newly arrived families facing economic vulnerability
- Provide tailored guidance to refugees and asylum seekers to facilitate regularisation and strengthen their participation in local economic life
- Implement community-based programmes that prevent gender-based violence and expand economic social and emotional empowerment opportunities for women
- Run education and community activities that promote peaceful coexistence reduce xenophobia and strengthen intercultural understanding
- Expand coordination with authorities and civil society partners to reinforce collaborative humanitarian responses and ensure community-driven support mechanisms

of sustainable psychosocial care programmes that respond to the needs of migrants and refugees who experience vulnerability, trauma or displacement, ensuring these services are integrated into wider community support structures.

The IFRC will support the Red Cross Society of Panama in the expansion of livelihood programmes that develop skills, promote empowerment and facilitate the local integration of people with a vocation to remain in the country. It will help advance social inclusion and regional cooperation initiatives that safeguard dignity, access, participation, child custody considerations and protection protocols across all migration-related interventions. The IFRC will also help strengthen coordination mechanisms and reinforce partnerships that enable effective humanitarian action and long-term resilience in contexts of human mobility.

The **Canadian Red Cross** will support the National Society with resources that reinforce humanitarian services, strengthen health interventions and enhance prevention and response to sexual and gender-based violence.

The **Spanish Red Cross** will provide technical and financial support to the Red Cross Society of Panama to strengthen services, humanitarian assistance, economic support, service adaptations and participation in coordination spaces analysing migratory trends.

The **Swiss Red Cross** will continue supporting strategic and operational strengthening in 2025–2026 with a focus on improving the National Society's response capacity in contexts of human mobility.

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### Longer-term support from the IFRC network

The IFRC will strengthen the operational capacity of the National Society to prepare for, coordinate and respond to humanitarian needs arising from the movement of migrants and refugees across Panama, ensuring that actions remain coherent, safe and aligned with humanitarian principles. It will reinforce assistance for both host communities and migrants, supporting the provision of essential services that maintain dignity and protection. It will also promote the establishment



## Values, power and inclusion

In Panama, the right to education is constitutionally guaranteed and regulated by the Organic Law of Education (2009). The national system has approximately 4,563 educational centres, of which 3,688 are official and 886 private. However, deep territorial and social inequalities persist. In urban areas, coverage is wider, while in rural areas, indigenous regions and communities with difficult access, a deficit of infrastructure, limitations in transport, connectivity and basic services such as water and electricity prevails. The preschool enrolment rate is barely 27 per cent and it is estimated that between 129,000 and 190,000 children and young people between the ages of 4 and 20 are out of the education system or at risk of dropping out. The main factors are poverty, child labour, teenage pregnancy, disability without adequate care, as well as lack of legal documentation in the case of the migrant population or asylum seekers.

The quality of learning represents another structural gap. According to [PISA 2022](#), only 16 per cent of students achieved minimum levels in mathematics, 42 per cent in reading and 38 per cent in science. The primary completion rate was 92.8 per cent in 2023, but it decreases at higher levels, especially among young people from indigenous peoples and students with disabilities. UNICEF estimates that 122,000 adolescents are at risk of dropping out in high school and high school. There are currently 33,200 students with special educational needs, of which 4,200 receive care through the Panamanian Institute of Special Habilitation (IPHE), which reflects coverage gaps. The proportion of teachers with adequate training is uneven, and the student/teacher ratio in regional areas is double that of urban areas. These constraints show the need to strengthen both the availability and cultural, linguistic and gender relevance of education.

In terms of protection and inclusion, Panama faces high rates of violence against children, adolescents and women. Gender-based violence (GBV) disproportionately affects young and indigenous women, with more than 15,536 reports of domestic violence recorded in 2024. Inclusion barriers also persist towards people with disabilities (11 per cent of the population), indigenous communities (12 per cent of the population), LGBTQI+ people, and migrants and refugees. UNHCR estimates that in 2024 there were 2,661 recognized refugees and more than 8,000 asylum seekers in Panama, many of them without access to work permits, increasing their vulnerability. The risks of human trafficking, sexual violence, educational exclusion and employment discrimination particularly affect women and young people in situations of mobility.

The legal framework includes the Equal Opportunities Law (2013), the Youth Law (2007), Law 16 on violence against women (2013) and the National Policy for the Comprehensive Protection of Children and Adolescents. However, the implementation of these standards is limited by budgetary constraints and lack of effective monitoring mechanisms. At the institutional level, there are intersectoral efforts led by the Ministry of Education, the National Women's Institute, and the National Office for the Attention of Refugees (ONPAR), but coordination gaps persist with community actors and humanitarian organizations.

In terms of community participation, there is a generalized distrust of public institutions, as a result of a historical perception of exclusion, welfare and weak follow-up to commitments. Women and youth are the groups that are least involved in decision-making processes, despite the fact that they represent key sectors in community resilience.

### Multi-year high level objectives of the National Society

The Red Cross Society of Panama seeks to focus on social inclusion, encompassing livelihoods, social programmes and economic inclusion. It aims to advance educational inclusion by promoting environments in which children and young people with disabilities and special educational needs can participate fully and equitably. It seeks to deepen community knowledge of risk management, first aid and resilience by strengthening approaches that reinforce learning, safety and preparedness across schools and community settings. It also plans to foster gender equality and intercultural inclusion with a particular focus on indigenous girls and adolescents, ensuring that education becomes a platform for empowerment and protection.

The National Society will focus on safeguarding educational continuity during emergencies by developing approaches that sustain access to learning when crises disrupt daily life. The National Society further seeks to empower young people as agents of change by expanding avenues for meaningful participation and leadership. In the sphere of protection, the Red Cross Society of Panama aims to embed a Protection

Gender and Inclusion (PGI) lens across all humanitarian action to ensure safe, dignified and accessible services for those most at risk. It seeks to reinforce its role as a national reference for inclusive humanitarian action by strengthening collaboration with the government and advancing the visibility and practical application of its protection policy.

The Red Cross Society of Panama also plans to strengthen Community Engagement and Accountability (CEA) by enhancing mechanisms that allow communities to express feedback, concerns and needs.

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### Planned activities in 2026

- Deliver tailored educational support for children and young people with disabilities and special educational needs through inclusive learning activities
- Provide training sessions in risk management first aid and community resilience for schools and community groups
- Facilitate community and school-based initiatives that promote gender equality and intercultural inclusion with emphasis on indigenous girls and adolescents
- Implement measures that help maintain access to education during emergencies and crisis conditions
- Support youth-led initiatives that enhance participation leadership and positive community engagement
- Support the reintegration of youth from high-violence contexts into employment and entrepreneurship programmes
- Apply Protection Gender and Inclusion standards across programmes to ensure safe and accessible humanitarian services for people at heightened risk
- Establish context-appropriate feedback and grievance mechanisms with active participation of women young people persons with disabilities and indigenous communities and disseminate preparedness information through community radio and local media

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### Longer-term support from the IFRC network

**The IFRC** will provide technical assistance to the National Society to provide specialized training adapted to the Panamanian context across educational inclusion, risk management, first aid, community resilience, Community Engagement and Accountability (CEA), School Safety, Planning, Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting in emergencies, evidence-based decision making and gender equality, thereby strengthening the capacities of staff and volunteers.

The IFRC ensure the incorporation of international standards by assisting the Red Cross Society of Panama in aligning projects with the Sustainable Development Goals, the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and global child protection policies. It will guide the development

of accessible feedback and grievance mechanisms designed to meet the needs of women, young people, persons with disabilities and indigenous communities, ensuring relevance to diverse linguistic and cultural contexts.

The IFRC will support the preparation of inclusive materials through the provision of guides and joint development of key messages adapted to Panamanian communities. It will

facilitate participation in regional learning and cooperation spaces through the ASC Network in the Americas. The IFRC will also enable access to financial and technical resources that allow the implementation of pilot community communication activities during emergencies. Additionally, it will promote technological innovation in CEA by supporting the integration of digital channels, mobile surveys and interactive platforms into community communication and accountability strategies.

## ENABLING LOCAL ACTORS

The Red Cross Society of Panama is committed to pursuing institutional strengthening and carried out the self-assessment part of the Organizational Capacity Assessment and Certification (OCAC) process in 2016 and 2020. The self-assessment is intended to capture the strengths and weaknesses of National Societies in relation to a wide range of organizational capacities.

The Red Cross Society of Panama is also committed to the Preparedness for Effective Response (PER) process and is at the action and accountability 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 ultimately take necessary action to improve it. The National Society has conducted local PER assessments at the branch level, which have contributed to strengthened preparedness and enhanced institutional learning.



### Key Institutional Indicators

The National Society has put in place the following:

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



## Strategic and operational coordination

### Multi-year high level objectives of the National Society

- Consolidate inter-institutional coordination with national and local authorities to strengthen the auxiliary role
- Strengthen cooperation with the International Movement (IFRC, ICRC and sister National Societies) through joint work plan
- Develop strategies for fundraising and resource mobilization
- Create a benefits programme for strategic allies and collaborators, encouraging their long-term participation and building loyalty among strategic partners

### Longer-term support from the IFRC network

The IFRC will assist the Red Cross Society of Panama by ensuring participation in inter-agency platforms, such as the humanitarian country team, thematic groups and working groups, especially in the context of migration. It will also support the National Society in the development of a resource mobilization strategy

The IFRC supports the Red Cross Society of Panama in coordination efforts by facilitating partnerships with international, regional and national organizations, providing technical assistance and ensuring the National Society remains engaged in key humanitarian response networks.



## National Society development

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### Multi-year high level objectives of the National Society

- Develop and implement a roadmap for improving management, governance and operational monitoring at the local level
- Improve the training and readiness of volunteers to respond efficiently to emergencies and disasters
- Prioritize youth volunteerism as a key driver for behavioural change and community action
- Develop and implement initiatives to attract both individual and corporate donors, including recurring donation programmes, event sponsorships and exclusive benefits for staff and volunteers
- Ensure financial sustainability by engaging a broad range of sponsors and funding sources
- Collaborate with institutions to provide training programmes for staff and at-risk communities, reinforcing social commitment and expanding impact in vulnerable areas

- Establish consistent pricing models for services provided by local committees to ensure financial sustainability
- Acquire necessary equipment and expand outreach through comprehensive health, education and protection programmes

### Longer-term support from the IFRC network

The IFRC will promote and facilitate the Organizational Capacity Assessment ([OCA](#)), Branch Organizational Capacity Assessment ([BOCA](#)) and Preparedness for Effective Response ([PER](#)) processes and support the revision of the [Statutes of the Red Cross Society of Panama](#). The IFRC will also utilize the services of the Inter-American Centre for the Development of Volunteers to strengthen volunteerism. The IFRC will support the National Society financially through various funding programmes such as the IFRC Capacity Building Fund ([CBF](#)). Additionally, the IFRC will support the National Society in the development of its Strategic Plan 2026-2030.



## Humanitarian diplomacy

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### Multi-year high level objectives of the National Society

- Promote humanitarian principles and values while enhancing volunteer capacity and transparency in operations
- Establish key messages, identify effective communication channels and implement tactics to reach diverse audiences through digital media, traditional media and public events
- Partner with community organizations, media and influential voices to amplify humanitarian campaigns and maximize impact
- Build credibility and support through clear, effective communication and awareness initiatives
- Engage in strategic alliances and advocacy efforts to advance humanitarian priorities and objectives

- Develop informative materials that showcase the National Society's role, achievements and ways for the public to contribute and support its mission
- Emphasize the National Society's position as an auxiliary to public authorities in humanitarian efforts

### Longer-term support from the IFRC network

The IFRC will aid the National Society with [humanitarian diplomacy](#), [fundamental principles](#) of the Movement and [auxiliary roles](#) of National Societies. The IFRC aims to develop content and key messages tailored to specific audiences communicated through the most effective channels.



## Accountability and agility (cross-cutting)

### Multi-year high level objectives of the National Society

- Strengthen safety measures, tailor equipment and protocols to staff needs and ensure well-being in all operations
- Increase the number of courses aligned with strategic goals, offering educational programmes for volunteers and staff to strengthen competencies and response effectiveness
- Maintain a commitment to impartial humanitarian action, integrating individuals regardless of race, ethnicity, religion, or political affiliation
- Train staff and volunteers in best practices for prevention and response to sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEA) while encouraging a safe and inclusive environment
- Implement systems and tools to enhance the National Society's emergency and humanitarian response capacity
- Update the volunteer database using the SIVOL System to optimize coordination and engagement
- Advance digital transformation by promoting the benefits of digitalization, ensuring buy-in from leadership, volunteers and staff to enhance operational efficiency

- Strengthen human resources for data analysis and information management while ensuring compliance with data protection policies
- Engage management and resource mobilization teams to actively drive digital transformation initiatives
- Work with universities and research bodies on digital projects and data management initiatives
- Expand the SIMS Network by training staff in information management to enhance digital capabilities
- Offer technical assistance to other National Societies in technology, information management and digital transformation through the Digital Transformation network

### Longer-term support from the IFRC network

The IFRC will support the Red Cross Society of Panama in enhancing digital transformation of the National Society and its components. This support will include improving digital and technological processes to ensure efficiency, transparency and responsiveness in humanitarian operations. Additionally, the IFRC will provide guidance in adhering to international best practices, including compliance with IFRC policies, national laws and global data security and privacy standards.



Teams of the Red Cross Society of Panama hosting a community mobile cinema in Llano Bonito, creating a recreational space for all ages while strengthening community education on water conservation and safe practices (Photo: Red Cross Society of Panama)

# THE IFRC NETWORK

## The IFRC

The **IFRC** supports the Red Cross Society of Panama through its Central America Country Cluster Delegation, based in Tegucigalpa, Honduras, and the IFRC Americas regional office, based in Panama. IFRC's support focuses on strategic and operational coordination, National Society development and humanitarian diplomacy. It also supports the strengthening of accountability as a cross-cutting theme.

In recent years the IFRC has supported the Red Cross Society of Panama through Disaster several Response Emergency Fund ([DREF-IFRC](#)) and Emergency Appeals [operations](#) in relation to various hazards such as [floods](#), [dengue epidemic](#) and [river pollution](#).

## IFRC membership coordination

IFRC membership coordination involves working with National Societies to assess the humanitarian context, agree on common priorities and jointly develop common strategies. This includes addressing issues such as obtaining greater humanitarian acceptance and access, mobilizing funding and other resources, clarifying consistent public messaging, and monitoring progress. It also entails ensuring that strategies and programmes in support of people in need incorporate clarity of humanitarian action while linking with development assistance and contribute to reinforcing National Societies in their respective countries, including through their auxiliary role.

The Red Cross Society of Panama, along with other National Societies in Central America, also receives support from the [IFRC Reference Centre](#) for Institutional Disaster Preparedness (CREPD) hosted by the **Salvadorean Red Cross** and supported by the IFRC. Communication and coordination channels across the region are available for the exchange of information on operational activities and different contextual analyses, with meetings held on a regular basis. The centre assists National Societies in strengthening their disaster preparedness capacities through the development of methodologies, tools and harmonization processes, complemented by the expertise and best practices of National Societies.

The following participating National Societies are supporting the Red Cross Society of Panama:

The **Canadian Red Cross** supports the National Society in the areas of to health and migration.

The **Italian Red Cross** supports the Red Cross Society of Panama's efforts to promote a culture of non-violence and peace through educational brigades.

The **Spanish Red Cross** has been collaborating with the Red Cross Society of Panama for more than 40 years. Currently, it is contributing to strengthening the National Society's management, coordination, and response capacity in the provision of humanitarian assistance to migrants in the Darién and Chiriquí region, in accordance with the National Migration Strategy. In this way, the Spanish Red Cross contributes to the strengthening of the Red Cross Society of Panama as a key local actor for the localization of aid with funding from the Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation (AECID). The **Spanish Red Cross** also supports the National Society by providing funding and support in various areas, including migration, [MHPSS](#) and other initiatives currently under development.

The **Swiss Red Cross** supports the National Society in the areas of migration and National Society development.

## Movement coordination

The Red Cross Society of Panama ensures regular exchanges with the IFRC, the International Committee of the Red Cross 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** in Panama works to ensure that people with the highest risk and vulnerability factors are protected and assisted and that their fundamental rights and dignity are respected. The ICRC has been present in Panama since 1989. In 2010, a headquarters agreement was signed between the Government of Panama and the ICRC, establishing a permanent presence and strengthening its exclusively humanitarian activities in the country.

## Coordination with other actors

The Red Cross Society of Panama actively collaborates with national authorities, humanitarian organizations and international agencies to ensure a coordinated and effective response to emergencies, disasters and migration-related challenges.

At the national level, the Red Cross Society of Panama works closely with the Panamanian government through institutions such as the Ministry of Health, Ministry of Security, Ministry of Social Development and the National Civil Protection System (SINAPROC). These collaborations are formalized through agreements, conventions and memorandums of understanding, allowing joint efforts in emergency response, health promotion, social welfare and disaster prevention. The Red Cross Society of Panama also takes part in the National Operations Centre during emergencies, ensuring alignment with public policies and government response plans.

In response to the migration crisis in the Darién region, the Red Cross Society of Panama leads coordination efforts by participating in sector-specific working groups on shelter, WASH, protection and health. Key humanitarian organizations involved include HIAS, PADF, UNICEF, IOM, RET and Global Brigades. While state authorities have yet to join these coordination mechanisms, their inclusion is anticipated soon. Additionally, the Red Cross Society of Panama collaborates with the UNFPA and IOM to provide safe spaces for women at temporary migrant reception centres.

The Red Cross Society of Panama also engages in regional and international coordination efforts. It is a member of the Regional Interagency Coordination Platform (R4V) and participates in the human mobility, protection and WASH groups. The Red Cross Society of Panama partners with organizations such as Médecins Sans Frontières, the Norwegian Refugee Council, Doctors of the World and Save the Children. Weekly inter-agency meetings in Darién and Chiriquí further strengthen collaboration with the UNHCR, IOM, UNICEF and other humanitarian actors to address the growing needs of migrants, refugees and displaced persons.

Recognizing the transnational nature of migration, the Red Cross Society of Panama regularly coordinates with various state entities, including SENAFRONT, the National Migration Service and the National Secretariat for Children, Adolescents and Family Affairs. SENAFRONT plays a crucial role in leading a significant portion of the state's humanitarian response. The Red Cross Society of Panama also maintains strong partnerships with research institutions including the Gorgas Institute and regional bodies such as CEPREDENAC to strengthen disaster risk management and public health interventions.

Through these strategic collaborations, the Red Cross Society of Panama continues to strengthen its capacity to provide life-saving assistance and uphold humanitarian principles across Panama.



**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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