EVERYONE COUNTS

Special edition mid-term review of Strategy 2030

October 2024

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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FIGURES

ABBREVIATIONS

AI	Artificial Intelligence
CEA	Community Engagement and Accountability
CHF	Swiss francs
DREF	Disaster Response Emergency Fund
FDRS	Federation-wide Databank and Reporting System
HSPs	Humanitarian Service Points
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
IFRC	International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
KPIs	Key Performance Indicators
MENA	Middle East and North Africa
NLP	Natural Language Processing
NS	National Society
PNSs	Participating National Societies
S2030	*Strategy 2030*
WASH	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene

FOREWORD

Five years ago, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) embarked on a journey to ensure that we go beyond resilience and enable individuals and communities to thrive. A journey of **hope** in the **power of humanity**.

The IFRC's determination was quickly put to test: the COVID-19 pandemic worsened inequalities and claimed millions of lives. Old conflicts smoldered in devastated communities while new conflicts erupted, taking more lives and livelihoods. Hazards continued to shake the world. The impacts of climate change on at-risk communities became a daily threat. Yet, the best of humanity shone through in the darkest moments. Red Cross and Red Crescent volunteers stood up for their communities, taking risks or making great sacrifices to serve others. They became a beacon of hope, lighting the path to a brighter future.

As we reach the midpoint of *Strategy 2030*, the IFRC reflects on the collective performance of the global network. The hard work and commitment of our member National Societies has allowed the IFRC to gather and share evidence of our work and achievements through key processes and platforms: the Federation-wide Databank and Reporting System, Unified Planning and Reporting, and the GO platform. The Solferino Academy also gathers a wealth of insights from the IFRC network's leaders, staff, and volunteers.

We must now leverage the analysis of our achievements and the insights on the challenges ahead, as detailed in this report, to adjust our priorities and ways of working for the remaining five years of *Strategy 2030*. I encourage all National Societies to harness the power of data and take ownership in providing and using it effectively.

Together, the IFRC network must build on our successes, learn from our experiences, and continue to drive forward with unwavering commitment, partnership, and hope. Our journey is far from over, but with our shared vision and collective effort, we can ensure a more promising, more resilient future where everyone counts and no one is left behind.

Jagan Chapagain
Secretary General, CEO
International Federation of
Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

INTRODUCTION

The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) publishes *Everyone Counts* as a flagship document that highlights the collective efforts, achievements, and learning of its member National Societies.

Welcome to the seventh edition of the *Everyone Counts* report.

Strategy 2030: a shared vision

Strategy 2030 is the IFRC network's ambitious, collective agenda for the decade 2020–2030. It serves as a guiding framework for the IFRC network to address major humanitarian and development challenges.

Key aspects of *Strategy 2030* include:

- Vision: It envisions the global IFRC network bringing people together for the good of humanity, driving changes that will create a better future for all.
- Goals: *Strategy 2030* outlines three main goals:
  - » People anticipate, respond to, and quickly recover from crises
  - » People lead safe, healthy and dignified lives, and have opportunities to thrive
  - » People mobilize for inclusive and peaceful communities
- Global Challenges: It identifies five key global challenges to focus on:
  1. Climate and environmental crises
  2. Evolving crises and disasters
  3. Growing gaps in health and wellbeing
  4. Migration and identity
  5. Values, power, and inclusion

- Transformations: The strategy proposes seven transformations to enhance the IFRC network's effectiveness:
  1. Supporting National Societies as strong local actors
  2. Inspiring and mobilizing volunteerism
  3. Ensuring trust and accountability
  4. Working effectively as a distributed network
  5. Influencing humanitarian action
  6. Undergoing a digital transformation
  7. Financing the future
- Approach: *Strategy 2030* emphasizes a people-centred approach, recognizing the interconnectedness of global issues and focusing on the people who are vulnerable, excluded, or marginalized.
- Alignment: It aligns with major global frameworks such as the Sustainable Development Goals and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change.
- Practical use: National Societies and the IFRC will use *Strategy 2030* to inform their own planning, shape their programmes and operations, guide their investments, influence their advocacy, and focus their efforts in addressing people's needs over the next decade.
- Unifying the network: Perhaps most importantly, *Strategy 2030* serves as a unifying platform, bringing together the diverse components of the IFRC network under a common vision and ambitious agenda.

The year 2025 marks the half-way point of *Strategy 2030*. It is an opportunity to look back at what the IFRC network has achieved and to look forward to the range of different possible futures just ahead of us. It is also an opportunity to look at strategic planning as a *process*: how much do the 191 National Societies have a single shared vision? With the future so uncertain, can we really talk about *planning*?

The chapters in overview

Everyone Counts reports present both overall and in-depth results from our dedicated, Federation-wide Databank and Reporting System (FDRS) and other relevant datasets.

In **Chapter 1** we will look at what the IFRC network *does*, across the world: common strengths plus local adaptation – as reflected in those datasets.

Chapter 2 addresses the changing world we all live in and the range of futures ahead of us.

In **Chapter 3** we will look at our changing organization. We mainly use data from FDRS on *Strategy 2030*'s seven Transformations.

Chapter 4 focuses on strategic planning as reflected in the texts of Strategic Plans. What have we been *planning and aspiring* to do in the future?

Where do these ideas come from? Do they get first declared in *Strategy 2030* and then gradually adopted by National Societies? Or is it the other way round?

Chapter 5 presents the perspective of the IFRC Solferino Academy.

This edition of *Everyone Counts* is special because for the first time we include substantial guest input to help create a dialogue with and beyond the numerical data. The IFRC's Solferino Academy has been talking to thousands of staff and volunteers across the IFRC network to review the *Strategy 2030* process and present here additional insight into the status, concerns and aspirations National Societies and the IFRC have in relation to *Strategy 2030* and our future.

The **Solferino Academy** is an initiative by the IFRC aimed at fostering innovation, foresight, and transformation within the IFRC network. It supports the network by helping it anticipate, understand, and adapt to emerging trends and issues in the humanitarian sector.

Key objectives and activities of the Academy:

1. Promoting Innovation

2. Foresight and Strategic Planning

3. Leadership and Transformation

4. Network Engagement

Throughout this report you will see pointers like this *for more on this see page…* which point to additional perspectives in Chapter 5.

Data sources

The Federation-wide Databank and Reporting System (FDRS)

https://data.ifrc.org/fdrs/

The Federation-wide Databank and Reporting System (FDRS) collects data from National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies across the world about what they are doing and with what resources. National Societies have been contributing data to the FDRS since 2012. Even in the very first year, all except two National Societies (187 of IFRC's 189 member Societies in 2012) contributed at least some data; by 2013, all National Societies were already contributing at least some data. The coverage and quality of the data has been improving every year since then.

What the FDRS does

- Provides National Societies, IFRC staff, partners, researchers and other stakeholders with immediate and engaging access to data about National Societies worldwide.
- Allows better understanding of the true scale and scope of IFRC network action.
- Promotes greater awareness of the capacities, services, and potential of National Societies, to boost their self-development and external profile.
- Facilitates monitoring and reporting of National Society performance in a consistent, transparent and accountable manner.

The previous FDRS reports

This is the seventh report on the FDRS. The previous reports for 2014, 2015, 2018, 2019, 2022 and 2023 can be found here: https://data.ifrc.org/fdrs/everyone-counts-report-and-analysis.

Unified Planning and Reporting

Launched in 2022, the IFRC's Unified Planning and Reporting process represents a significant evolution in the network's approach to coordinated action and resource mobilization. (ifrc.org/our-promise/trust-and-accountability/federation-wide-results-based-management-approach). **The process strengthens joint planning of the IFRC network in countries where National Societies seek international support.** Unified planning and reporting involves comprehensive discussions on country context and needs, aligning support of the IFRC network to a National Society's multi-year priorities. Unified plans and reports are developed collaboratively between the National Society, IFRC, and participating National Societies, using an optional template with a multi-year narrative and a yearly workplan table aligned with *Strategy 2030*.

Data collected as part of the unified planning and reporting process **complements the FDRS**, which continues to serve as a comprehensive database for all National Societies. Annual **unified reporting takes place in February, before the July FDRS deadline, involving 39 core indicators, including 15 shared with FDRS**, and up to 256 unique indicators specified by National Societies. A new Federation-wide indicator bank is being built to facilitate coordination, ensure collective accountability and ease reporting efforts of National Societies with their IFRC network partners. Beyond responding to reporting needs against the unified plan, **data collection through unified reporting feeds FDRS with a preliminary understanding of National Societies' activities, key events, and overall performance in contexts with significant humanitarian needs**.

Figure 0.1 shows the widespread use of the 39 unified planning and reporting core indicators.

Figure 0.1 The range of different Unified Planning and Reporting Indicators used by each National Society
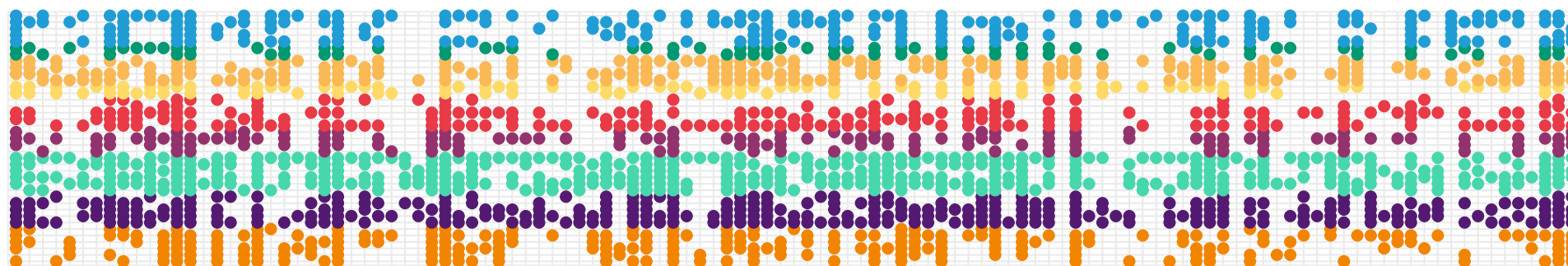
National Societies (NS)

Global Challenge
- GC1: Climate and environment
- GC2: Disasters and crises
- GC3: Health and wellbeing
- GC4: Migration and displacement
- GC5: Values, power and inclusion

Enabling Function
- EF1: Strategic and operational coordination
- EF2: National Society Development
- EF3: Humanitarian diplomacy
- EF4: Accountability and agility

Source: Unified Planning and Reporting 2023. Colored by Global Challenge/Enabling Function. National Societies are in the x-axis, and indicator names and categories are ordered alphabetically.

GO platform

The third source of internal data used in this report is the **IFRC GO** database https://go.ifrc.org/. GO is a digital platform designed to enhance humanitarian response coordination. It offers:

- **Real-time data sharing:** Captures and disseminates real-time information during emergencies.

- **Resource mobilization:** Facilitates swift deployment of resources.

- **User-friendly interface:** Provides easy-to-understand reports, maps, and dashboards.

- **Public accessibility:** Ensures transparency with open access to information.

About the use of generative AI in this report

To answer questions like those about the content of National Society documents in Chapter 4, we need to examine tens of thousands of pages of text in hundreds of National Society Strategic Plans and Annual Reports in around 40 languages. To do that in a systematic way would have been almost impossible until the arrival of Large Language Models and generative Artificial Intelligence (generative AI). Using these tools, we are now able to deal with large amounts of narrative text and for the first time analyse it systematically. We can ask quantitative questions like "How many reports mention social polarization?" Or we can ask qualitative questions like "what are the main themes mentioned?"

We recognize, however, that the development and operation of such AI technologies come with significant environmental costs, primarily due to the extensive computational power required. The energy consumption associated with training and deploying these models contributes to the broader challenge of reducing our carbon footprint.

Despite this, we believe the use of generative AI in this context is justified due to the unique and irreplaceable insights it provides. By harnessing these tools, we can conduct analysis at a scale and depth that would otherwise be unattainable, ultimately helping us to better understand and address critical issues captured in the vast array of National Society documents. We are committed to using these technologies responsibly and will continue to explore ways to mitigate their environmental impact.

There are more details in the Appendix.

Democratic Republic of the Congo 2019 Red Cross staff analyzing data from a community feedback system.

© Corrie Butler / IFRC

HOW ARE WE DOING?
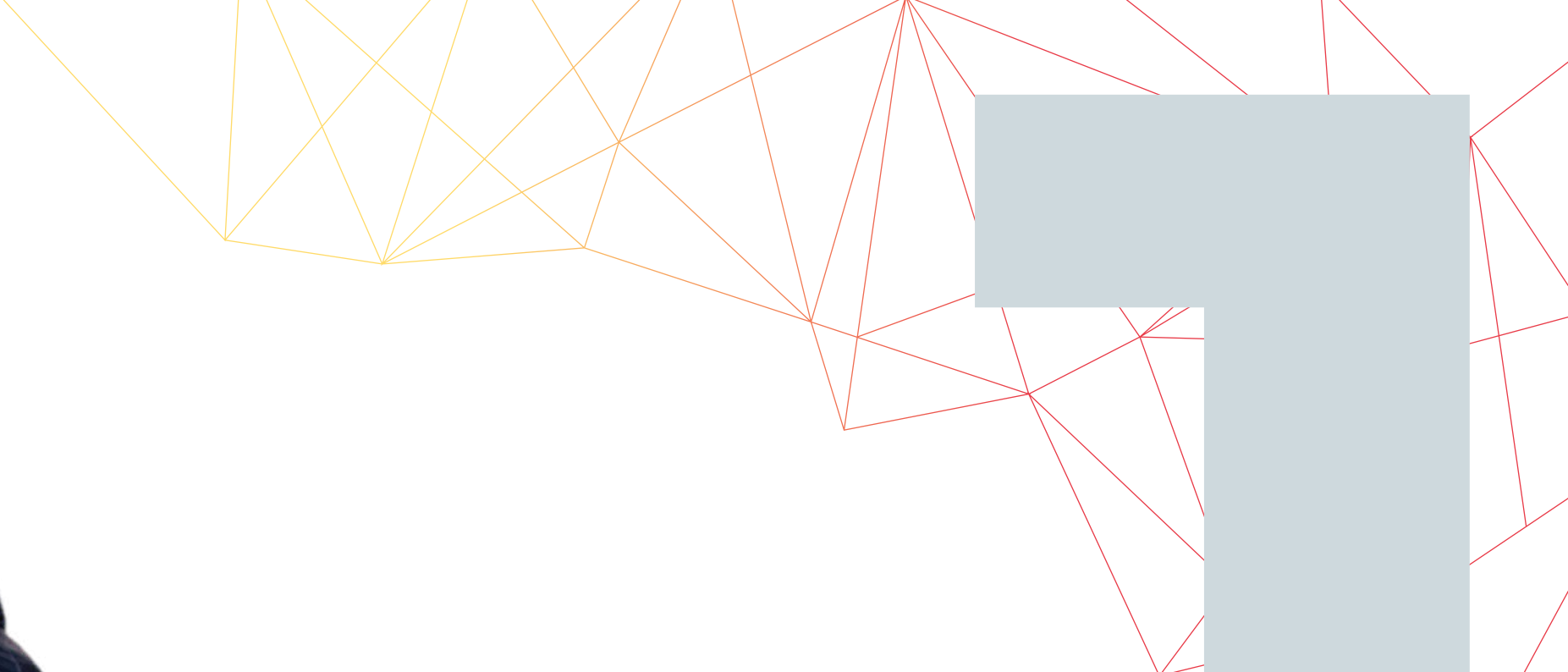
KEY QUESTIONS

How many people are reached by the IFRC network? What are the standout results in terms of reach for each of *Strategy 2030*'s five Global Challenges?

What progress has the IFRC network made in the past few years?

How can we understand the progress made by all National Societies, not just the large ones?

What additional insights does the IFRC's unified planning and reporting process give us?

How does progress compare for National Societies in higher-income and lower-income countries?

The FDRS is in itself an extraordinary achievement, collecting reliable data regularly from 191 National Societies around the world. However, it is designed to collect a small set of core indicators which represent a fraction of the wealth of activities and achievements which National Societies are involved in. Nevertheless, it is possible to do detective work on this simple set of core indicators in order to answer a surprisingly broad range of interesting questions, even before we turn to other data sets to complement the FDRS.

NATIONAL SOCIETIES' OVERALL REACH

Figure 1.1 presents numbers of people reached in 2023, including those donating blood and trained in first aid, on important FDRS Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). Each dot is a National Society. Each row corresponds to one of the KPIs.

Figure 1.1 shows that the overall totals are breathtaking, the largest being 200 million people reached with health services.

We can see that there is a large range of numbers of people reached for each KPI. The range of numbers is so large that we have used a logarithmic scale (so that the distance between ten and 100 is the same as the distance between 100 and 1,000). Otherwise, the picture would be dominated by a few National Societies making very large contributions and it would be hard to distinguish between the other National Societies.

This wide range is to be expected, not only because the National Societies serve countries of very different sizes, but also because each country has a different range of needs and each National Society has its own unique way of meeting those needs.

National income group

● Higher income

● Lower income

● Not available
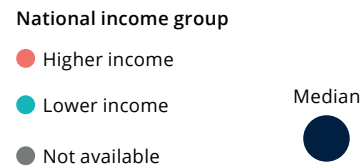
● Median

Source: FDRS. Data for 2023 is still provisional. On the vertical axis, the KPIs are sorted according to the global medians, so that those with the highest global medians are at the top. Each dot is one NS. The dots are coloured by the World Bank income group of the National Society's country. Black dots show filtered medians (only including National Societies which actually do the activity). Overall totals are shown on the right.

Figure 1.1 IFRC network reach in 2023 *people reached*

KPI	Median	Total
Health	426 000	200,000,000
Long term services and development programmes	190 000	78,000,000
Immunisation services	162 000	47,000,000
Disaster Risk Reduction	62 500	29,000,000
Water, sanitation and hygiene	55 600	61,000,000
Disaster response and early recovery	50 000	71,000,000
Livelihoods	23 100	24,000,000
National Society education programmes	18 000	24,000,000
Migration	17 200	12,000,000
Protection, gender, and inclusion programmes	16 900	16,000,000
Mental health and psychosocial support services	15 000	14,000,000
Heatwave risk reduction, preparedness or response	12 500	6,000,000
Activities to address rising climate risks	12 400	9,000,000
Cash transfer programming	8 970	10,000,000
Shelter	7 660	9,000,000
People donating blood	5 900	11,000,000
People trained in First Aid (any level)	3 660	15,000,000

Totals

Number of people (logarithmic scale)

Figure 1.2 illustrates this by showing proportionately the different contributions made by the different National Societies to just one example KPI: the number of people reached with migration programming. A few National Societies reach many people, and many National Societies reach comparatively few people. This pattern can be found across different indicators, though the names of the National Societies and the names of the indicators change each time[1].

Figure 1.2 12 million people reached with migration programming: National Society contributions
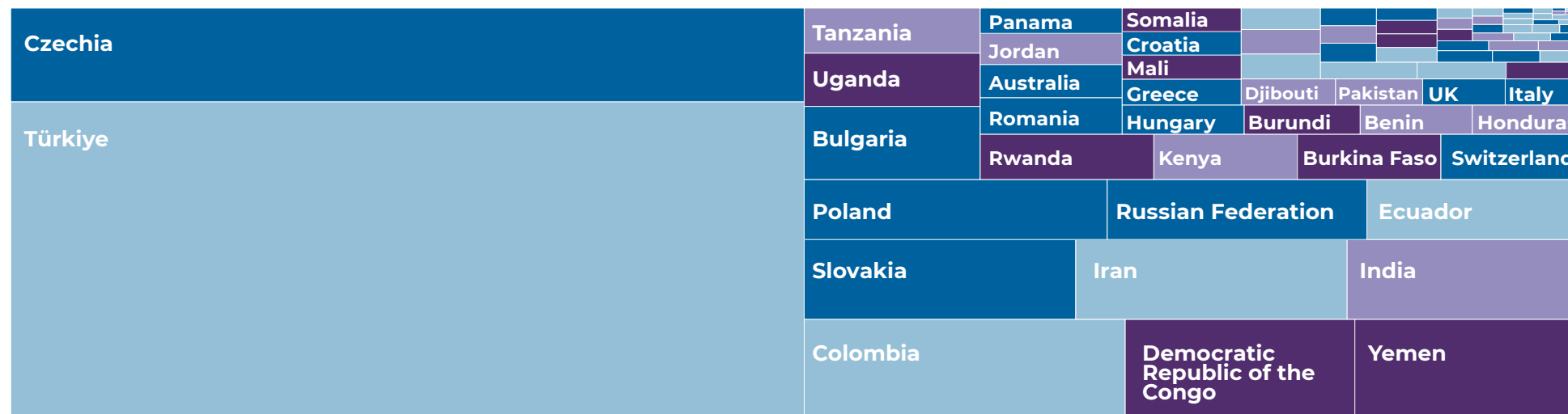
National income group ● Low income ● Lower middle income ● Upper middle income ● High income

Source: FDRS. Data for 2023 is still provisional. Size of each rectangle is proportional to the contribution.

Findings

National Societies around the world reach hundreds of millions of people with different kinds of services and programming.

This large variation between National Societies is why we also show *median* numbers. (The median score over many National Societies for one KPI, is what you get if you list that KPI for all the National Societies in order of size and take the *middle* number[2].) Even here there are some very large numbers: the typical (median) National Society reaches around 426,000 people with health services, or 17,200 people with migration programming.

1 A phenomenon known to statisticians as a power law distribution
2 These are filtered medians which filter out National Societies which do not provide this service at all

Türkiye 2023 Following the devastating earthquake that stroke Türkiye and Syria on 6 February 2023, Turkish Red Crescent has deployed more than 4,000 staff and volunteers to respond to the urgent needs of the affected people.

© Turkish Red Crescent

PROGRESS ON *STRATEGY 2030'S* FIVE GLOBAL CHALLENGES: MEDIANS AND TOTALS

Figure 1.1 above looks good: the IFRC network is reaching millions of people. But how did we get here? What are the trends? In these two pages of figures, we look at progress over the past decade on the FDRS Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). The FDRS system is flexible and is gradually extended as new needs arise. Some indicators are relatively new within the FDRS, aligning with the Global Challenges of *Strategy 2030* and priorities defined through statutory texts of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement.

> The data for 2023 are provisional: they were still being finalized as this report was written.

As well as the totals we present medians. Progress on overall medians as well as totals is good news: it means not only that more and more people are being reached but also that this progress is not only due to the largest National Societies, but rather that overall, each National Society is reaching more and more people.

For example, if we look at shelter programming, the global totals have fluctuated a lot between 2016 and 2023, but the median has been steadily climbing. This is due to reductions in people reached in a smaller number of large operations on the one hand and a larger number of smaller operations on the other.

Figure 1.3 Climate and environmental crises *(number of people reached – Total)*

- **Activities to address rising climate risks**
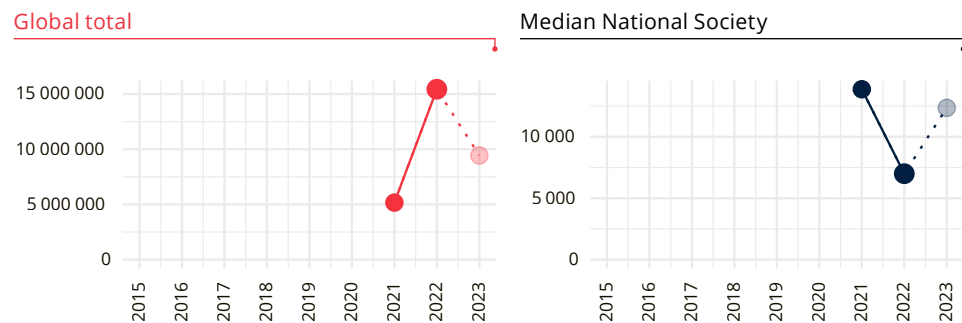
- **Heatwave risk reduction, preparedness or response**

Source: FDRS. Data for 2023 is still provisional, so dotted lines are used. Medians are filtered (only including National Societies which actually do the activity).

Number of NSs
- 0
- 50
- 100
- 150
- 200

Data
Confirmed
Provisional
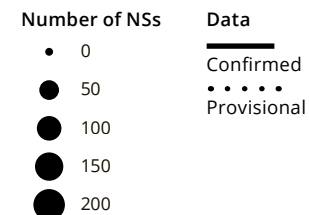
Figure 1.4 Evolving crises and disasters *(number of people reached – Total)*

- **Disaster Risk Reduction**

Global total
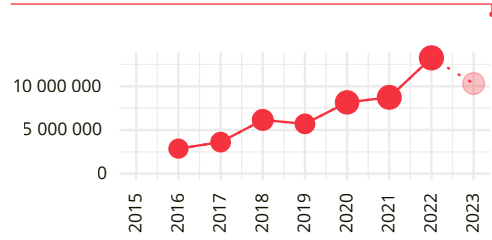
Median National Society
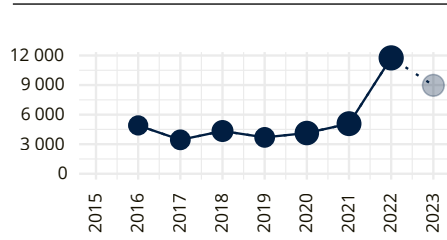
- **Disaster response and early recovery**

Global total
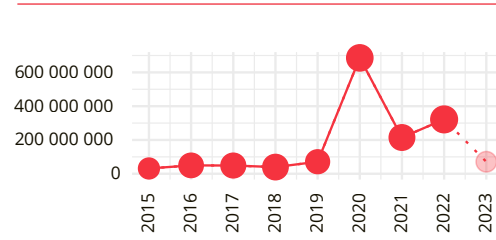
Median National Society
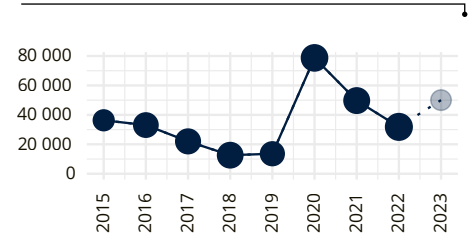
- **Cash transfer programming**

Global total
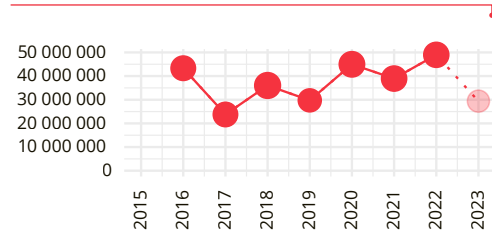
Median National Society
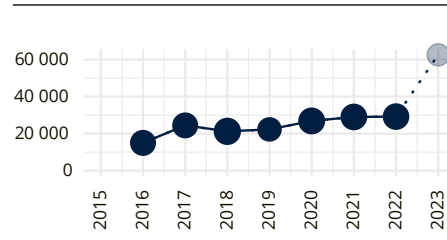
- **Livelihoods**

Global total
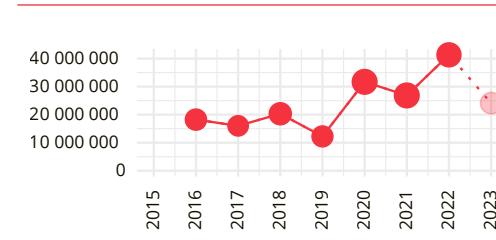
Median National Society
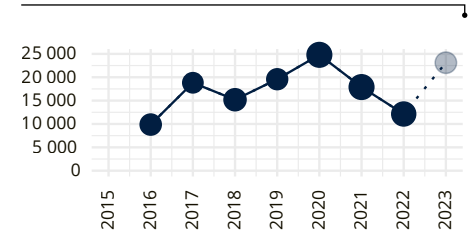
- **Shelter**

Global total
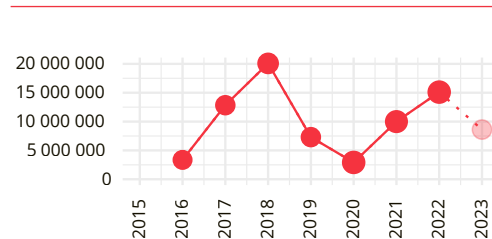
Median National Society
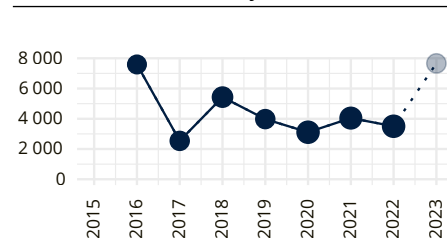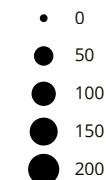
Number of NSs
- 0
- 50
- 100
- 150
- 200

Data

—— Confirmed

····· Provisional

Source: FDRS. Data for 2023 is still provisional, so dotted lines are used. Medians are filtered (only including National Societies which actually do the activity).

Figure 1.5 Growing gaps in health and wellbeing *(number of people reached – Total)*

• **Health**
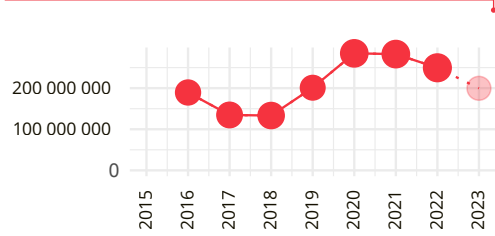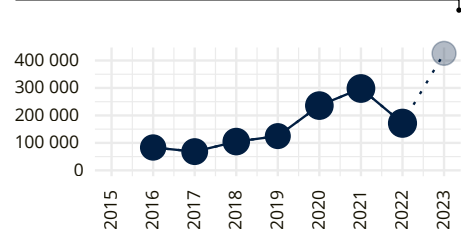
• **Water, Sanitation and Hygiene**

• **Mental health and psychosocial support services**

• **Immunisation services**

Source: FDRS. Data for 2023 is still provisional, so dotted lines are used. Medians are filtered (only including National Societies which actually do the activity).

Number of NSs

- 0
- 50
- 100
- 150
- 200

Data

— Confirmed
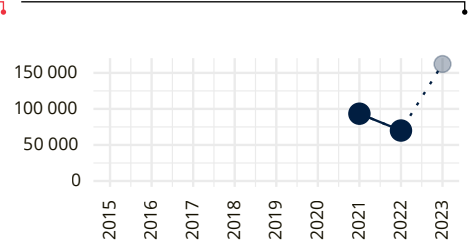
· · · · · Provisional

Figure 1.6 Migration and identity *(number of people reached – Total)*

- **Migration**

Global total

Median National Society

Number of NSs
- 0
- 50
- 100
- 150
- 200

Data
Confirmed
Provisional
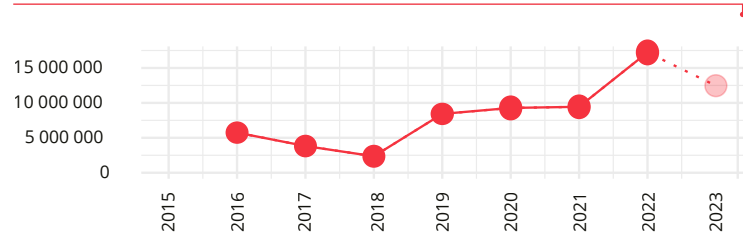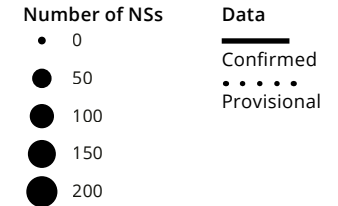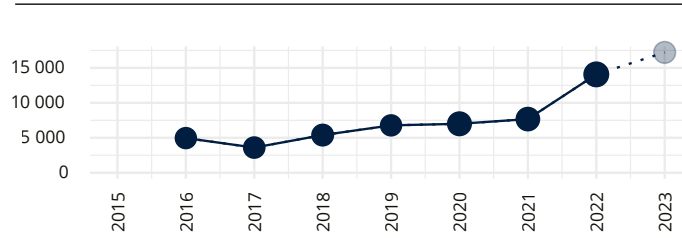
Figure 1.7 Values, power and inclusion *(number of people reached – Total)*

- **Protection, gender and inclusion programmes**
- **National Society educational programmes**

Global total

Median National Society
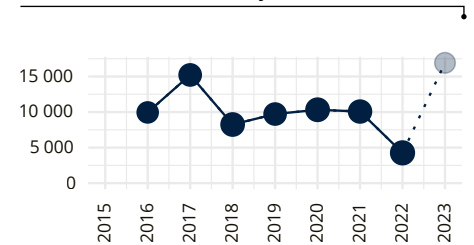
Global total

Median National Society

Source: FDRS. Data for 2023 is still provisional, so dotted lines are used. Medians are filtered (only including National Societies which actually do the activity).

These graphs show the "noise" as many National Societies adapt their activities to changing circumstances. But the overall picture is positive: in most cases, both medians and totals show an upward trend.

Findings

Overall, National Societies are reaching more and more people each year on the majority of KPIs, in terms of both total numbers and median numbers. Migration and cash transfer programming both show a particularly strong development.

Malawi 2023 Malawi Red Cross Society volunteers carry water from a borehole to a cholera treatment centre.

© Victor Lacken / IFRC

THE FIVE GLOBAL CHALLENGES OF *STRATEGY 2030* IN DETAILS

Now we will look at the five Global Challenges individually (see the Appendix). For each one we will present the KPIs from the FDRS, sometimes together with data from other sources. FDRS indicators have been complemented by a whole set of new standard and also custom indicators included in the new unified planning and reporting system.

The data for 2023 are provisional: they were still being finalized as this report was written.

The figures in this section, such as Figure 1.8, each show four separate lines of progress, according to the World Bank's four income levels for the country to which each National Society belongs.

The numbers behind these figures are ordinary, not filtered, medians. That means that if a National Society reported a zero number the median calculation includes it and may be lower because of it. See more details on the FDRS dataset in the Appendix.

Global Challenge 1 Climate and environmental crises

Our analysis of Annual Reports from around the world (see Chapter 4) confirms that climate and environmental crises are a pressing concern for many, as illustrated by this extract:

> **Annual Report for Malawi, 2022** *The position of Malawi, as a land-locked country in Southern Africa, has made it particularly vulnerable to changing climate patterns and weather shocks. A scarcity of land resources, poverty, and a growing population are continuing to increase pressure on natural resources, while heavier but less predictable rains, hotter weather, and extended dry periods are making planting and harvesting more difficult. (Page 2).*

Figure 1.8 Climate and environmental crises – median people reached
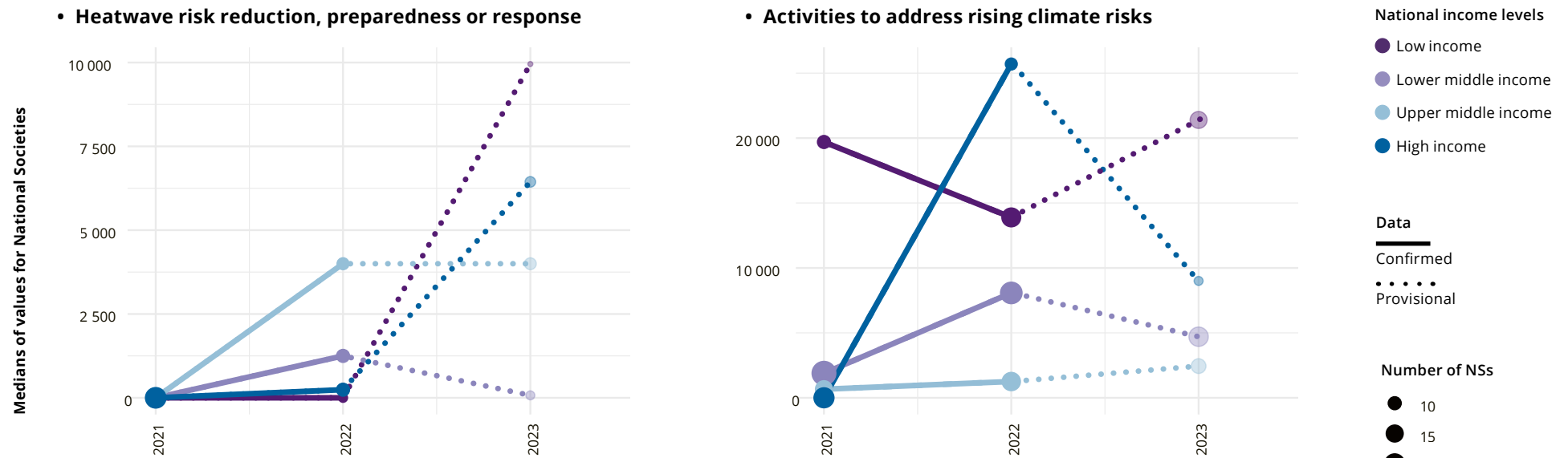
- **Heatwave risk reduction, preparedness or response**
- **Activities to address rising climate risks**

Source: FDRS. Data for 2023 is still provisional, so dotted lines are used. Removing data points with less than 5 NSs reporting. National income levels use World Bank classification.

Until 2021, the work of National Societies in relation to climate and environmental issues was mostly captured under disaster risk reduction, which still represents a significant contribution to reducing heightened risks from weather-related events and environmental degradation. The more recent FDRS indicators focus on more targeted and deliberate action to address climate change impacts. The number of National Societies reporting these indicators has increased substantially in every region. At thersame time, the medians for *Activities to address rising climate risks* are remaining stable and the medians for *Heatwave Risk Reduction* are even increasing substantially.

Unified Planning and Reporting 2023
People reached with activities to address environmental problems

The unified planning and reporting process includes indicators which complement the two indicators reported above to measure how National Societies undertake urgent action to adapt to the rising and evolving risks from climate and environmental crises. Actions range from conducting training on climate and environmental crises, locally led adaptation and climate-smart programming and operations, to designing and implementing nature-based solutions, community education/awareness raising activities on adapting to and reducing climate-related risks and implementing actions that address climate displacement.

For more on how National Societies are dealing with complex crises, which some are calling "polycrises",

Global Challenge 2 Evolving crises and disasters

This Global Challenge includes FDRS indicators for disaster risk reduction, disaster response and early recovery, livelihoods, shelter and cash transfer programming.

Annual Reports from around the world illustrate the way that different crises and challenges are constantly emerging to threaten populations:

Armenian Annual Report, 2022 *In 2022, the Armenian Red Cross Society continued the implementation of its humanitarian mission in a complex and challenging environment, as crises and emergencies continued to shake the entire world, as well as our country and region. (Page 1)*

The Annual Reports also discuss the unique role of the National Society to address these "polycrises":

French Annual Report, 2022 *Faced with the multiplication of crises – health, economic, climatic, migratory…, the French Red Cross has a historic role to play with vulnerable people. In a fractured society, it is a trusted partner with public authorities and all those who wish to develop solidarities. (Page 10)*

5,389,231

people reached with activities to address environmental problems

42

National Societies globally

Source: Unified Planning and Reporting 2023

Armenia 2024 © Yulia Bilenko / IFRC

Figure 1.9 Evolving crises and disasters – median people reached

• Disaster response and early recovery

• Disaster Risk Reduction

• Livelihoods

• Shelter

• Cash transfer programming

Findings

National Societies in the lowest income countries are those reaching the most people on all these indicators for the Global Challenge of evolving crises and disasters.

Cash transfer programming shows particularly substantial increases over the past few years, especially in low income countries.

National income levels
- Low income
- Lower middle income
- Upper middle income
- High income

Data
— Confirmed
• • • • Provisional

Number of NSs
- 20
- 30
- 40
- 50

Source: FDRS. Data for 2023 is still provisional, so dotted lines are used. Removing data points with less than 5 NSs reporting. National income levels use World Bank classification.

Pakistan Red Crescent Annual Report 2021 *There is an increased use of cash transfer programming (CTP) in humanitarian response; and it is widely recognized that cash transfers can be an appropriate and effective tool to support populations affected by disasters in a way that maintains dignity and choice for beneficiaries while stimulating local livelihoods, economies and markets. The Movement has a long history of using Cash Transfer Programming in disaster response and it is recognized that adequate preparedness and organizational institutionalization of CTP are critical pre-requisites for an organization to rapidly deliver cash. (Page 54)*

Global Challenge 3 Growing gaps in health and wellbeing

The FDRS KPIs for this Global Challenge cover health, water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH), immunization, and mental health and psychosocial support.

Figure 1.10 Growing gaps in health and wellbeing – median people reached

Source: FDRS. Data for 2023 is still provisional, so dotted lines are used. Removing data points with less than 5 NSs reporting. National income levels use World Bank classification.

Immunization services, although familiar to some National Societies, reached a new prominence during the COVID-19 pandemic. Measured as part of the IFRC network global response to COVID-19[3], the indicator was subsequently adopted as a new FDRS indicator. Mental health and psychosocial needs of people affected by disasters and crises was a main theme of the 33rd International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent in December 2019 where the

3   https://go.ifrc.org/emergencies/3972/additional-info/actions

Movement and the 196 States Parties to the Geneva Conventions adopted a resolution addressing this urgent humanitarian issue. The related indicator was introduced in FDRS shortly after.

Dominican Republic Red Cross Society Annual Report 2022 *Compared to the year 2021, affected by COVID-19 social distancing, we more than doubled our in-person care, and virtual care has multiplied by 100. (Page 6).*

However, these activities were not without problems:

Ghana Red Cross Society Annual Report 2022 *Some major challenges encountered are absence of health professional to vaccinate the identified persons by the volunteers. It was observed there were low motivation of health staff to lift their morale to do their works diligently. Limited vaccines at some health centres.... (Page 10)*

Findings

Figure 1.10 shows that National Societies in low-income countries generally reach the highest number of people across health and water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) services, followed by lower-middle-income countries, with National Societies in high-income countries reaching fewer people, but still substantial numbers.

Although starting from a higher level, National Societies in low-income countries also demonstrated the highest increases over time.

For more on how National Societies are taking a systemic approach to health challenges, *see p. 91 in Chapter 5*

Dominican Republic 2016
Red Cross Vounteers inform residents about the Zika virus.

© Miguel Domingo Garcìa

Global Challenge 4 Migration and identity

Figure 1.11 Migration and identity – median people reached
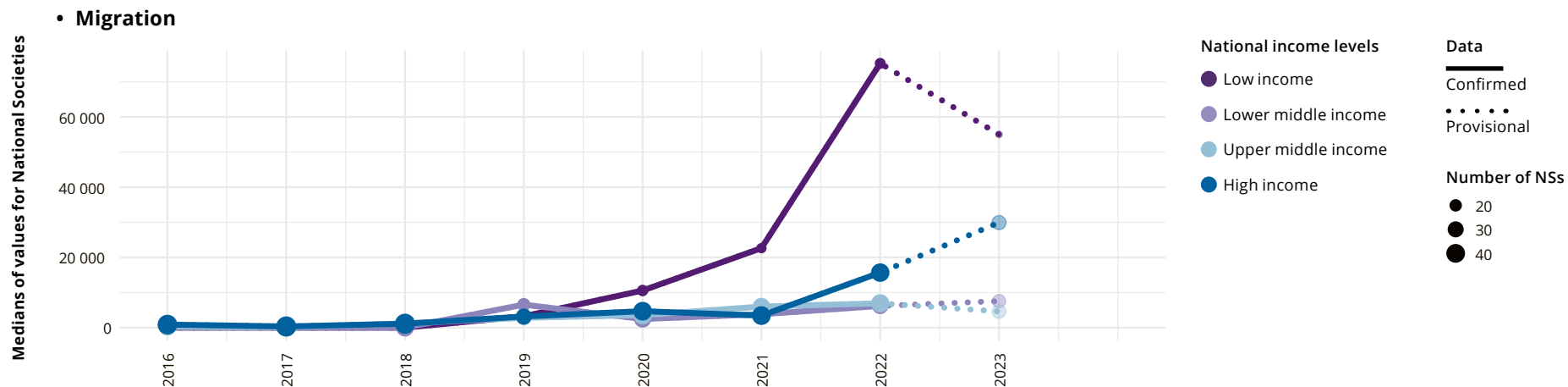
• **Migration**

Source: FDRS. Data for 2023 is still provisional, so dotted lines are used. Removing data points with less than 5 NSs reporting. National income levels use World Bank classification.

Findings

On number of the people reached with migration programming, unusually, National Societies in high-income countries report median figures above those in middle-income countries. But National Societies in low-income countries pulled away from those in all other countries, reaching a median of more than 70,000 people by 2022.

Senegal Red Cross Annual Report, 2021 *The Senegalese Red Cross, in partnership with the Spanish Red Cross, is leading a project funded by the European Union through the Emergency Trust Fund for Africa to strengthen the protection and assistance of the most vulnerable migrants along the main migration routes between West Africa and the Sahel to North Africa. The action, lasting three years (2020–2023), is being implemented in the regions of Kolda, Sédhiou, and Ziguinchor. (Page 50)*

Australia Red Cross Annual Report 2020 *As the global pandemic became a local emergency, Australian Red Cross activated to provide emergency relief to 128,133 people in Australia on temporary visas, people seeking asylum, people without visas temporary visas, people in isolation or quarantine or in remote communities. (Page 18)*

This quote from Australian Red Cross shows how migration and COVID-19 were interrelated.

Senegal 2015 El Hadji Diop, President of the Association of illegal repatriated migrants and affected Families in Thiaroye-sur-mer. He lost eight family members including his son, nephews, and grandchildren on the sea route to Spain.

© Ricci Shryock / IFRC

257

Humanitarian Service Points provided assistance and/ or protection to people on the move along land-based migration routes

23

National Societies globally

Source: Unified Planning and Reporting 2023

Panama 2023 © Hermanos Corallo / IFRC

Unified Planning and Reporting 2023

Number of Humanitarian Service Points (HSPs) that provided assistance and/or protection to people on the move along land-based migration routes

This indicator highlights National Societies' commitment to ensuring migrants and displaced persons have access to humanitarian assistance and protection at key points along migratory routes as well as access to durable solutions when appropriate.

Humanitarian Service Points (HSPs) are an IFRC network tool for addressing the lack of access to essential services for many migrants and displaced persons. HSPs are an expression and fulfillment of **humanitarian principles**. Assistance at HSPs is provided based on the principle of **humanity**, and delivered **impartially**, on the basis of need alone and irrespective of migration status or other considerations. HSPs operate **independently** of government or other influence and demonstrate **neutrality** in situations where migration may be politically sensitive. They provide a safe and welcoming space for migrants to receive these services at key points on their migration routes.

The Humanitarian Service Point at Sea (HSP@Sea)

In addition to HSPs established by National Societies along land-routes, the Humanitarian Service Point at Sea (HSP@Sea) was initiated by IFRC in collaboration with SOS Mediterranée in response to the growing humanitarian crisis in the Central Mediterranean.

This region has become one of the deadliest migration routes, with a sharp increase in the number of migrants risking their lives to reach Europe from North Africa and the Middle East. The HSP@Sea project aims to provide a coordinated and comprehensive humanitarian response, addressing the urgent needs of migrants at sea, including rescue operations, medical care, and the distribution of essential supplies. The initiative highlights the commitment of the IFRC and its partners to saving lives, alleviating suffering, and ensuring the dignity and safety of at-risk populations on this perilous journey.

Figure 1.12 People rescued 2021–2024 as part of HSP@Sea
Disclaimer: data is from the data collection system used on board.

Number of rescues done: **123**
People rescued: **6841**
Days to disembarkation*: **6**

By age
By gender
- 0.67K (9.82%) female
- 6.17K (90.18%) male

Minors: **1841**
Unaccompanied minors: **1478**
People travelling with family: **1215**

* average number of days between the first rescue and disembarkation
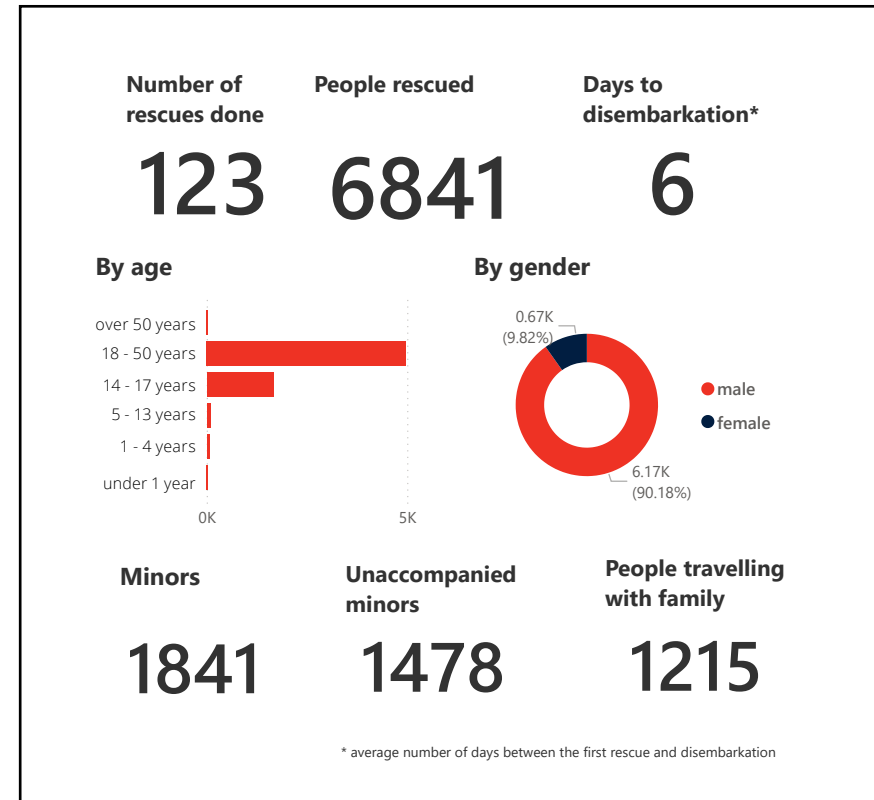
Findings

In 2023, 23 National Societies were operating 257 Humanitarian Service Points (HSPs), providing assistance to migrants along land routes. In addition, the IFRC-SOS Mediterranée partnership constitutes a key HSP@Sea on the deadly sea route in the Mediterranean.

Global Challenge 5 Values, power and inclusion

The FDRS KPIs for this Global Challenge cover programming for education and protection, gender and inclusion.

Figure 1.13 Values, power and inclusion – median people reached
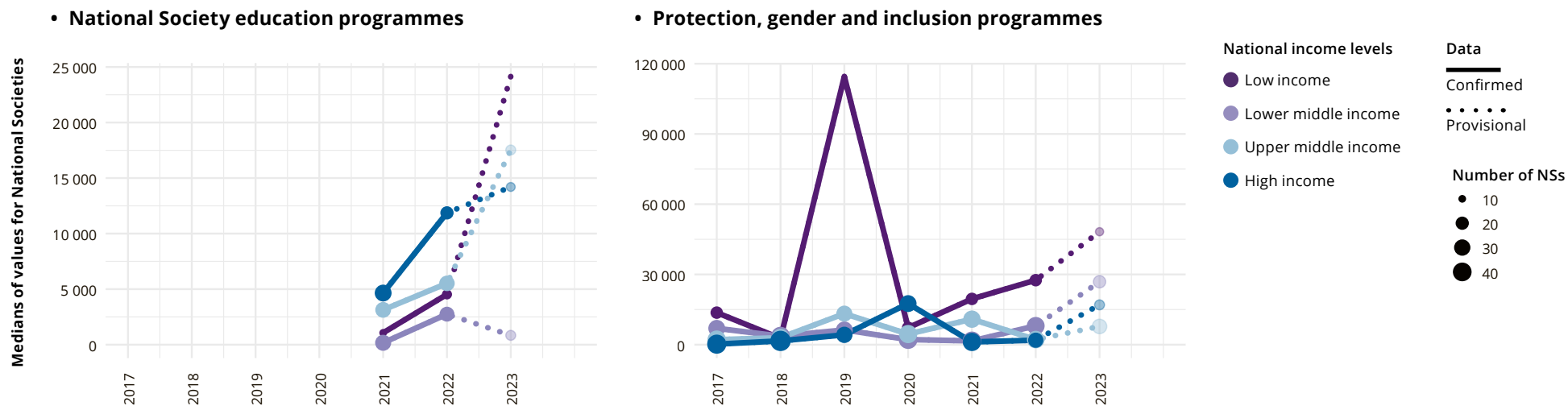
• **National Society education programmes**

• **Protection, gender and inclusion programmes**

National income levels
- Low income
- Lower middle income
- Upper middle income
- High income

Data
— Confirmed
····· Provisional
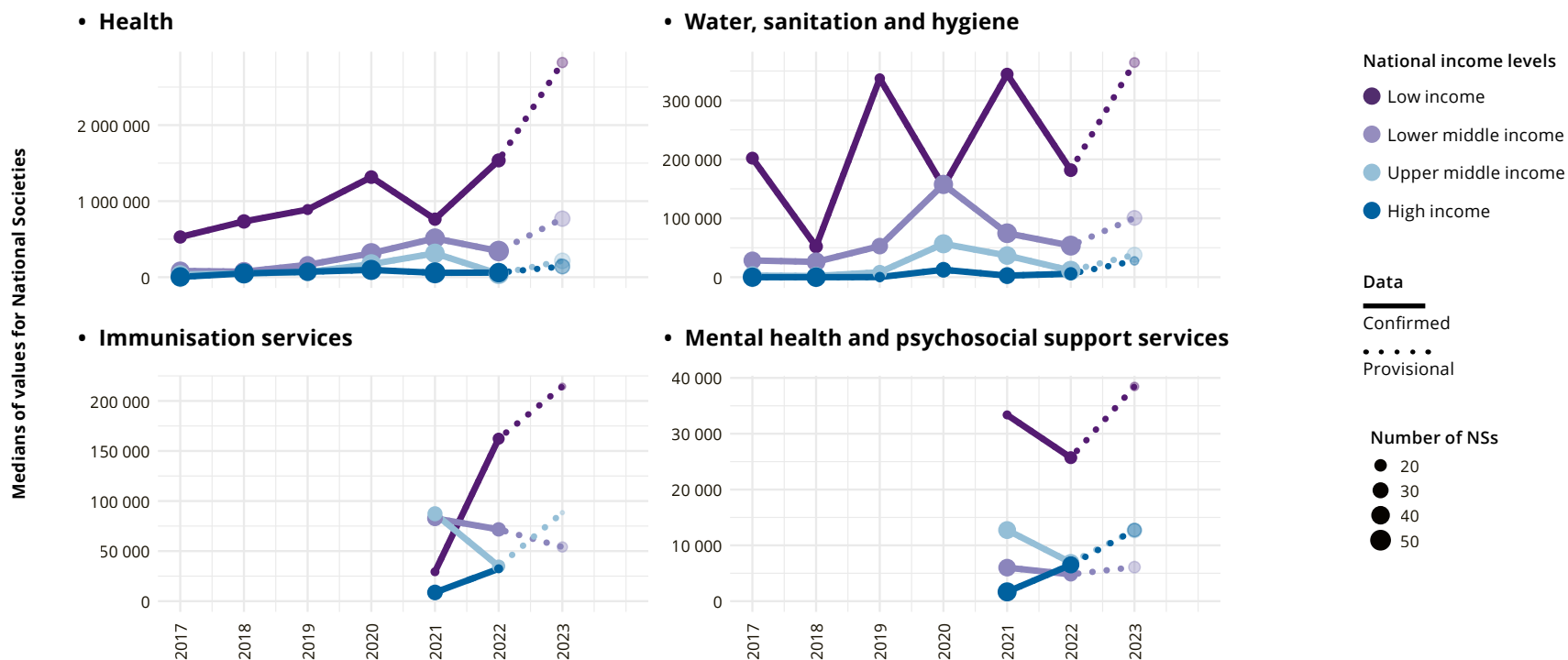
Number of NSs
- 10
- 20
- 30
- 40

Source: FDRS. Data for 2023 is still provisional, so dotted lines are used. Removing data points with less than 5 NSs reporting. National income levels use World Bank classification.

Educational programme activities are not new for most National Societies, but the FDRS indicator was introduced following the 2017 resolution of the Council of Delegates titled "Education: related humanitarian needs", and ensuing IFRC Education Framework 2020–2030. Data shows that National Societies have been reaching more people in the past three years.

Findings

Programming for the Global Challenge of values, power and inclusion has increased substantially since 2017. While programming for protection, gender and inclusion such as on child protection, the prevention of sexual and gender-based violence, addressing social inclusion, or increased gender and diversity analysis is highest in lower-income countries, educational programmes reach many people also in higher-income countries.

Protection, gender and inclusion programming is most often cross-cutting, as illustrated by this quote:

> **Guinea Red Cross Annual Report 2020** *The approach to Protection, Gender, and Inclusion was integrated into the entire intervention to ensure dignity, access, participation, and safety for communities. (Page 43)*

Additional indicators for values, power and inclusion that are available through unified planning and reporting relate to community engagement and accountability (CEA). This way of working recognizes and values all community members as equal partners, whose diverse needs, priorities, and preferences guide everything we do. This approach is enshrined in the Movement Commitments for Community Engagement and Accountability, which were adopted at the 2019 Council of Delegates. People and communities, vulnerable to and affected by crises, should be empowered to influence decisions affecting them and trust the National Societies and IFRC network to serve their best interests.

Unified Planning and Reporting 2023
Is community engagement and accountability integrated and institutionalized in the National Society policies, operations, and procedures?

While CEA is embedded in values, power and inclusion, it should be integrated into the activities under other *Strategy 2030* Global Challenges. This indicator can be achieved by integrating meaningful community participation, open and honest communication, and mechanisms to listen to and act on feedback, within programmes and operations, and adopting related policies and procedures.

83.6%

of people report effective information dissemination
By sharing risk information in local languages through trusted channels and establishing feedback mechanisms. This approach aims to boost community resilience against evolving and multiple shocks and hazards

Across

22

National Societies
in the Americas, Africa, Asia Pacific and Europe and Central Asia

Source: Unified Planning and Reporting 2023

For more on the impact of polarization on humanitarian endeavours,

Guinea 2014 © IFRC

Syria 2014 A Syrian Arab Red Crescent volunteer helps children in the summer school in Sahnaya.

© Ibrahim Malla / IFRC

Figure 1.14 Number of NSs which report that they have integrated and institutionalised community engagement and accountability in their policies, operations, and procedures (with clear benchmarks)

Number of National Societies

- Reported as not yet implemented
- Reported as already implemented

Source: Unified Planning and Reporting 2023.

	Africa	Americas	Asia Pacific	Europe and Central Asia	Middle East and North Africa
Not yet implemented	8	19	7	4	4
Already implemented	30 / 78.9%	11 / 36.7%	21 / 75%	11 / 73.3%	5 / 55.6%

Findings

Educational programmes have expanded, reaching more people in recent years. Protection, gender, and inclusion programming is being integrated across interventions. Community engagement and accountability is becoming more strongly institutionalized. More detailed information on these activities is now being collected in the unified planning and reporting system.

KEY FINDINGS

National Societies' global impact:

- **Reach:** hundreds of millions of people served annually, with increasing numbers across most key performance indicators, both in terms of total people reached and median numbers.

- **Low-income countries:** lead in evolving disasters and crises, and health and WASH services. Rapid growth in cash transfer programming.

- **Lower middle-income countries:** strong in disaster response, reduction, and health services.

- **Migration:** high-income societies match middle-income ones. Low-income societies now lead, reaching more than 70,000 people (median). In 2023, 23 National Societies were operating 257 Humanitarian Service Points (HSPs), providing assistance to migrants along land routes. In addition, the IFRC-SOS Mediterranée partnership constitutes a key HSP@Sea on the deadly sea route in the Mediterranean.

- **Values, power, and inclusion:** significant growth since 2017. Protection programmes strongest in lower-income countries; education programmes reach more in higher-income nations. Community engagement and accountability is becoming more strongly institutionalized. More detailed information on these and other activities is now being collected in the unified planning and Reporting system.

THE CHANGING CONTEXT

2

KEY QUESTIONS

Is it true that National Societies are being confronted with an increasingly broad range of threats?

How is the IFRC network adapting our models of financial support in emergencies?

Do National Societies around the world report that crises are becoming more complex and interconnected?

Does increasing polarization in many societies affect the work of National Societies?

How quickly did we adapt our overall response in the concrete case of COVID-19 and how quickly did we adapt our strategy as the context developed?

How do National Societies prepare in the face of changing and more complex crises?

In this age when surprise plays so important a part, is it not possible that wars may arise, from one quarter or another, in the most sudden and unexpected fashion? And do not these considerations alone constitute more than adequate reason to take precautions against surprise?

— Henri Dunant
A Memory of Solferino, 1862

This quote from Henri Dunant warns us to expect the unexpected. It is more relevant than ever today and leads us to the following questions.

THE INCREASING RANGE OF THREATS

IFRC-DREF operations and Emergency Appeals contain information about types of emergencies in which different National Societies are involved. In the IFRC database, each appeal is assigned to one of 23 different types. We can use this data to see if the range of different threats changes over time. Specifically, to construct Figure 2.1, for each year and each National Society we look at the total number of different types of threat which the National Society has encountered *over the preceding ten years*, as measured by the IFRC-DREF operations and Emergency Appeals in which they were involved. So, this is a rolling total: it reflects a kind of "institutional history" of the range of threats which current staff are likely to have experience with.

Figure 2.1 Increasing range of different types of threats confronting National Societies
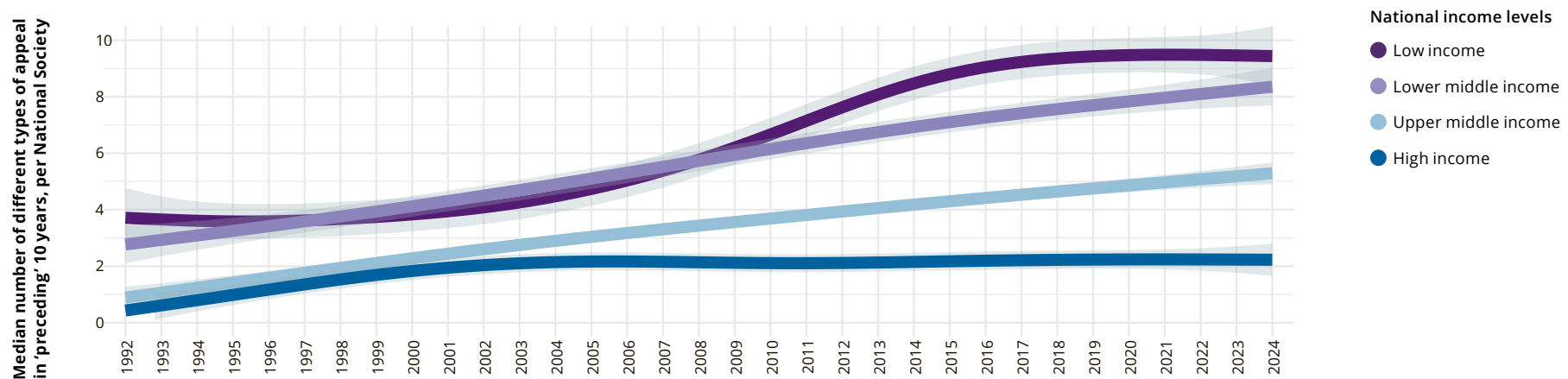
Source: Appeals and DREFs. Counting the number of different types of Emergency Appeals and DREFs which each National Society was involved in over the previous 10 years. Lines show the general trend for National Societies within each national income group.

Findings

National Societies in lower-income countries in 2024 have been confronted by around eight different types of threats/crises covered by an IFRC Emergency Appeal or IFRC-DREF operation in the preceding ten years, compared with around one or two in high-income countries.

Since 1992 there has been a steady increase in the range of crises facing a National Society covered by IFRC-Emergency Appeals or IFRC-DREF operations.

How are we adapting our models of financing crisis response?

National Societies are used to crises. The majority of crises are addressed by National Societies in the course of their work without recourse to additional funds. Sometimes additional international support is necessary, which is where IFRC Emergency Appeals and DREF allocations come in.

Figure 2.2 shows the total amount funded per year from 1994-2023, with call-outs to the top funded crisis.

Figure 2.2 Total amount funded per year for Emergency Appeals and DREF from 1994–2023
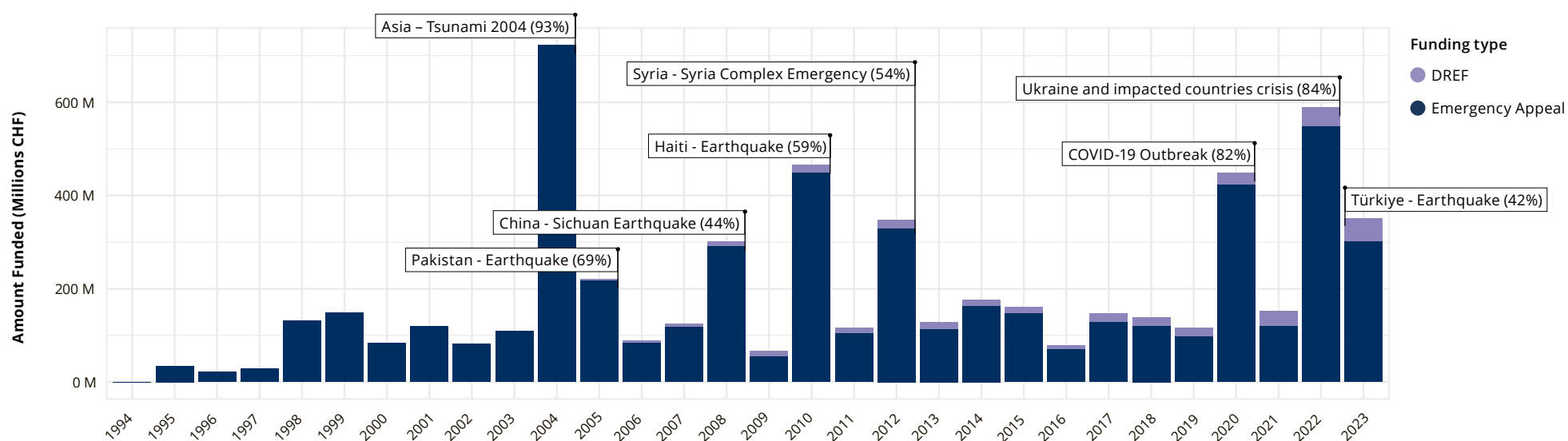
Source: Appeals and DREFs. Counting the number of different types of Emergency Appeals and DREFs which each National Society was involved in over the previous 10 years. Lines show the general trend for National Societies within each national income group.

The largest funds are mostly directed towards unpredictable tectonic hazards and disasters, such as the 2004 Indian Ocean Tsunami, the 2005 Pakistan Earthquake, the 2008 China Sichuan Earthquake, the 2010 Haiti Earthquake, the 2023 Türkiye Earthquake, as well as complex crises like the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic, the Syria Complex Emergency which started in 2011, and the crisis in Ukraine and neighbouring countries since 2022. These spikes demonstrate how unforeseen events can suddenly and dramatically increase funding requirements.

Findings

The largest Emergency Appeal funds are mostly directed towards unpredictable, tectonic hazards. Disasters like earthquakes, floods, and hurricanes are often very costly, due to their widespread destruction, economic disruption, significant reconstruction needs, and substantial insurance and humanitarian aid costs.

Figure 2.3 DREFs increasing year on year
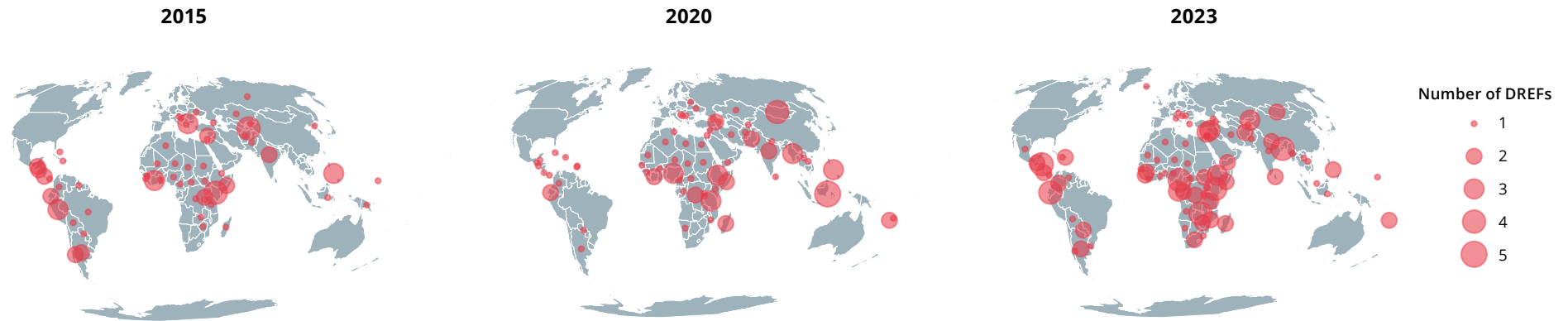
Source: Appeals/DREFs. The number of DREFs per National Society is mapped for three selected years.

Looking at the IFRC-DREF more specifically over the past two decades, we can see a significant evolution, demonstrating the IFRC network's commitment to respond to smaller emergencies through our efficient pool-fund mechanism dedicated to localized humanitarian action.

Findings

Since the launch of *Strategy 2030*, the IFRC-DREF has experienced a steady increase in both funding received and allocations made to support National Societies' emergency responses. This growth has been evident in the number of allocations and the total amounts allocated. In 2023, this trend reached an unprecedented level, with a total of 74.2 million Swiss francs allocated.

IFRC-DREF allocations in 2023 include 44 loans to Emergency Appeals, 140 grants for anticipation and response via IFRC-DREF operations, and eight triggered Early Action Protocols and simplified EAPs.

The average amount per allocation has also increased, now exceeding 305,000 Swiss francs for IFRC-DREF Grants and 643,000 Swiss francs for loans to Emergency Appeals. Despite this growth, the IFRC-DREF remains focused on small and medium-scale disasters, with more than 47% of the total amount allocated in 2023 supporting yellow category crises.

Additionally, the scope of the IFRC-DREF has expanded since 2018 with the inclusion of Anticipatory Action as a second pillar of the fund, resulting in over 41 million Swiss francs allocated since then. Figure 2.2 highlights the progression in allocation for two pillars.

Findings

The COVID-19 and Ukraine and Affected Countries crises were the first time in recent years that substantial funds in the crisis system were allocated to high-income countries.

Mentions of complexity of crises in the Annual Reports

If we look at the text of National Society Annual Reports, do they mention the complexity and interconnectedness of crises?

We can use a simple technique from Natural Language Processing, a precursor to generative AI, to identify passages in all the Annual Reports which deal with complex crises – regardless of what language[4] they are written in. This search reveals examples such as this:

> **Bangladesh Red Crescent Society, Annual Report 2022** *Due to the fast-changing global socio-political environment, humanitarian crises and their management have become gradually complex. On top of that, in recent years, the number of conflicts, wars, migration, violence, and forced displacement and migrations have alarmingly increased across the world. As a result, the humanitarian crisis might get intensified in the future and external support might reduce. To deal with such a situation, BDRCS needs to play a proactive role in increasing its internal capacity. (Page 3)*

But simply listing examples does not tell us whether this idea appears in the reports more or less frequently over time. So we can move on to use the same technique more systematically to create a "similarity score", a number between 0 and 1, which says how much each document section contains the idea of complex and interconnected crises and challenges. We set a cut-off of 0.35, as passages with at least this score usually contain at least an implicit mention of the topic. Then for each year we can calculate the average percentage of all Annual Report[5] sections with a similarity score above the cutoff.

Figure 2.4 shows that up to 1% of report sections make some mention of increasing complexity of crises, and the overall tendency is increasing.

For more on how National Societies are dealing with complex crises,

Findings

National Society Annual Reports increasingly often mention the complexity of the problems they are facing.

Figure 2.4 Mentions of complexity of crises
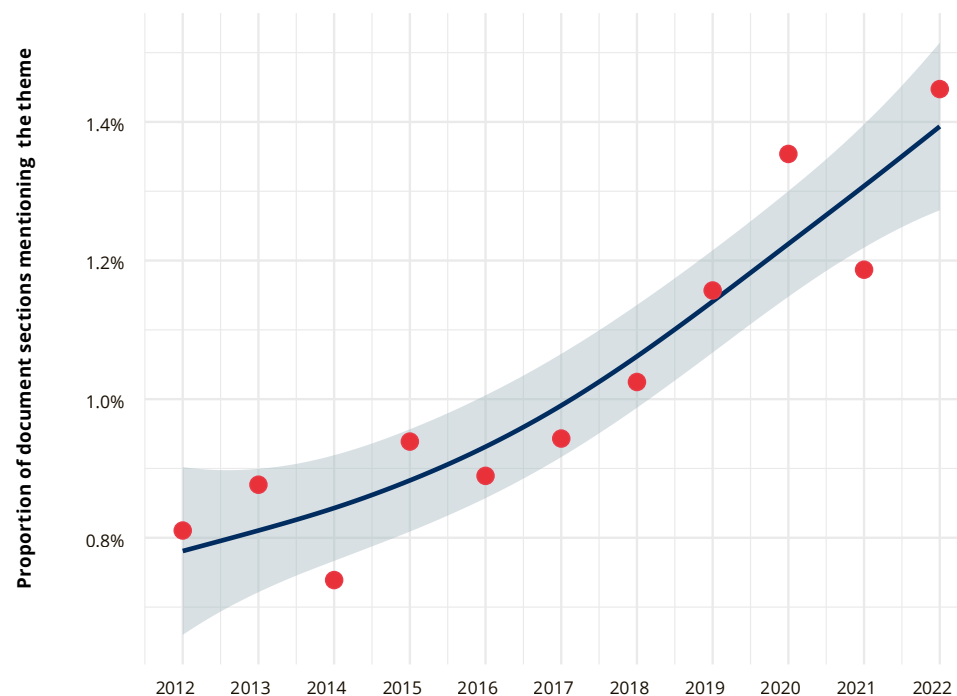
Source: Annual Reports. Numbers within the graph are the number of corresponding sections found.

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4   For more details on the method and how we treat different languages see the Appendix.
5   We used Annual Reports rather than Strategic Plans because mentions of the topic are relatively rare and there are not enough Strategic Plans in the past 2-3 years to ensure reliable results.

Mentions of social polarization in Strategic Plans and Annual Reports

Increasing social polarization is mentioned as part of Global Challenge 5 in *Strategy 2030*, which also links polarization to inequity:

> ***Strategy 2030*** *Values-based tensions are manifesting in different ways in different places, creating new fault lines within and between countries, regions and communities. The pace of change is leaving many political, regulatory and welfare systems unable to cope. The benefits of economic and technological progress, while driving significant gains and opportunities, are not being shared equally. Space for principled humanitarian action is shrinking, and is even criminalised in some parts of the world. These global changes risk creating a more disconnected, less inclusive and less empathetic world. (Page 16)*

What do National Societies have to say about this in their Strategic Plans and Annual Reports? Do they mention increasing polarization? Is it something noticed across geographies and across income groups? Reading through the Strategic Plans, there are indeed many mentions of polarization.

> **Kenya Red Cross 2025 Strategy** *Widespread inequality resulting in unemployment, poverty and political marginalization is contributing to the radicalization of some of Kenya's youth. This is providing a fertile environment for terrorist groups to recruit members by offering an opportunity to redress the balance with social and economic opportunities to those who have little. (Page 25)*

The Belgian Red Cross Strategic Plan also describes the unique role of National Societies in addressing polarization.

> **Belgian Red Cross Strategic Plan 2021–25** *Thanks to our neutral, humanitarian position, we play a connecting role in the society of tomorrow. We are one of the few organizations that can take on this connecting role. Our extensive volunteer network means we are close to the people. With all of these contacts, we are able to build a dam against polarization (Us vs. Them mentality) and extremism. And we do this internationally as well.. (Page 14).*

We can use a simple technique from Natural Language Processing, a precursor to generative AI, to quickly identify relevant passages in all the Annual Reports regardless of what language they are written in (details in the Appendix).

Many mentions of polarization are in relation to existing social divisions such as those between different ethnic groups.

> **North Macedonia Annual Report (2022)** *The social fabric in certain areas remains fragile, with ongoing risks of ethnic polarization exacerbating tensions. (p. 22)*

Myanmar 2019 A student in Yangon, Myanmar shares a fist bump with an American Red Cross worker.

© Jenelle Eli / American Red Cross

Increasing number of mentions of polarization in Annual Reports

Again, as on p. 48, we used Natural Language Processing to look for changes over time in Annual Reports. It shows a clear trend:

Figure 2.5 Mentions of social polarization in Annual Reports
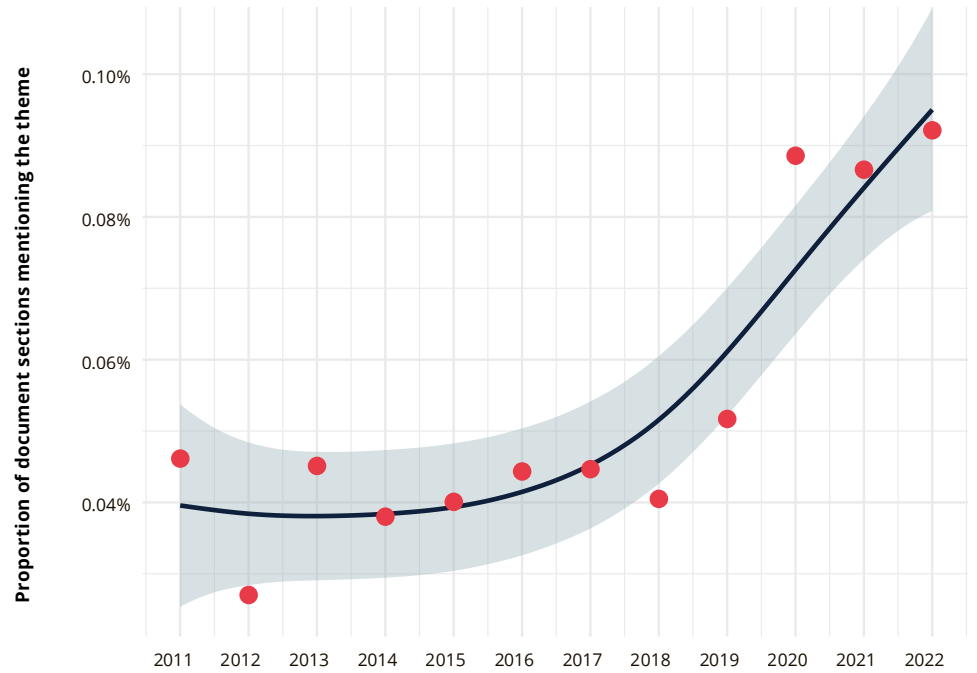
Source: Annual Reports. Numbers within the graph are the number of corresponding sections found.

Findings

Overall, social polarization is being mentioned with increasing frequency in National Society Annual Reports.

HOW QUICKLY DO WE ADAPT?

Henri Dunant would surely have been interested in how we responded to the biggest global health emergency in recent times: the COVID-19 pandemic. To what extent were we prepared for the (un)expected?

How quickly did we respond to COVID-19, overall?

To answer this question we will compare the speed of rollout of the COVID-19 response with the speed of the spread of the virus around the world, as measured by mortality.

The black line in Figure 2.6: We map the epidemiological curve for deaths due to COVID-19. Recall that it was at the end of Q1 2020, that WHO made the assessment that COVID-19 could be characterized as a pandemic[6]. This line corresponds to the black scale at the left of the figure.

The red line in Figure 2.6: The response was a very complicated operation, and it was also complicated to track. The IFRC maintained a set of 44 indicators (such as "Number of people supported through community WASH activities" or "Number of health facilities supported"[7]) . It is impossible to know exactly when each of these different kinds of support were actually delivered by each National Society, but to create this chart we use the date of the beginning of the quarter in which the activities were reported. The numbers for each indicator are quite different – some are reported in tens, some in millions. To make this figure we calculated the total rollout for each indicator, and then the percentage of that total which was delivered in each quarter, and finally calculated for each quarter the average percentage for all the indicators in each priority.

Figure 2.6 Speed of COVID-19 response rollout

Source: FDRS and Economist dataset. The red line shows the speed of the global rollout for the Covid-19 response: the percentage of the total rollout, averaged over all the Covid Tracking indicators.

Findings

The COVID-19 response was overall rolled out rapidly, with over one-third of the total response being rolled out by Q4 2020, reaching its peak well before the peak of the pandemic itself.

6   https://www.who.int/director-general/speeches/detail/
     who-director-general-s-opening-remarks-at-the-media-briefing-on-covid-19---11-march-2020
7   See https://go.ifrc.org/emergencies/3972/additional-info/actions

How did the COVID-19 response adapt?

National Society Annual Reports give many examples of how the elements of the response were adapted to respond to the changing challenges:

Philippine Red Cross Annual Report, 2020 *As COVID-19 affected more people and the economy, the Philippine Red Cross (PRC) continued to rise to respond to the challenge. On April 14, 2020, PRC inaugurated its first automated molecular testing laboratory in the country. At the end of the year, PRC accounted for 25 percent of all the tests done in the country with its 13 molecular laboratories in Metro Manila and the provinces. (Page 11)*

Maldivian Red Crescent Annual Report, 2021 *In adapting to the 'new normal' of the COVID-19 pandemic and adjusting to emergency response efforts related to the pandemic, the work towards furthering the key strategic priorities of the National Society was reinvigorated. The Psychosocial Support Helpline and the Migrant Support Helpline established in 2020 continued its services, strengthening the support provided to vulnerable groups and those in need. (Page 3)*

Figure 2.7 How the COVID-19 response was adapted

(Coloured circles show the priority making the biggest contribution in each quarter)

Priority ● Health (adjusted) ● NS Strengthening ● Socio-economic ● Testing ● Vaccination awareness ● Vaccinations
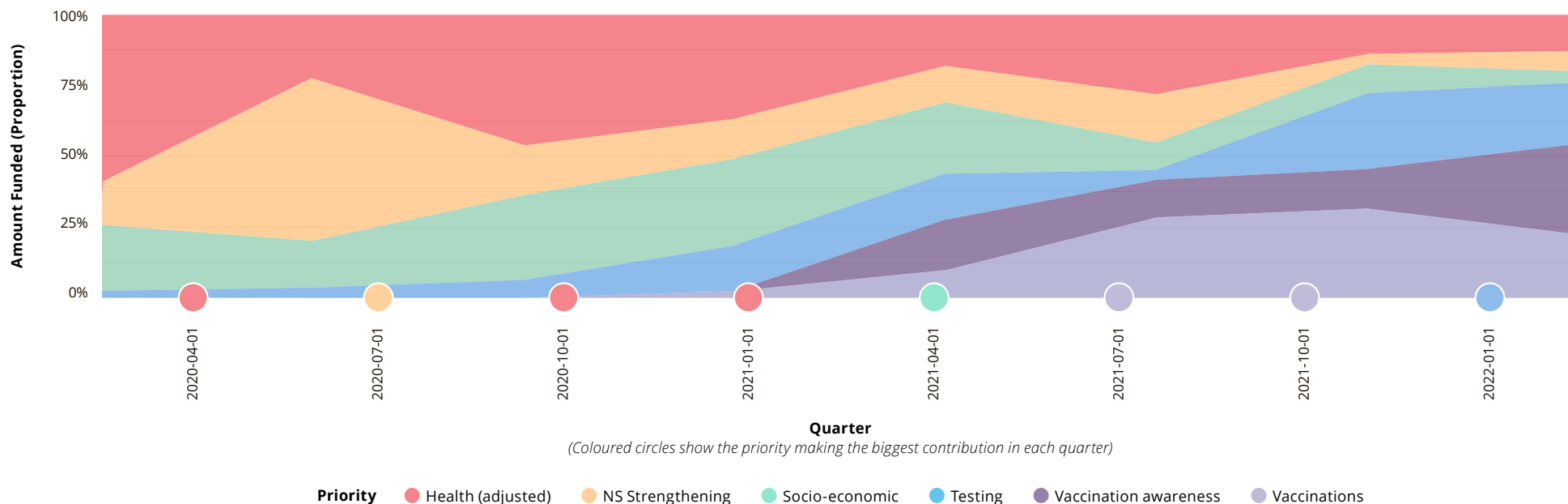
Source: Covid Tracking. For the purpose of this figure, testing, vaccinations and vaccination awareness have been moved from Health into separate priorities.

The COVID-19 tracking database assigns elements of the rollout to the three pillars of the IFRC Global COVID-19 Emergency Appeal: Sustaining health and WASH, Addressing Socio-economic impacts, and Strengthening National Societies. We can use these to visualise how the relative importance of the different elements of the response changed over time. As testing, vaccinations and vaccination awareness, which are part of the health and WASH priority, are important to track in their own right, for the purposes of this figure we break them out and show them separately.

Figure 2.7 shows how National Societies adapted the priorities of the pandemic response to the changing situation. The coloured circles at the bottom of the figure show that the largest components of the rollout were, in turn, health, then National Society strengthening, socio-economic support then vaccination support, in that order.

> **Findings**
>
> The COVID-19 pandemic response was adapted over time to prioritize different components as needs changed.

How do National Societies talk about adaptation, according to the Annual Reports?

How do National Societies respond when circumstances change? This kind of question is difficult to answer with standard quantitative techniques, when we don't know in advance *what and how* circumstances change, or *how* National Societies respond.

So we searched for passages within the Annual Reports which discuss adaptation to unforeseen circumstances, and then grouped the different stories into types (details in the Appendix).

One thing that stands out is that even though these stories come from reports from over a decade covering a multitude of disasters across the world, in aggregate it is COVID-19 that almost completely dominates the narratives.

> **Findings**
>
> When National Society Annual Reports discuss how they had to adapt to different kinds of unexpected challenge, it is COVID-19 that almost completely dominates the narratives. National Societies all over the world share this common experience of almost unprecedented adaptation.

Figure 2.8 Number of passages in Annual Reports explicitly mentioning adaptation
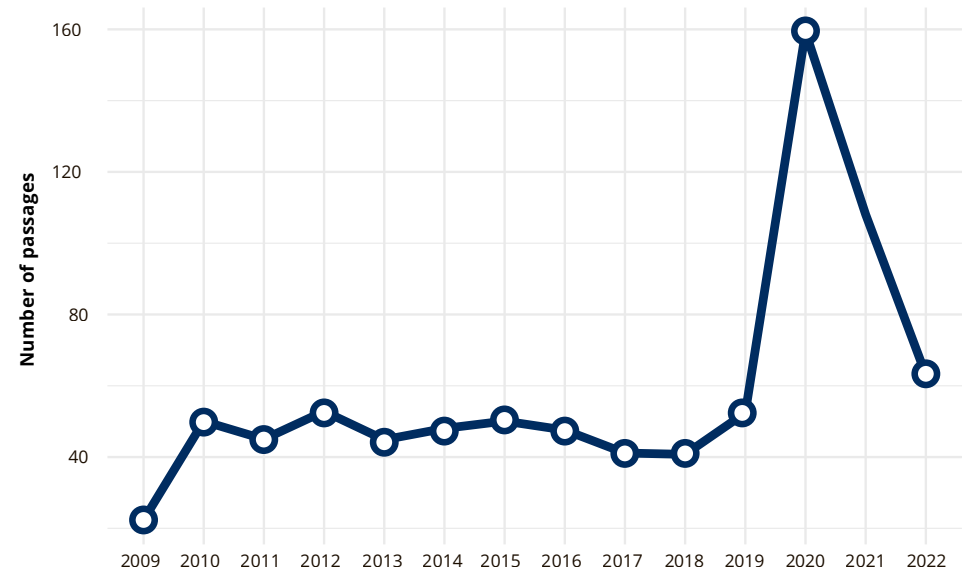
Source: Annual Reports. Proportion of passages in Annual Reports over time explicitly mentioning adaptation, per 100,000 document sections.

HOW DO NATIONAL SOCIETIES PREPARE FOR THE FUTURE(S), ACCORDING TO THE STRATEGIC PLANS?

We used Large Language Models to identify pages in the Strategic Plans which talk about futures. Then we used generative AI to identify common themes.

Based on the Strategic Plans from various National Societies, several main themes emerge regarding how these organizations approach planning for the future and adapting to changing circumstances. These themes can be grouped into similar areas of focus:

Disaster preparedness and climate adaptation: Many National Societies emphasize the importance of preparing for and adapting to the increased frequency and severity of disasters due to climate change. This includes focusing on community resilience, disaster preparedness, early warning systems, and climate change mitigation strategies.

Health and epidemic preparedness: Preparing for and responding to health emergencies, including disease outbreaks, is a critical focus area. This includes psychosocial support, disease control, and addressing non-communicable diseases as part of broader health programmes.

Sustainability and resource mobilization: Another recurring theme is the necessity of sustainable financial strategies and resource mobilization to ensure the organizations can meet their goals and respond to emergencies. This often involves diversifying funding sources, enhancing marketing and communication, and building trust and credibility to attract and maintain funding.

Collaboration and partnership: Working in partnership with local governments, communities, and other organizations is an essential strategy for effectively delivering services and achieving strategic goals. This involves leveraging National Societies' unique positions and networks to facilitate disaster preparedness, health initiatives, and sustainable development efforts.

Technological innovation: Embracing technological advances to improve service delivery, especially in disaster response, health services, and community engagement, is highlighted across the Strategic Plans. This includes leveraging social media for marketing, using technology for early warning systems, and data utilization for planning and resilience building. This theme is not directly quoted but is an underlying component in the emphasis on adaptation and efficiency improvements seen in multiple plans.

For more on how National Societies are dealing with future risks, *see pp. 88–93 in Chapter 5*

These overarching themes show that National Societies generally view the future as something that can be partly planned for, yet also see the necessity for flexibility and adaptation to the inherently unpredictable nature of emergencies and global changes. Flexibility and adaptation play crucial roles in their strategic planning, enabling them to anticipate and respond to changes effectively. Opportunities are found in closer community engagement, technological advancements, and strategic partnerships, while threats are primarily seen as coming from climate change, health emergencies, and competition for resources.

> **Findings**
>
> The strategies and tactics National Societies mention in their Strategic Plans as ways to anticipate the future are diverse. They generally revolve around strengthening internal capabilities, improving disaster preparedness, engaging communities in resilience-building activities, enhancing health and epidemic preparedness, and optimizing resource mobilization through innovative means and strategic partnerships.

KEY FINDINGS

Crisis diversity: Lower-income countries are now facing about eight different types of crises needing Emergency Appeals or IFRC-DREF allocations per decade, versus one or two in high-income nations.

The **IFRC-DREF** evolved significantly to support localized response to smaller emergencies by National Societies. In 2023 funding reached over 74.2 million Swiss francs.

The **COVID-19** and **Ukraine** crises resulted in an unprecedented allocation of funds to high-income countries.

National Societies increasingly report the **increasing complexity and interconnectedness** of the threats they face.

Social polarization is increasingly mentioned in National Society documents.

COVID-19 response: Globally, National Societies responded fast, staying ahead of the epidemic curve. They adapted over time to changing needs.

Adaptation narratives: When National Societies discuss adapting to unexpected challenges over the past decade, it is COVID-19 which dominates the narrative.

Future strategies: In trying to prepare for an evolving future, National Societies focus on internal capabilities, disaster preparedness, community resilience, health readiness, and innovative resource mobilization.

OUR CHANGING ORGANIZATION

KEY QUESTIONS

What progress have we made on strengthening local capacities, and how does progress differ for National Societies in countries with lower or higher income?

How robust are the sources of income available to National Societies? How does this differ between National Societies in countries with different income levels?

How have volunteer numbers been affected by COVID-19 pandemic?

How many National Societies form support links with other National Societies, and how long do these partnerships last? What are the opportunities and challenges with the adoption of digital technologies?

What progress are we making in giving women and men an equal role across the IFRC network?

How is our organization adapted, and adapting, to the changing challenges we outlined in Chapter 2?

In this chapter we present data from the FDRS and other sources. We also related this data to the seven Transformations in *Strategy 2030*.

These sections also relate to the section *Insights on our changing organization* in Solferino analysis in Chapter 5.

LOCAL CAPACITIES

The FDRS also contains information on local capacities, shown here in Figure 3.1.

Figure 3.1 Local capacities *median people*
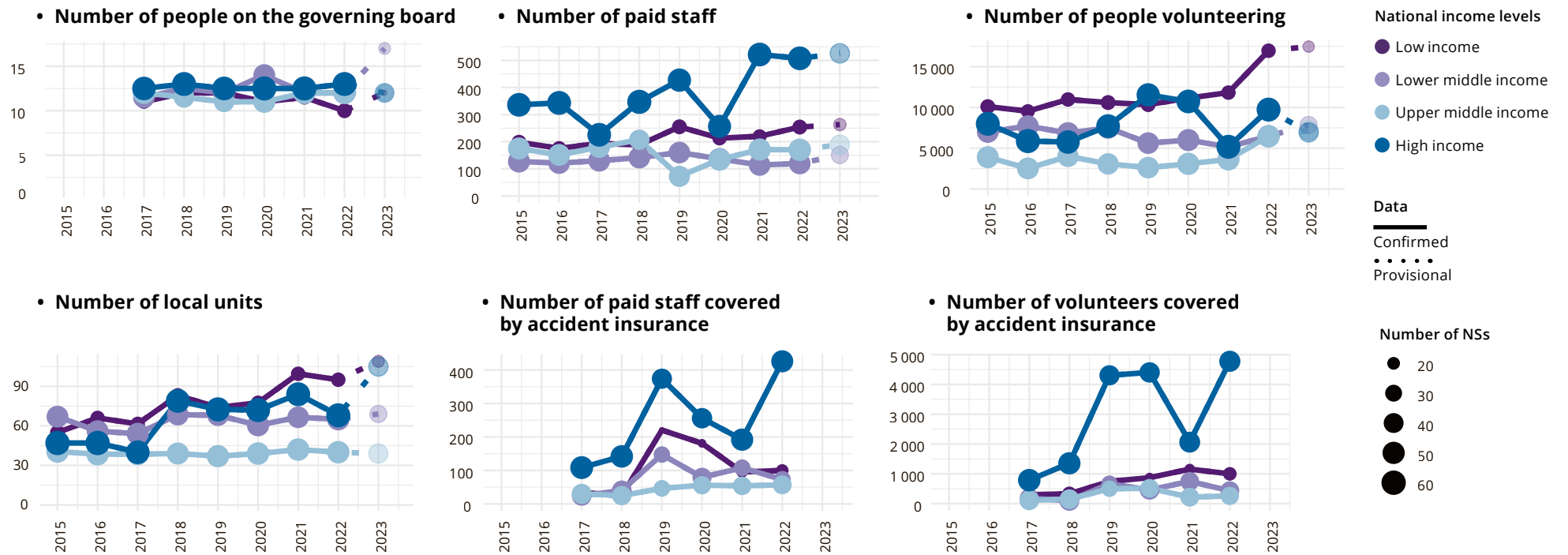
- **Number of people on the governing board**
- **Number of paid staff**
- **Number of people volunteering**
- **Number of local units**
- **Number of paid staff covered by accident insurance**
- **Number of volunteers covered by accident insurance**

National income levels
- Low income
- Lower middle income
- Upper middle income
- High income

Data

Confirmed
••••• Provisional

Number of NSs
- 20
- 30
- 40
- 50
- 60

Source: FDRS. Data for 2023 is still provisional, so dotted lines are used. Removing data points with less than 5 NSs reporting. National income levels use World Bank classification.

Findings

These indicators show the reverse of most of the "people reached" indicators in the FDRS: National Societies in high-income countries score higher. They have on average many more paid staff and much better insurance coverage of staff and volunteers.

VOLUNTEERING

The COVID-19 pandemic was probably the biggest shake-up to National Society operations in living memory. What impact did it have on volunteer roles within National Societies?

Content analysis of volunteering in Annual Reports 2020–22

We used a dedicated set of Large Language Model queries to process all the Annual Reports 20-22, first to find sections mentioning volunteer numbers or engagement during the pandemic and related issues, and secondly to summarize them.

Here is a summary of the findings.

1. **Initial surge in 2020:**
    - Many countries reported significant increases in volunteer numbers and engagement in 2020, directly linked to COVID-19 response efforts.
    - For example, Spain saw around 21% increase in volunteers, Belarus increased volunteer leaders, and Kenya reported 54,000 new volunteers joining mainly for COVID-19 support.
    - Some countries, like the Netherlands, mobilized large numbers of volunteers and "Ready2Helpers" specifically for pandemic-related activities.

2. **Mixed trends in 2021:**
    - Some countries continued to see increases in volunteer numbers and engagement, often still tied to COVID-19 efforts. For instance, Denmark saw an increase in total volunteers, especially in "Red Cross Ready helpers."
    - Other countries reported stable numbers or slight declines in regular volunteers while maintaining high engagement in pandemic-related activities.
    - There was a focus on diversifying volunteer roles and adapting to remote or socially-distanced volunteering.

3. **Post-peak adjustments in 2022:**
    - As COVID-19 response efforts scaled down, some countries saw a shift in volunteer focus rather than decreases in numbers. For example, Maldives reported volunteers engaging more in other programmatic activities.
    - Many countries still reported increases in volunteer numbers, suggesting a lasting impact of the pandemic on volunteerism, for example Paraguay and Singapore.
    - Some National Societies focused on specialized training for volunteers, such as Micronesia training more than 100 volunteers for community dialogue sessions.

4. **Ongoing COVID-19 impact:**
    - Even in 2022, some countries were still actively engaging volunteers in COVID-19 related activities, particularly around vaccination efforts. Thailand, for instance, had 7,655 volunteers registered for vaccine operations.

5. **Long-term effects:**
    - The pandemic seems to have led to lasting changes in volunteer management and engagement strategies across many National Societies.
    - There was an increased focus on digital volunteering, youth engagement, and diversification of volunteer roles.
    - Some countries reported hesitancy for in-person engagement post-pandemic, indicating a need for adaptive strategies.

For more on how National Societies are dealing with volunteering challenges, *see pp. 95–99 in Chapter 5*

So overall, according to the Annual Reports, COVID-19 initially led to a significant surge in volunteer numbers and engagement across many National Societies. As the pandemic progressed, there was a shift towards more specialized roles and adaptation of volunteer activities. While some countries saw a normalization or slight decrease in numbers as the immediate crisis subsided, many reported sustained or even increased volunteer engagement in 2022, suggesting a lasting positive impact on volunteerism within these organizations.

Is this summary compatible with information from FDRS?

Figure 3.2 compares the median volunteer number for each income group against the 2019 median. The good news is that volunteer numbers two years after the start of the pandemic were already higher than at the start, except in high-income countries. This result is partially consistent with the qualitative analysis of Strategic Plans, except that the Strategic Plans narratives seem to present the numbers in a more positive light.

This result is partially consistent with statistical analysis of volunteer numbers during and after crises mentioned in the 2018 Everyone Counts Report (p. 45). That analysis found that volunteer numbers typically increase by around 40% during a disaster and remain elevated for a while, but they tend to return to baseline levels two to three years later. In the case of the pandemic, it seems likely that while many National Societies were able to engage large numbers of volunteers for COVID-19 activities, other volunteer activities were put on hold because of the nature of the pandemic.

> **Findings**
>
> Volunteer numbers across all National Societies reduced substantially at the time of COVID-19 pandemic and now seem to have recovered everywhere, surpassing 2019 numbers, except in National Societies in high-income countries.

Figure 3.2 Volunteer numbers recovering after COVID-19

National income levels
- Low income
- Lower middle income
- Upper middle income
- High income
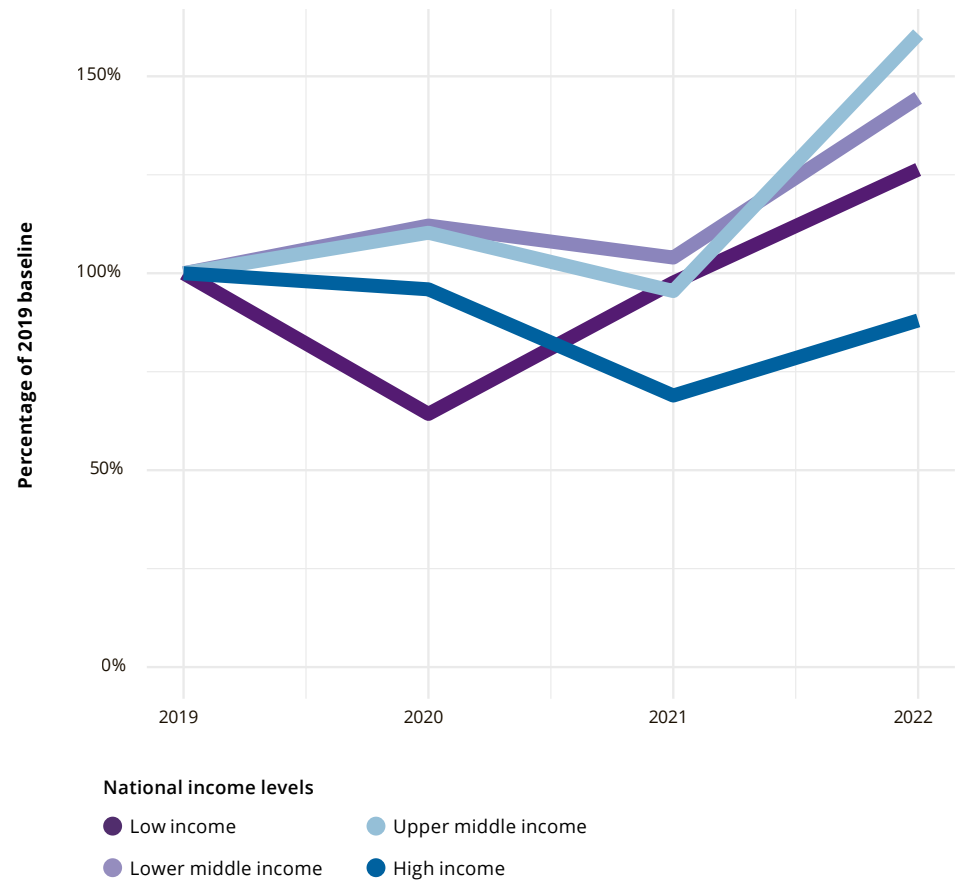
Source: FDRS. Comparing the median volunteer number for each income group against the 2019 (pre-pandemic) median.

Overall trends in discussion of volunteering in the Strategic Plans

For this analysis, we look at which common volunteering-related themes are mentioned in Strategic Plans over time, based on six themes identified by the IFRC's Solferino Academy:

• Formal, organized and long-term volunteering

• Informal, short-term and spontaneous volunteering

• Difficulties recruiting enough volunteers

• Volunteers working digitally/online

• Difficulties providing support, training or insurance for volunteers

• Volunteers with diverse profiles and backgrounds

Figure 3.3 shows that formal volunteering is mentioned decreasingly often in Strategic Plans, supplanted mostly not by informal volunteering as such but by digital volunteering.

Findings

Formal, longer-term volunteering engagement seems to be giving way to online and digital volunteering in National Societies' strategic planning.

Figure 3.3 Proportional presence of different volunteering-related themes in National Society Strategic Plans 2011–2023

Theme
- Formal volunteering
- Informal volunteering
- Difficulties recruiting
- Digital volunteering
- Difficulties supporting volunteers
- Volunteer diversity
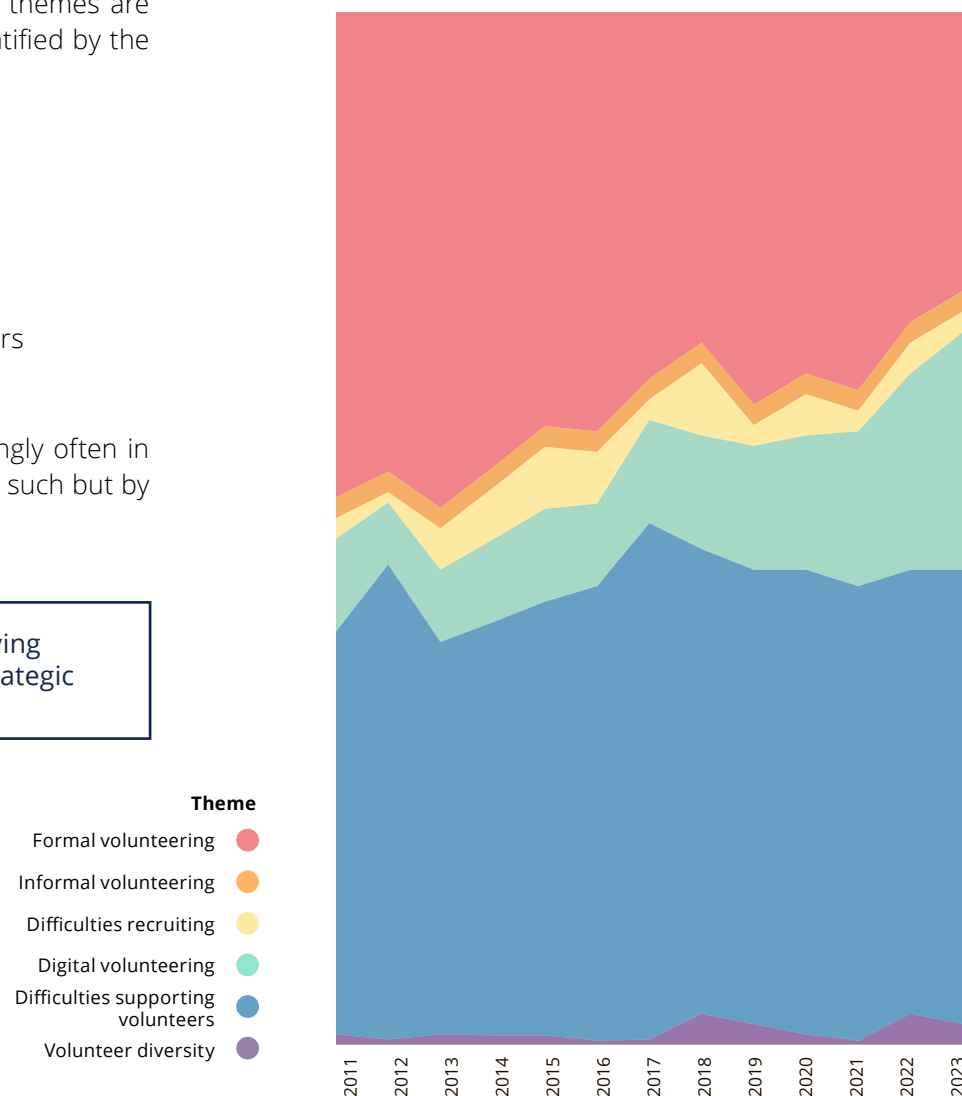
GENDER AND POWER

People are, of course, the most important resources available to National Societies. To be as effective as possible in their communities, National Societies need to make sure they treat the different members of their own staff equitably. This means ensuring a balance of men and women in leadership roles, on staff, and as volunteers. If women are not fully included and their contributions are not valued, then the National Society is operating below its full potential. Everyone brings different experiences, skills, strengths and ideas, so it's crucial to have diverse voices and ideas that represent experiences of and ways to tackle the range of complex problems we face in order to build strong, resilient **communities**. By prioritizing gender equality and diversity in staffing and programme design, National Societies can unlock their full potential and better serve the people they are there to help, leaving no one behind. This raises another question: whether inclusivity is being extended to people who do not identify as male or female.

El Salvador 2024 The Salvadoran Red Cross held a Psychological First Aid workshop for people sheltering from Tropical Storm Alberto.

© Salvadoran Red Cross

Gender of members of Governing Boards

The option "Non-binary"/"Other Gender" is a single category which can mean different things in different contexts.

The proportion of women on Governing Boards is slowly increasing[8] but is still less than 25% in two regions and is under 45% in the other three. Nevertheless, in every region there is at least one National Society with 50% or more women on its Governing Board.

Table 3.1 Number of National Societies with at least 50% women, per region

Region	Number of NSs reporting in region	Number of NSs with at least 50% women
Africa	42	2
Americas	27	11
Asia Pacific	34	10
Europe and Central Asia	41	17
Middle East and North Africa	12	1

Findings

The proportion of women on Governing Boards is very slowly increasing but is still less than 25% in two regions and is under 45% in the other three. In Europe and Central Asia, a small number of Governing Board members have started using the category "non-binary".

In every region there is at least one National Society with 50% or more women on its Governing Board.

Figure 3.4 Gender of members of Governing Boards over time
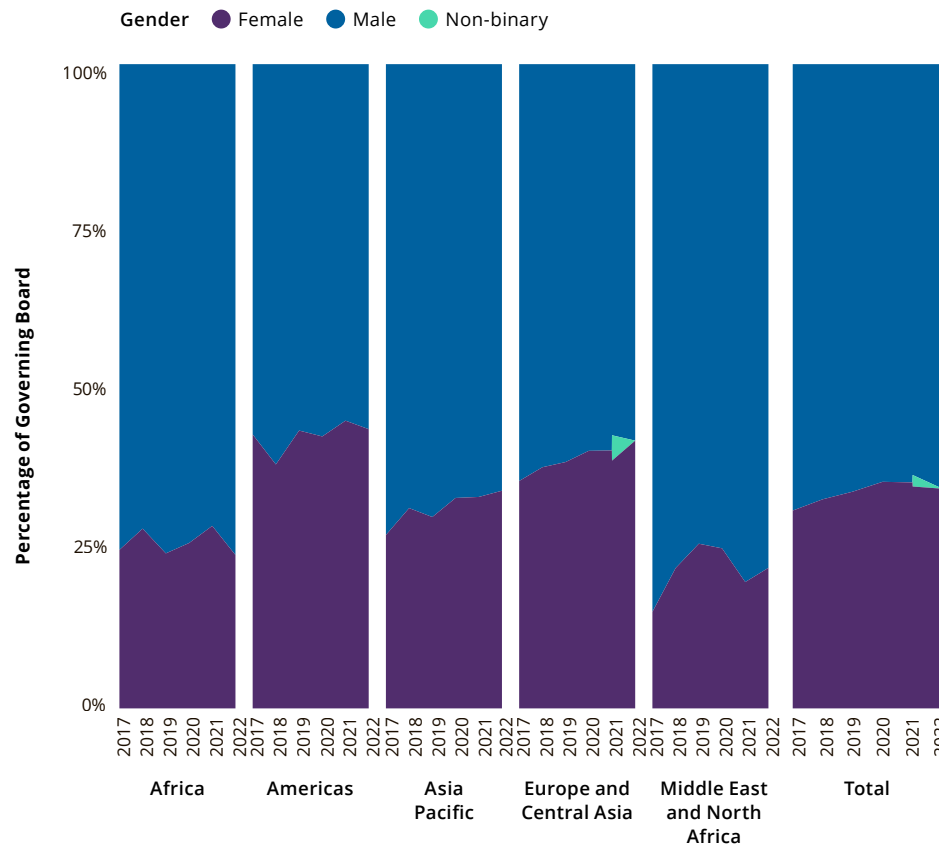
Source: FDRS. For each year and each region, we show the average percentage composition of female vs male vs non-binary members of the Governing Board.

8   p<0.01

Gender of President and Secretary General

Figure 3.5 Gender of President and Secretary General in each National Society over time

Leadership gender ● Both female ● Both male ● Mixed
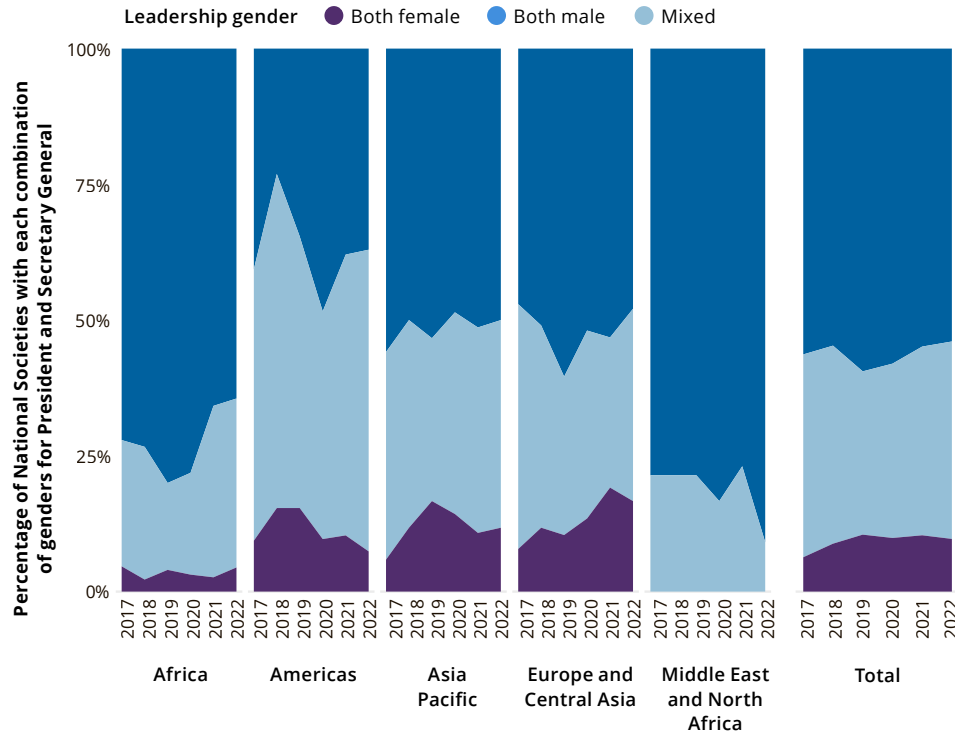
Source: FDRS. For year and each region, we show the percentage of National Societies with each combination of genders for President and Secretary General.

Findings

The gender of President and General Secretary, usually the two most powerful positions in a National Society, is particularly reflective of regional and cultural differences. In over half of all National Societies globally, both positions are occupied by men. There has been no clear progress on this in recent years. To address this stagnation, initiatives and strategies may be required.

Bangladesh 2024 The President of the IFRC paid a two-day visit to the Population Movement Operation in June, 2024.

© IFRC

OPTIMIZE NETWORK COLLABORATION

In the FDRS, National Societies list other National Societies with whom they have collaborated in the previous year, offering or receiving support, or both.

Figure 3.6 presents this information in the form of partnerships. For example, the top bar in the figure shows that there were 69 different partnerships between two National Societies lasting at least the six years from 2016 to 2022[9].

Findings

Individual National Societies continue to establish new support links with other National Societies from year to year. There are hundreds of different partnerships lasting several years. For example, in 2022 we can identify 625 different current support relationships between National Societies lasting for longer than one year, with a mean duration of just over four years.

For more on why National Societies need to work better as a distributed network,

Figure 3.6 Number and duration of partnerships between different pairs of National Societies

Source: FDRS. The numbers (and the widths of the arrows) show the number of different partnerships (pairs of National Societies where one supported another) extending from one year to another year. Showing only those partnerships lasting longer than one year and during which there was some interaction in more half of the years.
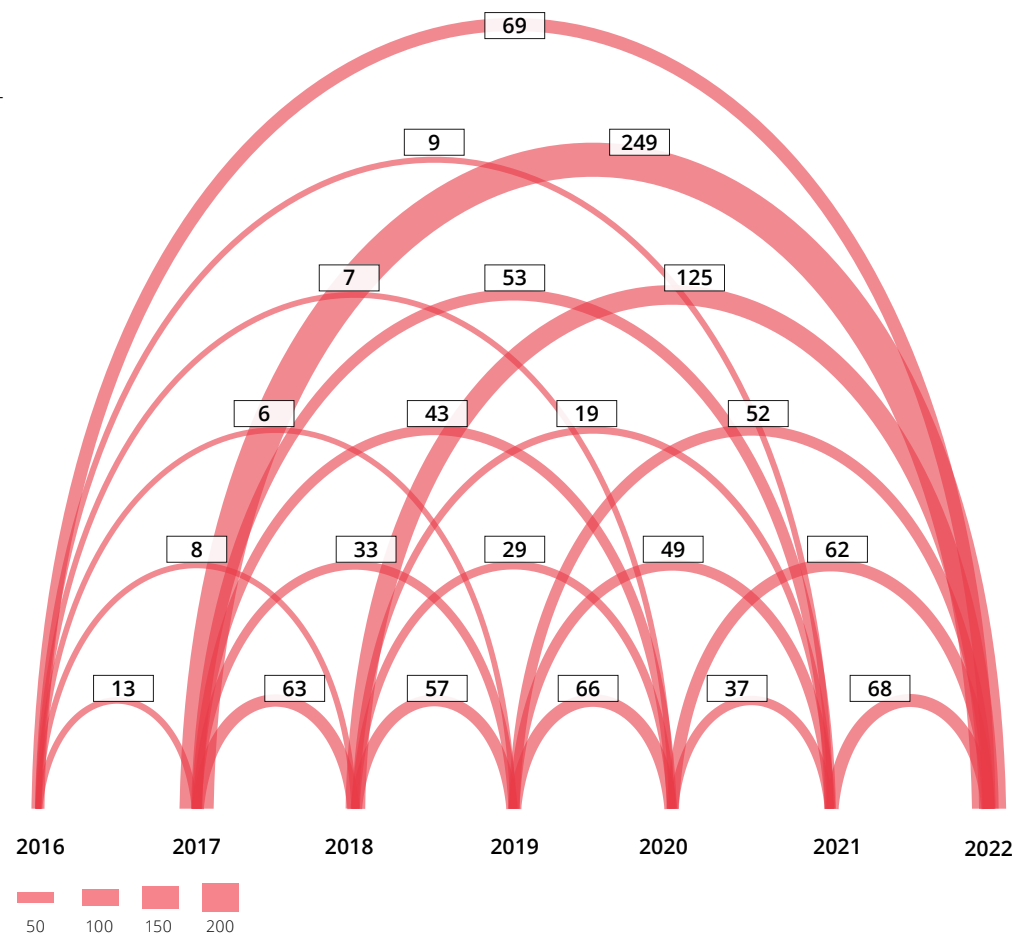
9   Our definition of "partnership" means that one of them gives the other some support in the first and last years, in this case 2016 and 2022, and also in at least half the years in between, i.e. three or more years in this case. Note this definition excludes partnerships lasting only a single year, of which there are more than 900. It is also directional, so it treats National Society X supporting National Society Y as a different partnership as National Society Y supporting National Society X. .

Chad 2023 Volunteers participating in activities that were organized by The French Red Cross and Chad Red Cross under the Programmatic Partnership between the IFRC and the EU during their mission in various cities in Chad.

© Guillaume Binet / IFRC

DRIVE DIGITAL ADVANCEMENT

For this section we turn to the IFRC's unified planning and reporting, which has additional indicators on digital transformation which are not available in the FDRS. These indicators inform progress in digital transformation as part of the IFRC's Enabling Function of Accountability and Agility (cross-cutting), which emphasizes the significant shift towards utilizing data and digital technologies to enhance humanitarian services. This transformation involves **adopting digital tools** and processes to deliver aid more effectively and efficiently, thereby improving the quality, reach, and relevance of services provided to those in need. Key components **include strengthening data literacy** among National Societies, **implementing robust digital infrastructure**, and **enhancing collective digital services** such as cash assistance platforms, digital engagement hubs, and volunteer data management systems. The ultimate goal is to ensure that data-driven insights and digital innovations are embedded within the operational strategies of the IFRC network, enabling a more agile, accountable, and effective response to humanitarian challenges.

Figure 3.7 National Societies reporting progress in digital transformation by region

● Reported as not yet implemented
● Reported as already implemented

Source: Unified Planning and Reporting 2023.
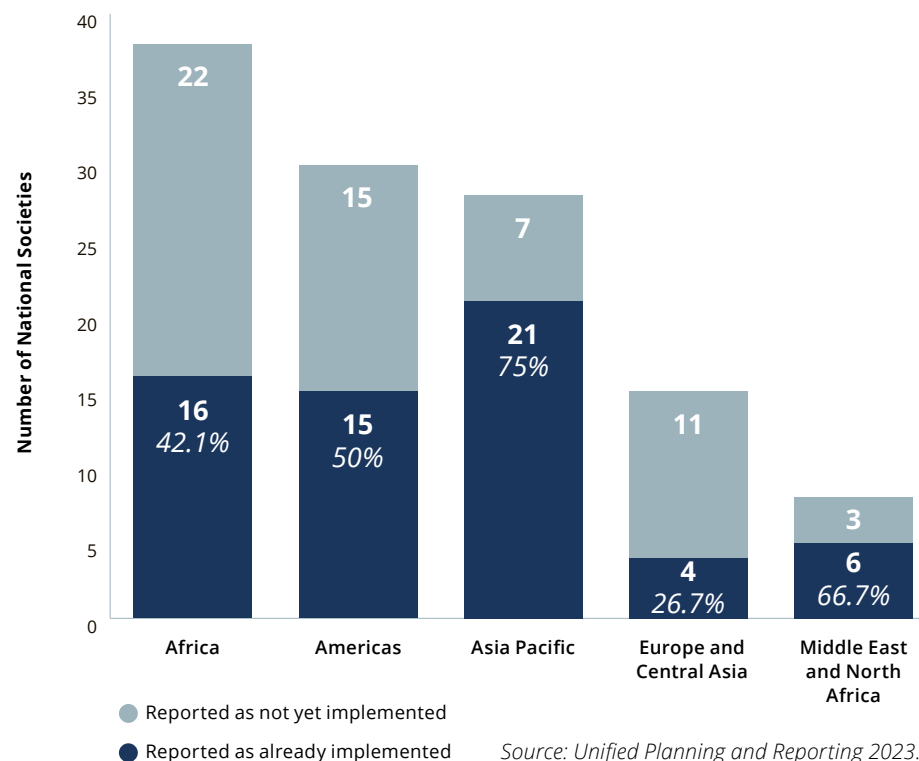
Findings

Unified planning and reporting indicators show that 62 National Societies are already reporting their progress on digital transformation, with the biggest percentage of National Societies per region in Asia Pacific.

Another indicator focuses on functioning data management systems that inform decision making and support monitoring and reporting on the impact and evidence of the IFRC network's contributions. It seeks to measure progress in ensuring accurate, timely, and relevant data collection, which enhances decision-making and supports effective program monitoring and evaluation. Such systems ensure that data collected is accurate, timely, and relevant, thereby enabling the National Societies to measure and report on the impact of their humanitarian efforts **accurately**. These systems also support a culture of **accountability** by providing **transparent** and evidence-based insights into the performance and outcomes of various initiatives. Additionally, the integration of digital tools and platforms facilitates real-time data collection and analysis, enhancing the **agility** of the network to respond to emerging challenges and opportunities.

For more on digital transformation,
see p. 94 in Chapter 5

Figure 3.8 Number of National Societies with functioning data management systems

Number of National Societies

	Africa	Americas	Asia Pacific	Europe and Central Asia	Middle East and North Africa
Reported as not yet implemented	23	25	12	9	5
Reported as already implemented	15 / 39.5%	5 / 16.7%	16 / 57.1%	6 / 40%	4 / 44.4%

● Reported as not yet implemented
● Reported as already implemented

Source: Unified Planning and Reporting 2023.
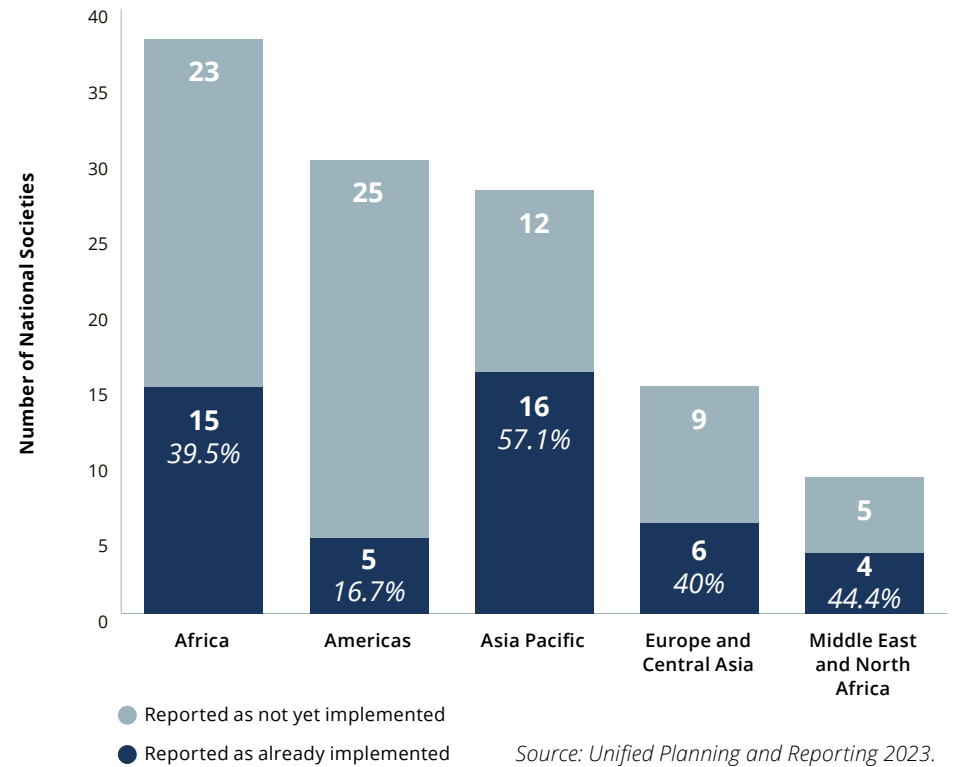
Findings

78 National Societies report having functioning data management systems, with high percentages of National Societies in Asia Pacific, Middle East and North Africa, as well as Europe and Central Asia.

INNOVATIVE FINANCING STRATEGIES

Annual Reports frequently mention the importance of income diversity:

Bangladesh Red Crescent Society Annual Report 2022 *Bangladesh Red Crescent Society generates income through a variety of means, including real estate, resource mobilization, and external training services. These income-generating activities are crucial to the organization's ability to provide humanitarian assistance to vulnerable people and in need. (Page 40).*

National Societies in different income groups have broadly the same income apart from those in high income-countries, which is much higher. The National Societies in high-income countries have an income around ten times higher than those in other countries.

Figure 3.9 National Society income
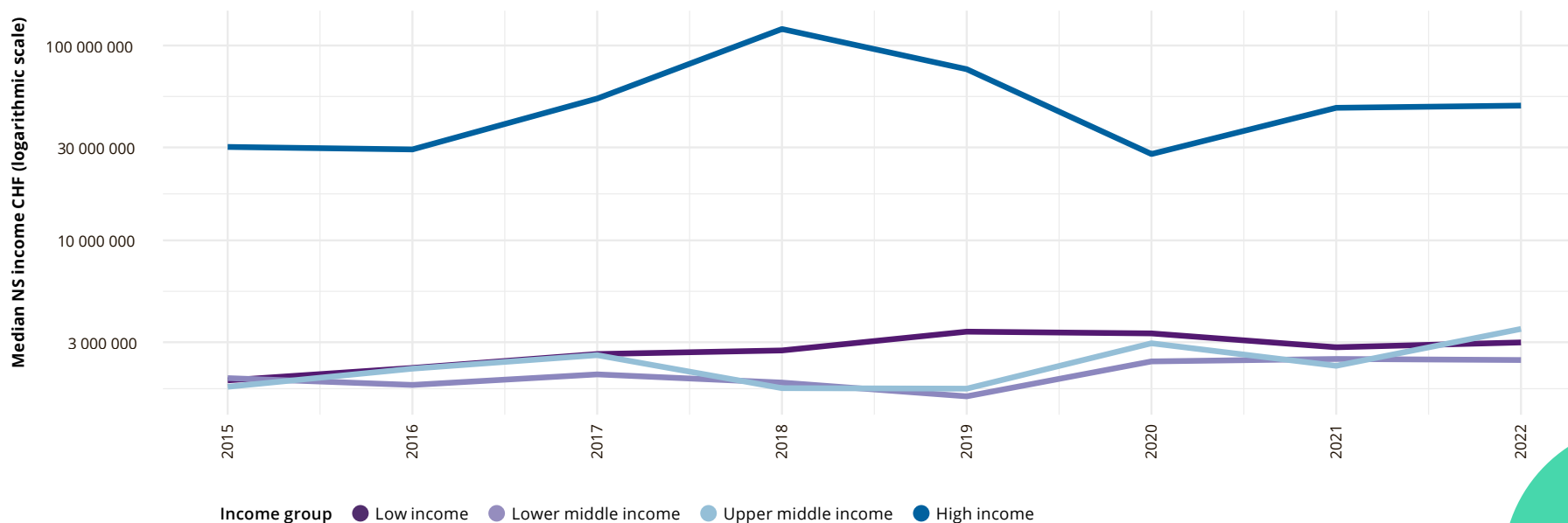
Source: FDRS. The number at the end of each line shows the final median for each group. Note logarithmic scale.

Figure 3.10 Sources of National Society income since 2018 by country income group
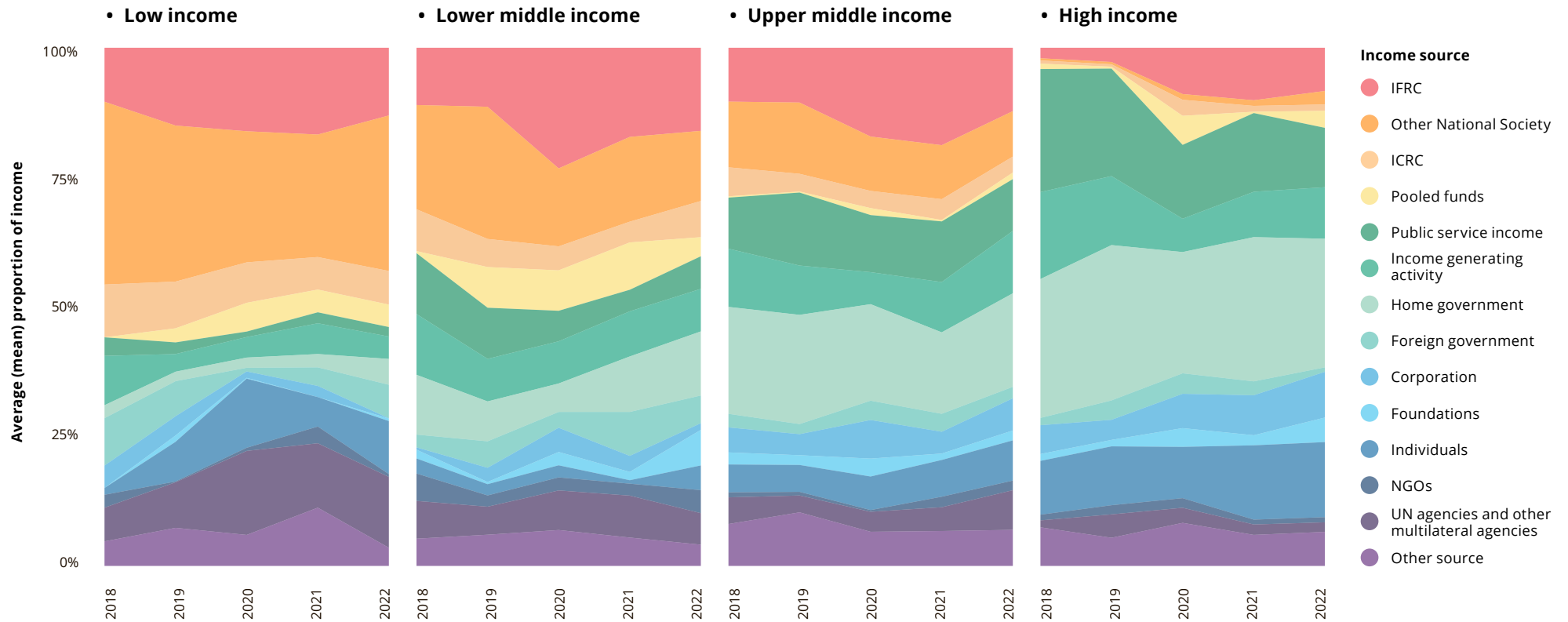
Source: FDRS. For each National Society for each year, the proportion of income from each source is calculated. Then for each year, the mean of these proportions is calculated within each income group.

Findings

The sources of income used by National Societies depend strongly on what income group their country belongs to. National Societies in low-income countries depend around 50% on funding from IFRC, participating National Societies or the ICRC, whereas in high income countries, public service income and funding from the home government predominate. In high income countries, the proportion of income from public service income has reduced in recent years.

Figure 3.11 shows the diversity index covering the relative importance of different sources of income for each National Society per income group per year. Diverse sources of income are crucial for National Societies to mitigate risks and ensure financial stability, as discussed in *Everyone Counts 2022* and *Everyone Counts 2020*. This analysis does not look at the type of the different income sources but only at their number.

Figure 3.11 How many different types of income does each National Society have?

Median number of different types of income sources per National Society

National income levels

● Low income   ● Lower middle income   ● Upper middle income   ● High income
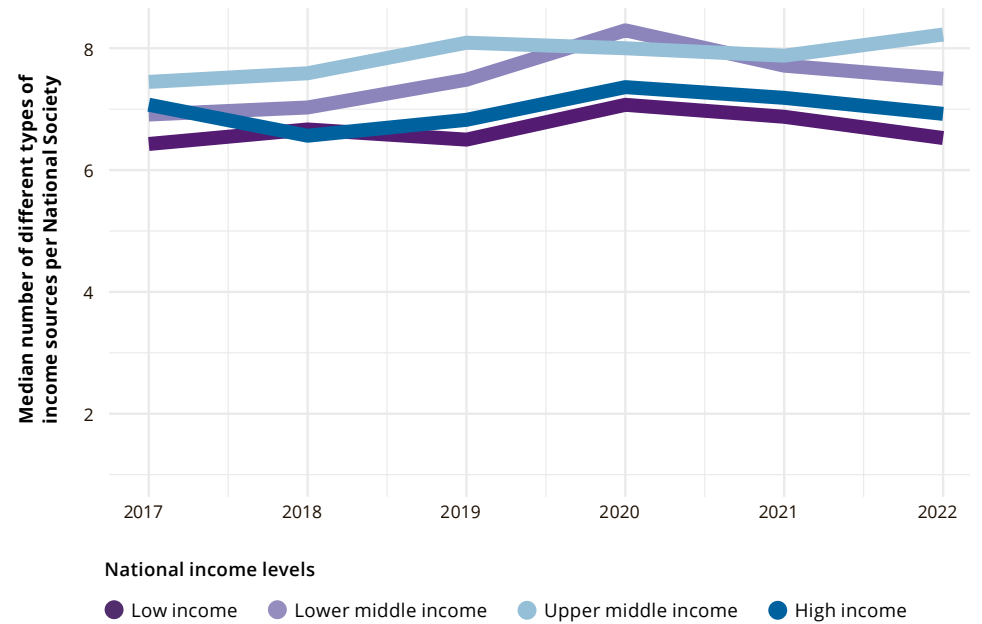
Source: FDRS.

Findings

National Societies are very aware of the importance of having diverse sources of income, but diversity of income sources has not improved in recent years.

Netherlands 2021
The Netherlands Red Cross provide certifications for basic and advanced first aid training.

© Arie Kievit / Netherlands Red Cross

KEY FINDINGS

Local capacities: National Societies in high-income countries score lower than others on most "People Reached" indicators but higher on "Local Capacities" indicators: on average they have many more paid staff and much better insurance coverage of staff and volunteers.

Volunteering: Formal, longer-term volunteering engagement seems to be giving way to online and digital volunteering in National Societies' strategic planning. Volunteer numbers following the COVID-19 pandemic are now surpassing 2019 numbers, except in National Societies in high-income countries.

Gender balance:
- The proportion of women on Governing Boards is slowly increasing, but still under 25% in two regions and under 45% in others. At least one National Society in each region has 50% or more women on its Board.
- Leadership roles: Over half of National Societies have men in both President and Secretary General positions.

Partnerships: In 2022 there were 625 different long-term partnerships (over one year) between National Societies, averaging four years' duration.

Digital transformation: New unified planning and reporting indicators show that 62 National Societies are already reporting their progress on digital transformation, and 78 National Societies report having functioning data management systems, with high percentages of National Societies in Africa and Europe and Central Asia as well as Asia Pacific.

Income diversity:
- National Societies in different income groups have broadly the same income apart from those in high income-countries, which is much higher.
- The sources of income used by National Societies depend strongly on what income group their country belongs to. National Societies in low-income countries depend around 50% on funding from Movement partners, whereas public service income and the home government predominate in high income countries.
- National Societies are very aware of the importance of having diverse sources of income, but diversity of income sources has not improved in recent years.

HOW DOES IFRC'S *STRATEGY 2030* RELATE TO NATIONAL SOCIETIES' OWN STRATEGIES?

KEY QUESTIONS

Do National Societies' current Strategic Plans and Annual Reports reflect *Strategy 2030*?

Where do strategic ideas come from? Do they get first declared in global strategic initiatives like *Strategy 2030* and then gradually adopted? Or is it the other way round: the ideas first appear in National Society documents and only then gradually spread across the globe?

Every year since 2012, well over half of all National Societies have had an active Strategic Plan covering the current year which can be used to analyse alignment with the three goals, five challenges and seven transformations in *Strategy 2030*, listed on p 13. In this section we refer to the goals, challenges and transformations as "themes".

In principle, to find out to what extent each section of each Strategic Plan since 2010, we could use human researchers. However that would mean setting up a team of human readers to read all the documents in many different languages, and make a subjective assessment of how much each section reflected each of the themes, and set up a system to make sure that each was making the assessment in a comparable way.

CAN WE TRUST NATURAL LANGUAGE PROCESSING?

We set up the analysis as far as possible in a transparent way, the steps of which can be independently verified (see the Appendix).

It would have been possible to ask a generative AI like ChatGPT to simply read each document and ask it to rate how much the document overall reflects the *Strategy 2030* themes. But we did not do this because we did not want to leave high-level judgements to the AI. Instead we used Natural Language Processing (a precursor of generative AI) to compare every section of every Strategic Plan with every theme and give a similarity score. This process results in around 1 million comparisons for the Strategic Plans.

Initially we used the full text of each theme as published in *Strategy 2030*. However, some of the themes, especially the Transformations, are quite full of similar-sounding generic text. It was quite difficult for the AI to really tell the difference between them – and on reflection, perhaps it is difficult for humans to tell the difference between them as well, or to remember the key ideas. So, we prepared shorter versions of the Transformations, creating for each one a distinctive sentence focusing on the unique aspects. See p. 112–118 in the Appendix.

This NLP approach is good at understanding the underlying meaning of themes such as the Transformations and is much less sensitive to specific words and phrases than other methods like text mining or using a keyword search. However, care is still needed.

National Societies use many different languages. How do we deal with this?

NLP provides a new opportunity to "read" documents in many different languages in a cost-effective way.

Our analysis shows that the AI "understands" the meaning of English-language documents on average a little better than for other languages. So English-language documents were given a small handicap in the algorithms to account for this.
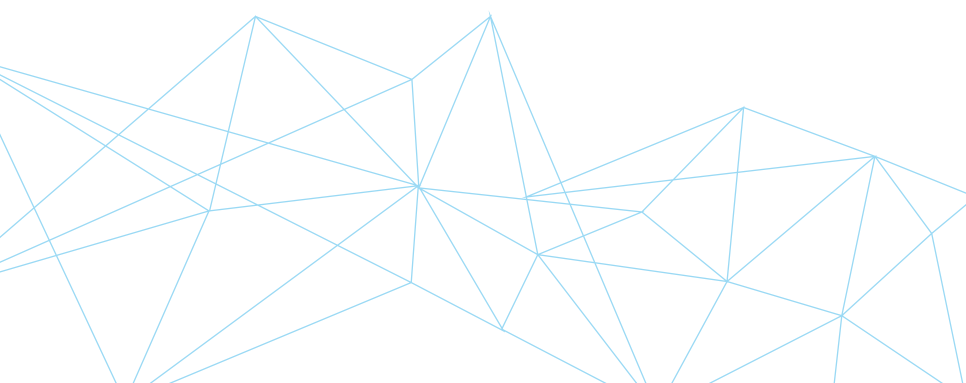
HOW MUCH DO THE STRATEGIC PLANS REFLECT THE GLOBAL CHALLENGES?

Each individual graph shows how much one Global Challenge was mentioned over time. The first rows look at *explicit* mentions of the ideas contained in each Global Challenge, the second at *implicit* mentions. For example, the top left-hand graph presents explicit mentions of Climate and Environmental Crises. Looking at the vertical axis we can see that there were very few explicit mentions until 2021 and 2022, reflecting the introduction of *Strategy 2030*.

If a document section has an **explicit** mention of a theme, that means it contains very similar ideas – it might even quote the whole or part of the theme, or it might just contain very similar ideas.

If a document section has an **implicit** mention of a theme, that means it expresses similar ideas but does not use the same words.

Figure 4.1 Proportion of Strategic Plans over time with explicit or implicit mentions of Challenges (*Strategy 2030*)

Source: Red line shows introduction of 'Strategy 2030'. Dots show proportions for each year

This is an example of an explicit mention of Global Challenge 2:

Timor-Leste Red Cross Society Strategic Plan 2020–24: *Support disaster-prone communities to reduce their risks and be better prepared to respond to disasters and crises; do community risk mapping aligned with Vulnerability Capacity Assessment (VCA; encourage households and communities to make a disaster response plan; assist communities to ensure their houses are safe and resilient to natural disasters. (Page 6.)*

Findings

The Global Challenges presented in *Strategy 2030* were new in the sense that they do not appear explicitly in Strategic Plans until 2020. But roughly the same ideas do appear implicitly in these documents before the launch of *Strategy 2030*, overall with increasing frequency during the preceding decade. This supports the idea that the central ideas of *Strategy 2030* were some kind of culmination of narratives which had been circulating across the IFRC network. The ideas of Challenge 1 on Climate and Challenge 2 on Crises and Disasters have been particularly frequently mentioned in the past, the others somewhat less so.

What about the Annual Reports?

Nearly every year since 2012, more than 100 National Societies have provided Annual Reports. This is a much bigger amount of data than the Strategic Plan: around 80,000 pages. Each analysis of the Strategic Plans shown here was also replicated with the Annual Reports[10]. Those results reveal that the ideas contained in both the Global Challenges and Transformations appear less frequently than in the Strategic Plans, presumably because Annual Reports are focused more on operational detail than strategy; but the same basic trends are visible. The influence of *Strategy 2030* can be seen in the Annual Reports as clearly as within the Strategic Plans. For example, after 2020, Challenge 1 on Climate and Challenge 3 on Health begin to be mentioned explicitly.

Do all Strategic Plans reflect *Strategy 2030* to the same extent?

We grouped the Strategic Plans from 2021 onwards according to how much they represent the ideas of *Strategy 2030*, according to the NLP model we described earlier[11]. This procedure identified three groups, one in which virtually all the *Strategy 2030* themes are well represented, another in which the themes are not clearly visible, and a third group positioned between the first two. Transformations 1 and 5 are most strongly represented across all groups, whereas in the first group, Challenge 1 is particularly clearly represented.

Libya 2023 Libyan Red Crescent teams and volunteers were first on the ground after Storm Daniel, providing first aid and search and rescue efforts.

© Libyan Red Crescent

10   The results are not shown here but are available on request from the IFRC FDRS team.
11   Details are not shown here but are available on request from the FDRS team.

HOW MUCH DO THE STRATEGIC PLANS REFLECT THE TRANSFORMATIONS?

In this panel, each individual graph shows how much one Global Transformation was mentioned over time. As with the previous panel, the first row looks at explicit mentions of the ideas contained in each Transformation, the second at implicit mentions. For example, the upper right-hand graph presents explicit mentions of Innovate Financing Strategies. Looking at the vertical axis we can see that there are very few explicit mentions at all, although there is a slight uptick in 2020, 2021 and 2022, perhaps reflecting the introduction of *Strategy 2030*. The graph below shows that nearly every Strategic Plan contains at least one implicit mention of the ideas in this Transformation, increasing very slightly over time.

Findings

The Transformations presented in Strategy 2030 were less obviously new than the Global Challenges in the sense that the frequency with which similar ideas were mentioned, explicitly or implicitly, does not change noticeably around the launch of Strategy 2030 in 2020.

The ideas contained in Transformation 4, Optimize Network Collaboration, seem to be mentioned least in the documents, perhaps because the text of this Transformation is less relevant for individual National Societies. But it does seem to be mentioned a little more frequently after 2020.

Transformation 6: Drive Digital Advancement has been mentioned implicitly for several years but the explicit details of this Transformation are just starting to now appear after the launch of Strategy 2030.

Figure 4.2 Transformations: Percentage of Strategic Plans mentioning each

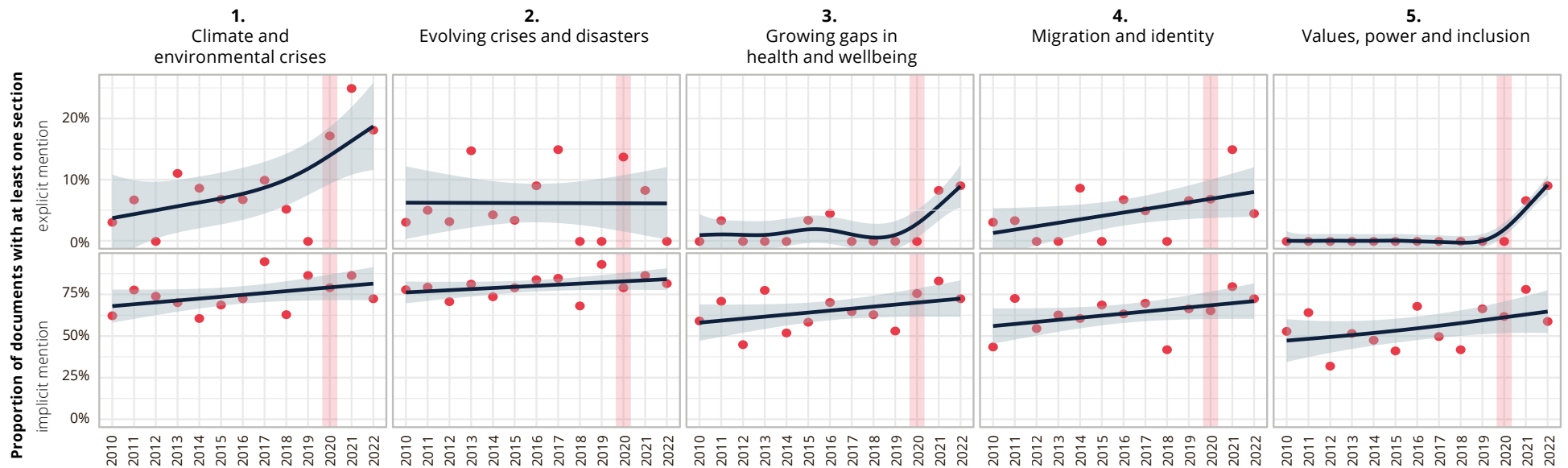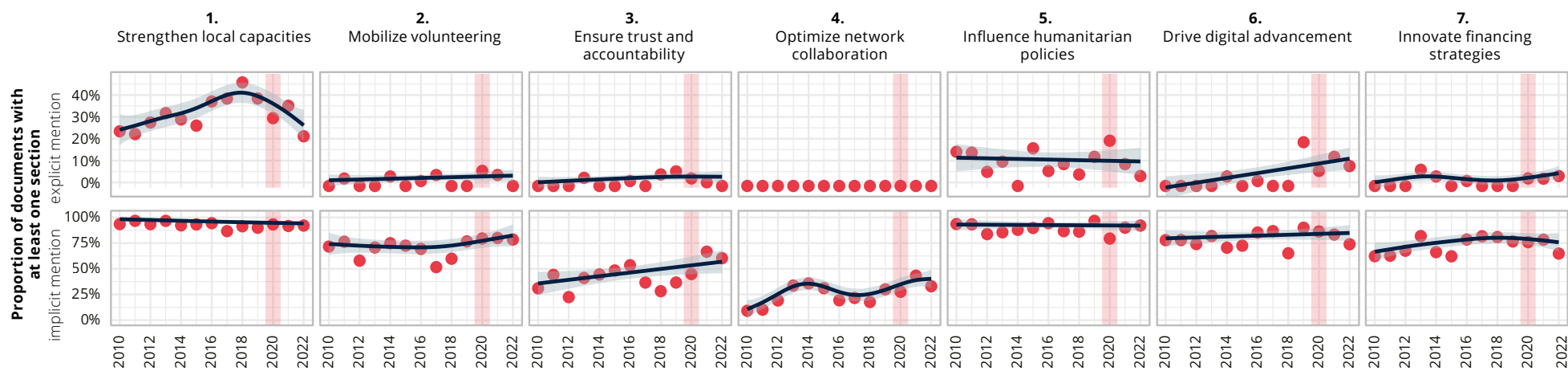Source: Red line shows introduction of S2030. Dots show proportions for each year

HOW MUCH DO THE STRATEGIC PLANS REFLECT THE GOALS?

In this panel, each individual graph shows how much each Goal was mentioned over time. As with the previous panel, the first row looks at explicit mentions of the ideas contained in each Goal, the second at implicit mentions. For example, the upper left-hand graph presents explicit mentions of People anticipate, respond to and quickly recover from crises. There is a very clear increase in 2021 and 2022, presumably reflecting the introduction of *Strategy 2030*. The graphs in the row below show that most (around 70%) Strategic Plans have always contained at least one implicit mention of the ideas in each Goal.

Figure 4.3 Goals: Percentage of Strategic Plans mentioning each

Source: Strategic Plans. Red line shows introduction of S2030. Dots show proportions of all Strategic Plans for each year which have at leason one implicit or explicit mention of each theme.

> **Findings**
>
> The basic ideas of the Goals would seem to be not at all new and appear solidly represented in some form in almost every Strategic Plan. On the other hand, *Strategy 2030* has influenced a significant minority of new Strategic Plans which are starting to adopt the same language and ideas more explicitly.

Syria 2023 As part of an EU humanitarian air bridge for Syria, two planes with emergency aid landed in Damascus to provide further support for the Syrian people impacted by the earthquake.

© *Jani Savolainen / IFRC*

KEY FINDINGS

Do National Society Strategic Plans after 2020 reflect the Goals, Global Challenges and Transformations outlined in Strategy 2030?

- Overall, yes. But some Transformations and Global Challenges are reflected much more than others.

- Some of the key ideas in *Strategy 2030* might have benefitted from a light editing to make them shorter, more distinct from one another and from other typical ideas in strategic documents. Although this issue was highlighted by the work to adapt the texts for NLP, it is likely that also humans would find more distinctive texts easier to understand and remember.

- National Societies' Strategic Plans after 2020 can be grouped into three types of roughly similar size: those that follow *Strategy 2030* quite closely, another group which does adopt many of the ideas but not quite as strongly, and a third group which seems to mostly go its own way.

- The Global Challenges and Transformations presented in *Strategy 2030* were new in the sense that they do not appear **explicitly** in Strategic Plans or Annual Reports until 2020, but are now appearing more frequently, especially in Strategic Plans.

- The ideas contained in the Global Challenges and Transformations do appear **implicitly** (and increasingly often) in these documents well **before** the launch of *Strategy 2030*. The central ideas of *Strategy 2030* may have been a culmination of narratives which had been previously circulating across the IFRC network.

- The ideas contained in both the Global Challenges and Transformations appear much more frequently in Strategic Plans than in Annual Reports, presumably because Annual Reports are focused more on operational detail than strategy.

Using NLP and generative AI to systematically analyse the content of large numbers of documents in multiple languages like Strategic Plans and Annual Reports presents an interesting opportunity for a large global network like the IFRC network.

STRATEGY 2030
STRENGTHS AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR IMPROVEMENT

EMERGING INSIGHTS FROM THE IFRC SOLFERINO ACADEMY'S GLOBAL CONSULTATION

Every strategy is a story about the future as well as a call to action. It describes a journey to meet challenges and embrace opportunities, to deliver change and improve impact. But as this decade has proven so powerfully, the IFRC network operates in a complex world where it is hard to know exactly what will happen next year, let alone beyond that. So, sound strategy must prioritize resilience, adaptability and engagement with emerging risks and opportunities.

Strategy 2030 had barely launched when the global COVID-19 pandemic hit, upending everything from social interaction to international trade and generating huge humanitarian needs and casualties. Even as National Societies faced this enormous challenge, the climate emergency, migration, and other crises continued to accelerate, stressing the network's capacity to respond, complicating existing humanitarian issues and demanding action.

Now, as we reach the midpoint of *Strategy 2030*, we are entering a new humanitarian era. A complex mass of emerging trends is changing the world around us and affecting our ability to act: from social and geo-political polarization to protracted conflicts that threaten to expand; emerging challenges to the protection offered by the Fundamental Principles, to new drivers of displacement and migration tensions; through to the rise of artificial intelligence (AI), autonomous weapons and many more overlapping, accelerating shifts.

The IFRC Solferino Academy has consulted more than 4,000 people in 154 countries[12] as part of an ongoing conversation about the network's progress on *Strategy 2030* and priorities for the future. These voices - from National Society volunteers, staff and leaders around the world as well as some external experts - bring different perspectives to the fore as a complement to the data analysis in the rest of this report. Consultation will continue throughout 2024 beyond the publication of this report and will include staff and leaders from the IFRC Secretariat, along with the IFRC Governing Board and the IFRC General Assembly. This section presents the preliminary findings and is intended to trigger debate and spark new ideas. We encourage everyone to join the dialogue by visiting The IFRC Solferino Academy *Strategy 2030* Intelligence Centre[13].

Through the consultation process, feedback was gathered on *Strategy 2030* as a process and institutional tool, in addition to seeking feedback on its content. A number of strengths and opportunities for improvement of process were identified, as set out in table below.

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12   This includes over 3,500 who have responded to surveys and 500 who have participated in dialogues, workshops and interviews
13   https://solferinoacademy.com/ifrc-strategy-2030-midterm-review

Table 5.1 Strengths of *Strategy 2030* and opportunities for development: Summary of contributions from the network

Strengths of *Strategy 2030*	Opportunities for improvement
Valuable and inspiring menu of priorities and options "a strategic umbrella" Distillation of collective priorities and concerns "very useful as a shared statement" Important starting point for National Societies' strategic development processes "we didn't have to start from scratch" Adapted and used by different NS based on contextual humanitarian needs and capabilities Practical tool for engaging across National Societies and working out shared priorities when developing partnerships	IFRC network's strategic support and "value add" to National Societies could be clearly articulated and realised through the Strategy's priorities S2030 could be used as a basis for regular reflections on the strategic progress Could be used to strengthen collective strategic capability of National Societies, especially in prioritisation and foresight Better guidance on 'how' to address key goals, challenges, transformations More consistent and sustained communications and implementation support Feedback and support on National Societies strategic plans Clearer senior level ownership in the Secretariat

Key priorities and issues identified

Our respondents in the IFRC network consistently identified specific trends, risks and opportunities which we have grouped into five key priorities across two categories, and three major issues (presented in boxes) aligned to these priorities;

Insights on the changing context and the five global challenges

- Navigating complex and unpredictable crises and the interconnectedness of the five global challenges of *Strategy 2030* (including Box 1: Health inequities)

- Social, political, economic and institutional polarization and the importance of global challenge 5 on values, power and inclusion.

Insights on our changing organization and prioritization within the seven transformations

- Accelerating the transformation of volunteering (including Box 2: Digital Transformation)

- Financial sustainability transformation as an urgent priority

- The criticality of transformative leadership (including Box 3: The power potential of an effective distributed network)

INSIGHTS ON THE CHANGING CONTEXT

Navigating complex crises

We are too often still operating from fixed mindsets and with fixed responses rather than recognising the interconnected nature of issues we are facing. — Staff interview, Strategy 2030 consultation.

Let's be clear – there is no single crisis any more. Every crisis is actually a plural, crises. Vulnerability is so interconnected. — National Society lead, Asia.

Crises and emergencies have never been simple or straightforward, but there were established patterns and well-understood impacts and responses. Humanitarian services – and the institutions which deliver them – were designed to meet these challenges. But today, in a hyper-connected world facing common global threats as well as locally nuanced vulnerabilities, the consultations have highlighted a deep-rooted concern that existing response models are unfit and are being stressed to breaking point as the triggers, impacts and effects of converging crises change, particularly in contexts of fragility.

Current state

Respondents once again prioritized climate issues as the most pressing global challenge overall, consistent with the original assessment of *Strategy 2030*. They continued to see health, disasters, migration and issues of values, power and inclusion as a priority overall. The key development however, has been that they are more pointedly observing that humanitarian needs are driven by interconnected crises which disrupt all levels of society.

In this volatile system, IFRC network respondents told us that the boundaries between one issue and another are increasingly blurred; climate change intensifies disasters caused by hazards such as hurricanes, floods, and wildfires, which, in turn, exacerbate resource scarcity, challenge water, health and food security, and force displacement or mass migrations[14], for example. These environmental stresses can then ignite or worsen conflicts, destabilizing regions and straining international peace efforts.

Simultaneously, economic pressures, including inflation, unemployment, and widening health and other social inequalities (see Box 1), are both compounding these crises while also being impacted by them.

This convergence of trends, which affect and exacerbate each other, is leading to constantly shifting outcomes which are often novel or hard to foresee. These new hazards disproportionately affect people who are already at risk.

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14   Is climate change causing more extreme weather? | Zurich Insurance

BOX 1

Global Health – Systemic problems demand systemic responses

Global health needs and crises are complex, systemic phenomena arising from the interplay of various vulnerabilities. The COVID-19 pandemic is a prime example of how these factors can converge to create widespread health emergencies. Environmental degradation, food insecurity, social disparities, and economic instability all played roles in the rapid spread and severe impact of the virus worldwide.

Participants in surveys and interviews consistently raised health issues and services as a critical focus. Across the IFRC network, we can see numerous efforts to address these multifaceted health challenges in a systemic fashion. National Societies aim to:

Prevent health crises: Implementing proactive measures to mitigate the factors that lead to health emergencies, ensuring communities are better prepared and resilient.

Aid recovery: Providing essential support and care to individuals and communities during health crises, facilitating quicker and more effective recovery processes.

Reduce health inequalities: Working to bridge health gaps and reduce disparities, including mental health, thereby decreasing overall vulnerability and fostering equitable health outcomes for all.

Through these efforts, the IFRC network not only responds to immediate health needs but also strengthens the foundational systems that support long-term health and wellbeing globally.

Sri Lanka 2021 © Dinuka Liyanawatte IFRC

Future priorities

We must prioritize systemic changes that empower communities to withstand and recover from multiple shocks. Otherwise we will become irrelevant to the very thing - humanitarian vulnerability – that underpins our purpose.
— Strategy Lead, National Society

National Societies are at the forefront of responding to these multifaceted challenges[15]. To effectively navigate and mitigate the impact of these compounding systemic crises and a deeply uncertain future, National Societies are increasingly calling for a shift from traditional, siloed approaches to more integrated, holistic strategies and systemic change[16].

Systems thinking: Embracing systems thinking allows for a comprehensive understanding of how different drivers interact and increase humanitarian vulnerability. Systems thinking involves identifying the multiple root causes and potential ripple effects of crises, enabling more proactive and preventive measures. By mapping interdependencies and feedback loops, the network believes it can design interventions that address multiple aspects of a crisis simultaneously. Technology is an important enabler here, but community connections are also vital.

I've worked on a lot of projects... but this was the first one that looked at the interconnectedness between the different areas. It was a new way of looking holistically at our society, looking at connections and how things branch out from one area into all the others. — National Society Disaster Manager, Africa.

Systemic leadership: Leadership (which is examined in more detail later in this section) requires agility, innovation, and a commitment to collaboration, according to respondents. To deliver systemic change, leaders must encourage continuous learning and adaptability. This means developing policies and strategies that are flexible and responsive to uncertainty and a rapidly changing external environment, and that leverage diverse partners as players in a distributed network (see below section). Many respondents call for more space to look 'up and out' to engage with external issues, rather than 'down and in' at internal politics and processes, when shaping priorities and making decisions:

Our ability to adapt and innovate in the face of complex crises of today is what will define our success as a global humanitarian network. Systems thinking and systemic leadership are not just strategies; they are imperatives for building resilience. — National Society Leader, Europe.

System-wide partnerships: Navigating complex crises necessitates strong links between different sectors and communities. The consultation indicates that building multi-stakeholder partnerships with governments, NGOs, private sector entities, academia, and local communities is expected to improve resource sharing, knowledge exchange, and coordinated action. Such partnerships also build organizational resilience by 'making friends before they are needed'.

Collaboration is our most powerful tool. It is only by partnering across sectors and borders, we can create comprehensive solutions that leave no one behind. — National Society lead, Asia

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15   ifrc.org/sites/default/files/2021-10/IFRC-Displacement-Climate-Report-2021_1.pdf
16   Radical changes are needed for transformations to a good Anthropocene | npj Urban Sustainability (nature.com)

What success looks like by 2030

Participants continue to see the five global challenges as causing major human- itarian and developmental challenges but prescribe much more coordinated and systemic approaches to interrogate and tackle them, in acknowledgement of their connectedness and complexity.

1. **Integrated response and resilience mechanisms:** Integrated response mechanisms that coordinate efforts and share knowledge across different sectors and regions. These mechanisms will facilitate rapid, effective responses to crises.

2. **Stronger collaborative networks:** The foundation of strong, multi- stakeholder partnerships will be evident, with diverse actors working together towards common humanitarian goals.

3. **Enhanced readiness:** The network's ability to identify, track and act on emerging risks and opportunities in anticipation will be significantly improved. The capacity for agility and to plan for constant and immediate strategic adaptation is essential.

4. **Sustainable development outcomes:** The humanitarian efforts of National Societies will contribute to broader sustainable development goals, including poverty reduction, improved health outcomes, and greater social equity."Building resilience is not an option; it is a necessity. It requires bold leadership, innovative thinking, and an unwavering commitment to collective action. If we do not step up to this, if we stay in our response silo - I cannot be more clear on this - it will be seen by future generations as an abdication of humanitarian principles" Crisis response lead, National Society

"Building resilience is not an option; it is a necessity. It requires bold leadership, innovative thinking, and an unwavering commitment to collective action. If we do not step up to this, if we stay in our response silo - I cannot be more clear on this - it will be seen by future generations as an abdication of humanitarian principles" — Crisis response lead, National Society

Polarization

Concern about the impact of an increasing polarized world on the work of National Societies has become more prominent over the first five years of *Strategy 2030*, reaffirming the importance of global challenge 5 This is already affecting the ability of many National Societies to operate with neutrality and to maintain independence, but it is also triggering new threats. Respondents identify polarization in many domains, including political, social, economic and international geopolitics, as well as the divisive on-flow impacts within the IFRC network itself.

Some respondents argue, however, that in the face of these deepening divisions, a strong principles-based approach could allow the network to take a leader- ship role and provide alternative, unifying narratives and actions:

> *In our polarized world, the IFRC and the ICRC have a key role to play in finding and sharing that greatest common denominator that transcends all differences. — Staff, Europe.*

Current state

Political polarization continues to grow as a concern in many countries and is a deeply rooted endemic issue in others. Worldwide and across sectors, there is a perception that people are taking increasingly entrenched positions and space for civic dialogue and compromise is being eroded or erased.

Global trend analysis seems to support this, and the issue is often worsened by misinformation and disinformation, algorithms which reinforce existing beliefs, and political opportunism. This has put some National Societies in a very diffi- cult position:

> *There is no neutral position, the society is demanding you take a side, even not taking a side is seen as not neutral. — National Society leader, Asia Pacific*

Afghanistan 2021
IDPs who have been affected by multiple shocks such as drought, conflicts, Covid-19 and poverty.

© Meer Abdullah Rasikh / Afghan Red Crescent Society

Parallel to this, respondents report that **social polarization** is linked to accelerating inequality, with a deepening gulf between those with wealth, health and access to opportunity, and the increasingly marginalized and excluded communities at the other extreme. This poses significant challenges for the IFRC network as demand for humanitarian services increases and new vulnerabilities appear even as, according to some respondents, respect for the fundamental principles appears to decline.

But this is not a universal concern, as one leader acknowledged:

Not all countries are equally polarized – and so the challenge is different for different National Societies. But we must be clear that this is a challenge we all face, and rise up to it. — National Society lead

At the global level many leaders have concerns about what they see as increased **geopolitical tensions**, a growing divide between States and the threat of expanded or new conflicts.

It is a very complicated world in which we live in…the big transformations that we have to prepare for are the polarization between East and West or Global North and Global South, whatever you want to call it. — National Society leader, Middle East North Africa

This view represents a significant shift from the *Strategy 2030* consultations (held in 2019) in which polarization, while acknowledged, was not as prominent. Today, polarization is seen as a more urgent threat to vulnerability and humanitarian needs globally. It is linked to an increased risk of conflict, both within and between countries. Critically, polarization is also seen as a major threat to the collaboration and unity needed to tackle to global crises.

Some respondents argued that, historically, humanitarian principles have helped to protect people from the inhumanity of war and the impacts of violent conflict, but they now believe this power is waning.

The issue was raised less frequently in the staff and volunteer survey. Of particular concern were the threat polarization posed to the IFRC network's freedom of

action and ability to help people across all sides of any conflict or social division, as well as National Societies' auxiliary role:

> *Our National Society has to find a way of getting the Government to trust and be committed to our course financially without impeding on our fundamental principles. — Staff, West Africa.*

Within the IFRC network, **institutional polarization** appears to be a topic of discussion for some leaders, with fractures seen along similar lines to the wider geopolitical divides, and debate about the threat this poses to our fundamental principles and ability to act. This institutional polarization is causing concern for the unity of the IFRC network at a time when unity is perceived as essential.

Future priorities

For leaders across all the National Societies consulted, navigating these challenges means ensuring humanitarian principles are upheld in ways that foster trust and resilience, even amidst societal divisions.

However, respondents have suggested that anticipating and adapting to societal polarization requires a more strategic approach than has been seen to date. There is a notable disparity between the rapid evolution of polarization and the relatively static application of humanitarian principles:

> *The Movement's historical leadership in principles-based responses can pave the way for societal reconciliation amidst deepening divisions. But we have to be more courageous than we have been in recent years. It feels like we are using principles less as a tool for change and more as a space that we retreat to. — Leader, Europe*

Addressing this disparity poses a number of critical strategic questions that were put forward in roundtables with senior leaders:

- **Sensitivity and awareness:** How can we as humanitarian organizations enhance our sensitivity to, and awareness of, shifting societal polarization trends?
- **Proactive strategies:** What proactive measures can be implemented to effectively address emerging polarization, including within our own network?
- **Approach to engagement:** Should strategies lean towards a cautious approach, refraining from public stance to mitigate risks, or should they adopt a more proactive role in engaging and mediating differences?

> *The challenge lies not only in acknowledging polarization but in actively using our principles to bridge divides and build consensus. We have to move beyond our comfort zones to do this. — Advocacy lead, Africa.*

What success looks like by 2030

> *In times of heightened polarization, principles serve as our compass to navigate through turbulent waters with integrity and trust. If we can't do this, no one can. — Communications lead, Americas*

Participants suggested the IFRC network could focus in four ways:

- **Principles-based communication:** Utilising humanitarian principles to foster dialogue and understanding across polarized divides.
- **Advocacy leadership:** Taking a proactive stance in advocating for inclusive and principled approaches to societal issues.
- **Humanitarian education:** Investing in child and youth education programmes that promote humanitarian principles.
- **Learning:** Investing in more opportunities for staff and leaders to come together and share experiences, learn from each other and develop collaborative approaches.

BOX 2

Digital Transformation

Digital technology is a powerful driver of social change, as well as a critical tool in the IFRC network's response. Digital transformation was identified as a key transformational priority in *Strategy 2030* and continues to be prominent in these consultations.

Hardware, software, and the data they generate, are altering our social interactions, institutions and economies. To navigate this successfully, the network must manage two competing priorities: the impact digital technology is having on the world in which we operate, and the way in which we manage our own digital transformation.

Externally, we are witnessing the rapid rise of revolutionary technologies, such as artificial intelligence (AI) and automation, which are likely to further accelerate digital transformation in most sectors by the end of the decade. These rapid shifts will create humanitarian vulnerabilities, even as they open new possibilities for our operations and administration.

Respondents argued for better sharing of expertise and investment within the network, while also creating new types of partnership with external organizations which leverage our ethical strengths: Our humanitarian principles and the people we support should be the anchor for all our decisions as we explore the possibilities.

There was concern about National Societies' ability to maximize the benefit of new technologies and deliver effective digital transformation. Respondents highlighted inadequate funding and a lack of key skills as a major impediment. There were also concerns about leaders' knowledge of digital transformation, staff resistance, and cultural barriers within the organization which prevent experimentation and adaptation.

More investment is needed in training, data literacy, shared resources and technical skills, respondents argued. We also need a more sophisticated approach to considering the true costs of managing digital products, rather than just calculating the initial project costs for the implementation.

More sophisticated product management, with a clear data strategy and a compelling vision for the future of digitally-enhanced humanitarian action, will benefit our staff, volunteers and the communities we support.

Many parts of the IFRC network have already experienced rapid digital transformation this decade, driven by the COVID-19 pandemic. We must now prioritize learning the lessons from this experience and overhauling not just our technology but also our culture and mindsets.

INSIGHTS ON OUR CHANGING ORGANIZATION

Volunteering

In our surveys with volunteers and staff, *"Volunteer engagement and support"* was cited as the second most important priority for the IFRC network in the coming five years, after climate change. Volunteering was the number one issue that respondents hoped would be improved in their National Societies by 2030.[17]

Figure 5.1 Main themes in free-text answers to Solferino Survey question number 10: *What do you hope will be different in your National Society by 2030?*
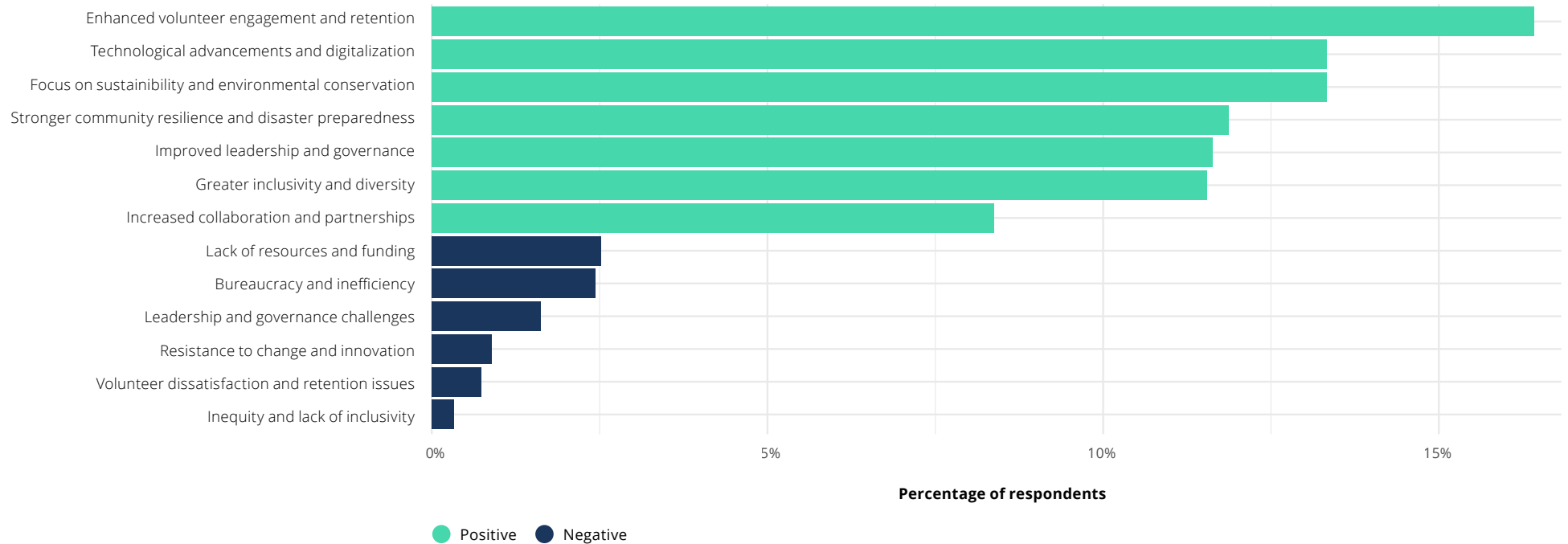
Source: Solferino Survey. Common themes within free-text answers were identified, then each answer was assigned one or more of these themes where appropriate. Each answer may be assigned to zero, one or more themes.

17   This was mentioned more often by those who identified as volunteers rather than staff or leaders, however it was in general across all three groups a consistently very high priority

Figure 5.2 Main themes in free-text answers to Solferino Survey question number 9: *What changes do you think your National Society should prioritise now and why are they important?*
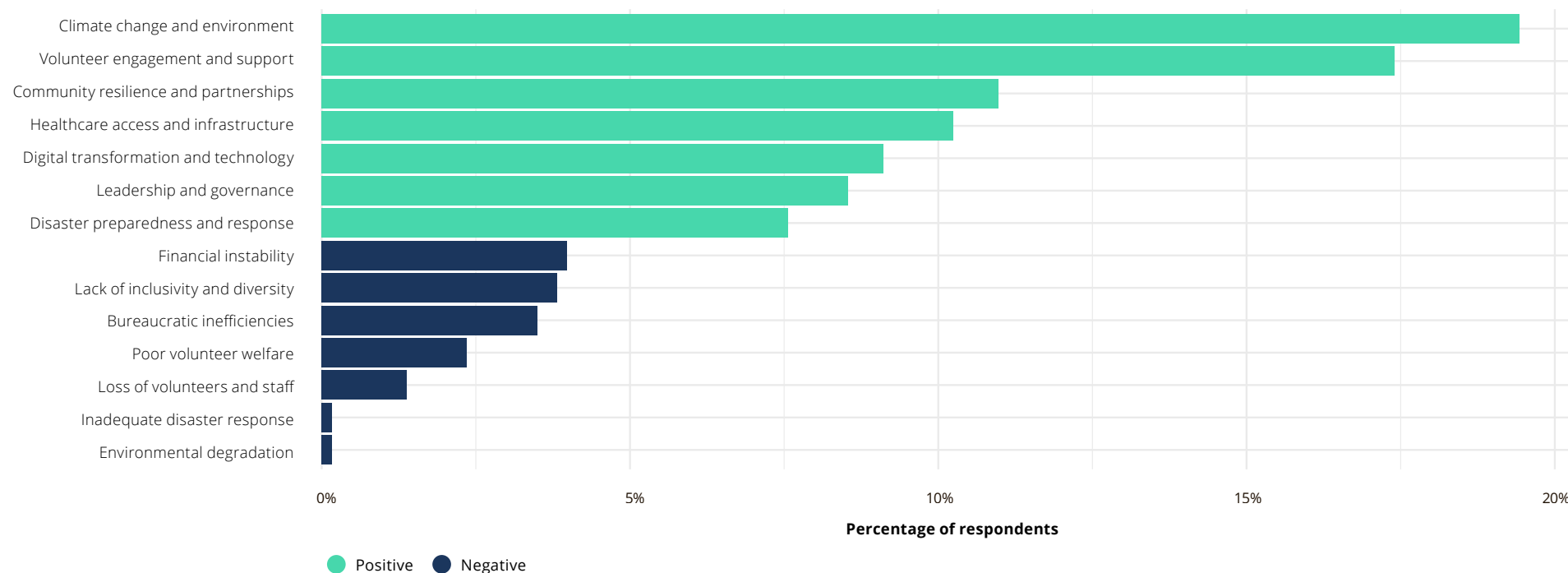
Source: Solferino Survey. Common themes within free-text answers were identified, then each answer was assigned one or more of these themes where appropriate. Each answer may be assigned to zero, one or more themes.

Current state

Volunteering patterns and modalities continue to change across most countries in the world, reaffirming the centrality of transforming volunteering as highlighted within *Strategy 2030*. These shifts have been well documented over the past decade - both by the IFRC network[18] and externally - and have again featured prominently in these consultations.

Trends include: volunteers wanting to champion a specific issue rather than rally behind a particular brand or institution; an increasing desire for quicker mobilization to deliver direct action with reduced bureaucracy; shorter volunteering lifespans and; more autonomy in the role. Volunteer availability is also affected by economic shifts, life pressures and changes in expectations of the volunteer experience.

18   See Global Review on Volunteering (2014) and IFRC *Strategy 2030* and supporting documents (2019)

While not all countries experience these changes at the same pace or intensity, survey respondents indicate that the impacts are becoming more widespread and disruptive.

The impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic have also been significant, seemingly worsening many of the trends outlined above.

While evidence is mixed at a global level, available data suggests a downward trend in formal volunteering, even as youth remain highly engaged and active in the social and environmental causes they are passionate about, focusing their energy on actions outside traditional volunteer institutions.

> *The changing nature of voluntary service presents a significant challenge for our National Society. There is an opportunity here to reconsider what voluntary service means…and we will need to do that if our National Societies are to remain relevant. — Leader, Oceana.*

These shifts have significant implications for virtually all aspects of the network. Volunteers' energy and influence shapes Red Cross and Red Crescent culture; without them there is no IFRC network. Most National Society service models depend on regular involvement of trained longer-term volunteers. If the emerging volunteering trends persist, they present a threat to reliable service provision at meaningful scale and manageable cost.

As the organization grapples with new types or combinations of crises which necessitate more complex service responses, the network increasingly needs more sophisticated skills in its volunteer base.

> *Even the activities and projects that National Societies are developing are more effective, interesting and better oriented to our contemporaneity. Perhaps the values of volunteering have decreased. Most tasks require a level of knowledge and management that is difficult to achieve with your free effort. I don't think this is a bad thing, but just the expression of a world that is changing more quickly than in the past. — Volunteer, Europe*

Future priorities

Despite the many challenges, people cite youth and volunteers as two of the greatest opportunities for the organization. The volunteer base is still massive in many parts of the world (110 National Societies count more than 5,000 volunteers in their base) and there are large numbers of highly committed, 'longer-term' volunteers. Even volunteer retention, while on a downward trend, is still high compared to many external organizations[19].

The digital transformation of volunteering approaches appears to have significantly improved in the first half of this strategy period but requires continued focus. Respondents who identified digital transformation as a priority overwhelmingly indicated that there had been improvements in areas such as streamlining sign up processes, creating more accessible training, enabling communication, enhancing collaboration and increasing effective data management. COVID-19 undoubtedly accelerated this[20].

Respondents felt there are considerable opportunities to be grasped but called for continued focus and investment, including in emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence (AI) and new digital services (see Box 2).

> *The push from COVID-19 required moving to online technology and better security of personal identifiable information far ahead of the planned implementation. Effects from better data management has been stunning. I've not seen anything like this in my 20 plus years as a disaster volunteer. — Volunteer, Americas*

Inclusivity, transparency and accountability are important ingredients. One of the most common critiques from volunteers was that the hierarchy did not listen to nor include them in decision making, and that there was an overall lack of transparency. They felt strongly that accountability to volunteers could be strengthened, and this would help people feel included and be a decisive factor in engagement quality. Where National Societies appeared to get this right, the results were compelling:

19   Where data exists it is not unusual to have average retention figures at above 2 years. See Volunteering Alliance data and reports
20   See *Everyone Counts* COVID report and COVID Evaluation IFRC 2023.

The most significant change has been involved in collecting 'stories' about change at regular intervals and interpreting/discussing them in a participatory way (through group discussions). In this way children, youths and adults have been able to express, document and make use of their views about the benefits. — Volunteer, Africa.

and;

Youth engagement has skyrocketed and young people are being encouraged to develop their own innovative solutions at community level. — Volunteer, Americas.

There is also a consistent call for more flexible volunteering that will enable more diverse participation. Specific efforts must be made to engage with groups currently underrepresented in National Societies. While it is recognized that some volunteer roles require more training and management, the need to complement these with more flexible models was strongly articulated:

There's too much red tape, and not enough support for [volunteers] and yet we can't be Red Cross without them. We need to put our people front and centre again as the connection point with the people who need our services. We need to adapt our approaches to meet the needs of the volunteers more. — Staff member, Asia Pacific.

We cannot achieve the same outcomes through volunteerism that we have enjoyed in the past without significant additional investment. Put simply, volunteering is now more expensive. A greater diversity of offerings is required, more focus on enhancing the volunteering experience and more resources for training, coaching and helping volunteers achieve their goals. All of this requires more investment than we may be used to, likely for a lower return on investment given the shorter retention periods.

Complicating this further, in many countries volunteers are grappling with their own economic difficulties and we must continue to explore how to ensure volunteers at least do not suffer financially.

Understanding that volunteerism in today's economy cannot be sustained without monetary compensation and as such; proper mechanisms should be put in place in order to address this challenge that is gnawing at the core of our National Societies. — Staff member, Africa Region.

What success looks like by 2030

- Openness to innovation and considerably more investment for experimenting with new models of volunteering that result in more diverse volunteer opportunities better suited to volunteer needs.

- Greater focus on developing digitized approaches that make the volunteer experience more efficient and incorporate meaningful digital volunteering opportunities (for more on digital transformation, see Box 2).

- More inclusive decision making and transparency with volunteers in the National Society, including more focus on supporting volunteers to make the change in the world that they want to see, as well as the opportunity to influence and be involved in the development of services and the National Society.

- More and higher quality training for volunteers.

- Targeted strategies to offer volunteering opportunities to people who do not normally have the chance to participate.

- Leadership that sets a high standard of ethics and accountability to its volunteers.

Türkiye 2023 Friends volunteering together in Kahramanmaras to serve the earthquake-affected communities.

© Onur Isik Canturk / IFRC

Financial sustainability

In our consultations, financial sustainability was listed as by far the most important challenge the network will face in the coming five years. Financing the future featured as one of the seven prioritized transformations of *Strategy 2030* and its prominence has continued to rise in the first five years of the period. Regardless of the financial status of their National Society, there is overwhelming concern about the financial future of the IFRC network from senior leaders, staff, management, volunteers and youth around the world and about our ability to ensure a sustained local action and services – see Figure 5.3.

Current state

The financial landscape has undoubtedly changed: Crises are more frequent, requiring more (generally underfunded) appeals as seen in Figure 2.1, but they are also more costly, severe and often highly complex. Many crises go on for longer, with some stretching into decades and others, such as climate change, increasingly acknowledged as permanent crises (or 'permacrisis') for which there is no clear end point, with dramatically escalating cost projections.

Humanitarian financing, while growing incrementally, is not keeping pace with the increase in costs. The prognosis is not good. The increasing cost of living, donor fatigue, politicized humanitarian and development support aligned with (and in some cases overshadowed by) the geopolitical, trade and security interests of governments, increasing competition and many other factors are combining to create a perfect storm. Financial sustainability is now one of the greatest threats to the IFRC network's ability to meet the needs of at-risk populations in the future and ensure sustained services and action.

Figure 5.3 Main themes in free-text answers to Solferino Survey question number 9: *What do you think will be the main challenges and opportunities for your National Society over the next 5 years?*
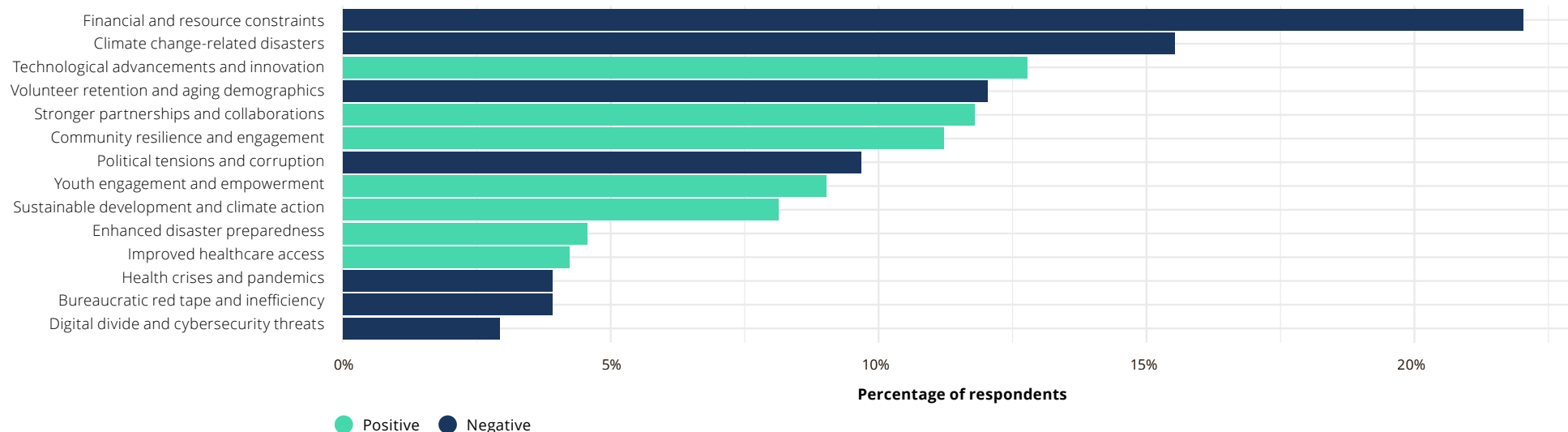
Source: Solferino Survey. Common themes within free-text answers were identified, then each answer was assigned one or more of these themes where appropriate. Each answer may be assigned to zero, one or more themes.

Future priorities

The financial disparity between National Societies is dramatic (see figure 3.10) and raises significant questions about independence, neutrality and, for many, decolonization. The gap must be narrowed. While some National Societies manage billion-dollar budgets, many others consistently struggle to cover their costs.

This inequity is rooted in wider geopolitical inequalities, but respondents argue that an organization which espouses solidarity and a sincere commitment to strong local actors must do better to address these systemic issues.

> *The mobilization of resources must remain a strong strategic axis because there is enormous financing capacity for national (level), but also and above all, international support. — Senior National Society leader, Europe.*

Respondents pointed out that financial independence, if sufficiently diversified, enables neutral humanitarian action by ensuring the IFRC network is not beholden to the priorities of governments or partners. It also enhances localized power and accelerates decolonization of the humanitarian system:

> *We would no longer have to accept the decisions of sister National Societies … and to not be dependent on donors. — Leader, Africa.*

National Society development is a growing priority for both participating National Societies and the IFRC, and many feel decent progress has been made in this space and should continue. More focus is suggested on the skills, approaches and, in some circumstances, capital that is needed to achieve financial independence.

Trust and accountability are inseparable from financial sustainability, and the IFRC should be more vigilant in ensuring we all achieve it.

> *It's very difficult to build a reputation. It's very easy to lose a reputation. And so we have to do the things that will reduce the risks to our reputation, which is being very transparent on how we use funds, about what it is that we do (with those funds). — Staff member, Europe.*

This has been recognized by the IFRC network for decades, and respondents again overwhelmingly linked these issues to financial self-reliance. Trust and accountability have become increasingly visible in Strategic Plans and Annual Reports, but respondents felt more action is needed. National Society leadership attracted strong critique for their performance on accountability, risk management and transparency.

Diverse approaches are identified as key. While diversity of income streams is consistently trumpeted as the key to financial self-reliance, data seems to indicate that, in general, we have not seen any growth in this area. See Figure 3.11.

Participants indicated we also need to improve:

- Advocacy to governments and strengthening National Societies' auxiliary role: While the IFRC network has a critical role to play in civil society, our links to the state were also seen as problematic if we over-relied on it, risking our independence and causing struggles with neutrality within heavily polarized societies.

- Public fundraising. This is dependent on the reputation of the individual National Society and the financial prognosis of its country. *"There is a perception we are not very modern, and this affects our fundraising"*.

- New income streams: A consistent thread called for "internally generated funds". Social entrepreneurship and businesses seem to be favoured by many, particularly in middle- and lower-income countries.

- Innovative financing models: New approaches do not appear to have much traction, although the IFRC-DREF, IFRC's Capacity Building Fund and the IFRC-ECHO Pilot Programmatic Partnership have received praise, and there are exciting developments with Islamic Social Financing. There have also been some notable trials of smaller initiatives, but not with substantial growth.

- Access to development funding: The drive to secure more development financing has also appeared to be gaining traction.

Leadership is again identified as a critical factor in enabling improvements, specifically to ensure transparent and prudent fiduciary management. However, some also diagnosed a need to build governance approaches that could bring in expertise to reimagine IFRC network approaches to financing:

> *I need different skills in my National Society development support than what has been used, someone who can help me restructure my debt, develop new financing, make a multi-million dollar business more sustainable. — National Society Secretary-General, Africa Region.*

What success look like by 2030

- A much greater prioritization and investment from all Movement partners in National Society development, in particular strategies to build financial self-reliance.

- Equal focus from both partners and leadership on the fundamentals of financial sustainability, including transparency, trust, accountability, risk management and reputation.

- Stronger mechanisms from the whole of the IFRC network for accountability of senior leaders in the above categories.

- A genuine commitment from National Societies with financial power to share and transfer power to the local actors they are supporting.

- Transformed governance and leadership approaches that consider capacities for strong financial performance and sustainability strategies.

- All IFRC network members increase the diversity of their financing sources, including a commitment to explore new business models and access development funding where appropriate.

Transformative leadership

Today's leaders face enormous pressure from all sides. They must simultaneously optimize their organization while engaging with an ever-shifting external context, balancing the preservation of existing business models with reinvention and transformation to meet soaring demand. As they deal with these urgent, immediate issues they must also anticipate and adapt to future challenges and opportunities. Not doing so risks change being forced upon them, rather than it being deployed as a purposeful strategic tool.

Participants in the consultations, at all levels of the IFRC network, called for transformative approaches to leadership to be prioritized to enable the network to deliver humanitarian services tailored to evolving needs.

Current state

Our respondents call for reorientation and reorganizing to navigate emerging challenges and huge uncertainty, with a clear, collective ambition backed by the flexibility to anticipate and adapt. The transformation of strong local actors prioritized in *Strategy 2030* remains a significant priority here at the mid-point. Leadership, they argue, is essential to this.

This is not a challenge unique to the IFRC network. The entire humanitarian sector sits at a critical juncture. As the world's largest humanitarian network, respondents felt the IFRC should lead this change and not just reshape our own institutions, but also help to reinvent the sector.

Significant work has been undertaken since 2020 to develop and disseminate novel leadership approaches. Some National Societies have reimagined their focus and then reorganized to deliver this vision. Others have invested in new

specialisms to add their unique strength to the IFRC network. Still more are retooling to build foresight, anticipation and inclusion into their governance. Around the world, leaders are connecting to learn from each other and to draw on the rich diversity of our collective work.

There is widespread frustration however, with the pace and ambition of change. Staff and volunteers see many change efforts as mired in inefficient governance, internal politics and a lack of willingness to be genuinely participatory:

> *Institutional change takes an obscene amount of time because there is not enough political will. — 'Strategy 2030' Midterm review survey response, Staff, Americas*

Many respondents highlighted the growing concentration of power – and the resultant micromanagement – in senior roles as an impediment to innovation and adaptation:

> *Maybe current leadership models are obsolete because the challenges are too complex and overwhelming to be addressed by a few people only. We need real inclusion. — Winds of Change survey response.*

While *Strategy 2030* aspired to redistribute power and unlock leadership potential at a community level, respondents indicate that decision-making power is still concentrated in a small number of senior roles that have a disproportionate influence on how National Societies and the IFRC network operates. The implication of this conservatism is stark:

> *Unless there are changes among the leadership…there will not be changes. — Volunteer representative[21].*

Future priorities

It is clear from consultations across the IFRC network that leadership takes many different forms around the world, but a shared vision for the network's leadership seems to be emerging in the consultations that enable us to identify common characteristics and priorities. These commonalities point to a need for more transformative and systemic focused leadership:

A bold, collective vision: projecting a vision for the future rooted in a deep understanding of the systems we are trying to influence, while building support and momentum with partners and supporters.

Navigating uncertainty: This requires leadership that is more agile, innovative and able to encourage continuous learning and adaptability to navigate changing systems, particularly in contexts of fragility. Leaders who are willing to invest in experimentation to design new modes of humanitarian action and develop policies and models that are flexible and responsive.

Inclusive and equitable: Staff and volunteers commonly called for more equitable distribution of power across roles and regions, more inclusive decision making and improved transparency, which requires a culture shift across the network.

> *What we really need are leaders who enable people, who help them to unfold potential, who trust them, that they will give their best to drive something further. — Staff interview, 'Strategy 2030' consultation.*

Here, the critical challenge for leaders identified, is a willingness to let go of power and trust their staff and volunteers to act on their own initiative, while using their seniority to coach, guide, open doors and establish the pathways needed for new approaches "by emphasising creativity and innovation in everything [the National Society] does", as a volunteer in Africa argued.

Alliance builders: Leaders should look outward with a commitment to collaboration, according to respondents, engaging with emerging trends and seeking strategic partners across sectors. They should aim to engage with and leverage diverse stakeholders building powerful alliances to tackle the complex systems of challenges we face.

See Box 3 on working as a distributed network.

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21   *Strategy 2030* Midterm review survey response, Volunteer, Trinidad and Tobago

BOX 3

Working as a Distributed Network

The IFRC network's strength lies in its ability to share knowledge and form supportive alliances, both inside and outside the organization. Strong individual components are essential for this kind of robust network, enabling effective collaboration across countries, cultures, and crises.

Fundamentally, that demands an organizational culture that can look and work forwards, outwards and across systems. However, the IFRC network currently faces considerable challenges due to an internally focused, control-heavy culture, where issues such as slow responses, burdensome bureaucracy, and inconsistent reporting structures hinder efficiency and effectiveness. These challenges draw attention away from service delivery and over-burden smaller National Societies.

In our consultations, we consistently heard the need for a more collaborative and partnership-oriented mindset as "the first step, not the last resort". This means every National Society must be strong and capable of mobilizing resources and support. To bring this about, there is a need for internal changes to promote adaptability, shared learning, and collaboration. We must also improve how we work with external partners – including citizens, civil society, government, private sector, scientific researchers, and more – to achieve shared goals. This kind of cross-capability partnership will be increasingly essential to tackle multifaceted problems.

Delivering this change means understanding our own capabilities better. Focusing on a select number of signature multi-stakeholder programmes will help the IFRC network learn how to do this more effectively. But respondents assert that we cannot just partner with the powerful – we need to foster deeper, more equal relationships with marginalized or underserved communities to improve programme relevance and impact. Prioritizing diversity, equity, and inclusion will better serve our network.

This also means putting our own house in order with safeguarding, risk management and accountability seen as critical components of the collective performance of a distributed network. Working better as an alliance of National Societies with these critical components within our global network is seen as critical. A decentralized yet connected IFRC network enhances resilience and responsiveness. Collaboration should be multi-directional, with traditionally dominant National Societies learning from and supporting their peers. Power and knowledge flow should be oriented to maximize the network's overall potential. Ultimately, being part of a more interconnected and empowered global community will strengthen the IFRC's ability to meet humanitarian challenges effectively.

Respondents commonly advised we should prioritize:

Investing in diverse local leaders: Diverse leadership can better understand and address the needs of the communities we support. Achieving this will require dismantling structural and cultural impediments that discourage or prevent people from joining or staying in the IFRC network. In some instances, this may mean that the National Society must be brave and pioneer diversity and inclusion in contexts where it is not the norm.

> *Our National Society unfortunately does not reflect the diversity of the communities we serve. It is a great risk to our humanitarian work. — 'Strategy 2030' Midterm review survey response, Staff, Japan*

There are also clear calls for more space for youth to participate in decision-making and for support to develop leadership skills and opportunities. A recommendation that has been consistent in reviews for decades.

> *More youth involvement will be highly advantageous to everyone, but youth involvement depends on how the National Society leadership is treating them 'Strategy 2030' Midterm review survey response. — Volunteer, Zambia*

> *Right now, there are only older individuals leading the team and there is too much politics involved. This is not good for the future of my National Society. — Volunteer, Asia.*

Investment in developing diverse local leaders should be an urgent priority. It is currently seen as significantly under-resourced at national and international levels. Dedicated space is needed to encourage reflection, dialogue, and momentum to develop models that leverage what is unique about the IFRC network and amplify our strengths.

What success looks like by 2030

- The IFRC network is focused on a key set of collective priorities, with a clear focus on the development of a new generation of humanitarians.

- Diversity is increased across the network, particularly in positions of power and where strategic decisions are made that affect everyone, so that the leadership represents the communities we work on behalf of.

- Leaders ensure they create a culture that gives decision-making power, responsibility and accountability to all staff and volunteers so they can take an active role in the delivery and development of our humanitarian services, making meaningful changes to systems which currently stifle initiative, participation and change.

- Change is viewed as a critical adaptive strategy and alterations have been made to leadership, bureaucracy and process to ensure National Societies can adjust to new information and changing priorities.

- National Societies are investing in leadership development, including engagement with different authorities, private sector and opinion leaders to navigate uncertain and complex contexts.

Guatemala 2024 The Guatemalan Red Cross is a part of the global project 'Building Trust', funded by BHA, until March 2024. In this project, the GRC, in partnership with the Ministry of Health, is focusing on improving local health services.

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CONCLUSION

This seventh edition of the *Everyone Counts* report provides a comprehensive look at the collective efforts, achievements, and challenges of the IFRC network as we reach the midpoint of *Strategy 2030*. By analysing data from IFRC's Federation-wide Databank and Reporting System (FDRS), unified planning and reporting process, GO platform and other sources, alongside insights from the IFRC Solferino Academy's global consultation, we gain a clearer picture of our network's impact and the evolving humanitarian landscape.

The data shows that National Societies continue to reach hundreds of millions of people annually across a wide range of services, with increasing numbers across most key performance indicators both in terms of totals and median numbers. Low-income countries lead in many areas, particularly in evolving crises, disasters, and health services. There has been significant growth in areas like cash transfer programming and migration support. The values, power and inclusion Global Challenge has also seen substantial progress since 2017.

However, we face an increasingly complex and interconnected set of crises. Climate change, health inequities, migration, and social polarization are creating new and interconnected vulnerabilities and straining the IFRC network's traditional response models. These developments are felt and reported by many National Societies across the world. The COVID-19 pandemic demonstrated both our ability to rapidly adapt and the need for continued transformation in how we work.

Our organization is changing to meet these challenges. We are seeing a shift towards digital and more flexible forms of volunteering, though challenges remain in volunteer retention and support. Gender balance in leadership roles is slowly improving but still has a long way to go. Digital transformation is progressing, with many National Societies reporting advancements in this area. Financial sustainability remains a critical concern, with a need for more diverse funding sources across the network.

Our analysis of National Societies' Strategic Plans and Annual Reports reveals an encouraging alignment with *Strategy 2030*. The Global Challenges presented in *Strategy 2030* are now appearing more frequently in these documents, especially in Strategic Plans. Interestingly, many of the central ideas were already circulating across the network before the launch of *Strategy 2030*, suggesting it represents a culmination of shared narratives.

The IFRC Solferino Academy's consultations with network personnel highlight the need for transformative leadership, stronger collaboration as a distributed network, and continued investment in local capacities. There is a call for more systemic approaches to address complex, interconnected crises and to navigate an uncertain future.

As we look towards 2030, it is clear that while the IFRC network has made significant progress, there is still much work to be done. We must continue to adapt, innovate, and collaborate to meet the evolving needs of the communities we serve. By building on our strengths - our global reach, local presence, and dedicated volunteers - and addressing our challenges head-on, we can enhance our impact and build a more resilient, inclusive, and prepared world.

APPENDIX

CAVEATS AND DATA LIMITATIONS

The data repository

All the graphics, tables and calculations in this report were generated by scripts in the computer language R[22] from raw data. The raw data and the scripts could be shared upon request.

Contact fdrs@ifrc.org for further details.

Disclaimers and limitations

The analyses in this report are based on different datasets. Each dataset has its own limitations which also apply to these analyses. Readers are referred to the documentation for the different datasets.

In addition, the analyses themselves can introduce additional limitations. For example, when matching datasets by country, countries and territories may sometimes be present in one dataset but not in another. Furthermore, although we did subject the analysis scripts to peer review, we cannot be certain that we have eliminated all errors in coding.

22   R Core Team (2021). R: A language and environment for statistical computing. R Foundation for Statistical Computing, Vienna, Austria. URL https://www.R-project.org/. With additional packages: countrycode, DiagrammeR, flashClust, ggbeeswarm, ggplot2, knitr, officer, patchwork, pheatmap, readxl, rmarkdown, rnaturalearth, rworldmap, scales, sf, stringdist, textreadr, tidyverse, wbstats

DATASETS

FDRS

Data for 2019 onwards imputes missing values according to this script: GitHub - FDRS-ifrc/fdrs_imputing_missing_values: Python script to implement the current imputation techniques for FDRS key data.

Data prior to 2019 was not imputed.

For 2023, not all the data was available and/or verified at the time of writing. For this year, a larger percentage of the data is imputed. 2023 data is a best estimate as of July 24 and will certainly be updated.

Unified planning and reporting

The Unified Planning database is part of a process launched in 2022 to strengthen joint planning within the IFRC network, particularly for countries where National Societies seek international support. The database allows National Societies to showcase their unique work and progress through the use of custom indicators. Extracted and updated on 30-July-2023.

IFRC Emergency Appeals and IFRC-DREF

The dataset was extracted from IFRC GO, the IFRC network's emergency response platform. The analyses exclude all Emergency Appeals with 0 beneficiaries or 0 amount funded, manual verification of the data took place for appeals from 2010 onwards.

Solferino survey

The IFRC's Solferino Academy hosted an online survey in the first part of 2024 open to staff, volunteers and other respondents. The survey contained both closed and free-text questions. Common themes within free-text answers were identified, then each answer was assigned one or more of these themes where appropriate. Each answer may be assigned to zero, one or more themes.

The Economist / COVID-19

This dataset is a reliable source of information on the development of the COVID-19 pandemic. One of the tables was used to construct the curve of mortality over time: https://github.com/TheEconomist/covid-19-the-economist-global-excess-deaths-model/raw/main/output-data/country_daily_excess_deaths_with_covariates.RDS.

THE *STRATEGY 2030* GLOBAL CHALLENGES AND THE CORRESPONDING FDRS KPIs

Number of National Societies refers to the Number of National Societies which report at least one nonzero value in the past 10 years.

Challenge	KPI_code	KPI_Name	Number of National Societies
Climate and environmental crises	KPI_ClimateHeat_CPD	Number of people reached - Heatwave risk reduction, preparedness or response - Total	54
	KPI_Climate_CPD	Number of people reached - Activities to address rising climate risks - Total	98
Evolving crises and disasters	KPI_ReachCTP_CPD	Number of people reached - Cash transfer programming - Total	157
	KPI_ReachDRER_CPD	Number of people reached - disaster response and early recovery - Total	182
	KPI_ReachDRR_CPD	Number of people reached - Disaster Risk Reduction - Total	175
	KPI_ReachL_CPD	Number of people reached - Livelihoods - Total	166
	KPI_ReachS_CPD	Number of people reached - Shelter - Total	155
Growing gaps in health and wellbeing	KPI_ReachHI_CPD	Number of people reached - Immunisation services - Total	108
	KPI_ReachHPM_CPD	Number of people reached - Mental health and psychosocial support services - Total	141
	KPI_ReachH_CPD	Number of people reached - Health - Total	189
	KPI_ReachWASH_CPD	Number of people reached - Water, Sanitation and Hygiene - Total	164
Migration and identity	KPI_ReachM_CPD	Number of people reached - Migration - Total	155
Values, Power and Inclusion	KPI_ReachRCRCEd_CPD	Number of people reached - RCRC educational programmes - Total	115
	KPI_ReachSI_CPD	Number of people reached - Protection, gender and inclusion programmes - Total	167

National Society Strategic Plans and Annual Reports

All 488 National Society Strategic Plans and 1568 Annual Reports since 2002, after removal of duplicates, were processed.

Sometimes documents are available in a national language and a global language like English, in parallel, in which case the English language version was used.

Each document was broken down into pages, excluding pages with less than 500 characters. Then "embeddings" were constructed to represent the approximate "meaning" of each page, largely independently of the document language. (This "embedding" is a mathematical object, a list of numbers, which can be compared with others, such that it is possible to how close or distant two pieces of text are from one another). The embeddings were stored in a vector database.

Our analysis (see Appendix) shows that the AI "understands" the meaning of English-language documents on average a little better than for other languages. So English-language documents were given a small handicap in the algorithms to account for this.

Original and condensed *Strategy 2030* themes (Goals, Global Challenges, Transformations)

Goals

Original Version

Goal 1: People anticipate, respond to and quickly recover from crises

Goal 2: People lead safe, healthy and dignified lives, and have opportunities to thrive

Goal 3: People mobilise for inclusive and peaceful communities

Condensed version used in the NLP analyses

Goal 1: People anticipate, respond to and quickly recover from crises

Goal 2: People lead safe, healthy and dignified lives, and have opportunities to thrive

Goal 3: People mobilise for inclusive and peaceful communities

Challenge 1

Original Version

Climate and environmental crises. he climate crisis and environmental degradation are significant risks to humanity. Changes to our climate and environment are already contributing to an increase in the frequency, intensity and unpredictability of severe weather events, multiplying health effects, and the decline of biodiversity. Without action on both climate and environmental degradation, their impacts will place increasing pressure on scarce natural resources, including food, water and clean air. These intersecting issues are increasing exposure and vulnerability; raising climate related risks in cities and in regions already suffering from violent conflict, with serious consequences for the livelihoods, mental health and psychosocial wellbeing of the people who are affected.

Condensed version used in the NLP analyses

C1: Climate and Environmental Crises: Human activities are accelerating climate change and environmental degradation, increasing the frequency and severity of extreme weather events, depleting natural resources like water and clean air, and endangering biodiversity, which together heighten vulnerabilities particularly in conflict-affected regions.

Challenge 2

Original Version

Evolving crises and disasters. he ability of populations to cope will be affected by disasters that are predicted to become more common, more costly, more complex, and more concentrated. ore common: Disasters due to extreme weather events and climate/environmental disruptions are predicted to increase. While there are

now fewer largescale interstate conflicts, other forms of conflict and violence have increased in the past decades across multiple domains. The complex geopolitical factors involved in these events often trigger humanitarian crises that become protracted. ore concentrated: Disaster and crises are significantly more frequent in fragile settings. By 2030 almost half of the world's poor people are expected to live in countries affected by fragility and conflict. The people least able to cope with disaster will be the most affected. ore complex: Beyond traditional drivers of disaster and crises, our increasing dependence on technology brings new risks and vulnerabilities, including potentially unforeseen cyber and digital threats. ore costly: In addition to all the above, increasing population density in urban and particularly informal settings is likely to result in significant deprivation and more hazard exposure. The combination of common, concentrated and complex disasters, means that when a disaster strikes – be it a seismic or weather related event or an infectious disease outbreak – the impacts are multiple, the ability to provide immediate assistance is low, and the costs of providing assistance in such complex environments are higher.

Condensed version used in the NLP analyses

C2: Evolving Crises and Disasters: Disasters are becoming more frequent, complex, and costly due to environmental changes, technological dependencies, and increasing urban density, particularly impacting fragile settings where the poorest and least equipped populations reside.

Challenge 3

Original Version

Growing gaps in health and wellbeing. here is much to be optimistic about, the global health gains made in recent years, alongside the major medical advances that are emerging. But despite this, people continue to face a complex mix of interconnected risks to their health and wellbeing. The greatest vulnerabilities and threats to health resilience over the next decade are going to be as a result of multiplier effects from population movements, epidemics, conflicts, noncommunicable diseases, natural and technological disasters, and climate change. Changing demographics means that more older people are becoming dependent on health and social care services that are not able to cope, or often do not exist. ore than a billion people live in places where protracted crises and weak health services leave them without access to basic care, fostering environments where forgotten diseases emerge. An unacceptable number of people still do not have access to clean water and basic sanitation. Rising mental health issues such as depression and anxiety place increasing strain on individuals, communities and health systems. Linked to this are increasing rates of loneliness, involuntary isolation and emerging areas of digital isolation that prevent people from having socially connected lives. Most countries across the globe are struggling to manage the rapidly increasing cost of health care. A projected significant shortage of health workers – estimated to reach 18 million by 2030 – will affect the delivery of health services at all levels.

Condensed version used in the NLP analyses

C3: Growing Gaps in Health and Wellbeing: Despite advances in medical science, global health is threatened by a complex mix of factors including epidemics, noncommunicable diseases, climate change, and inadequate health services, exacerbating issues like mental health and access to basic care, particularly in crisis-stricken areas.

Challenge 4

Original Version

Migration and Identity. he movement of people, whether voluntary or involuntary, is one of the defining features of the 21st century. Migration has helped improve people's lives in countries of origin and destination. allowing millions of people around the world to build safe and meaningful lives. The number of migrants globally has grown significantly since 2000 and is projected to keep rising, notably as a result of conflict, poverty and a lack of quality employment opportunities. In the future, it is projected that climate and environmental crises will make some regions uninhabitable, forcing people to move en masse. he risks that people, particularly refugees, face when they are on the move are growing. These risks include exploitation and abuse at the hands of traffickers and other criminal groups, as well deprivations caused by policies that limit access to basic services and care. The risks are heightened for stateless people and those who do not have official proof of their identity. Discussions on migration in some parts of the world are currently being used as instruments to fuel tension and xenophobia. This is often accompanied – in migrant and host communities alike – by stress and worries about acceptance, identity and what it means to 'belong', resulting in fractures in social cohesion, and exclusion.

Condensed version used in the NLP analyses

C4: Migration and Identity: Migration, driven by conflict, poverty, and environmental crises, is increasing globally, posing heightened risks of exploitation and identity-related tensions, challenging the acceptance and integration of migrants and refugees in host communities.

Challenge 5

Original Version

Values, power and inclusion. Values based tensions are manifesting in different ways in different places, creating new fault lines within and between countries, regions and communities. The pace of change is leaving many political, regulatory and welfare systems unable to cope. The benefits of economic and technological progress, while driving significant gains and opportunities, are not being shared equally. Space for principled humanitarian action is shrinking, and is even criminalised in some parts of the world. These global changes risk creating a more disconnected, less inclusive and less empathetic world. et there are also many people the world over who want to make their lives, their communities and their world better. any previously marginalised voices are now calling for greater agency and involvement in decision making. In many countries, there are influential efforts to secure recognition and equality for all persons regardless of their sex, race, ethnicity, religion, gender or sexual orientation. call for diversity and true equal inclusion of women is driving change across civil society, institutions and Government structure and policy, particularly in areas of protection, leadership and decision making.

Condensed version used in the NLP analyses

C5: Values, Power and Inclusion: Rapid societal and technological changes are straining political and welfare systems, leading to uneven economic benefits, restricted humanitarian spaces, and heightened societal divisions, while also driving movements for greater equality and inclusion across various social dimensions.

Transformation 1

Original Version

Transformation 1: Supporting and developing National Societies as strong and effective local actors. We know that strong local actors are key to supporting communities across the world and to achieving greater humanitarian and development outcomes. We also understand that in order to respond to the rapid changes of our world, new skills, models and approaches will be required in our organisations. We are committed to well-coordinated, efficient and respectful support with each other to ensure that all National Societies are able to work with their communities to understand needs and strengths, devise strategies, and ensure continued quality improvement. Utilising evidence, research and data to inform our approaches, our network will be able to learn, adapt and move more quickly to capitalise on opportunities. We must continue to invest in leadership and specialised organisational development assistance to ensure development of robust systems, promote honest, creative, and curious mindsets, and optimise opportunities for change. We will work extensively with external partners to support these developments. We are committed to connect with the younger generation of community-based change agents who are mobilising in large numbers and in creative ways. We will adapt our systems and cultures to be more effective at engaging young people, including supporting their participation in leadership and decision making. Our transformative action will be to put much greater focus on the development of branches and National Societies, ensuring services are led and developed by local actors, and that National Societies have a stronger role in setting their own priorities and a stronger voice in any decisions being made about operations in their own territory. As a network, we will jointly support National Societies to shift their systems, structures and approaches to be able to meet changing needs and to promote innovation, agility and greater anticipation.

Condensed version used in the NLP analyses

T1: Strengthen Local Capacities: Enhance the effectiveness of National Societies by investing in leadership, innovative approaches, and partnerships, ensuring they lead and innovate in serving their communities.

Transformation 2

Original Version

Transformation 2: Inspiring and mobilising volunteerism We know that volunteering and civic mobilisation are key to ensuring more inclusive societies where all can enjoy the benefits and opportunities available. We also know that volunteers ensure we are deeply rooted in the communities we support, understand the persistent and emerging challenges in their communities, and have ideas and passion for how to drive change. We know that the very nature of 'community' and volunteering is changing, powered in part by greater connectedness and capacity to self-mobilise through digital technologies. We know that while we currently have the largest formal network of volunteers globally, there is a massive movement of people around the world trying to mobilise for a better world, and we want to support and enhance these efforts. We are committed to re-imagining volunteering and civic action, and to developing new, more flexible, open and complementary approaches that create a more effective network of humanitarians working for global good. We reinforce our commitment to strengthen our approaches at volunteer management, including easier pathways to participation and ever more effective support and recognition for the work of volunteers. We will continue to nurture our volunteer base to ensure that a range of essential services can be provided, particularly in complex environments. We will continue to do all in our power to ensure the well-being, safety and protection of volunteers, particularly those who are working in conflicts and other extremely dangerous settings. We must continue to invest in expanding the diversity of our volunteer base, and the opportunities available to all volunteers. We will work to reduce the barriers to

volunteering that currently affect women and girls in many countries, facilitate greater volunteer engagement for older persons, inter-generational collaboration and with persons with disabilities, and seek out participation from people experiencing marginalisation who may not have been able to engage with the Red Cross and Red Crescent before. Our transformative action will be to innovate and become a platform that can support people's own efforts to drive the change they seek in the world, with a particular focus on the efforts of young people and self-organising groups. We will also work to ensure greater connectedness of our volunteers including across borders, more effectively utilising digital approaches and supporting them to creatively develop new initiatives and campaigns for good on common issues of concern.

Condensed version used in the NLP analyses

T2: Mobilize Volunteering: Transform volunteering by developing flexible, inclusive, and digitally-enhanced methods that empower diverse groups and enhance global connectivity.

Transformation 3

Original Version

Transformation 3: Ensuring trust and accountability We know that trust is essential to all of our relationships. It enables our access to communities and to partnerships, as well as encouraging a productive and healthy volunteer and staff base. Our first accountability is to the communities we serve. In all our interactions with communities, we must demonstrate integrity, transparency, humility and honesty. The paramount consideration is that the people who come into contact with our services and initiatives must at all times be safe and protected. Donors and supporters also place their trust in us to use their resources to help drive a better life for affected people, and this trust is sustained by our obligations and commitment to use these efficiently and wisely. We also know that we must be accountable to each other: to other members of the Movement, and to our staff and volunteers. We prioritise a culture of trust, safety, integrity and hold each other to account. We are committed to expanding our presence in communities all over the world, especially in communities that are isolated or marginalised. We ensure that we are representative of the diversity of communities we work within, and foster engagement with groups that might be under-represented in decision making, We are committed to ensuring communities have access to information they need, and can lead in the decisions and programmes affecting them. We also commit to transparency: regularly publishing information about our work and finances, explaining progress, challenges and learning, and inviting feedback that will strength our efforts. We must continue to invest in systems and approaches that promote privacy, integrity, and transparency in community feedback mechanisms. We will improve channels for communities to share concerns or comments in ways that prioritise feedback loops and are safe and confidential. We continue to focus on highly ethical, effective and transparent governance. We support and invest in our leaders to help them build cultures and organisations that enhance the safety, well-being and growth of our staff and volunteers, and the trust of the wider community. We also deepen our efforts to prevent, identify and respond to instances and allegations of behaviour that are contrary to our humanitarian principles and values. We will support widespread implementation of IFRC policies on Gender and Diversity as well as Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse and, constantly monitoring and updating these policies and practices as necessary. Our transformative action will be to fully embrace a culture of ethical practice and to place personal and institutional accountability at the heart of all of our work. We will also work together effectively as a global Movement to drive these practices and accountabilities and to strengthen mechanisms to implement them.

Condensed version used in the NLP analyses

T3: Ensure Trust and Accountability: Commit to ethical practices and transparency, focusing on community safety, integrity, and participatory decision-making to strengthen trust and accountability.

Transformation 4

Original Version

Transformation 4: Working effectively as a distributed network We know that rising humanitarian need requires new, collaborative multi-stakeholder approaches for effective action. Our large, independent and local network is among our greatest strengths but we must prioritise much more effective coordination, connection and internal efficiencies to leverage this for much greater gains. We also know that we need new ways of partnering, with a much wider range of actors beyond those we traditionally work with, to address common causes. We are therefore committed to optimising the power of working as one global Movement, sharing resources, learning and common standards, and finding ways to build greater efficiency and collective intelligence. We will find new models of collaboration in a spirit of togetherness, humility and joint effort. We must continue to invest in innovations that can connect people and make knowledge more accessible, in widening our networks locally, regionally and globally, and in developing the skills and systems to be 'good partners'. We must also continue to support the independence of local actors to enhance their decision-making and agency. Our transformative action will be new models of collaboration that are open, direct and with decentralised communication and decision-making. We will open ourselves up to more connections and transformative partnerships that prioritise collective action and joint problem-solving, including those outside the traditional, mainstream humanitarian system.

Condensed version used in the NLP analyses

T4: Optimize Network Collaboration: Foster effective collaboration across the distributed network, leveraging digital tools and decentralized decision-making to increase efficiency and collective impact.

Transformation 5

Original Version

Transformation 5: Influencing humanitarian action, We know that the challenges communities face are complex and require a multitude of approaches to address and that, at times, this will require us to use the breadth of our collective voice. We also recognise that our neutrality does not mean silence and that our volunteers, youth, and the communities they come from must be heard on issues that affect their capacity to thrive. We also know that by clearly standing for the causes and values we believe in, those who hold similar values and commitments can more easily identify with our work, connect with us, and join our efforts. The reach and influence of digital communications will continue to be an important tool in communicating our message. We are committed to standing up and speaking out in support of the most vulnerable communities and individuals we work with, in line with and in furtherance of our Fundamental Principles. When people cannot speak for themselves, we will speak on their behalf, leveraging our extraordinary network and our auxiliary status for their benefit. We also commit when appropriate to joining our voice to that of others, including other humanitarian actors, so that we may amplify our impact. We must continue to invest in promoting and defending critical areas such as international humanitarian law and disaster law, leveraging the unique auxiliary status of National Societies with Governments. Our transformative action will be to use our convening and diplomatic capacity to strengthen our collective voice on key humanitarian issues. We will also significantly invest in the development of evidence, data and research that can inform thought leadership on the humanitarian and social issues that can influence opinion, policy and practice.

Condensed version used in the NLP analyses

T5: Influence Humanitarian Policies: Utilize the federation's global voice and digital outreach to advocate for vulnerable communities and influence humanitarian policies and practices.

Transformation 6

Original Version

Transformation 6: Undergoing a digital transformation, We know the tremendous opportunities to enhance our work, to become more effective and to drive new forms of humanitarian action are emerging through the rapid advancement of digital technologies. We also recognise that these advancements bring new challenges, threats and vulnerabilities that will need to be addressed in the coming decade. We are committed to experimenting with new technologies, innovations, digital practices and culture to harness our collective intelligence to help bridge the digital divide and decrease digital poverty and isolation. We acknowledge and commit to continue to be ever mindful that these opportunities are accompanied by emerging risks, including issues related to data ethics, access, protection and rights, inherent biases and information security, as well as the potential for cyberwarfare and as yet unknown hazards. We must continue to invest in experimenting with and integrating emerging technology, skills, capacities and digital culture into our ways of working as well as in the necessary legal, ethical and risk management support across our global network. Our transformative action will be to embrace and integrate the necessary culture, structure and technology to support a wholescale, equitable digital transformation. This will include building data and digital literacy and, forming purposeful partnerships with a wide range of actors.

Condensed version used in the NLP analyses

T6: Drive Digital Advancement: Integrate digital technologies and data ethics into humanitarian work, focusing on bridging digital divides and enhancing operational effectiveness.

Transformation 7

Original Version

Transformation 7: Financing the future We know that the complexity and scope of humanitarian and development challenges are growing and, in the coming years, will require financing beyond current levels if our goals are to be met. We also understand that meeting these financing goals will require new partnerships, new ways of working, and alternate sources of capital and financing. We are committed to securing sufficient funding to support our global network to meet growing needs but to do so in an ethical and sustainable manner that allows independence of humanitarian action in line with our Fundamental Principles. We must continue to invest simultaneously in (a) a global, coordinated investment strategy to support National Societies to strengthen their resource mobilization and financing approaches, including by better leveraging our auxiliary status with Governments and (b) strengthened governance, financial and programmatic management and accountability. Our transformative action will be to diversify our partnerships, improving collaboration with a wider range of actors and developing innovative business models, financial technologies and new financing mechanisms to better support independence, scope and depth of action.

Condensed version used in the NLP analyses

T7: Innovate Financing Strategies: Develop sustainable financing through new partnerships and innovative financial technologies to expand and enhance humanitarian and developmental capabilities.

The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) is the world's largest humanitarian network, with 191 National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and around 15.6 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 so people can live safe and healthy lives, and have opportunities to thrive.

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