



BHUTAN

2026-2028 IFRC network country plan



20 February 2026

In support of the Bhutan Red Cross Society



22

National Society branches



22

National Society local units



18

National Society staff



8,022

National Society volunteers

People to be reached in 2026



40,000

Climate and environment



40,000

Disasters and crises



50,000

Health and wellbeing



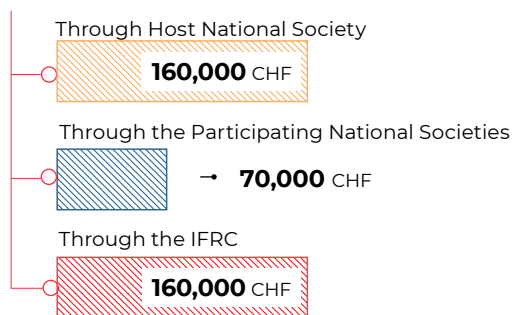
20,000

Values, power and inclusion

IFRC network Funding Requirements

2026

Total 390,000 CHF



2027

Total 390,000 CHF

2028

390,000 CHF

Projected funding requirements

Participating National Societies

Finnish Red Cross

Singapore Red Cross Society

Swiss Red Cross

IFRC Appeal codes

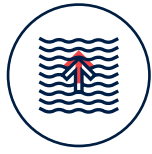
Longer-term needs:

MAABT001

Hazards



Earthquake



Glacial Lake
Outburst Flood



Floods



Forest Fires



Landslides



Disease
Outbreaks

IFRC network multi-year focus

Longer term needs

- Disaster Risk Management
- Climate change adaptation
 - Health and WASH
- National Society Development

Capacity development

- Digital transformation
- Partnerships and resource mobilization
- Quality and upgraded management systems
 - Volunteering and branch development

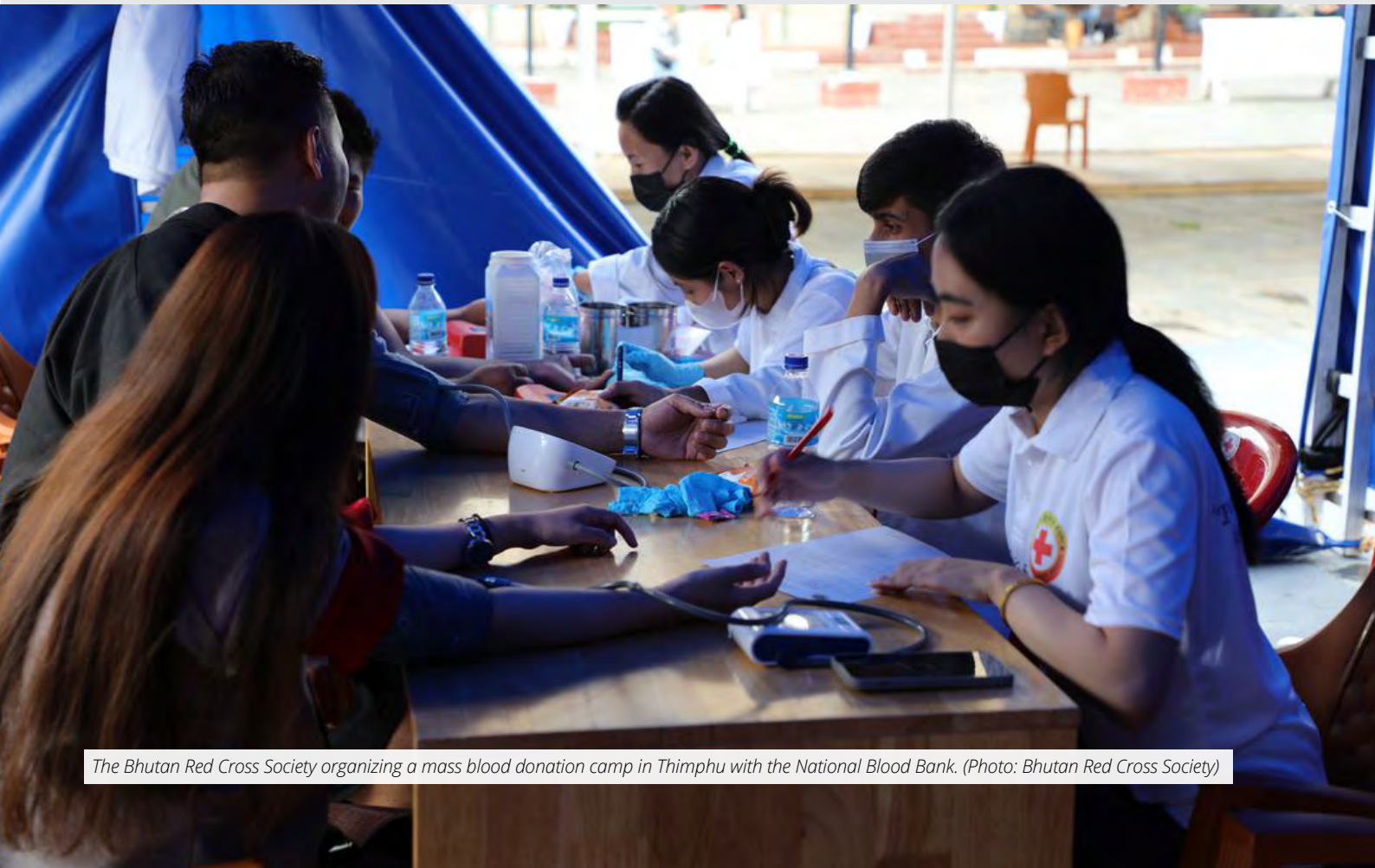
Key country data links

INFORM Climate Change Risk Index **Low**

Human Development Index rank **125**

World Bank Population figure **792,000**

World Bank Population below poverty line **12%**



The Bhutan Red Cross Society organizing a mass blood donation camp in Thimphu with the National Blood Bank. (Photo: Bhutan Red Cross Society)

Detailed funding requirements

	2026		2027		2028	
	Host National Society	IFRC	Host National Society	IFRC	Host National Society	IFRC
Longer-term needs						
Climate and environment	20,000	40,000	20,000	40,000	20,000	40,000
Disasters & crises	40,000	40,000	40,000	40,000	40,000	40,000
Health & wellbeing	40,000	20,000	40,000	20,000	40,000	20,000
Values, power & inclusion	30,000	30,000	30,000	30,000	30,000	30,000
Enabling local actors	30,000	30,000	30,000	30,000	30,000	30,000
Total	160,000	160,000	160,000	160,000	160,000	160,000

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
Finnish Red Cross	2026	70,000	-	-	-	-			70,000
	2027	70,000	-						70,000
	2028	70,000	-						70,000
Singapore Red Cross Society	2026	-	-	-		-			-
Swiss Red Cross	2026	-	-	-	-	-			-

NATIONAL SOCIETY PROFILE

The **Bhutan Red Cross Society** was formally established on 8 May 2017 following the enactment of the Bhutan Red Cross Society Act 2016 by the National Assembly in November 2016, which mandated it as an auxiliary to the public authorities. Under the leadership and guidance of Her Majesty The Gyaltsuen, President of the Bhutan Red Cross Society, the National Society received recognition from the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and was admitted as a member of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) at the General Assembly in December 2019 as the 192nd National Society.

The Bhutan Red Cross Society is mandated to alleviate human suffering and serve the most vulnerable. It supports Bhutanese communities at risk of disasters—including landslides, glacial lake outbursts, pandemics, and other emergencies—as well as those facing social and economic vulnerabilities such as limited access to preventive health information, essential health services, or timely first aid support.

The Bhutan Red Cross Society achieved a historic milestone through the successful nationwide response to COVID-19, its first major national emergency operation. The response was widely commended by the public and authorities, and in recognition of its outstanding service, the National Society was awarded the National Order of Merit (Gold) by His Majesty The King on 17 December 2021, reaffirming its vital auxiliary role. Building on this foundation, the Bhutan Red Cross Society has undertaken major initiatives to strengthen institutional capacity, enhance community outreach, and expand volunteer engagement. The establishment of youth volunteer networks and youth-focused policies positioned young people as key drivers of humanitarian action. The successful hosting of the 2nd General Assembly in 2024 further reinforced governance, accountability, and institutional coherence.

The volunteer network was significantly expanded and strengthened through capacity-building programmes in basic first aid, disaster management, and Movement induction across 21 branches. The Bhutan Red Cross Society continues to serve as a key national actor in blood donation services, supporting health facilities across the country.

Institutional development was prioritized through investments in digital transformation, including the introduction of an Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) system and a Volunteer Management System. Human resource capacity improved through staff expansion, professional development opportunities, and provision of essential tools and equipment at headquarters. The development of key organizational policies and standards further enhanced accountability, transparency, and compliance with international humanitarian principles.

Volunteer membership increased from 6,893 to 8,031, reflecting strong public trust and growing community engagement. Partnerships were also expanded at both national and international levels through collaboration with civil society organizations, local authorities, and Movement partners.

The National Society Strategic Plan 2022-2030 identifies priority objectives in its main areas of work as follows:

- Increased community resilience
- Improved community health
- Strengthened social inclusion

In 2024, the Bhutan Red Cross Society reached approximately 20,000 through its long-term services and development programmes.

IFRC NETWORK ACTION

JOINT SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS

The Kingdom of Bhutan (Bhutan) is a landlocked country with an area of 38,394 km² located in South Asia and is bordered by China and India. The long Southern border and some parts of Western and Eastern parts border with India. The Southern part of the country is the flatlands. The Northern and some parts of the Western and Eastern parts border

with the autonomous region of Tibet, China, are Himalayan regions characterized by the world's highest mountain ranges. These regions are difficult to access, scarcely populated and environmentally highly fragile. Two-thirds of the country's surface is covered by forest. However, regions of Bhutan vary greatly, from flatlands to mountain peaks. This makes up for great climatic differences within the country varying from subtropical to moderate and tropical climates. The capital Thimphu is in the Western district of the same name and accounts for approximately 15 per cent of the country's population. Internal migration from rural areas to the few

centres of Bhutan constitutes a noted trend for the past decade and causes significant challenges for Bhutan's development in the areas of food sustainability, education employment as well as overall poverty reduction and balanced socio- economic growth amongst the districts.

Under the leadership of His Majesty The Fourth King of Bhutan King Jigme Singye Wangchuck, the country set course on its strife for Gross National Happiness, a concept and philosophy that incorporates indicators of individual happiness and communal well-being into the overall measurement of national growth and development. Opening the country to foreign influence and allowing for international trade - especially hydropower to neighbouring countries - and tourism, Bhutan has advanced economically. Average annual growth of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) has been 7.5 per cent since the early 1980s, making Bhutan one of the fastest growing economies in the South Asia Region. GDP growth in 2019 was 5.46 per cent. The pandemic year 2020 reversed positive growth trends to a -6.77 per cent. Post pandemic, the GDP has seen a positive growth to 4.9 per cent in 2023 and the economy is projected to grow to 5.7 in the 2024-25 financial year.

Bhutan has strong economic and strategic relationships with India, particularly as the major trading partner, as a source of foreign aid and as a financier and buyer of hydropower.

Approximately 80 per cent of Bhutan's imports are from India, and the Bhutanese Ngultrum is pegged to the Indian Rupee. Inflation between the countries is closely linked. This economic growth, however, does not necessarily mean that all strata of society have benefitted equally from growth. Discrepancies between rural and urban areas as well as the still very moderate living conditions for ordinary Bhutanese citizens require careful attention and support in order to stabilize the process of growth and the strive for happiness.

Bhutan is vulnerable to natural disasters and prone to climate change-related risks. The country lies on the eastern section of the Himalayan belt; one of the most geologically active zones in the world. It is considered to be of high seismic risk and susceptible to all magnitudes of earthquakes, including large and great-scale events. Moreover, the secondary hazards occurring in small scales so far are aftershocks, landslides, landslide dams, fires and glacial lake floods. The population in the South face frequent flooding whereas the North is prone to landslides and glacial lake outburst. Road traffic accidents are reported frequently with serious injuries and loss of lives through the country. In October 2025, heavy rainfall for two days over the country caused severe rainfall, flooding, and landslides across the region impacting infrastructure, livelihood, livestock, hydro power and transportation.

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES



Climate and environment

Bhutan is small least developed and landlocked country located in the fragile eastern Himalayan ecosystem; climate change is not just an environmental problem but also a serious challenge to sustainable development and the livelihood of the people. Bhutan is becoming increasingly susceptible to climate related risk and extreme events such as glacial lake outbursts, windstorms and erratic rainfall patterns, causing landslides, flash flood, outbreaks of pest and diseases and changing water availability. The challenge is further compounded by the fact that the country's economic development is highly dependent on climate sensitive sectors such as agriculture, hydro power and transport.

Record temperatures have been reported almost every year since 2014, breaking previous records. The year 2024 was the warmest year ever recorded. The warming is unprecedented and inching closer to the global target for limiting rise in global temperature below 1.5°C. Climate change is believed to impact every aspect of existence and Bhutan is highly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. There is a trend of increasing

temperature in Bhutan, especially since the 1990s. Climate extreme events such as heavy rainfall and associated floods and landslides are on the rise. Climate change is projected to increase both the temperature and the frequency of high intensity rainfall.

The climate projection [report](#) of the National Centre for Hydrology and Meteorology Bhutan projects increase in both temperature and rainfall across different scenarios and time scales. The results are based on downscaling of selected Global Climate Models to [1km resolution](#) for Bhutan. The results indicate an increase in the maximum and minimum temperatures with more increase in the northern and central places. Likely rise in temperature ranges from 1.5°C to 5°C in different scenarios and timescales. Intensification of the water cycle and increase in rainfall is expected across many countries. An increase in rainfall could be in the form of short duration of heavy rainfall, causing floods. Rainfall in Bhutan is projected to increase for the north, western, and southwestern regions of the country while a few places in the eastern and

southeast regions may also experience decrease. Adaptation is critical for Bhutan to reduce the loss and to build resilience to climate change.

Multi-year high level objectives of the National Society

The Bhutan Red Cross Society's multi-year high level objectives consist of elements such as enhancing the National Disaster Preparedness and Response capacity for climate-induced hazards and community early warning systems and strengthening the community health resilience to climate-related risks. The National Society will work to foster climate action awareness and advocacy among institutions and communities, strengthening institutional capacity and volunteer engagement for climate action and initiate and implement the [IFRC Green Response](#) framework.

Planned activities in 2026

- Train volunteers in disaster response and climate adaptation in vulnerable communities
- Train and empower youth on [Y-adapt curriculum](#)
- Conduct a Training of Trainers (ToT) for Master Trainers on the surveillance of climate-sensitive diseases
- Launch and conduct awareness outreach campaign in flood-prone southern districts

- Pilot a Youth Climate Champion programme in 10 College recruiting and training youths to lead community awareness activities

Longer-term support from the IFRC network

The IFRC will provide technical expertise and support to the Bhutan Red Cross Society in designing and implementing effective programmes. The Red Cross Red Crescent Climate Centre will share its knowledge, while facilitating valuable connections with other National Societies that possess strong expertise in relevant fields. To further empower young people, the IFRC will introduce the global 'Youth as Agents of Behavioural Change' framework and resources, enabling the 'Youth Climate Champion' pilot initiative in Bhutan to expand into a national movement and link Bhutanese youth with their global peers. Drawing on its experience and reputation, the IFRC will guide the Bhutan Red Cross Society in securing access to significant international climate funds such as the Green Climate Fund and the Adaptation Fund, which can be challenging to navigate alone. Additionally, IFRC will offer the National Society staff and key volunteers the opportunity to attend specialist training and participate in international knowledge-exchange programmes at Red Cross and Red Crescent centres of excellence worldwide.



The National Society's Y-adapt training programme is aimed to fostering young leaders for spearheading climate adaption efforts in their communities. (Photo: Bhutan Red Cross Society)



Disasters and crises

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

The Kingdom of Bhutan (Bhutan) is a landlocked country with an area of 38,394 km² located in South Asia and is bordered by China and India. It is a mountainous country in the Eastern Himalayan ecosystem with summits ranging from 160 meters (m) to over 7,800m above sea level, abundant water resources, and healthy primeval forest. The northern part of the country is characterized by snowcapped peaks of elevations above 7,300m with abundant glaciers and alpine pastures. The country is bordered by mountains in the Tibet Autonomous Region, the Lesser Himalayas (Inner Himalayas), and Duars Plain along its southern border. Rivers flow southward and most join the Brahmaputra. The principal rivers flowing from west to east are the Toorsa, Wang, Sankosh, and Manas. Glacier area represented approximately 1.6 per cent of the land cover of Bhutan in 2018. About 72.3 per cent of the country is covered by forests and 13.8 per cent of land is agricultural. As the youngest and highest mountain chain on earth, the Himalaya ecosystem is ecologically fragile and considered a biodiversity hotspot. Climate varies dramatically due to the country's topography and geographical location at the edge of the tropical circulation in the north and Asian monsoon circulation in the south

Bhutan is exposed to floods, landslides, cloud bursts, windstorms, cyclones, river erosion, earthquakes, glacial lake outburst flood (GLOF), wildfire, and droughts. Between 1992 and 2021, around 87,900 people were affected and approximately 320 died due to natural disasters. Projected increases in heavy precipitation anticipate the risk of flooding and impact runoff, erosion, and river discharge rates. Most of the country's infrastructure is located along drainage basins that are highly vulnerable to flooding caused by heavy monsoon rains and glacial melts. The urban areas in the south are vulnerable to extreme heat. Risks of local dry spells are expected to increase for large parts of the country, while extreme rainfall events would heighten flood and landslide risks. The risk of potential disasters induced by GLOF is pronounced, as the country is home to 700 glaciers and 567 glacial lakes, of which 17 are expected to pose medium to high risks.

Bhutan is exposed to an earthquake with a magnitude of more than 8 on the Richter scale. In 2009 and 2011, two high-magnitude earthquakes caused damage and loss of US\$52.6 million²⁰ (4.3 per cent of GDP) and US\$24.5 million²¹ (1.4 per cent of GDP), respectively. A study estimates 9,000 fatalities with 10,000 serious injuries and 40,000 people displaced throughout the country in the worst-case seismic scenario. More than 7,000 hectares of forest were burnt every year during 1994–2020. Both flame length and rate of fire spread will increase as climate change intensifies.

Based on the [2025 INFORM Risk Index](#), Bhutan is classified as low risk-class country, with a rank of 126. However, it remains particularly vulnerable to both natural and human-induced hazards due to its geographic location, the terrain, and environmental conditions. Hydrometeorological hazards, particularly water-induced hazards, such as glacial-lake outburst floods (GLOFs), flash floods, riverine floods, landslides, river erosion, windstorms and wildfires, are among the most common. The country is also located in a seismic active zone between the Indian and Eurasian tectonic plates; thus, earthquakes also pose a high risk to the Kingdom. Various climate trend analysis also shows that Bhutan is susceptible to climate change, and the frequency and intensity of these hazards are only expected to increase with climate change. Change in temperature, humidity and precipitation also has a direct impact on public health with increase in the geographic range and spread of vector-borne tropical diseases, as well as water-borne diseases. All these pose a challenge to Bhutan's resilience as they could have severe detrimental social, economic and environmental impacts, in terms of lives, properties, and livelihoods lost, and damage to essential infrastructure.

Multi-year high level objectives of the National Society

The Bhutan Red Cross Society is dedicated to reducing, responding to and mitigating the impact of humanitarian crises and disasters while strengthening the resilience of vulnerable communities as mandated under the BRCS Act 2016. The National Society is recognized as a key stakeholder within the National Disaster Response Coordination Committee as the highest coordination task force nationally and is tasked to act immediately during disaster, strengthen preparedness and recovery of the communities. This role also includes coordinating with other public and private institutions to ensure effective mitigation, early action, response, and recovery from disasters and crises.

The Bhutan Red Cross Society aims towards enhancing communities' resiliencies through disaster risk management initiatives in the communities through capacity building, and strengthening disaster coordination among its stakeholders, technical support in policy and strategy development.

The multi-year objectives of the National Society are to:

- Strengthened organizational preparedness and emergency response to save lives and livelihoods from disasters and reduce vulnerability
- Communities take action to increase their resilience to evolving and multiple shocks and hazards
- Meet the needs of people affected by disasters and crises through access to timely, adequate and flexible in-kind

assistance and support that strengthens their capacity for action

- Respond effectively to the wide spectrum of evolving crises and disasters, and enhance their auxiliary role in emergency response and coordination with other humanitarian agencies and emergency response agencies at local, regional, and national levels
- Supporting local communities in taking steps to increase their resilience to hazards including implementation of integrated and comprehensive programs with an early recovery approach
- Develop contingency plan, simulation exercises, drills, and training scenarios to improve response capacity to different types of crises and disasters
- Formation and equipping of community response team in 205 sub districts of Bhutan who will act as first responders during disaster ensuring effective and timely humanitarian responses

Planned activities in 2026

- Finalisation of the Bhutan Red Cross Society Multi-Hazard Contingency plan
- Training of 210 volunteers of 21 branches in Community Response Team and NDRT selection and training
- Coordination and stakeholder analysis on Multi hazard community based early warning systems
- Enhancing National Society specialised/response services



Health and wellbeing

Bhutan faces growing challenges that affect the overall health of its population. Non-communicable diseases (NCD) continue to remain a concern. Unlike infectious diseases, which come and go, NCDs are lifelong conditions that require continuous care. The latest national screenings reveal a worrying rise in cases, with more Bhutanese succumbing to sudden deaths and hospitalizations. The findings reported a rise from 28 per cent in 2019 to 30.3 per cent in 2023. The primary risk factors of NCDs identified are tobacco and alcohol use, physical inactivity, and unhealthy diets.

Heart disease and stroke, cancer, diabetes and chronic lung conditions are the four major NCDs in the country. Road traffic injuries are a leading cause of death and disability with reported road accidents rising sharply from 780 in 2022 to 1,118 in 2024. Due to treacherous terrain, particularly during the monsoon season and inadequate road maintenance, there is a need for stronger first responder systems.

Longer-term support from the IFRC network

The IFRC will support the Bhutan Red Cross Society in strengthening its capacity for preparedness and readiness, enabling it to anticipate and respond to crises in a timely, appropriate and accountable manner. It will provide access to essential tools and resources for effective crisis and disaster response while assisting in risk identification, addressing gaps in response systems and applying emergency response tools to meet operational needs.

This includes support for IFRC Disaster Response Emergency Funds ([DREF](#)) and Emergency Appeal capacity strengthening, surge tools and planning, monitoring, evaluation and reporting (PMER) standardization. It offers technical assistance to the National Society across all pillars of preparedness for effective response ([PER](#)) and the implementation of its plan of action. Additionally, it provides expertise and support in developing [anticipatory action](#) systems, including forecast analysis, contingency planning and [early warning and early action](#) measures.

The IFRC will also support for capacity building of staff and volunteers in global IFRC tools, provide technical guidance in the design and implementation of programme and projects.

There is a growing burden of emotional distress, anxiety, depression and substance abuse that are quietly taking root and threatening the well-being of individuals and the strength of our social fabric. The [Annual Health Bulletin 2024](#) confirms what many have long sensed: mental health issues are escalating rapidly. For every person who seeks professional help, many more suffer in silence, trapped by stigma, fear, or a lack of support. From teenagers to the elderly, people across age groups are showing signs of mental distress. The most affected group are those between the ages of 25 and 49 and those who are in their most productive years, often carrying the weight of both professional and family responsibilities. According to the Annual Health Bulletin 2024, the country recorded 13,127 cases of mental and behavioural disorders and these are only the ones that were reported.

Of these, anxiety disorders accounted for 3,732 cases, followed by depression with 2,741 and alcohol-related disorders with 2,824 cases. Mental health experts warn that Bhutan is in the grip of a silent epidemic, one that is quietly eroding lives and well-being.

In Bhutan, only 63 per cent of the population have access to basic sanitation services. Out of these, majority are in the rural communities. One in every five schools lacks water for handwashing with soap and functional toilets. Nearly one third of schools have no separate toilets for girls. These deficits severely affect children's well-being and physical and mental development, while they also bear gender-specific repercussions. For instance, menstrual hygiene management (MHM) for adolescent girls remains a key challenge. A recent needs assessment study revealed that about 44 per cent of adolescent schoolgirls and 50 per cent of nuns missed school lessons and other activities during menstruation. Apart from pain and discomfort, lack of water and clean toilets were one of the main reasons why they missed school. The poor sanitation facilities and consequent inadequate personal hygiene lead to serious skin infections, worm infestations and diarrhoea.

Multi-year high level objectives of the National Society

Over the next five years, the Bhutan Red Cross Society will play a complementary and strategic role in supporting government commitments and SDG targets through integrated, community-based Health programming. The core objective of the National Society is to strengthen community resilience to health emergencies and everyday health risks through Community-Based Health and First Aid (CBHFA). This approach builds local capacity by training volunteers and community members to act as first responders during emergencies, directly contributing to the national target of reducing preventable deaths and injuries. In addition, the National Society will scale up Certified First Aid programmes targeting large-scale and small-scale industries, public and private institutions, transport and tourism sectors. This not only expands lifesaving skills across the population but also contributes to organizational sustainability through income generation, reducing reliance on external funding while supporting the government's broader emergency preparedness goals.

The Bhutan Red Cross Society will strengthen Psychological First Aid (PFA) and broader Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) as an integral part of health and emergency response. Through structured training and deployment of volunteers, it will help address growing mental health needs, reduce stigma and provide immediate psychosocial support during crises, disasters and public health emergencies, complementing national mental health policies and services.

In partnership with the National Blood Bank Unit, the National Society will expand its blood services by supporting voluntary, non-remunerated blood donation campaigns,

donor recruitment, and community awareness. This directly contributes to strengthening national blood supply systems, improving emergency and routine care outcomes, and supporting government commitments to safe and sufficient blood availability.

The National Society's health objectives also focus on preventing communicable diseases through safe sanitation and hygiene promotion. These efforts support national strategies to combat waterborne and other communicable diseases. The National Society will work on equitable access to sanitation, handwashing behaviour change and the development of inclusive Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) facilities, with specific attention to women, girls, elderly and persons with disabilities.

Through these integrated multi-year objectives, the Bhutan Red Cross Society directly contributes to the implementation of Bhutan's National Health Policy, National Disaster Risk Management Framework, National Sanitation and Hygiene Policy and broader SDG commitments by strengthening community capacity, improving equitable access to services and ensuring that vulnerable populations are reached through inclusive, locally driven solutions.

Planned activities in 2026

- Conduct Community-Based Health and First Aid (CBHFA) training programmes across all 21 branches, prioritizing remote and vulnerable communities
- Conduct community response training, simulation drills and mock health emergency exercises
- Pre-position first aid items at the headquarter and also across 21 branches
- Support community-level disaster risk reduction planning and mapping of health risks, in coordination with local governments and disaster management authorities
- Strengthen community-based disease surveillance by training volunteers in early detection, referral and reporting of outbreak-prone diseases
- Roll out Certified First Aid training programmes for public and private institutions, industries, transport and tourism sectors as part of commercial first aid
- Provide Health Official Psychological First Aid (PFA) Training of Trainers (ToT) as part of staff capacity building and equip National Society with technical expertise
- Provide community-based PFA services during emergencies and disasters
- Conduct health promotion and awareness sessions in collaboration with the Ministry of Health, targeting prevention of non-communicable diseases, communicable diseases and healthy lifestyles

- Organize and support voluntary blood donation camps in collaboration with the National Blood Bank Unit and district hospitals
- Train caregivers and family members on elderly care, basic first aid and hygiene
- Digitalization of blood donor system and data including for emergency preparedness
- Provide Health Official Surge Training in Emergency WASH- Tier C level as part of staff capacity building and equip National Society with technical expertise in WASH
- Conduct basic WASH training to volunteers as part of Community Response training
- Implement hygiene promotion campaigns focusing on handwashing and menstrual hygiene management
- Support relevant Ministry or agency in household water treatment and storage and mass water treatment during emergencies
- Pre-position emergency WASH equipment and supplies for rapid deployment during Emergencies or disasters

Longer-term support from the IFRC network

The IFRC will provide technical and financial support to the Bhutan Red Cross Society in strengthening national surge capacity through technical backstopping, mentoring and access to regional and global IFRC surge mechanisms. It will provide long-term capacity in Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) through advanced Psychological First Aid (PFA) trainings and Training of Trainers (ToT) support. The IFRC will also provide operational support to strengthen voluntary blood donation systems in collaboration with the National Blood Bank Unit and support tiered capacity development in Emergency WASH, including surge WASH trainings, equipment standardization and pre-positioning strategies.



Values, power and inclusion

Two in five women in Bhutan experience intimate partner violence, and 6.9 per cent report childhood sexual abuse. More than half of women and girls believe violence against women is justified, reflecting deep-rooted social and cultural norms that perpetuate gender-based violence (GBV). Harmful practices such as child marriage continue to persist despite national laws, such as the Penal Code of Bhutan and Domestic Violence Prevention Act (DVPA).

According to the 5th National Health Survey 2023, 9 per cent of women aged 20-24 years were married or in union before the age of 18. Eliminating GBV and harmful practices is essential for protecting human rights, as they violate fundamental rights to life, liberty, and security. Gender-based Violence leads to severe public health impacts, including physical injuries, long-term mental health issues, and burdens on the healthcare system. Economically, GBV reduces workforce productivity and increases healthcare and social service costs. It also destabilizes society and exacerbates social inequality. Bhutan's vulnerability to climate change and the COVID-19 pandemic has deepened GBV risks, underscoring the urgent need for stronger responses to these emerging challenges. Inadequate resources, lack of skills, poor coordination, inadequate information and knowledge, and gender biases continue to hinder progress in addressing and stemming GBV. To address this, the National Commission for Women and Children (NCWC) initiated the development of a comprehensive national strategy in partnership with relevant government and non-government agencies. Despite the adoption of the National Gender Equality Policy (NGEP) by

the Government in 2020, its implementation has been slow, and enforcement remains weak. As a result, harmful practices, including child marriage further impeding efforts to combat GBV effectively

In Bhutan, the most recent data recorded by the Royal Government is the National Health Survey of 2023, which shows there are about 48,000 persons with disabilities. This survey shows a marked increase of self-declared disability of 6.8 per cent from 2.1 per cent (15,567) recorded in the Population and Housing Census of Bhutan. This number represents a significant portion of the population (777,224), particularly concentrated in rural areas, where poverty and disability are often linked. Many individuals with disabilities face barriers in accessing education, healthcare, rehabilitation services, and employment. Progress has been made in establishing policies for inclusion, but gaps remain in implementation, data systems, service availability outside major urban centres, and public awareness.

Multi-year high level objectives of the National Society

A strong cross-cutting objective across all Bhutan Red Cross Society programmes is the integration of Protection, Gender and Inclusion (PGI). It will systematically ensure that all services are safe, accessible, and responsive to the specific needs of women, girls, boys, men, elderly and persons with disabilities. This includes safeguarding, prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse, dignity and respect in service delivery,

and meaningful community participation in programme design and implementation.

The National Society will contribute to positive change in communities through increased understanding, ownership, dissemination and application of the Fundamental Principles and humanitarian values, with a particular focus on the knowledge, skills and behaviour of young people. It will promote and support safe, equitable, and continuous access to services for all, especially for children affected by disasters, crises, or displacement and continue to work as a secure and inclusive network, ensuring the dignity, access, participation and safety of people of all identities. The National Society will empower vulnerable and crisis-affected individuals and communities to influence decisions that affect them and promote humanitarian principles and seven fundamental principles among volunteers, community members and public authorities. Furthermore, the National Society develop training strategies for the generation of technical skills and employability aimed at young people from communities at social risk and develop, standardize and apply community engagement and accountability (CEA) internally and externally.

Planned activities in 2026

- Raise awareness and promote seven fundamental principles among the volunteers
- Develop a Protection and Prevention against Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA) policy
- Develop a CEA guideline

Longer-term support from the IFRC network

The IFRC will support the Bhutan Red Cross Society to adopt and implement community engagement and accountability and [PGI minimum standards in emergencies](#), ensuring participatory approaches that align humanitarian assistance with community preferences, prioritize safety and target those most in need based on vulnerability analysis. It will also support the development and implementation of procedures for investigating and addressing concerns related to the prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse and child safeguarding, including enhancing investigation capacity, clarifying and promoting reporting mechanisms and strengthening referral systems.

ENABLING LOCAL ACTORS

The Bhutan Red Cross Society is also committed to the Preparedness for Effective Response (PER) process and is at the orientation phase. The PER approach is a continuous and flexible process that enables National Societies to assess, measure and analyze the strengths and gaps of its preparedness and response mechanism, and ultimately take necessary action to improve it.



Key Institutional Indicators

The National Society has put in place the following:

- Youth engagement strategies
- Protection against sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEA) policy
- PSEA Action Plan



Strategic and operational coordination

Multi-year high level objectives of the National Society

- Strengthen its coordination, cooperation and collaboration with key national and international stakeholders including authorities, civil society, the private sector and academic institutions.
- Work towards ensuring that the Bhutan Red Cross Society has a diversified and expanded funding base, supported by strengthened domestic fundraising and enhanced partnerships. This leads to resources that are increased, predictable, and sustainable to deliver its humanitarian and development priorities
- Strengthen internal systems and capacities for resource mobilization, including competent staff, effective

tools, and an organization-wide resource mobilization strategy guiding coordinated, accountable, and efficient fundraising

Longer-term support from the IFRC network

The IFRC will support the Bhutan Red Cross by providing technical expertise and seeking funding to enhance its programmes and initiatives. It will facilitate peer-to-peer opportunities, enabling knowledge sharing and collaboration within the network to strengthen operational capacity. Additionally, it will organize workshops and conferences to foster learning, exchange best practices and reinforce partnerships, ensuring that the Bhutan Red Cross Society can effectively meet the needs of vulnerable communities.



National Society development

Multi-year high level objectives of the National Society

- Strengthening financial sustainability and Resource Mobilizations
- Implementing Commercial First Aid
- Branch Development and Local presence
- Strengthen the skills of staff and governance
- Establishment of Bhutan Red Cross Society Centre – National emergency operations centre, training centre and warehouse
- Integration of youth volunteers into branch volunteer networks
- Advocate youth representative into National Society governance
- Strengthening and integration of youth volunteer base into the 21 branches
- Integration of the Red Cross Clubs into mainstream Institution system of financial and program independence
- Integrate and engage Foundational Humanitarian values at the school level
- Develop flagship youth initiatives that respond to local risks and needs, ensuring youth leadership and active participation

- Ensure every branch has a functional youth structure and an annual youth workplan integrated into branch planning by 2030
- Specialization of the volunteers and services by offering youth specialization tracks in areas such as first aid, disaster risk reduction, health, psychosocial support, and protection/inclusion, linking advanced training to practical roles and recognition

Longer-term support from the IFRC network

The IFRC will continue to provide technical and financial support to the National Society to encourage financial sustainability initiatives and will support components such as the youth programming, volunteering and core cost policies and statutes review along with transformational leadership. The IFRC will work with the National Society to identify development priorities and help with branch development and ensure that financial resources are used effectively by ensuring adherence to the budget.

The IFRC support will also centre on strengthening youth programming, leadership development, and volunteer management, ensuring youth remain central to the National Society's mission, community impact, and long-term sustainability



Multi-year high level objectives of the National Society

- At the national level, the Bhutan Red Cross Society will pursue structured and systematic engagement with line ministries, local governments, and national institutions to strengthen understanding of its auxiliary role and humanitarian priorities. Evidence from operations, volunteers, and communities will be used to inform policy dialogue and advocacy
- Strategic media engagement will be undertaken in line with humanitarian principles, complemented by clear internal messaging and spokesperson guidance
- Regionally and globally, the National Society will engage through IFRC and Movement platforms to contribute to shared humanitarian diplomacy objectives, exchange experience, and strengthen Bhutan-specific humanitarian concerns
- IFRC membership will be leveraged for technical support, peer learning, coordinated advocacy, and access to regional and global influencing spaces
- Development or refinement of an internal Humanitarian Diplomacy and Communication Strategy, clear guidance on roles and responsibilities, capacity-building for leadership, communication focal points, branches, and improved coordination between operations, communication and governance
- Emphasis will be placed on evidence-based communication, human-centred storytelling, digital platforms, and emergency communication, ensuring timely, accurate, and principled messaging during crises
- Enhance understanding and implementation of International Humanitarian Law (IHL) through translation, institutional coordination and widespread dissemination

Longer-term support from the IFRC network

The IFRC will provide support to the National Society in the effective implementation humanitarian diplomacy and communication priorities under Development Plan 2 (2026–2030). This longer-term support will reinforce the National Society's auxiliary role to the Royal Government of Bhutan and focus on building institutional credibility, policy influence, and public trust. The IFRC will provide technical guidance, tools, and platforms to strengthen humanitarian diplomacy, strategic communication, advocacy, reputation management, and engagement with decision-makers, media, and key stakeholders, ensuring that the interests of vulnerable people in Bhutan are represented in national, regional, and global humanitarian dialogue.

Additionally, the IFRC will support the Bhutan Red Cross Society to strengthen enabling systems for humanitarian diplomacy and communication, including leadership and staff capacity development, in strengthening enabling systems for humanitarian diplomacy and communication, including leadership and staff capacity development, digital and communication systems, and coordination among digital and communication systems, and coordination between operations, governance, and communication functions. Partner National Societies will contribute through aligned financial and technical support, peer learning, and joint initiatives, while IFRC will facilitate access to regional and global influencing platforms, learning networks, and surge support when required. All support will emphasize national ownership, sustainability, and localization, ensuring that by 2030, the Bhutan Red Cross Society has embedded, professionalized humanitarian diplomacy and communication capacities that enhance access, safeguard humanitarian space, and strengthen trust and accountability to communities, authorities, and partners.



Accountability and agility (cross-cutting)

Multi-year high level objectives of the National Society

- Work towards ensuring that the National Society has robust and transparent systems across governance, finance, integrity, security, risk management, and supply chain, ensuring accountable, ethical, and efficient operations that meet donors, stakeholders, and community expectations
- Ensure that Bhutan Red Cross Society staff and volunteers are competent, safe, and supported through strong HR policies, safeguarding, training, and inclusive practices, enabling effective implementation of programs, results-based management, and sustainable delivery of humanitarian, health, social, and climate resilience services
- Establish resilient infrastructure, standardized systems, and interoperable platforms across the National Society and enable real-time, reliable, and ethically managed data to inform operational, strategic for humanitarian decisions making

- Conduct a full Digital Maturity Assessment in collaboration with IFRC and partners to develop a National Society Digital Roadmap
- Develop inclusive digital solutions that improve service delivery, accountability, and community engagement and create a digitally literate workforce and foster a culture of innovation
- Upgrading core digital systems (HR, finance, logistics and volunteer management) and introduce standardized data collection tools such as Kobo
- Strengthen branch digitalization to ensure equitable technological access
- Develop a Cybersecurity & Data Protection Framework based on IFRC and ICRC guidelines

Longer-term support from the IFRC network

The IFRC will provide support in building staff and volunteer capacities, align policies and standards with the wider IFRC network, and use innovative and transformative approaches to better anticipate and adapt to complex and evolving risks in Bhutan.



The Bhutan Red Cross Society is actively training and empowering its youth volunteers across diverse regions. (Photo: Bhutan Red Cross Society)

THE IFRC NETWORK

The IFRC

The IFRC country cluster delegation, with an office based in New Delhi, currently works with four National Societies in the region, namely, India, Bhutan, Maldives and Sri Lanka. The IFRC support to the Bhutan Red Cross Society

centres on strategic and operational coordination, National Society development and humanitarian diplomacy, including strengthening its auxiliary role.

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 .

Movement coordination

The **Bhutan Red Cross Society** 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](#).

Coordination with other actors

As an auxiliary to the public authorities, the Bhutan Red Cross Society works in close coordination with the Royal Government of Bhutan. In addition to annual financial support, BRCS receives continuous guidance and participates in key national decision-making platforms, including the National Disaster Management Authority. At the local level, Branches collaborate closely with local governments and actively contribute to district-level initiatives, particularly in disaster response and community services.

The Bhutan Red Cross Society maintains strong cooperation with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and External Trade to facilitate international engagement and diplomatic coordination. Its partnership with the Ministry of Health has deepened since the pandemic, building on earlier joint initiatives, including blood- donation drives, public health promotion, and the training of volunteers in life-saving skills.

The Bhutan Red Cross Society is officially certified by the Bhutan Medical and Health Council as a National Medical First Aid training provider.

Beyond government collaboration, the Bhutan Red Cross Society partners with non-governmental organizations to enhance community services. Notable initiatives include waste-management projects with Clean Bhutan and support for patients facing transportation challenges during cancer treatment through a partnership with the Bhutan Cancer Society, Disabled Persons Organization, Royal Society for Senior Citizens

At the international level, the Bhutan Red Cross Society operates under the jurisdiction of the IFRC Country Cluster Delegation and the ICRC Regional Delegation in New Delhi, ensuring strong engagement within the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement.



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

This 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 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](#)

Contact information

Dragyel Tenzin Dorjee

Secretary General
Dragyel.t.dorjee@brcs.bt
Bhutan Red Cross Society

Herve Gazeau

Head of Strategic Partnerships & Resource Mobilization
IFRC Asia Pacific Regional Office, Kuala Lumpur
T +6019 268 6503
herve.gazeau@ifrc.org

John Entwistle

Head of Country Cluster Delegation
for India, Sri Lanka, Bhutan and the Maldives,
New Delhi
T +91 9266905183
john.entwistle@ifrc.org

Sumitha Martin

Lead
IFRC Global Strategic Planning & Reporting Centre
New Delhi
sumitha.martin@ifrc.org