



**Irish Red Cross**

**THE WAY TO**

**2018**



**Irish Red Cross**



Humanity  
Impartiality  
Neutrality  
Independence  
Voluntary Service  
Unity  
Universality

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# INTRODUCTION

“The Way to 2018” is the Irish Red Cross strategy for 2014 – 2018. It sets out our ambitions, our priorities, and our determination to make an ever greater contribution to the lives of people in need. Over the next five years, we will focus on building and developing our organisation and extending our reach in a way that makes the Irish Red Cross ever more relevant to vulnerable communities at home and abroad.

We will do this by positioning ourselves at the heart of communities, understanding their needs and responding to them – either directly with services and support from Irish Red Cross volunteers or through collaborating with others for the benefit of all. We will build more resilient communities, we will provide essential health and social care to those in crisis and we will support the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement to meet growing humanitarian needs around the world.

To do this, we need to prepare our organisation for the challenges of the future. We will invest in our volunteers, develop our services and will make sure our Society operates to the highest standards of governance and efficiency. We will develop sustainable programmes and ensure that we build long-term funding streams that will enable us to plan with confidence and conviction.

This strategy is based on a wide ranging consultation process with beneficiaries, volunteers, staff, donors, partners and other stakeholders. It draws together many views and aspirations for the future and sets out an ambitious and achievable path for the Irish Red Cross.

# WHO WE ARE

The Irish Red Cross is part of the largest global network of voluntary humanitarian action in the world – the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, founded by Henri Dunant in 1863. There is a national organisation in nearly every country in the world – some 189 Red Cross or Red Crescent societies in total.

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# THE FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES

The Red Cross was born of a desire to bring assistance – without discrimination. Across the world, we are committed to and bound by the same seven Fundamental Principles

**Humanity**  
**Impartiality**  
**Neutrality**  
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**Unity**  
**Universality**

The Irish Red Cross, which currently has a network of almost 140 branches throughout Ireland, is a volunteer led organisation established in 1939 which has the power to act as an auxiliary to the public authorities in the humanitarian field. The Irish Red Cross provides voluntary Ambulance Services, Mountain and Lake Search and Rescue Services and a broad variety of Community Based Health, Social Care and Youth programmes here in Ireland. The Irish Red Cross contributes to the overall mission of the Red Cross Red Crescent Movement worldwide in preventing or alleviating human suffering wherever it may be found.

# OUR VISION

The vision of the Irish Red Cross is to be a leading humanitarian organisation, providing impartial services and support to vulnerable communities both at home and abroad.

# OUR MISSION

Our mission is to identify and deliver humanitarian assistance, both at home and abroad, to those who are most in need. In achieving this we will be guided by the fundamental principles of the Red Cross.

# WHAT WE DO

At the heart of our strategy is the way we work. We call this the “IRC Way” - building more resilient communities from within the community - and it is fundamental to meeting the goals and objectives we have set for ourselves in the five year timeframe of this strategy.

Irish Red Cross volunteers are living in their local communities and bring an intimate knowledge and understanding of the risks and vulnerabilities that are faced by people in their everyday lives.

As our primary aim is to meet the needs of the most vulnerable both at home and abroad, we will implement the “IRC Way” (Irish Red Cross Way) – a structured approach to assessing community vulnerabilities and identifying the priorities for action and response.

**Our volunteers will deliver services and support that will address some of the needs in communities, for example;**

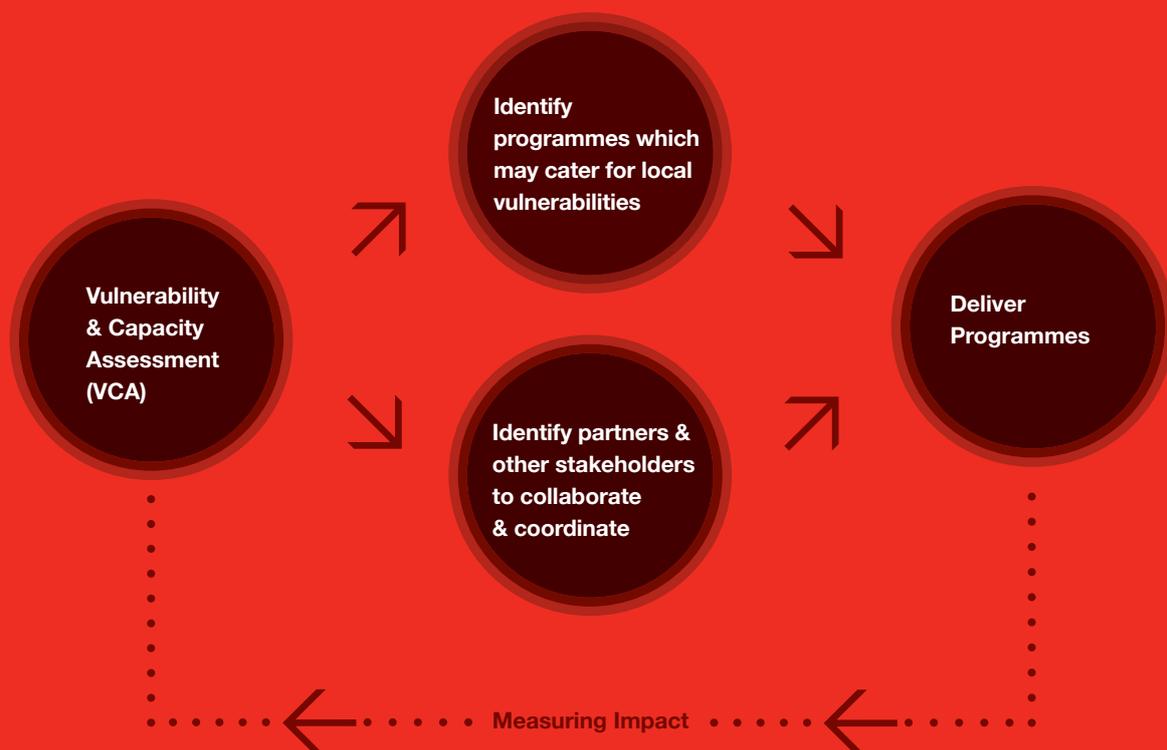
- As “first responders” to crisis and emergency
- In providing health and social services to those in need
- In supporting marginal groups in society
- In advocating for those whose voice is not being heard.

At home and abroad we will help build a more resilient community fabric. Where we cannot meet the need alone, we will collaborate with other partners or stakeholders in finding solutions. With international projects we will align ourselves with local Red Cross/ Red Crescent volunteers who bring their knowledge and understanding of the environment and help us to operate in the same community centric way – an approach that gives us access and credibility in difficult environments and ensures we can be effective always in responding to the needs of the most vulnerable.



PHOTO: ©Laura Gallagher, Irish Red Cross

# THE IRC WAY



# OUR STRATEGIC AMBITION

We have developed this strategy from a position of strength. The Irish Red Cross today enjoys a strong position as a provider of first-response services in local communities through our 140 strong branch network actively delivering first aid and ambulance services as well as supporting communities.

This provides us with profile and standing in the community and the opportunity to strengthen further and develop a more substantial role as a central player in building strong, resilient communities.

We want to sustain our role as a primary volunteer first response agency, building on this to make ourselves relevant to many other vulnerable groups in local communities. Where it is not possible for IRC to help directly, we will work in close collaboration with other players to deliver the best result for our local communities.

Our aim is to empower and enable local communities in a way that will make society stronger and more resilient in preparing for and in reacting to crises and emergencies.

Our overarching strategic ambition is to implement the IRC Way in every community where we have a branch and volunteers. We will analyse and map local vulnerabilities and meet community needs where possible with specific and targeted responses

**We have translated this ambition into three specific strategic aims:**

- Save lives, protect livelihoods and strengthen recovery from disasters and crises
- Enable healthy living and safe living
- Promote social inclusion and a culture of non violence and peace

# ABOUT THIS PLAN

This strategic plan is informed by the IFRC Strategy 2020 and as such follows the 'Strategy House' model.

**Additionally we have chosen to focus our efforts on**

- The Irish Red Cross' role in communities and specifically what the Irish Red Cross can contribute as a service provider
- The challenges facing the Irish Red Cross and the changes most likely to occur over the coming years
- Priorities for the next 5 years and the approaches to take in addressing these challenges

**Through implementing the IRC Way across our Branch Network we will enable the Society to**

- Support the development of safe and resilient communities and in particular prioritise helping the vulnerable in society.
- Play a leading role in disaster and crisis recovery in Ireland and actively support any International Red Cross response to emergencies overseas by contributing to the improvement of the lives of vulnerable people.

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# STRATEGIC AIMS

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**Strategic Aim 1**

Save lives, protect livelihoods and strengthen recovery from disasters and crises

2

**Strategic Aim 2**

Enable healthy living and safe living

3

**Strategic Aim 3**

Promote social inclusion and a culture of non violence and peace

# STRATEGIC AIMS

## SAVE LIVES, PROTECT LIVELIHOODS & STRENGTHEN RECOVERY FROM DISASTERS & CRISES

In Ireland we will fulfil our role as auxiliary to the public authorities in times of major disaster/crisis, ensuring we are always available for deployment at short notice and that our volunteers are appropriately skilled to make a significant and valuable contribution to recovery. Limiting the impact of an emergency situation starts with thorough preparation. In this respect, understanding risks is key; by building on our First Aid and Ambulance Services and deploying those services underpinned by the 'IRC Way' we will help to develop more resilient communities. Internationally, we cooperate with other National Societies, the Federation and the International Committee of the Red Cross.

### **Specifically, we will;**

- Build and maintain a capacity to respond to local emergencies. Such capacity may include transportation/home visits/food distribution and medical support for vulnerable and isolated people in our communities.
- Continue to provide and promote our recognised quality first aid services and training delivering first-hand to an increasing number of people in Ireland.
- Further improve disaster preparedness and response capacity and mechanisms at the community level  
Strengthen psychosocial support services in response to local emergencies, accidents, natural or other disasters and other situations of humanitarian need.
- Develop and implement community based programmes that can save lives and support and protect the most vulnerable in our communities.
- Continue to actively mobilise funding and other resources to provide support to local communities in crisis situations
- Continue to support the International Red Cross Movement interventions to disasters through the provision of financial and human resources expertise where and when required.
- Work with other partners internationally to develop programmes that respond to vulnerable communities in need.



**At home...** The Irish Red Cross has a cohort of 379 Emergency Medical Technicians (EMTs) and 548 Emergency First Responders (EFRs). Irish Red Cross is the leading first aid educator in Ireland and issues in excess of 12,000 first aid related training certificates each year.

**Internationally...** In Syria, where large numbers of people are affected by the ongoing conflict the Irish Red Cross has supported the work of the Syrian Arab Red Crescent and the International Committee of the Red Cross. Donations from our public appeal have helped to provide essential medical care, food and supplies.



**At home...** The Irish Red Cross Award Winning CBHFA (Community based Health and First Aid) programme in Irish Prisons is helping to transform the lives of almost 3000 prison inmates, creating a safer, healthier prison environment and enabling them to develop first aid and community care skills that make a real difference to the lives of fellow inmates.

**Internationally...** The Irish Red Cross Food security programme in Niger has made an enormous difference to the lives of 130,000 people in one of the poorest countries in the world. We have supported the development of key skills and capabilities through empowering individuals, families and communities to become self sustaining.

# STRATEGIC AIMS

## ENABLE HEALTHY & SAFE LIVING

We play a critical role in promoting, guiding and organising community-based health and first aid for communities. Provision of first aid training is one of the key activities of the Irish Red Cross.

The need for building Community resilience is increasingly important. As the Red Cross we are committed to reaching out to help those most vulnerable in society because they have the least means to cope. We aim to strengthen community resilience by helping communities to be as healthy as possible, supporting them to prevent or reduce risks where they can, so that they may enjoy a better quality of life.

We firmly believe that individuals and communities can actively contribute to bettering their own situation. - With the 'IRC Way' we will help communities to identify their own needs and link these to structural solutions. We will assist people in building the networks that are essential for resilience and where necessary we fill gaps in such networks.

### Specifically we will...

- Build on our core competences in first aid and ambulance services so that the skills of our volunteers can be used to support and build community resilience.
- Provide first-aid and first response training in the community
- Actively support community programmes that enable people to live healthy and safe lives
- Provide youth services, with developmental activities and a particular focus on fostering a caring and humanitarian culture amongst younger people
- Support international programmes that focus on improving lives and support international delegates who deliver Red Cross humanitarian programmes.

# STRATEGIC AIMS

## PROMOTE SOCIAL INCLUSION & A CULTURE OF NON VIOLENCE & PEACE

In line with our Mission Statement and guided by our Fundamental Principles, we have an important role to play in the promotion of a culture of non-violence.

All of our programmes are delivered with this important mission in mind. Using the IRC Way our branches are ideally placed to respond to disharmony within local communities, and to deliver practical solutions and actions to respond when required. All our members and volunteers have a responsibility to promote a culture of non-violence and peace in the community.

At national level we have an obligation to promote international humanitarian law and ensure that these international principles are supported and safeguarded by our government. Gender equality is another priority area for us. We will focus on diversity and equality at all levels in our organization and in all our work.

### **Specifically we will ...**

- Seek to influence Government Policy to uphold the principles of the Red Cross movement and place an appropriate focus on International Humanitarian Law, Disaster Response Law, Gender-based violence prevention and Humanitarian diplomacy.
- Actively support community programmes that enable the promotion of social inclusion and a culture of non-violence and peace.
- Support the International Movement in its ongoing efforts to develop consensus and momentum across National Societies for the wider humanitarian agenda.
- Develop greater public awareness and support for the Red Cross' humanitarian values and ideals, and reduce stigma and discrimination
- Through our youth programmes, build on the strengths of young people as agents of behavioural change in addressing social exclusion and violence
- Continue to collaborate with like minded organizations to promote social inclusion



**At home...** Through its Restoring Family Links programme the Irish Red Cross reunites family members who have lost contact through conflict, natural disaster and migration. In the past few years, Irish Red Cross has assisted over 180 family members of refugees to enter Ireland for resettlement and has provided mentoring and support to enable them integrate into their new communities.

**Internationally...**

After contributing to the International Red Cross Movement emergency relief response to Typhoon Haiyan, the Irish Red Cross is now helping thousands of affected families restart their economic activities and rebuild their lives.

# ENABLEMENT ACTIONS

To support the implementation of our strategy, we need to build a stronger, more robust Irish Red Cross. We will take steps to develop a strong healthy organisation that supports and inspires our volunteers; an organisation that functions more effectively as a National Society rather than a series of independent branches and units, with a more visible national profile, with adequate funding to develop its services, and governance and administrative systems that meet the expectations of all our stakeholders. We call these our Enablement Actions - a set of steps that must be taken if we are to ensure that as a National Society, we have the capacity to implement our strategy effectively and comprehensively

**Ensure that all our people (members, volunteers, staff, delegates) have knowledge and understanding of our fundamental principles, our global humanitarian role, our objectives and strategy at national level and the role they can play in achieving our organisational goals**

- Promote these key messages consistently and repeatedly to all our members, volunteers, staff and delegates.

Provide all our people (members, volunteers, staff, delegates) with appropriate training and support and ensure that the Society provides them with appropriate opportunities to grow and develop.

- Put in place a Volunteer management programme, including induction for all volunteers
- Review the skills sets of volunteers and develop a “Competencies and Capacities” register
- Organise Volunteer Training programmes that will develop specific skills and competencies
- Develop and train our youth members to enable them to progress to all levels within the Society
- Invest appropriately in staff development and create a Career path for employees

Strengthen our governance, administrative and management systems to ensure that the Society functions effectively as a national enterprise

- Ensure that our Constitution and Governance structures are fit for purpose
- Review the Area and Branch Structure and establish clear roles and responsibilities
- Ensure that our Organisational Structures are designed in a way that facilitates and enables the implementation of our strategy.
- Ensure that we comply at all levels with regulatory standards, relevant legislation and financial management policies and practices.
- Measure programme implementation and evaluate impacts
- Establish Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for our services and operations and report on them periodically

Put a stronger emphasis on mobilising financial resources at every level to ensure that we have the financial capacity to see our strategy fully implemented

- Continue to develop and diversify our central fund-raising capability
- Develop the potential for branches to fund-raise in their local communities
- Develop funding and programme partnerships with other Red Cross National Societies and with bilateral and multi-lateral funding agencies.

Put a stronger emphasis on mobilising human resources at every level to ensure that we have an adequate number of appropriately skilled volunteers to meet our objectives

- Conduct periodic reviews to identify skills shortages
- Run recruitment campaigns, some that will target specific skills and profiles
- Run annual recruitment campaigns, both at local and national level to increase the membership of Irish Red Cross Youth



PHOTO: © Reuters, Thomas Mukoya

**Raise our profile to ensure that there is greater awareness of the role and activities of the Irish Red Cross, both at home and abroad.**

- Emphasise our contribution to the International work of the Movement
- Be explicit about programmes and services, and their impact, so that public, donors and beneficiaries understand what we do and why we are unique.
- As our community positioning develops further, ensure that this is well communicated and used to support our Vision
- Exploit social media to embed our community position and communicate the impact of services and programme

**Collaborate with each other internally, recognising that we are one organisation and look for opportunities to collaborate with others externally, where it supports the achievement of our objectives**

- Work together as one team within the organisation
- Identify like minded groups in local communities with whom we can collaborate to promote community resilience and well-being

**Improve our operating systems so that data and processes can be managed more efficiently – reducing workload and cost**

- Invest in IT systems that will streamline administration processes, data capture and analysis, financial management and fundraising,
- Build a more effective interface for volunteers that will enable data transfer and learning

# COMMITMENT TO DELIVER

“The Way to 2018” is a step-change for the Irish Red Cross. It has the potential to place us at the centre of communities in a way that will enable us to make a real difference to the lives of the most vulnerable. We are determined to make the most of that opportunity, and with that objective, we will all share the responsibility to see that this plan is fully and comprehensively implemented. There is a role for everybody in turning this plan into reality.







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