HONDURAN RED CROSS SOCIETY

Impartiality in humanitarian action

Long-term National Society Development investments that strengthened the positioning, sustainability and impact of the Honduran Red Cross Society in a fragile, complex and violence-affected context

Cruz Roja
Hondureña

Cruz Roja Hondureña

1. Background

In 2016 the World Humanitarian Summit's **Grand Bargain Commitments set out the goal of "localising"[1] humanitarian action.**

As its own contribution to localisation, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) defines National Society Development (NSD) as "the continuous effort of each National Society to achieve and maintain an accountable and sustainable organisation that delivers – through volunteers and staff – relevant services to address needs, reduce vulnerabilities and build resilience in a changing environment. NSD encompasses all aspects of the life of a National Society, including both what is referred to as Organisational Development and Capacity Strengthening / Enhancement. The policy defines these two interrelated areas as follows:

- **Organisational Development** is the part of NSD work that focuses on fundamental issues within the National Society: its mandate, legal base, identity, long-term strategic direction, basic organisational model, leadership drive, capacity to anticipate and adapt, and the relationships between different parts of the organisation or between the National Society and its environment, including the auxiliary role. Organisational Development recognises the interconnectedness of a National Society's different functions and levels, and their influence on performance and impact.
- **Capacity Strengthening / Enhancement** is the part of NSD work that focuses on improving existing services and capacities by making them more impactful, effective, widespread and better related to the National Society mandate and mission. This includes both strengthening areas of work that focus on community resilience and empowerment, and strengthening underpinning systems, procedures and tools." (IFRC NSD Policy, 2022)

However, little is documented about how Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies local NSD investments strengthen their impact in line with the Movement's seven Fundamental Principles – in particular those of Neutrality, Impartiality and Independence – which exist to help staff and volunteers gain access, acceptance and trust in all communities and parties in highly conflict-sensitive contexts. This case study was commissioned by a task force of Red Cross Red Crescent Movement (Movement) members[2] as part of a study of long-term National Society Development investments in fragile, complex, protracted conflict and violence-affected contexts[3], to record the impact of these and how they will inform future work. It shows how the Honduran Red Cross Society's successful NSD investments over the past 10 years strengthened its unique positioning as a strong, principled, trusted, and local humanitarian actor through:

→ better services

→ a more effective structure

→ a more sustainable organization

→ a stronger response ready as well as community resilience building capacity.

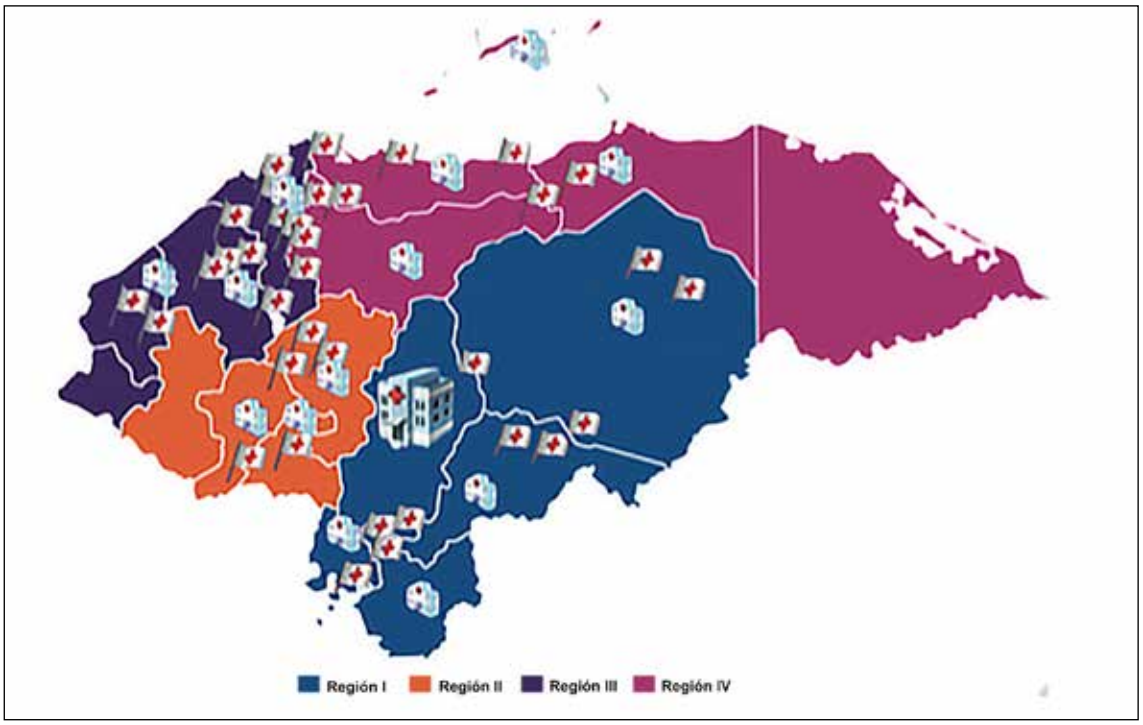
American Red Cross · Australian Red Cross · BritishRedCross · Canadian Red Cross · DANISH RED CROSS · Deutsches Rotes Kreuz · Cruz Roja Hondureña · IFRC · ICRC

1 Local humanitarians are often first to respond when disaster strikes and are often able to get to areas international staff and volunteers can't. Because they're within the affected communities before, during and after crises, they're better placed to both understand people's needs, and connect them to the right ongoing support. In 2016 the Grand Bargain Commitments established a "Localisation Workstream" to "learn from successful localisation practices around the world" and introduce humanitarian processes that:
- Strengthen locally-led, accountable and principled humanitarian action
- Reset power balances between local and international actors so local humanitarians can lead and deliver relevant, sustainable services
- Use a more strategic blend of local to international resources to create more efficient, collaborative, speedy response.

2 The study taskforce was convened and led by British Red Cross and comprised of the American Red Cross, Australian Red Cross, Canadian Red Cross, Danish Red Cross, German Red Cross, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC).

3 The term 'investments' refers all activities undertaken by a NS to strengthen itself, and any support given by partners to help achieve this, including money, time, expertise and other resources.

2. Executive summary



"Our transformation journey was planned. With senior leadership continuity at president and vice-president level, we could manage a strategic mix of refreshment, change and continuity. Set against the goals of IFRC's Strategy 2020 and 2030, and our regional commitments, we developed strategic plans to set objectives and monitor progress. Big problems need big solutions. It was necessary to be honest and analyse the context to help strengthen our local impact across the nation."

Jose Juan Castro, Honduran Red Cross president

The Republic of Honduras is the 18th largest country in the Americas, bordering Guatemala, El Salvador, and Nicaragua. It is abundant in natural resources, such as timber, coffee, gold, silver, copper, iron ore, coal, fish and hydropower, and links the Pacific to the Atlantic, with a total land area of 112,490 km² (43,433 mi²) and coastline of 669 km (415.7 mi).

Honduras is the second poorest country in Central America, with poverty rates that jumped from 59.3% of the population in 2018 to 73% in 2022[4], while the proportion of people living in extreme poverty rose from 36.7% to 53% over the same period. Sixty per cent of the country's 10.3 million people live in cities, with one in nine living in the capital city, Tegucigalpa. Poverty is concentrated in southern, eastern and western regions where rural and Indigenous peoples live. North and central Honduras are home to the country's industries and infrastructure, resulting in lower levels of poverty.

Honduras has seen the movement of people in various forms, ranging from forced displacement to voluntary migration, including refugees fleeing conflicts in Nicaragua, El Salvador and Guatemala during the 1980s. Large-scale migration from Honduras began in 1998, in the aftermath of Hurricane Mitch, which caused an 80% reduction in people's quality of life and a 16.5% drop in Honduras' score in the Human Development Index (HDI). As a result, many people left their homes in search of better opportunities, motivated by the lack of adequate protection mechanisms to safeguard their lives and wellbeing.

In recent years, there has been an increase in forced displacement, both inside and outside Honduras, as a result of economic factors, climate change and the growth of violent crime, which is directly linked to the increase in gang activity and drug trafficking.

4 National Institute of Statistics of Honduras (INE), 2022.

Cruz Roja Hondureña

Honduras is a vulnerable country in terms of natural hazards, social security, development and gender inequality, among other factors. The government has programmes to improve people's quality of life, but without the resources they need. In this context, the Honduran Red Cross (HRC) as a humanitarian organisation helps implement projects to supplement services through its auxiliary roles. After Hurricane Mitch, it undertook a progressive transformation to strengthen its humanitarian assistance through a deep organisational development process.

This transformation began in a structured way in 2001-2005 with the first strategic plan, followed by a natural evolution focused on people, relationships with partners and changing humanitarian trends. These processes were consolidated through subsequent strategic plans, considering the country's evolving needs, institutional capacities and HRC's auxiliary roles. The latest stage of development has been led by new incoming senior leadership from 2012 onwards.

Set within a complex context where people's everyday lives are affected by crises, emergencies and disasters, various forms of violence, conflict, stigma and discrimination, HRC has provided ever-increasing services and support. The number of people reached has grown in line with its National Society Development (NSD) investments. 3 These have expanded human, technical and financial capacities to enable the organisation to reach more vulnerable people, as the following statistics show.

Measurable increases in people reached through:	**People reached in 2016**	**People reached in 2020**	**People reached in 2023**
Supporting migrants	33,211	51,049	83,677
Restoring family links	15,321	24,577	35,858
Distributing blood products	1,593	50,973	60,954
Pre-hospital services	50,478	17,419	31,447
Psychosocial support		3,336	11,260
Voluntary blood donors	33,245	34,860	11,297
Strengthened institutional capacities to increase numbers of people reached			
Formation of 22 local emergency committees and their support brigades, trained in basic first aid, search and rescue, fire control and shelter management.		22	35
Educational centres implementing the Safe School modules		12	37
Restoring Family Links (RFL) programme volunteers/teams	100	120	180
Volunteer members	6,539	5,195	6,085
Staff	402	373	406
Planning, monitoring, evaluation and reporting systems implemented	15	27	34
Projects	32	30	45
Emergency operations	3	2	5
International and local partnership MOUs signed	17	28	32
Municipality level auxiliary role agreements	66	69	60
Volunteer security coordinators	21	55	45

Between 2004 and 2009 the Americas accounted for four of the five most violent countries in the world. The legacy of war and armed conflict in Honduras should not be forgotten, nor the impact of decades of structural adjustment policies and austerity programmes that widened the gap between rich and poor.

In 2023, Honduras scored 0.74 in the gender gap index, which means women are approximately 26% less likely than men to have equal opportunities. A report from CARE and UN Women says: *"As a result, this population lives in conditions of poverty and inequality that directly influence the deepening of aspects related to the feminization of poverty; limitations in access to basic services, resources, economic opportunities, and decent employment (livelihoods); vulnerability to violence, especially Gender Based Violence (GBV); and the continuity of the gender gap that exists in terms of participation at the organizational or political level."*[5]

HRC has achieved an important position in the country, as a reference institution on the issues of crisis and disaster response, community health, social development and violence prevention, among other areas. As a member of the network of organisations that address crisis and emergencies, it has been able to promote discussion on key issues with decision makers in the country.

The goals of a deep internal HRC transformation process included increasing its relevance through NSD investments to strengthen branches; pursuing 'localisation' by mobilising and training more community-based volunteers from communities affected by natural and human-made threats; expanding technical staff and their skills and competencies; developing and socialising new institutional policies; reaching new audiences through the media, private enterprises and educational centres.

HRC's ability to serve individuals and communities affected by vulnerability and social inequality were enhanced as a result of its organisational reform process. Using NSD investments, accelerated by the IFRC's Organisational Capacity Assessment and Certification (OCAC) process[6] led to its global accreditation as a 'strong National Society' in 2019.

> *"OCAC is not an endgame, but a tool to continue to learn and adapt. In 2013, we scored 38%, in 2016 [we scored] 63%, and in 2019 [we scored] 99%. It means we're relevant, have quality programmes, and have improved impact on vulnerability. But we cannot rest – we have to better support volunteers, be agile, and strengthen our auxiliary roles and support further."*
>
> Jose Juan Castro, HRC president

As part of the process, HRC had:

- → considered its own history and objectives
- → reformed its statutes
- → refreshed its vulnerability and risk assessments and service profile
- → reorganised its organisational structures to deliver the new services
- → regionalised its coverage to ensure its presence as a local actor
- → strengthened volunteering capacities that involved and empowered local communities.

5 CARE and UN Women. *Rapid Gender Analysis in Honduras: an Overview in the Face of COVID-19 and Eta / Iota. 2021.*

6 IFRC's OCAC is an assessment process that supports National Societies to review all the elements that make up for a strong organisation. It analyses their capacity and performance indicators, assesses strengths and weaknesses, and provides focus in their efforts to become strong and sustainable service providers. See: https://www.ifrc.org/sites/default/files/2022-03/IFRC%20Overview%20Assessment%20Development%20processes%20EN.pdf

HRC consciously managed its NSD investments to deepen its positioning as a local, trusted, neutral, impartial and independent actor. This was accompanied by innovative work with young people and their families, and volunteers from 2011 onwards, to promote social inclusion and peace in communities. The work with youth, also looked at attitudes and behaviours that may increase vulnerability to violence and the potential to be victimised, exploring strategies for reducing these risks.

To adapt and survive as an organisation amid social inequalities and extreme pressures in its sensitive environment, HRC focused on NSD investments designed to strengthen its **proximity, visibility, legacy, reputation and integrity.** As a result, it has transitioned into a widely accepted and supported organisation that shows its preparedness and responsiveness to the most marginalised communities in need of economic support, protection, family reunification, public education, health and environmental sustainability.

This case study describes the customised NSD investments made by HRC and supported by its partners, in response to key 'turning point' moments in its external environment. Its journey since 2011 to define and work in specific humanitarian spaces that other actors cannot access serves as a strong example in the Movement of how:

- → strengthening its auxiliary roles and relations with the civil protection system, both at national and local levels, led to stronger first responder roles and increased trust from successive national and local governments
- → implementing a new system for recruiting and managing volunteers, with customised follow-up training on how to identify and manage risks – and therefore operate safely in violence-affected contexts - saves lives and builds communities' trust
- → making NSD investments in creating 'safe spaces' in communities, accompanied by community education and violence prevention and mitigation programmes, can build trust from all stakeholders involved in, and suffering from, violence
- → localisation of regional decentralised leadership helped branches build stronger capacities and acceptance in communities
- → work with migrant, displaced and refugee populations fleeing violence and insecurity enabled HRC to expand its work promoting non-violence, social inclusion and peace in communities
- → increased youth-focused support and actions to prevent violence led to young people becoming agents of behavioural change
- → strategically positioned local assets and decentralised services, achieved through a regionalisation process, provided opportunities for community engagement, consultation, involvement and accountability (such as health clinics, disaster warehouses and prepositioned stocks)
- → 'localisation' was achieved, in keeping with the Grand Bargain Commitments,[7] that built strengthened principled, locally-led humanitarian action through sustained investments in branches and community-based volunteers who were sensitive to gender and diversity
- → a re-engineered structure made HRC fit for purpose in the context of its changing mission, achieved through NSD investments in infrastructure that strengthened humanitarian predictability, response, accountability and acceptance
- → HRC strengthened its approach to Movement cooperation and coordination to take the lead in improving organisation-wide standards in accountability and administration, and also legal mechanisms to transfer responsibilities to the National Society.

7 In 2016, the World Humanitarian Summit's Grand Bargain Commitments established a 'Localisation Workstream' to "learn from successful localisation practices around the world". Its main goal was to find new ways of expanding the "localization of humanitarian action" through processes that:
- strengthen locally-led, accountable and principled humanitarian action
- reset the power balances between local and international actors that empower local humanitarian actors to lead and deliver relevant, sustainable local services
- use a more strategic blend of local to international resources to create efficiencies, speed of response, and promote more effective local collaborations for collective impact.

3. Humanitarian context

Honduras is one of the poorest countries in the Western Hemisphere and is vulnerable to climate-induced hazards such as hurricanes, tropical storms, floods, droughts and landslides. Classified as a high-risk country by the INFORM Risk Index, Honduras faces growing inequality driven by gender, ethno-racial and territorial social inequalities, which contribute to differences in income levels and access to basic services. High levels of informal work are reflected in low incomes with no social protection.

The country's topography of mountains, narrow plains and heavily populated lowland valleys make people working in agriculture, which is central to Honduras' economy, especially vulnerable to disasters. Logging, land degradation and soil erosion amplify the destructive power of such events. In 1998, Hurricane Mitch killed 5,000 people, left 12,000 injured, and destroyed approximately 70% of crops and 70-80% of transport infrastructure. Around 33,000 houses were destroyed and 50,000 more were damaged, with losses estimated at US$3 billion.

Almost six out of every 10 people in rural areas of Honduras live in poverty. This makes them particularly vulnerability to the effects of climate change, epidemics and other risks. For example, the COVID-19 pandemic, combined with the impacts of tropical storms Eta and Iota in 2020, has deepened socioeconomic and gender inequalities as well as structural violence, increasing food insecurity and displacement.

The rural poor depend on rain fed agriculture concentrated in the southern and western regions, known as 'the dry corridor', where food insecurity is a recurrent issue. Fifty-eight per cent of children under five suffer from chronic undernutrition, and migration from rural to urban areas has pushed settlements into hazard-prone zones which suffer from flooding and issues with water management and sanitation.

The destruction of Hurricane Mitch has become a benchmark for risk and hazard in Honduras. However, more common threats are a constant danger to many people. In a country largely composed of mountain ranges, major flooding occurs every year in the many river valleys and landslides are common. The mix of poverty, steep mountainsides, numerous rivers and persistent, heavy rainfall during specific periods of the year provides ample opportunity for disasters, especially when coupled with the numbers of people in high risk areas. Healthcare remains inaccessible to many sectors of the population

Volunteers meeting to celebrate First Aid Day in Colinas, Santa Bárbara, 2015

In 2015, Honduras was ranked 130 out of 188 countries with a Human Development Index of 0.625, and classified as a low middle-income country. However, it is one of the most unequal countries in Latin America, where vulnerable groups (including boys, girls, women, people with disabilities and the elderly) find it harder to access to basic services. Although Honduras is generally politically stable, a coup d'état in 2009 caused a constitutional crisis. The country has since returned to normality under the following government, which set up a truth and reconciliation commission. But political tensions remain, as exemplified by protests that took place during the 2017 elections.

Gangs play a key role in the high rates of violence in marginalised urban neighbourhoods. The Mara Salvatrucha (MS-13) and 18th Street (Barrio 18) gangs have an estimated range of members from 5,000 up to 40,000. Gang members engage in violent crime ranging from extortion to drug peddling, robbery, murder and territorial warfare. Weak state institutions and abuses by security forces, including alleged collusion with criminal organisations, have enabled gang violence to persist. There has been a slow but steady decline in crime over the past 5 years, but the murder rate remains at nearly 36 per 100,000 people – one of the highest in the world – and Honduras' 10.3 million people still face war-like levels of violence on a daily basis.

The Gender Inequality Index (GII) depicts gender-based inequalities in Honduras according to reproductive health, empowerment, and economic activity. Sexual violence against women has proven to be a huge issue, causing women to migrate. In 2014, 40% of unaccompanied refugee minors were women. Gangs often use sexual violence, and between 2005 and 2013 violent deaths of women alone increased by 263.4%[8], with many girls being forced into human trafficking and prostitution.

Domestic violence goes hand in hand with sexual or psychological violence, including physical aggression, sexual coercion, forced sexual acts, unwanted sexual comments or advances, rape, psychological abuse and controlling behaviour. Public health specialists are particularly concerned about violence against children because of its devastating future effects..

Psychosocial support services for boys and girls in Apacilagua, Choluteca, 2023.

4. Strengthening 'proximity'

(i) Localisation

"The strength of a National Society is in localisation. It is our goal to strengthen the capacity of every branch in the country down to the weakest, so that they serve the most vulnerable. We realised we were too centralised to help local impact. Using our statutes revision process, we decided to go for four regions to decentralise decisions, and to invest more in our personnel, infrastructure and communications. It has taken us 10 years to make the change, with targets being unified in the national development plans."

Jose Juan Castro, HRC president

HRC realised it needed to transform from being merely a reliable first responder into an organisation that could contribute to societal change. Its three consecutive strategic plans of 2007–2010, 2011–2015 and 2016–2020, and the current National Development Plan 2021–2025, are directly linked to the IFRC strategies, the latest of which is Strategy 2032. HRC's strategic plans demonstrate a critical determination to further localise its people and assets across the country. Its localisation goal, implemented through a range of NSD investments, has been to become a permanent presence and source of positive social mobilisation in communities across the country. It aims to promote both community resilience and preparedness at local levels, as well as a culture of social inclusion, non-violence and peace.

"Localisation is important from the bottom to the top – every branch has its own characteristics and specific needs, according to the context of its population. We have 53 branches and 53 challenges. The role of our headquarters is to support key capacity strengthening of branches to continually strengthen their relevance in communities, maintain positive relationships with external parties such as ministries, municipalities and partners, and strategic resource mobilisation."

HRC branch chairperson

HRC's mission statements have consistently focused on social mobilisation goals. But its last two national development plans also showed an intensified commitment to community resilience through empowerment:

"The National Society of the Honduran Red Cross is a voluntary humanitarian organization that mobilizes national and international solidarity to contribute to improving the quality of life of the most vulnerable in any circumstance in which it is our duty to intervene, such as armed conflicts, situations of violence, emergencies, crises and disasters.

"We favour the integral development of the capacities of the communities, based on the Fundamental Principles and Humanitarian Values of the International Movement of the Red Cross and the Red Crescent, through the execution of services, programs and projects for the assistance and protection of the most vulnerable populations."

Mission of HRC, National Development Plan 2016-2020

"Contribute to the improvement of dignified living conditions for the most vulnerable population, who ensure their well-being in health, safety, empowerment and resilience."

Mission of HRC, National Development Plan 2021-2025

This had implications for a wider NSD process which strengthened both individual and institutional capacities to engage communities that other organisations could not reach. HRC's goals for strategic change aimed to deliver organisational transformation in a more comprehensive way.

Starting in 2011, HRC intensified its emphasis on strengthening locally-led action, accompanied by strong NSD investments to ensure communities were more involved in their own empowerment. Its organisational development programme that year received less funding than expected, and this money was used to boost volunteer management and strengthen branch capacities, using IFRC tools such as the Volunteer Management Cycle, Well-Prepared National Societies, and Well-Functioning Branches.

Addressing the reality of gender discrimination and gender-based violence, HRC's localisation strategy over the past 25 years has also focused on improving access, participation and training of women, as well as men, in socially transformative roles in communities. HRC's health and social development programmes have proved to be a consistent vehicle for empowering women to address key issues, and to work with men to find solutions.

> *"HRC volunteers were mobilised to offer training in mother and child health care in both community leaders, Ministry of Health staff, Red Cross volunteers, and RC university student volunteers. Training included topics on gender equality, gender sensitisation, and how to encourage the support and participation of men to avoid reinforcing traditional beliefs that attribute health as only a woman's responsibility."*
>
> HRC volunteer and branch trainer

HRC's NSD investments to address violence against women and youth – within a wider approach to strengthening localised capacities to prepare for and respond to disasters, health crises and violence of any type – led to early gains. As part of the learning and implementation process, HRC implemented the Regional Violence Prevention Strategy (ERPV), with technical and financial support from the Spanish Red Cross.[9] By the end of 2011 alone, HRC's achievements included:

- → 12 educational centres implementing the Safe School modules
- → negotiations with government agencies to jointly implement programmes to improve communities' response capacities
- → enhanced training for volunteers and for populations in at-risk areas
- → establishment and preparation of community brigades with six new local emergency committees formed and made official by the authorities of the municipal mayors' offices in the Department of Santa Bárbara
- → formation of 22 local emergency committees and their support brigades, who were trained in basic first aid, search and rescue, fire control and shelter management
- → enhanced community collaboration, with most communities expressing an interest in receiving training to build their preparedness and longer-term resilience, decreasing reliance on external support and reducing the risk of flood damage during the rainy season

9 The Regional Violence Prevention Strategy (ERPV) began in 2008 and aimed to prevent, using a development approach, all forms of violence, intolerance and discrimination towards people in the region of Central America, Mexico and the Caribbean.

→ stronger overall preparedness and response systems, with an integrated approach to programmes and support services. This resulted in better trained staff and volunteers, improved monitoring centres, new response plans and procedures, and logistics procedures based on the operational standards of the IFRC.

Different partnerships were initiated with the American Red Cross, Canadian Red Cross, Finnish Red Cross, German Red Cross, Italian Red Cross, Norwegian Red Cross, Swiss Red Cross, Spanish Red Cross, IFRC's secretariat, ICRC, UNICEF, DG ECHO, the European Commission's Humanitarian Aid Department's Disaster Preparedness Programme (DIPECHO), FCDO, and the Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation (AECID), among others. These led to HRC participating more and having greater influence in wider local and national humanitarian networks. All partners supported HRC's development to enable it to be part of:

→ the Humanitarian Network (REDHUM)

→ discussion groups on risk reduction with representatives from AECID

→ working meetings to share information and develop a disaster preparedness workshop in coordination with the Permanent Contingency Committee (COPECO)

→ the Alliance for Risk Reduction Education, chaired by the government's Secretariat of Education

→ technical support for municipalities on first aid, vulnerabilities and capacities analysis, and response plans

→ community preparedness for disasters

→ livelihood development support and cash transfer for communities

→ community surveillance for epidemics to activate effective mitigating actions

→ the risk reduction educational fair in the National Pedagogic University, with a stand presenting the activities using the Protected School module and the Riskland game.

(ii) Adapting to regionalised contexts

Honduras is divided into 18 departments and 298 municipalities. To be closer to the people, HRC adopted a transformation strategy in 2013, founded on a regionalisation process, to address regional imbalances and ensure acceptance and reach within all communities.

"Regionalisation is established as a condition fundamental to strengthen the coverage of actions with equity, effectiveness and efficiency."

HRC Statutes, approved in April 2015

HRC's revision to its statutes in 2014-2015 resulted in the creation of four regions led by four vice-presidents who were to serve for four years each, with the right to be reelected once for the same period of time. The organisation's ever-expanding permanent presence in 16 departments and 53 municipalities enabled it to deliver a wider nationwide set of services when required. The objectives of the regionalisation process included:

- implementing unifying processes and internal standards, such as volunteers having a common uniform (instead of different uniforms supplied by different partners), which resulted in volunteers feeling they belonged to HRC rather than partners
- increasing the participation of the regional vice-presidents, branch presidents and branch volunteers in the life of HRC
- gaining a better understanding of local problems and developing capacities in local contexts (e.g. strengthening relevant actions to gain access and acceptance in places no other organisations could reach)
- strengthening communities' recognition of HRC as a partner in local issues, capable of solving problems even in the most complex locations to access.

(iii) Customising vulnerability and risk assessment tools to violence-affected contexts

It is important to reflect on violence as one of the most important humanitarian challenges in Honduras. This has been one of the IFRC'S key concerns since the late 1960s and addressing, reducing and responding to all forms of violence has continued to be a strong priority over the past 50 years. The 2007 declaration Together for Humanity, adopted at the 30th International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent, recognised violence as one of the world's greatest humanitarian challenges. In 2008, the IFRC reiterated its commitment to reducing the level and impact of violence, and in 2010 it revealed its vision for the next decade, Strategy 2020, which set social inclusion and promotion of non-violence and peace as one of its three central aims.

> *"Advancing the Red Cross Red Crescent Fundamental Principles and humanitarian values, we commit to work with people vulnerable to violence, with a particular focus on children and youth; to prevent, mitigate and respond to violence – locally and globally – through advocacy and promoting change in knowledge, mindsets, attitudes and behaviours in order to foster environments that respect human dignity and diversity and are caring, safe and peaceful."*
>
> IFRC Global Strategy on Violence Prevention, Mitigation and Response (2010–2020).

In 2011, the 31st International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent ratified the IFRC Pledge on Violence Prevention, calling for violence prevention to be mainstreamed within all IFRC operations, programmes and services. In March 2012, all 35 National Societies of the Americas signed up to the Montrouis Commitment presented at XIX Inter-American Conference of the Red Cross in Haiti. This was an agreement to:

- work in conjunction with governments and civil society to prevent violence
- train staff and volunteers to reduce the causes of violence
- respond to the impact of violence on families and vulnerable communities
- ensure safe environments were created within each of their organisations.

Further resolutions of the Inter-American Regional Committee (CORI) and the Caribbean Cooperation of the Red Cross (CCORC) committed National Societies to pursuing operational responses to violence prevention over the course of the 2012-2016 Inter-American Framework for Action. Whereas violence prevention is largely absent in the 2007-2011 Red Cross Inter-American Plan (with only one mention, in relation to youth programming), it is referred to extensively in the 2012-2016 Framework for Action.

In 2011, in response to a renewed commitment to undertake its work in violence-sensitive contexts, HRC produced a document setting out opportunities for youth volunteers to get involved in violence prevention projects in San Pedro Sula and Tegucigalpa. At the same time, National Society staff and youth representatives from Guatemala and Nicaragua helped HRC launch an internal process to ensure its external operations address and prevent violence.

By 2014, HRC had accumulated 10 years of experience in violence prevention. A regional report on "Violence Prevention, Mitigation, and Response Priorities" aimed to contribute to a Movement-wide resource to show how National Societies in the Americas were addressing violence. The report focused on the effect of both their successes and the limitations to progress and impact. It highlighted that 80% of projects undertaken had focused on prevention activities, 50% on mitigation, 40% on response and 12% on the humanitarian consequences of violence (e.g. providing first responder first aid in communities).

Pre-hospital care for citizens in Tegucigalpa city, 2016.

Although it was not stated explicitly in the report, the interim successes were an outcome of the NSD interventions that had been made. Without these, the respective National Societies could not have strengthened the necessary volunteering, youth, branch and human resource capacities to improve their effectiveness and impact.

Findings from the regional report on Violence Prevention, Mitigation and Response Priorities

Priority forms of violence addressed:

- → youth and urban violence
- → sexual and gender-based violence
- → school violence
- → domestic violence
- → violence against children.

Investments in violence prevention, mitigation and response:

- → although 92% of participating National Societies agreed this as a priority, only 70% included it in their strategic plans, and 44% had less than $5,000 in their budget despite it being classed as a high or medium priority.

Training investments:

- → few National Societies had trained more than 50% of their staff in violence prevention and SAF; most training was through the community-based health and first aid (CBHFA) violence prevention module, the Safer Access Framework (SAF), 10 Steps to Safer Environments, or the gender-based violence prevention module in HIV training curricula.

HRC's focus areas included:

- → integrated development of communities opening safe humanitarian spaces migration assistance
- → promoting 'friendly neighbourhoods'
- → expanding economic opportunities for young people
- → contributing to a regional Americas strategy on violence prevention.

Investments in ways of addressing different forms of violence:

- → ***Youth and/or urban violence***
  - o youth leadership, networks, citizen participation
  - o rehabilitation of safe public spaces
  - o income generating activities with seed funds to support entrepreneurship among youth and young mothers
  - o improving safe spaces for youth dialogue
  - o sexual health education and conflict resolution
  - o social and life skills and recreational activities
  - o strengthening social fabric and inter-generational assistance
  - o community organisation and identification of local solutions.
- → ***Violence against mobile populations***
  - o work with displaced and receiving communities to reintegrate returnees
  - o strengthening human rights and citizen participation
  - o reintegrating refugee populations with humanitarian assistance and livelihood support
  - o assisting migrants and deportees through first aid, awareness on rights and on risks of violence, and on prevention of sexual and gender-based violence.
- → ***Sexual and gender-based violence:***
  - o public awareness camps, modifying attitudes and gender norms, respect for diversity
  - o messages to increase understanding of violence and how to prevent it
  - o creating protective environments
  - o support networks
  - o working with local authorities
- → ***Other situations of violence:***
  - o providing humanitarian assistance
  - o increasing access to health services
  - o promoting principles and values
  - o dialogue with armed forces, police and armed actors
  - o detention activities including work in prisons
  - o capacity to respond to disturbances and riots.

→ ***Schools and educational institutions – good practices:***
- safe behaviours – identifying risks of armed violence and developing emergency plans
- schools as neutral space to open dialogue on armed violence
- awareness about violence, rights, laws and safety messages
- development of policies and systems to prevent and respond to violence, disciplinary code and referrals
- youth drop-out support programmes for occupational and social skills
- school brigades, prevention teams, and emergency teams trained in leadership, conflict resolution, and peace building
- co-designing with the Ministry of Education a curriculum on humanitarian values, dignity, discrimination, diversity and conflict resolution.

During these years, workshops and forums on violence prevention, violence mitigation and the humanitarian consequences of violence were supported by the Canadian Red Cross, Norwegian Red Cross, Spanish Red Cross, Swiss Red Cross, IFRC, ICRC, the UN Refugee Agency (ACNUR), the International Organisation for Migration (IOM), and other partners. This enabled HRC to reinforce its NSD capacities to develop relevant tools, methodologies and approaches to manage these challenges at community level.

(iv) Branch and regional office development

"We used a combination of IFRC tools such as OCAC, BOCA and ICRC's Safer Access Framework,[10] *together with changes in our statutes, with a common aim of reaching more vulnerable people. We're constantly on the radar of people and governments domestically and internationally through social media. We needed to identify our weaknesses so that we could work on them. For example, as a result of our statutes revisions, stronger branches with NSD investments that resulted in better planning, monitoring and reporting systems, helped us to receive not just Movement funding, but more direct funding from the Spanish and Swiss governments, for example, and also the European Union. These kinds of trusted partnerships help us reach more people across the country based on our own local assessments which involve the people in the process."*

Jose Juan Castro, HRC president

HRC's regionalisation model envisaged bringing capacity strengthening support closer to branches, to respond to their specific local contexts and humanitarian needs. Its consistent organisational goal of delivering, captured in its slogan *"impartiality in humanitarian action"* over its last two national development plans (2016-2020, and 2021-2025) led to NSD investments that drove HRC to increase its capacity for response to the branch network across the whole country.

"With our newly energised national leadership from 2012 onwards, we tried to develop contacts with the local levels of governance and Branches nationwide. We heard the complaints of remote Branches about the lack of attention and support to them. The Governments' National Response Secretariat had already regionalised to improve capabilities and respond better. HRC needed to bring down decision-making and response assets to the same levels. We could measure the benefits of regionalisation very quickly, for example in terms of quicker and more efficient response times in disasters, and more engagements and MOUs with Local Authorities. Out of 23 Chapters, 13 now have such MOUs – before we had none"

HRC regional vice-president

Previously, branch development was largely determined by the nature of programmes initiated by partners, but HRC wanted to transition to a more needs-based planning and response system. Although HRC was used to managing multiple -partners (with different branches averaging seven partners and sometimes up to 65 projects), it used its resources to strengthen its community-based positioning as a local actor. While partners provided programming support, HRC used its own vulnerability criteria to choose the operational areas.

Health checks for families at a health fair in Nueva Capital, Tegucigalpa, 2022.

10 The Safer Access Framework (SAF) was first developed by the ICRC in 2002–3, in consultation with National Societies and the IFRC. It aimed to help National Societies increase their capacities and preparedness to respond safely and effectively to humanitarian needs in sensitive and insecure contexts, including armed conflict and internal disturbances and tensions. The SAF contributes to NSD by drawing attention to context-specific organisational weaknesses, through the lens of acceptance, security and access. ICRC. *Safer Access: A Guide For All National Societies. (2014).*

HRC's senior leadership was keen to prioritise self-assessment processes such as IFRC's Organisational Capacity Assessment and Certification (OCAC) in 2013 and 2019, IFRC's Branch Organisational Capacity Assessment (BOCA),[11] the Canadian Red Cross's Disaster Response Capacity Enhancement (DRCE) exercise,[12] IFRC's Preparedness For Emergency Response (PER) process[13] and the Safer Access Framework (SAF) as the foundations of an organisation-wide change process. However, these tools were never merged or used strategically together to provide a collective analysis that would enable a unified and harmonised approach to branch development.

HRC used several other tools with the aim of deepening its capacities in local risk assessment and first response:

- → the First Responder Initiative (FRI) from 2010-2013 helped strengthen HRC's capacities to respond to emergencies and crises through training, equipment, and development of policies and procedures. This was an extension of earlier support from the Canadian Red Cross to help HRC strengthen its community-based health work.
- → FRI included an assessment and baseline tool to establish a roadmap of gaps that needed strengthening, which was developed in partnership with the IFRC's Preparedness and Response Reference Centre in El Salvador. It had strong NSD/organisational development components, which were a precursor to DRCE and included innovative elements, such as simulation exercises (as the only Movement preparedness and response tool was IFRC's Well Prepared National Society).
- → the above tools included some pre-OCAC type assessments of organisational capacities, in which certain leadership indicators had a very strong emphasis on auxiliary role positioning, and on modules such as, "How to work with government but maintain your independence".
- → FRI later transitioned into a longer-term five-year partnership with the Canadian government to also strengthen emergency response units (ERUs).
- → the Capacity Enhancement for Response in the Americas (CERA) was essentially an organisational development tool created in response to the Inter-American Action Framework 2016-2020. It was expanded to reference OCAC attributes to strengthen leadership and resource mobilisation, specifically in emergencies. CERA also included an emphasis on disaster law, strengthening HRC's positioning as a neutral, impartial and independent humanitarian actor in its domestic context.
- → OCAC and CERA together helped HRC to focus on priorities around services as well as NSD.
- → SAF focused on specific regions, and while CERA advocates supported the merging of the two tools, SAF was protected by ICRC, who didn't allow joint facilitation either. This led to HRC seeing SAF as an instrument to focus on safety and security for staff, rather than as a way of strengthening access in communities.

A further complication came from some partners working directly with selected branches, rather than coordinating through the headquarters. This led to an imbalance in branch capacities across the territory. To counteract this, some partners, such as the Canadian Red Cross, also made contributions to selected national costs, including building HRC's new offices, strengthening HRC's warehouse capacity, and creating a health unit in the national warehouse.

Within its regionalisation strategy, HRC decided to use the BOCA tool strategically, blending it with its own internally developed branch categorisation tool to classify branches according to criteria and in relation to the reality of each context. Once branches were placed in a category they knew where the gaps were and would prepare a development plan.

11 IFRC's BOCA is a self-assessment tool developed for National Society branches to identify and assess their strengths, limitations and challenges in relation to a wide range of organisational capacities. It is used as a first step in a branch development process. See: *https://branches.ifrc.org/boca-resources*

12 The Canadian Red Cross's DRCE exercises help to evaluate a National Society's preparedness and response capacity in order to: (1) test its preparedness and response mechanism and support systems; and (2) contribute findings to the baseline of its current preparedness and response capacity, enabling the organisation to prioritise and plan actions for improvement.

13 IFRC's PER is a self-assessment tool that enables National Societies to systematically measure, analyse, prioritise and plan preparedness for response actions to ensure timely and effective humanitarian assistance in line with their auxiliary role and mandate. It considers all hazards (natural, biological, technological, among others) and is flexible to be used in different contexts. See: *https://www.ifrc.org/document/national-society-preparedness-effective-response-and-forecast-based-financing*

(v) Adapting disaster risk reduction (DRR) to diverse contexts

In a country where crises, emergencies and disasters are caused by a wide variety of factors, HRC began its organisational transformation from 2013 onwards to ensure it remained a relevant, trusted, accountable and localised actor.

> *"The humanitarian consequences generated by crises, emergencies and disasters, violence, migration and forced displacement, as well as epidemics, pandemics, climate variability and change, have affected the conditions and quality of life, differentiated to all people in the world."*
>
> Honduran Red Cross, National Development Plan 2021-2025

Due to its location, Honduras is prone to weather events that significantly affect communities, impacting the local economy, health and water systems. Meteorological phenomena, such as hurricanes and storms, cause significant losses in the agricultural sector. These losses translate into a decrease in the area of harvested land, a reduction in productivity and a decline in the quality of agricultural products.

In addition to natural hazards, migration has a long history in the Americas as a complex, cross-border, international crisis, particularly with regard to movements between neighbouring countries. It creates the need for collective action and high-level humanitarian diplomacy at national and international levels. The situation in Central America is exceptional because all irregular migrants whose destination is North America (Canada, the United States or Mexico) must pass through it. It is also an area with very high migration outflows, particularly from the so-called Northern Triangle of Central America. It is therefore a region of origin, transit, destination and return for thousands of irregular migrants.

Thanks to agreements with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the National Migration Institute, since 2012 HRC has also worked with other National Societies in the region, as well as with the IFRC and ICRC, to strengthen its capacity and build a comprehensive vision for the protection and assistance of migrants. It has had to meet the assistance and protection needs of returnees and irregular migrants, including children, adolescents, young people and adults.

Together with IFRC, HRC has been involved in implementing the Rights of Migrants in Action project, the Violence and Legal Protection in Migration in the Northern Triangle of Central America project (which has now ended), and other regional projects. It is part of the IFRC Migration Taskforce, helping to develop tools and strategies that promote the Movement's work on migration.

The above actions were taken within the context of HRC's wider NSD investments in vulnerability assessments, crisis response, monitoring and humanitarian diplomacy skills. These led to a new range of key documents and capacities to engage and advocate in strategic and operational external forums

189 hectares of forest replanted by communities in Patuca, Olancho, 2020.

5. Strengthening 'visibility'

(i) Investments in volunteers and youth

Since 2012, HRC has continuously focused its efforts on strengthening its branches through the development of three important aspects:

- training volunteers, management and technical staff on institutional regulations
- developing the policies and laws governing the National Society
- implementing a financial regulatory mechanism for accountability and management of volunteers by forming volunteering focal points.

Since 2011, initially supported by the Canadian Red Cross, Spanish Red Cross and Swiss Red Cross, HRC had maintained volunteering focal points in branches, training them on how to apply the National Society's regulations on volunteering, the volunteer management cycle and the use of the relevant forms for the monitoring and control of the volunteer register. This included defining role descriptions for volunteer focal points at the branch level, including their responsibilities and their level authority for decision-making.

To encourage volunteers to remain active and involved, HRC organised events and awards to recognise their work, including their contributions to relief activities, branch offices and headquarters, youth teams and women's groups. This included naming the volunteer of the year, and awarding medals, diplomas and certificates. This new model for recognising HRC's volunteers was the basis to retain continued volunteer engagement.

The awards process led to the creation of new tools to help branches organise information, so they could track the number of volunteers, establish individual files and profiles, organise volunteers according to institutional trainings received, and establish agreements with universities to help mobilise volunteers and other benefits of collective interest such as aspects of humanitarian education. In 2012 alone, 15 branches received this benefit, substantially improving the recruitment, training, participation, evaluation and promotion of volunteers in branches.

At the same time, HRC's IT Department created and implemented a virtual unified database (known as SISTAH) to register, monitor and analyse its human resources in all branches. The data collected by newly established volunteer coordinators in each branch included metrics such as the numbers of active volunteers per day and what they had been trained in. The database also enabled HRC to provide volunteer identification cards; facilitated direct and quick contact with volunteers and staff; and allowed staff to identify volunteers for deployment according to their individual ability and training. By the end of 2012, 98% of branches had been incorporated into the information system, reaching more than 2,500 volunteers nationwide. An important part of this was the creation of the Volunteering Department at headquarters to direct the whole process, provide support for volunteer management and track the various volunteer development processes that had been in place since 2010.

Since it began in 1967, HRC had built a long history of youth work. But against the background of the increasing needs and vulnerabilities of a youthful population, HRC strengthened its strategic investments in youth programming. In 2020, 73.8% of the national population was of working age of 15 years and over, with an estimated unregistered unemployment rate of 41.1%.

In urban centres in particular, many people had low incomes and low-productivity jobs, creating a context in which violence and crime could flourish. Without the right support, this lack of jobs or economic opportunities pushed some people – especially young men – towards crime or gangs. This in turn created obstacles to economic activity (such as extortion), that further increased instability and insecurity.

HRC's enhanced abilities to focus on youth and involve them in its structures, programmes and services took place within a wider organisational reform process. NSD investments accelerated by the IFRC's OCAC self-assessment process in 2013, 2016 and 2019 led to its global accreditation as a certificated.

50th Anniversary of Lifesaving, 2016

National Society in 2019. As part of this process, HRC had reformed its statutes, refreshed its vulnerability assessments and service profile, reorganised its organisational structures to deliver the new services, regionalised its coverage to ensure its presence as a local actor, and strengthened volunteering capacities that involved and empowered local communities.

The National Society's focus on youth as agents of change has a long tradition. An intensified training programme for youth Red Cross leaders began in 2011, with the aim of improving their knowledge of the organisation and of the objectives of the Movement, and helping them to develop leadership skills and learn to use programme and service planning tools. From 2011 onwards, HRC's NSD interventions resulted in ever-growing youth participation in all of its programmes, including community-based health and first aid (CBHFA), and violence prevention. In 2018, HRC developed and implemented its national version of the IFRC's Youth Engagement Strategy (YES). Following a visit from the IFRC's Global Youth Commission, it conducted a self-assessment of its youth policy and strategy, followed by training for trainers to intensify its work on IFRC's Youth as Agents of Behavioural Change (YABC) programme.

Young people from new branches were trained to progress into management positions or become representatives of HRC's governing boards. Through the Youth Regional Network, they took part in internships in Costa Rica and Nicaragua, and attended in a regional youth camp held in El Salvador. HRC also participated as a member of IFRC's Global Youth Commission, sharing the experiences of young people in Honduras and the Americas, as well as bringing back learning on the dynamic and enriching contributions young people made to programmes and services.

(ii) 'Duty of care' considerations

The political tension and violence in Honduras around the 2009 crisis caused HRC to intensify its approach to improving the management and protection of volunteers. The organisation had been seeing a high level of turnover among its volunteers, who were mostly young people aged between 18-26 years who had been heavily impacted by social and economic factors.

> *"This high rotation of volunteers – sometimes within two years – led to a shorter lifespan of a volunteer and the need to speed up induction and training processes. We needed to adapt to new mechanisms – such as more flexible access through volunteer apps, better psychosocial support (PSS) for those working in violence-affected and disaster response situations, protection training, and the need to adapt to the culture of some communities."*
>
> HRC headquarters national director

In 2011, HRC signed up to IFRC's Global Volunteering Insurance System for 1,000 volunteers. However, there have been some frustrations with how long it takes to activate claims, while volunteers really need the support while they are in an emergency situation. In response, HRC formed a complementary fund using COVID-19 funds, which it aims to develop into a long-term fund to protect volunteers' more general welfare.

Before the ICRC's SAF assessment and training began in 2012, HRC was not widely perceived to have appropriate risk assessment capacities to ensure volunteers, youth and staff were protected in violent and unsafe environments. With a lack of standardised toolkits and case studies to improve protection and prevention, work to strengthen the safety and security of volunteers continued in a more ad hoc way, essentially as 'learning by doing'.

"When visiting community-based sessions in urban communities affected by gang violence, volunteers came to give services including sessions on violence prevention while giving first aid training. These processes were a key factor in HRC's work with ICRC support to open access to violence-affected parts of urban centres."

Partner National Society

A large ICRC-funded support programme was put in place that focused on strengthening HRC's governance, improving volunteers' and staff members' understanding of Movement history, and delivering refresher training on how the Fundamental Principles were used in everyday work. However, this was abruptly stopped in 2014 without an exit strategy. IFRC had a one-person presence with no capacity to step in to continue the process, which led to HRC feeling that several security incidents that followed (after a very short volunteer induction cycle) were due to the lack of continued training.

Using global volunteering development tools, IFRC reference documents and resources gained from IFRC's Global Volunteering Alliance, HRC developed its updated Policy and Strategy on Volunteering in 2014. It was aligned to IFRC's volunteering policy and global standards, as well as to HRC's commitments to the Latin American Regional Volunteering Development Framework. It included new elements such as psychosocial (PSS) support, networking opportunities between volunteers, and strategies for recruiting volunteers from new and diverse groups, and diversifying volunteering actions.

Responding to the need to find new and innovative processes to mobilise and keep volunteers, the new policy included new elements such as:

- → redefining the amount of time needed to qualify (e.g. introducing a category of volunteer for those who could only commit one to three hours to accommodate those volunteers who may come from migrant populations)
- → targeting specific profiles from ethnic or migrant groups to support localised services, such as community health, support to connect with family, or first aid in emergencies, which required pre-existing access and acceptance in communities
- → specifying more clearly the selection process for new volunteers – e.g. starting with a first stage interview with a staff member to ascertain:
  - o the volunteer's intentions
  - o their understanding of and commitment to the Fundamental Principles
- → adding a second stage to the basic induction course covering:
  - o the Fundamental Principles in detail
  - o behaviour and conduct guidelines
  - o signing the commitment letter and code of conduct

HRC has never lost the life of an active volunteer on duty due to violence. However, after the socio-political crisis of 2009, there was an increase in insecurity in the country. Tragically, during the COVID-19 response three people lost their lives while on duty. As a result, HRC focused on strengthening security and assistance mechanisms for its volunteers and employees, recognising that they were not exempt from violence, accidents or infectious diseases, and needed to be protected. As a result of reflection, HRC prioritised:

- → identification (visibility of spaces, vehicles, people)
- → mental health support (connected also to acceptance)
- → operational security
- → operational communication (for external target groups)
- → internal communications
- → a solidarity fund for volunteers
- → application for the Maurice de Madre French Fund (FFMM) for life
- → insurance for volunteers and employees.

The key NSD investments that followed included:

- **establishing a Security Unit** to monitor, analyse and minimise security risks, and give training and guidance that prepares volunteers to work in violence-affected contexts
- **monitoring and controlling the social media profiles** and public posts of all volunteers and staff, and immediately addressing and expelling any volunteers who posted public material that undermined the Fundamental Principles
- **upgrading the HRC volunteering strategy** to include volunteer safety and security training based on SAF, as well as appropriate equipment
- **establishing a consistent new HRC uniform** to standardise clothing and visibility – replacing uniforms that resembled military or government uniforms, and changing from red clothing (which was the colour of a specific national political party) to white
- **increasing clear public recognition** by including HRC logos on all assets
- **developing and disseminating a stronger HRC volunteer guidance manual,** including the types of relations that should be developed with violent groups, what behaviours volunteers should have, and what actions to take when threatened or in the case of an assault
- **mapping local communities** and 'contested territories', including access routes
- **mobilising volunteers from violence-affected communities** to reduce the risks related to access, while also contributing to local acceptance and access for HRC when required
- **investing in GPS and radio infrastructure** nationwide to help keep HRC's communications safe and neutral
- **continuous dissemination** about HRC, the RCRC Movement and the Fundamental Principles
- **training on preparedness** for any form of social crisis
- **establishing a Movement contingency plan,** with specific roles for every Movement component.

The outcomes of these NSD investments helped HRC staff at all levels to build confidence by exercising these new capacities in specific highly volatile contexts. They addressed the learnings gained from earlier experiences such as HRC's actions to provide assistance during the tense political environment around national elections, which gave the National Society a chance to prepare for any emergency. For example, after the first political and election crisis of 2009, HRC staff realised that its NSD investments meant it was the only organisation whose ambulances were allowed to drive through communities and carry patients – all others were not.

When the next round of elections approached during the socio-political crisis of 2018, HRC made more structured NSD investments, building on confidence gained earlier to help prepare volunteers and staff to stay secure and be responsive to projected violence. And once again, only HRC's hospital and health care providers were allowed to deliver services, and no others. The key NSD investments included:

- new regulations about the minimum age of HRC volunteers in ambulances (raised from no minimum age to 21 years old) to professionalise the assistance and avoid having to take care of 14-year-old volunteers in the middle of challenging situations
- improving the selection of volunteers going to specific response situations by introducing new criteria based on experience and relevant skills
- introducing new structured roles, such as team leaders
- disseminating and delivering training on guidelines for respectful behaviour when dealing with police, community leaders and specific communities affected by violence.

Learning from its earlier abrupt cut to HRC's training support, ICRC offered more considered support that gave the organisation a chance to build sustainability in its services. For example, it paid HRC's Restoring Family Links staff member's salary at 100% in 2018, reducing this slowly to 75% by 2022, then 50% by 2023, and to 0% by 2024.

However, Movement coordination practice and mechanisms proved to be less than optimal. Key weaknesses included:

- ICRC being protective of the SAF facilitation and process
- HRC feeling unable to share the outcomes of the SAF assessment report as it assumed they were confidential, which undermined the ability of Movement partners to contribute to a harmonised NSD plan to address the gaps identified
- not being able to use the highly valuable branch-by-branch SAF reports to draw up Movement-wide support plans, in which leaders and volunteers had identified what had hindered further acceptance at local levels
- HRC not sharing specific branch SAF reports with wider partners, except for ICRC who would fund the follow-up action plans
- HRC seeing the OCAC and BOCA reports as internal and confidential documents, and so not sharing them with partners (ICRC has never received these reports)
- HRC being unable to draw up a branch development framework and action plan to which all partners could collectively contribute NSD resources.

Nevertheless, there has been a marked qualitative change and improvement in organisational behaviours and competencies within HRC, especially as a result of a lessons learned workshop following the last elections.

> *"There has been a culture change within HRC, with branches feeling confident to talk about risks and perceived humanitarian impact."*
>
> ICRC cooperation team

However, the above systemic weaknesses stemming from a lack of shared assessments across Movement components have led to a critical issue – the lack of a quantifiable and measurable framework of indicators against which HRC can monitor progress towards at least the eight elements of SAF.

(iii) Dissemination and communications

Starting in 2011, HRC reviewed its institutional training programme, defining a new basic training model with a focus on the Movement's Fundamental Principles and Humanitarian Values. The technical training unit had been reviewed and its functions re-established to make it responsible for taking on, coordinating, monitoring and certifying the National Society's training processes.

Relief supplies are handed out at a shelter in Puerto Cortés, Honduras. 2020

> *"In certain communities we didn't talk about 'violence' as an entry point, but rather of places which seemed to have more 'risks'. To establish longer-term trust and confidence, volunteers were trained to make visits during, for example, 'Children's Day'. While explaining about the Red Cross, its Fundamental Principles and Humanitarian Values, the communities would actually ask for assistance and training. There was a lot of expectation in young people of their chances to be involved in training and capacity building, and the chance to decide what they wanted to be trained in. Whenever our volunteers delivered humanitarian assistance, they got local people to help deliver as well, spreading our Values and Principles through such day-to-day actions".*
>
> HRC branch council chairperson

A mural painted by beneficiaries, which depicts activities representing the Expanding Opportunities Project, in Honduras. (Photo: Honduran Red Cross.)

Branches also implemented dissemination activities on the Principles and Values through teams of volunteers who had been trained as promoters and/or monitoring focal points. HRC's new Strategic Plan 2011-2015 demonstrated a strong emphasis on Principles and Values. In 2011, HRC also developed an agreement with the Public Education Secretariat to implement educational campaigns and involve young people in projects and actions that benefited their communities. This government body also granted permission for the creation of student brigades and support groups for the Honduran Red Cross youth area.

To capitalise on this new positioning and deepen understanding of its humanitarian mandates and roles, HRC also organised a workshop that year on migration issues in the country, facilitated by representatives from the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the Technological University. All technical staff, volunteer leaders and directorate members were trained on these issues. HRC also nominated three technical staff to speak in the Preparatory Commissions on the topics of violence prevention and migration for the Inter-American Conference held in Haiti in 2012.

Key dates and cultural events throughout the year were used by HRC to hold fairs in the parks and squares of major cities to promote messages about disaster preparedness, community health, non-violence and the culture of peace, respect for the Red Cross emblem, and humanitarian principles and values. As a result, HRC expanded its inter-agency relations in several areas, including the prevention of violence. It also achieved a presence on boards with government and other social organisations, on topics such as early warning systems, communicable diseases, protection, livelihoods, WASH and education.

To respond to the new opportunities that arose, HRC built on its priorities and NSD investments by:

- → reinforcing its capacity for preparedness by following up the PER evaluation
- → developing tools and methodologies to ensure the vulnerabilities identified were addressed in wider community focused programmes such as community-based health and first aid (CBHFA), national intervention teams (NITs) general and specialised approach[14]; community surveillance and epidemic control, etc.
- → developing plans for branches, according their BOCA and categorisation evaluations
- → encouraging HRC youth volunteers to participate in violence prevention projects
- → the HRC national youth directorate launching a 'Promoting Values' campaign in each of the branches through:
  - o monthly newsletters and local fairs
  - o the radio programme Youth on the Web
  - o an exhibit of murals in the HRC central headquarters
- → implementing the Expanding Opportunities for Adolescents project in parts of Tegucigalpa, with volunteers who had previously been participants and taken part in training in computers, automobile painting, jewellery making, theatre and dance
- → adapting the 10 Steps[15] to Creating Safe Environments approach to emphasise the role of individual beliefs and behaviours, and to create safe spaces by strengthening the 'risk assessment' components, to mitigate the personal attitudes and behaviours that are often expressed through violence
- → expanding the reach of HRC messages through social media channels (in 2016, HRC had 10,000 followers on Facebook, 4,500 on Twitter and 1,000 on Instagram).

14 On WASH, restoring family links, migration, damage analysis and need assessment, psychosocial support, etc.

15 The Canadian Red Cross programme's objectives were to: build Red Cross capacity to prevent, address and respond to interpersonal and community violence; use the '10 steps to creating safe environments' approach to integrate policies and practices to prevent violence; and involve multi-level institutional training, as well as work with other partners on implementing 10 steps processes into all institutions and programmes.

6. Strengthening 'legacy'

(i) Building on past perceptions and access

HRC's legacy is founded on its continuous historical commitment to humanitarian emergencies and crises.

> *"Some 34 years ago we supported the needs of Nicaraguan refugees where we needed to show our impartiality and credibility. We have also worked continuously with all governments, whatever their politics, and our neutrality has always been visible, trusted and recognised. For example, in the political crisis and violence in 2009 we had to make dialogue with different actors to change their views and see the Red Cross positively. In spite of some past political allegations, we had to use strict impartiality, neutrality and transparency as the basis of trust with all communities".*
>
> HRC national headquarters director

However, the long-term impact and importance of HRC's health-focused work over the decades cannot be underestimated. Sustained NSD investments throughout the evolution of its health programmes have built a localised presence that has led to long-term acceptance and access as a neutral and impartial humanitarian actor. This has led to achievements including:

- → HRC's first integrated community health programmes, including evidence-based impact models with baselines and indicators to demonstrate behaviour change results in communities. This work was supported by the American Red Cross, Canadian Red Cross, Italian Red Cross, Netherlands Red Cross, Spanish Red Cross, Swiss Red Cross, and IFRC from 1999, and inspired by the Colombian Red Cross's similar programmes.
- → developing WASH and maternal and child health (MCH) programmes (although these were a huge priority for the Ministry of Health, HRC had focused on disaster preparedness and response, and some emergency first aid, until that point)
- → using the response to Hurricane Mitch from 2011 onwards to scale up projects to programmes and move from single sectoral to multi-sectoral work
- → focusing on MCH programmes as an auxiliary to the Ministry of Health (MoH) – for example, running baby weighing programmes as part of outreach work through HRC's community-based health volunteers, and referring serious cases to MoH clinical facilities
- → strengthening community appreciation, acceptance and access for HRC's community health surveillance roles, which elevated the status and roles of volunteers
- → repositioning HRC in community health, with support from the American Red Cross and Canadian Red Cross, and developing a stronger auxiliary role in community health services.

> *"HRC's legacy of commitments to expanding community-based health infrastructure since 2008 have given it a strong tradition of access and acceptance in communities. Starting with establishing community-based health committees to identify at-risk newborns til two-year-old babies and offer care to pregnant women as well as mothers and fathers gave rise to the REDES network of community health workers/volunteers."*
>
> Partner National Society

NSD investments in its health programming led to HRC developing a range of roles in violence-affected communities where access was limited (by weather events, poor roads, long distances and in some cases violence) and where other organisations were not permitted to enter. With Canadian Red Cross support, HRC had 3,000 community health volunteers in 2009 who lived in isolated villages, often with no local Red Cross branch. They would phone for ambulances, blood donations and other support in response to community needs. Although HRC was lacking capacity at that time to gather strong data and manage volunteer databases, it still gained a strong reputation for its neutrality.

Over 10 years, HRC used integrated NSD investments within its health programmes to build a legacy that gave it better access to communities. Its initiatives included:

- → from 2006, developing the REDES ('Networks') integrated community health programme with the Canadian Red Cross. This focused on training volunteers in family and child health, nutrition, safe pregnancy, maternal health and family planning, and encouraging men to play an active role in family healthcare. It worked on localisation themes, in close collaboration with municipal government, health care providers and social organisations
- → from 2005, community health projects to support people living with HIV, sponsored by the Netherlands Red Cross
- → using health and CBHFA topics to engage and gain access to communities by empowering community health volunteers
- → providing first aid training for common injuries
- → identifying 'safe points' in communities where ambulances could arrive offering free health treatments, free of judgement, for marginalised groups
- → increasing access to health services and training health personnel in SAF before household visits
- → training teachers in psychosocial support to provide psychological first aid to detect and help cases of people affected by violence
- → training armed forces in first aid and psychological first aid.

"When people wanted to steal an ambulance or equipment, the armed groups would return it. Armed groups benefitted from blood and ambulance services, recognising that HRC didn't pick sides and remained passionately impartial and neutral."

HRC branch representative

HRC's journey towards being widely accepted as a localised actor was built on a strong tradition and foundation of community-based projects. For example, it's community development work in slums, supported by the Spanish Red Cross, gave HRC the credibility to recognise, talk about and address violence. Other previous NSD investments included youth-focused vocational training, clubs for older women and teaching first aid skills throughout communities. Acceptance of HRC also came from its reputation for running blood banks, providing blood to clinics and hospitals across the country, and being the trustworthy, active and proactive national leader in blood donor mobilisation.

To ensure it built on continuous learning from past approaches to access and acceptance, in 2013 HRC participated in a workshop on 'Lessons Learned on Violence Prevention in the Americas', sponsored by the Canadian Red Cross. This evaluated a two-year violence prevention programme in six National Societies, including HRC. The main lessons learned and recommendations for strengthening future NSD included:

- → ensuring better training to underline the importance of the preliminary assessments adopting a phased or modular approach to contextualised training in each national context
- → improving advocacy and relationship development skills to forge "partnerships for change and alliances of the willing"
- → creating 'quick wins' and maximising synergies between processes and programmes (e.g. encouraging links across thematic areas such as gender, health, emergency management, anti-stigma and anti-discrimination work)
- → adapting the '10 Steps' approach to fit within other social and behaviour change models (e.g. PSS, CBHFA and YABC[16])
- → aiming at a full integration with YABC.

16 Youth as Agents of Behavioural Change (YABC) is the IFRC's longstanding IFRC programme to help people around the world promote a culture of non-violence and peace in their communities. The project teaches both young people and adults how to harness their own power, take on ethical leadership roles and inspire positive transformations in mindsets, attitudes and behaviours. https://www.ifrc.org/our-work/inclusion-protection-and-engagement/education/youth-agents-behavioural-change

(ii) Maintaining a Movement footprint

HRC's transformation process was founded on its leadership's commitment to learn from what others were doing in the Movement. They wanted to deliver more consistency and coherence, and appoint senior personnel who could understand the National Society from partners' perspectives (for example, the incoming director general had worked within a Partner National Society previously). Using IFRC tools, such as OCAC, the leadership built a very clear vision of where HRC should go and envisaged it as a journey with inputs from multiple partners, not as a plan to get funds alone. Working in a disciplined way on long-term issues to expand its mission and delivery, HRC built stronger connections with IFRC to assess how other societies in the Americas had addressed similar challenges (for example, the IFRC regional director of the Americas had been the previous secretary general of the Colombian Red Cross).

In 2014/15, HRC was involved in an overwhelming number of partnerships and reached a turning point. It paused several initiatives, then focused on better articulating its forward journey in its next strategic plan and managing refreshed partnerships around that agenda. Conversations with partners were not combative, but focused on how each partner could invest in HRC's strategic development to better balance the needs of branches and partners. In general, the discussions were around HRC moving from being a first responder to taking on a more balanced, community-based resilience-building role.

HRC placed high strategic importance on developing its capability to manage the 'back-up support' it received from the IFRC and Movement partners to mobilise assistance and surge capacity when and where needed. Learning from global and regional models, and adapting and customising them to Honduran contexts, has been an important aspect of its localisation vision.

For example, learning from the impact of mobilising eight emergency response units (ERUs), which resulted in high visibility during the Hurricane Mitch response, HRC went on to negotiate a handover of the Canadian Red Cross's health ERU to become its own national unit. It requested technical support from the Canadian Red Cross to create locally relevant operating procedures and decide on how the ERU should be deployed. This also formed part of HRC's vision to make its ERU a global Movement asset, and partner with other National Societies in the region or globally who needed such support in future.

> *"The National Society, with its NSD investments in its strong national legal base, local volunteers, and enduring trust, supported by the whole Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement globally, was the main message that led the authorities to respect its independence."*
>
> IFRC

First aid drill to strengthen staff capacities at an international airport, Comayagua, 2021.

(iii) A new form of organisational development precipitated by population needs and changing contexts

> *"HRC aims to strengthen the population's resilience to crises, disasters and emergencies; improve access to comprehensive, quality health care services; ensure that the most vulnerable communities receive protection services; and ensure that people are empowered through the National Society's development processes."*
>
> The Honduran Red Cross´s National Development Plan 2021–2025

To strengthen its institutional capacities and refresh its positioning by building on its legacy, HRC undertook several phased organisational self-assessments at both national and branch levels. Carrying out these processes as a series of interconnected assessments could have enhanced their overall effect, but instead they were undertaken in parallel, to some extent.

Even so, the new leadership from 2012 onwards did use the outcomes and recommendations from the various assessments and tools to deepen HRC's overall commitments to localisation, organisational transformation, and locally-led first responder status. These outcomes included:

- → the Canadian Red Cross (CRC) supporting the First Responder Initiative (FRI) from 2010 onwards, which included a baseline assessment tool that was a precursor to the Disaster Response Capacity Enhancement (DRCE) exercise. FRI was based on a community disaster risk reduction programme, but used vulnerability and capacity assessment tools. This turned into a five-year strategic partnership with CRC to strengthen HRC and its emergency response unit (ERU), from 2013
- → starting with relevant and systematic orientation of the highest office bearers and management in HRC in June 2010 emphasising HRC's goal of protecting beneficiaries as well as internal staff and volunteers
- → working with ICRC on the Opening Safe Humanitarian Spaces programme for schools in communities with high levels of violence
- → transforming the 10 Steps approach into the Violence Prevention Programme (VPP). There was an idea to integrate the VPP into the Capacity Enhancement for Response in Americas (CERA) to emphasise its NSD components (e.g. policy development on violence prevention). A joint initiative between HRC, the Canadian Red Cross, Norwegian Red Cross, ICRC and IFRC on 'National Society Capacities in Other Situations of Violence' aimed to focus on violence prevention by trying to link the Safer Access Framework (SAF) with community-based approaches and volunteer mobilisation. Although no clear document was produced, a short-term peer-to-peer network was established to facilitate shared learning and support mechanisms between National Societies addressing the same issues
- → in 2012, CERA was modelled on FRI, and integrated the protection and violence preparedness agenda from the 10 Steps approach into the disaster preparedness and response programmes. Examples included separating girls and women from men's shelters and improving lighting in sensitive areas. In doing so, it further strengthened the neutral, impartial and independent humanitarian action and positioning of HRC
- → CERA's 'disaster law' element led to powerful and influential humanitarian advocacy by HRC in succeeding years to achieve an enhanced disaster law in Honduras
- → beginning SAF self-assessments in 2012, supported by ICRC. Their key objective was to strengthen HRC's operational safety and security management practices (see Section 4 (ii)), so that it could better deliver services in areas of interest to ICRC, such as restoring family links, migration, mental health and protection. However, the SAF didn't include any framework to measure progress, and was initially perceived to be focused on safety and security for staff, rather than on wider access
- → carrying out a draft study on violence prevention in Tegucigalpa, San Pedro Sula and La Ceiba in 2012, supported by the Spanish Red Cross
- → conducting activities to familiarise journalists and the private sector with the Red Cross emblem
- → training groups of volunteers on the Red Cross standards in 15 of HRC's 51 branches, under the volunteering project supported by IFRC

- → DRCE was originally promoted by the Canadian Red Cross, and was always trying to triangulate with SAF and links to the complexity of violence-sensitive contexts
- → conducting Branch Organisational Capacity Assessments (BOCA) in 2016 following a training workshop by IFRC for 16 BOCA facilitators. However, the BOCA results were seen as internal and confidential, so ICRC was not invited to participate or view the results
- → HRC's PER[17] results over several years showing how its capaciy for preparedness evolved.
- → in 2014, the new HRC president and senior leadership were keen to prioritise a change process based on an analysis of the collective and assimilated learnings and gaps identified in all previous CERA, OCAC, BOCA, DRCE, PER and SAF processes

From these assessment tools and their outcomes, HRC was able to develop a framework to strengthen its positioning and secure its acceptance as a neutral and independent local humanitarian actor, and impartial leader. The outcomes included additional NSD investments – for example, in community development initiatives, with support from the Italian Red Cross and Spanish Red Cross; and in extending HRC's 'Safe humanitarian spaces' training programme to 1,000 teachers across the country, with support from the Canadian Red Cross and ICRC.

The outcomes of these multiple NSD investments at community level helped further strengthen HRC's legacy of localisation over the decades:

> *"As a result of all our efforts we strengthened our investments in new types of volunteers. We now had direct communications with community level volunteers affected by regular disasters. We had established local emergency committees, involving community leaders, parents' associations, schools and mothers, and located in high-risk areas susceptible to regular winter crises and summer floods, to empower communities to be better prepared and respond to local foreseeable disasters and crises."*
>
> Branch council chairperson

By implementing recommendations from the assessment processes through a violence-sensitive lens, and making specific NSD investments as a result, HRC was able to keep volunteers and staff safer and save lives. Many branch level leaders and volunteers have attested to this:

> *"We were Red Cross volunteers doing health sensitisation work in communities and the armed group members were waiting for the Red Cross vehicle. These armed group members control the roads and extort 'passage fees' to pass. Drivers from other organisations and local bus companies have been pulled out of vehicles and shot because their companies hadn't paid the fees. But the armed group members say, 'We're with the HRC' and just want to know where we're going, without asking us to pay. Our Red Cross uniform is taken very seriously and contributes to our security."*
>
> HRC branch volunteer

Volunteers from the Council of Jesús de Otoro, Intibucá in fundraising, 2022

Blood donation program, 2022

17 The PER Approach is a continuous and flexible process that enables National Societies to assess, measure and analyse the strengths and gaps of its preparedness and response mechanism, and ultimately take necessary action to improve it.
- PER 1 Evaluation 2015: score 2.6563
- PER 2 Evaluation 2019: score 3.7188
- PER 3 Evaluation 2021: score 3.4792
- PER 4 Evaluation 2023: score 3.8400

7. Strengthening 'reputation'

(i) Legal base foundations

Founded by presidential decree in 1937, HRC has shown historically that it is neutral and impartial, separate from political and other priorities and pressures. It exercises independent decisions over its own development through its statutes and by-laws. At national level HRC has memoranda of understanding (MOUs) with a number of key ministries, with auxiliary role agreements based on mutual support at both national and municipality levels.

National level MOUs include those with the Ministry of Health to supply ambulances and blood (which the government pays for, but it is still in debt to HRC); the Ministry of Foreign affairs for support to returned migrants (with financial support for some programmes); and Disaster Risk Reduction. In 2011, HRC significantly strengthened its auxiliary role status and influence when it responded to the cyclone Tropical Depression E-12. The organisation used its local volunteer and branch capacities to engage in joint assessments, share information and coordinate in the field with other institutions, such as the Honduran Permanent Commission on Disaster Response (COPECO), the Humanitarian Network and the National Risk Management System (SINAGER).

Through its NSD investments and regionalisation process, HRC has succeeded in approximately 40% of its branches agreeing MOUs with their local authorities, while the remaining 60% are managed from the HRC headquarters.

> *"HRC's relations with local authorities have always been good. They have always seen us as supporters of humanitarian actions. Sometimes we have had to conduct humanitarian diplomacy through our newly regionalised leadership level to show state governments that their instructions are not in conformity with the Fundamental Principles and our auxiliary roles. For example, a local Ministry of Health director wanted HRC to lead a vaccination programme in a camp, while we had to explain that we could only help with logistics of the programme."*
>
> HRC headquarters national director

HRC's sensitive NSD investments to implement its legal base and deliver its auxiliary roles included:

- ✓ HRC's senior leadership visiting every ministry every year to present its annual report, including statistics relating to its services and numbers of people reached
- ✓ making a one-hour presentation to the president of the Republic of Honduras in 2022 on HRC, the humanitarian situation and the context of services across the country
- ✓ maintaining a stable blood supply to 75% of the country's public hospitals, 95% of private hospitals, and covering 100% for the Honduran Institute of Social Security for their purposes
- ✓ maintaining a stable emergency response capacity specially to flooding and hurricanes, deploying teams with other National Societies and local actors and organisations
- ✓ humanitarian advocacy and contributions to national policy making to ensure access to people like displaced and migrant populations, and so guarantee humanitarian support
- ✓ locating assets such as HRC health clinics in places where people had no other medical services, or where there were not enough private health clinics, hospitals or medical services. For example, one clinic in the capital city served migrant communities
- ✓ sustaining work since 2001 in communities that were particularly affected by violence, resulting in those responsible for violence respecting HRC's neutrality and impartiality
- ✓ investing in localisation through social development programmes, including work in schools to establish community response mechanisms, such as first aid volunteer brigades
- ✓ ensuring branches had contingency plans
- ✓ expanding its auxiliary role in community health service provision, by strengthening local volunteer-based health surveillance roles, and facilitating onward referrals from remote and isolated communities to government health facilities

✓ engaging in high-level humanitarian diplomacy forums, such as the national CASH working group with the UN, government and key civil society organisations; and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs panels on migration.

It is, however also working on further NSD investments to draft a new Red Cross law to supersede the presidential decree of 1937.

"We used the OCAC process to strengthen our National Society. If used properly it can dictate what the law and statutes also need to strengthen. Looking at some examples of complex relationships between National Societies and their state authorities in our region, such as Nicaragua and Venezuela, we want to modernise our systems so that our leadership does not stay too long and force a replacement from external pressures. We believe in the IFRC's Agenda for Renewal and localisation, and as such we are developing a new draft Red Cross law that will strengthen our independence, neutrality and impartiality into the future too."

Jose Juan Castro, HRC president

The new proposed law will aim to strengthen its foundations by:

→ modernising its auxiliary role

→ clarifying further the differences between HRC and non-governmental organisations (NGOs).

This will in turn lead to further adaptations to its statutes, which will also include the following – in alignment with the Movement's new Guidelines for National Society Statutes (2018):

→ clarified definitions of volunteers and members

→ updated guidelines on how volunteers can become members (after two years of evidence-based active volunteering)

→ diversified membership criteria, so that it includes a wider range of community stakeholders (e.g. migrants who want to join as volunteers, but not members, until they complete the same two years of active service)

→ a reinstated membership fee system (which was suspended in 1998, when Hurricane Mitch meant HRC had to turn away many new potential members as there were no filters to avoid the risk of politicisation).

(ii) HRC's auxiliary role and its interpretation

"If you want to make a real change you have to change the legal base."

Alexei Castro, HRC director general

There have been strengths as well as challenges in the implementation of HRC's auxiliary role as defined in the decree of 1937 and related statutes. On the one hand, continuous dissemination of the Fundamental Principles throughout the decades has led to HRC being well-positioned and respected locally, regionally and nationally. On the other hand, despite close and productive relationships with governmental authorities, its strong auxiliary role in blood provision, for example, has not resulted in the fees, subsidies and income due from government to sustain these services. Even though the government is in debt to HRC, it continues to supply blood and ambulance services to the population.

Psychosocial support assistance for migrant children, Danlí, 2023

> *"We have a need to update and modernise our auxiliary roles. For example, we have clearer auxiliary roles related to health in disaster response, but no clear public health mandates. We have also started to provide urgently needed humanitarian services in relation to migrant populations, such as first aid, psychosocial support, and special stations and centres to care for migrants, but these are not yet recognised as auxiliary roles, which could also generate resources from government and others to fulfil them better."*
>
> HRC branch leader

However, there is no doubt that HRC has been able to implement most of its auxiliary role more quickly as a result of its NSD investments in regionalisation. Because of its localisation approach and reputation, HRC has considerably strengthened its position as a well-recognised strong first responder, and its ability to respond faster to local emergencies.

> *"We had two examples of how we speed up local humanitarian action. In response to a local fire we organised a City Hall emergency committee and spontaneous warehouse to receive and keep humanitarian aid before it could be distributed. We knew people who were key to mobilising volunteers and using personal assets such as boats to reach and rescue the affected communities. We deployed disaster response teams who arrived at the remote island location within 24 hours who had distributed the assistance before even our headquarters teams could arrive.*
>
> *"On a second occasion, in response to Hurricane Iota, we were able to move personnel from non-affected chapters to move and work in villages where there were no chapters around."*
>
> HRC regional vice-president

HRC's strong positioning and auxiliary role meant it could use NSD investments to build humanitarian advocacy skills and widen its influence among humanitarian organisations and networks. In 2018, HRC trained its staff and key volunteers in humanitarian diplomacy with a focus on legislative advocacy. It also trained 16 government and civil society organisations in international disaster response law (IDRL).[18] These initiatives resulted in stronger relationships with other partners through taking part in platforms such as the Permanent Contingency Committee (COPECO),[19] where prevention and intervention actions are coordinated for emergencies and disasters.

HRC also actively participated in the Humanitarian Information Network (REDHUM), exchanging knowledge with other actors, helping to analyse Honduras' humanitarian context, and promoting initiatives to respond to challenges in health, disasters and violence. HRC strengthened the performance of its health programme by participating in municipal health clusters created in communities until they join the National Health Committee where, with the Health Secretariat of the Government, HRC has assisted their integration with other institutional health programmes and where projects are coordinated.

(iii) Building social inclusion and peace

> *"In some communities they say that no one can get in, including ambulances, so people pick up the wounded and take them to a location where they can be picked up. Generally, these communities ask for HRC ambulances which is why we have so many ambulances in service. We have 53 branches each with ambulance services, but the city-based ones are stronger as communities suffer more from violence there. In a northern city, for example, we prioritised work with communities during wars between armed groups who gave us access between certain hours. The groups would say, 'do your service and speak with the people, but come under our rules'."*
>
> HRC headquarters national director

Since 2002, HRC has been involved in several phases of violence prevention programmes, with the support of the Canadian Red Cross, Norwegian Red Cross, Swiss Red Cross, Spanish Red Cross and ICRC. These have all included a range of NSD investments that were originally aimed at protecting children, but later expanded into youth and adult-focused interventions. Violence prevention work included policy level influencing objectives through humanitarian diplomacy from the beginning, as a precursor to social inclusion work later.

18 International disaster response law (IDRL) is the area of international law that addresses the facilitation and regulation of international disaster assistance. IFRC Disaster Law is globally recognised as a leader in IDRL, having developed the Guidelines for the Domestic Facilitation and Regulation of International Disaster Relief and Initial Recovery Assistance.

19 Honduras' civil protection system.

HRC's earlier NSD investments in programmes to reduce rates of HIV in priority regions of the country had also given it a strong reputation as an organisation that fought against social stigma and discrimination, and promoted social inclusion. From 2011, IFRC supported HRC's response to HIV through its Global Alliance on HIV. This funding and technical assistance was complemented by support from other partners and pharmaceutical company Eli Lilly, which enabled HRC to run projects in four branches:

- → a Fulfilling and Healthy Life project (Vida Sana y Plena) targeted at-risk youth, truck drivers, taxi drivers, sex workers, Red Cross volunteers, people living with HIV (PLHIV) and the general population with prevention, and anti-stigma and discrimination messaging sponsored, by the Netherlands Red Cross. It was implemented in the Francisco Morazán and Puerto Cortes departments and funded under the IFRC's Global Alliance on HIV.
- → the Open Hand project (Manos Abiertas), provided comprehensive HIV prevention messaging and support for vulnerable populations, including sex workers, youth, pregnant women and PLHIV. It was implemented in the departments of Choluteca and Olancho and funded by the Finnish Red Cross.
- → the Southern Zone Development project (PRODESUR) focused on health and HIV/AIDS, targeting students in the formal education sector using the Together We Can peer education methodology. It was implemented in Choluteca and Valle departments and funded by the Swiss Red Cross.
- → Prevention of HIV/TB Co-infection targeted people in prison settings and PLHIV. It was funded by the secretariat with support from Eli Lilly.

HRC had explored the capacities that promoted greater social inclusion and peace. Given the high level of social exclusion and unemployment facing young people, and the risk of this leading to them being recruited into armed groups, much of HRC's social inclusion and peace-building work over the subsequent years focused on school children and youth. Its aim was to break the cycle through which young people and their lives end up being affected by violence.

Awareness campaign on Protection, Gender and Inclusion aimed at students, Saul Juarez school, Chluteca, 2022.

The NSD investments included:

- ✓ intensive investments in youth volunteers, and formulation and management of youth services mobilising youth volunteers and helping them to understand their role in HRC
- ✓ creating special roles for young people to focus on youth work with youth volunteers in schools, providing prestige and a Red Cross identity, with recognition systems and 'Volunteer of the Year' events to keep them motivated and not attracted to armed groups
- ✓ training for youth on topics such as:
  - o principles and values
  - o making friends with good values
  - o positive use of free time
  - o making communities stronger
- ✓ focusing on youth and their environment, providing vocational training to help avoid unemployment and the potential to be recruited into armed groups
- ✓ working with institutions and the health and education ministries, as well as their equivalents in municipalities and local authorities who support communities to bridge the generational gap.

The NSD investments in youth work led to greater and more integrated achievements in which youth contributed through their behaviours and services to demonstrating and achieving more socially inclusive outcomes.

"We moved from 'violence prevention' programmes to wider 'social development' programmes. Starting with five communities in Tegucigalpa, our work evolved into a social development programme to address the integrated needs of communities. We used humanitarian diplomacy skills to encourage local authorities to build community infrastructure focusing on protection. This included more street lighting in dark streets which had been dangerous for women and children. When the Red Cross opens access to a community, many others follow. So, we need to promote integrated responses. Working with other international NGOs, such as Plan International and World Vision, to build in disaster preparedness and response capacities in communities so that they could have longer-term sustainability, relations and support from local authorities."

HRC headquarters national director

HRC's NSD investments have increased the number of trained volunteers, expanded branch services and enabled it to gain access and acceptance in some of the communities most affected by violence. Its strategic plans demonstrate a clear evolution that has led to it becoming a key figure in promoting social inclusion in communities. The NSD investments included:

- ✓ expanding volunteer coverage to work with groups expelled from their land and/or repatriated from after migrating, offering education, job training and opportunities such as setting up bakeries, barber shops and seamstresses
- ✓ building coordination skills to form roundtables and alliances with different organisations to deliver the integrated assistance needed by communities
- ✓ using negotiation and advocacy skills to work with communities, so they were more welcoming to returnees, who were often scared to face a backlash when they returned
- ✓ establishing services in locations where only HRC (and not even the police) was able to contact local community leaders and/or armed groups, and explain its intention to:
  - o give young people opportunities
  - o improve community infrastructure
  - o respect local groups' governance and regulations (e.g. leaving cars and walking into communities)
- ✓ ensuring that its activities and services were, and were perceived to be, strictly non-political.

Building community development skills in volunteers and branch leaders led to a significant scale-up of humanitarian services and practicing of humanitarian values:

"With the support of the Spanish and Norwegian Red Cross, in one community made up of 14 sub-communities we formed leadership groups, did street fairs to encourage people to come out of their homes, and built alliances with doctors and nurses to visit. We worked with the Education Secretariat so that the children from the community would be accepted into the school system who had not been accepted before, or who couldn't cope with the fear of going to school. We took food into the community, had food at community meetings, and even instituted a Red Cross monetary card (like a debit card) so that families could spend up to a certain limit in a grocery store, and pay electricity bills. As a result of running programmes such as 'How to improve our lives' including activities such as vegetable gardening, we strengthen co-existence and social well-being".

HRC regional vice-president

Delivering water purifying filters to families in Lencita, Nueva Arcadia, Copan, 2021

Humanitarian assistance to families affected by tropical storms ETA and IOTA in La Lima, Cortes, 2021

8. Strengthening 'integrity'

(i) The role of HRC's statutes

> *"In spite of our inherited auxiliary roles, after Hurricane Mitch and in 2011 onwards, we began to talk about regionalisation to decentralise and improve immediate response capacities at local levels. After two years of internal consultation, we adopted our updated set of statutes and by-laws at our National Assembly in 2015. These had also been approved by the global IFRC and ICRC Joint Statutes Commission. We divided ourselves into four regions, each with a regional vice-president who could represent and support the national HRC president. By representing the presidency in the region, we could better resolve issues, supervise progress against national objectives, and maintain closer relations with branches, volunteers and local authorities to improve decision-making."*
>
> HRC regional vice-president

The election of the four new vice-presidents in 2015, each of whom had been a long-serving and active volunteer with HRC, significantly strengthened the National Society's NSD agenda. The four pillars of regionalisation were as follows.

- ✓ **Reinforcing governance:** refreshing the necessary profiles and roles of branch level governance to provide solutions to challenges and minimise the risk of not following the newly adopted by-laws.
- ✓ **Strengthening volunteerism :**balancing the introduction of new, more localised services through younger volunteers (who could be more agile and provide mobile health services while moving for education, study or work to other locations) with longer serving volunteers who retained the necessary training in crisis management and other services areas.
- ✓ **Strengthening crisis management:** maintaining credibility as first responders, particularly to those vulnerable to disasters, mobilising where appropriate and working in tandem with local government and civil society response teams, (e.g. with HRC ambulances at the centre of each local response effort).
- ✓ **Improving local resource mobilisation:** supporting local councils/branches to generate their own funds from diverse local sources, to strengthen their overall sustainability and independence. HRC continuously spread the message that as a voluntary humanitarian organisation, and in compliance with its auxiliary role, all its actions were based on the seven Fundamental Principles. It explained that it mobilised national and international support to help the most vulnerable, according to the needs of the Honduran population identified in situations of violence, emergencies, crises and/or disasters.

> *"In strengthening our statutes, we followed the IFRC/ICRC Joint Statutes Commission's advice and ensured that the Fundamental Principles are fully included – for example, avoiding political interests that dilute neutrality; making clearer distinctions between governance and management to strengthen accountability; and investing more in strengthening volunteers and their roles in the National Society"*
>
> Jose Juan Castro, HRC president

HRC is committed to further strengthening its statutes in relation to its integrity management systems. It will focus particularly on reinstating a membership fee system to improve its local mobilisation of sustainable resources, and strengthening membership and governance guidelines so that profiles include filters to ensure no one is aligned to political or religious affiliations to avoid risk.

(i) Refreshing governance at all levels to oversee a decentralised branch network

In response to critical views that some of HRC's leadership came from elite backgrounds, and in accordance with its revised statutes of 2015, HRC made NSD investments to mobilise of a new generation of volunteers to become board governors. This included a National Leadership Programme between 2017 and 2018. To show they could implement the Fundamental Principles, volunteers had to serve a minimum of two years as active humanitarian volunteers before being able to become HRC members and stand for elected roles. By 2021, in one region alone, new board governors were elected in 19 out of 23 branches.

However, there were challenges in organising effective induction processes for the newly elected governance.

> *"Volunteers who have had first responder status take time to grow into wider governance and oversight roles. Although board members already have basic training, given the example of Nicaraguan Red Cross recently and the need to continuously protect our independence and neutrality, we asked partner National Societies to support a three-year NSD support programme and budget to help strengthen governing board capacities at local levels, and thereby the whole institution. The Italian Red Cross has assisted us and we're planning a three- to four-day induction training programme for all new branch presidents. This wouldn't have been possible without regionalisation."*
>
> HRC regional vice-president

Nevertheless, the first four elected regional vice-presidents, each of whom started out as an active HRC volunteer, are coming to the end of their maximum of two terms. The success of regionalisation in providing localised solutions to challenges is balanced by learning generated by these new roles around areas that need to be strengthened. The vice-presidents themselves identify the following ways in which the roles could be made stronger in future.

- → Since the first elected roles had no predecessors, they received no structured training and induction. The next four vice-presidents should receive a full induction programme, based on lessons learned from the four existing position holders.
- → The first cohort of vice-presidents could be asked to stay as advisers.
- → The model of the regional team could be strengthened. Currently, each regional office has only one person to attend to branches' needs (a regional coordinator), but it can be difficult to provide the technical support each branch requests, together with the distances involved in travelling to some remote branches for just two people.
- → Regions could formalise some level of regional technical support teams, comprised of ex-volunteers who have deep experiences and technical expertise.

(iii) Strengthening transparency and accountability

> *"Transparency and accountability are both internal and external issues. The National Society must be an example in the eyes of its people. However, we are also part of many commitments and international commissions within the Movement too. We must work very hard to ensure that the ethical and moral doctrines of the Movement are delivered through our statutes, which must be in compliance with these rules and morals."*
>
> Jose Juan Castro, HRC president

In 2011, HRC introduced a new financial manual to consolidate reporting between branches and headquarters. Since then, branch treasurers and administrators have received continuous training in the updated versions of the manual. To promote accountability, they present quarterly reports, which acts as a monitoring mechanism for assets and liabilities, inventories, fundraising and account balances.

> *"We changed the financial system to improve financial accountability to build trust and track every single transaction. In the past the HQ did everything, but now through localisation we have transferred the responsibility and capacity to the branches."*
>
> Jose Juan Castro, HRC president

To guarantee institutional rules were implemented with transparency, branches appointed and trained 'oversight counsellors' (fiscales). Efforts were also made to encourage branches to use social networks to promote their activities and volunteering opportunities.

First aid training drill to strengthen staff capacities at an international airport, Comayagua, 2021

From 2012 onwards, HRC continued its work in the risk management area, strengthening institutional capacities with the aim of providing quality services and having greater coverage. To do so, it took advantage of opportunities to participate in training promoted by the IFRC in areas such as shelter, logistics, health, water and sanitation, disaster management, finance, human resources, communications, reports, and IT and telecoms to strengthen regional emergency response and programming. In addition, the agreement between the IFRC headquarters to provide support to the HRC in case of disasters was reviewed.

"We grew from a very simple organisation to what we are today. Our strengths are our volunteers, including governance, who draw no salaries, and our Fundamental Principles conveyed through community actions. Our 'big family of volunteers' is the platform we build from. We read the Fundamental Principles at the beginning of every meeting and study them. We agree our key principles and how to implement them in practice. We do this by working with communities to identify their own needs, programmes, and by being true to our promises. Communities recognise that we are there with a purpose that has no political or economic interest, only with humanitarian motivation."

HRC regional vice-president

From 2012 onwards, HRC intensified its capacity strengthening work with volunteers and branches. It encouraged them to support community development by implementing programmes and projects, and promoted relationships with other stakeholders in different sectoral areas nationwide, such urban risk, water and sanitation, volunteering and climate change.

Recognising the need to manage greater programmatic responsibilities and financing, HRC also focused on updating its internal policies and guidelines. The new leadership began a revitalisation and modernisation of its transparency and accountability systems to increase trust in the overall institution. In 2012, it made NSD investments that resulted in a restructuring process and strengthened risk management. The main results after that included:

- → approval of a National Fraud and Corruption Prevention Policy
- → approval of National Disaster Risk Management Policy
- → approval of Gender Policy
- → approval of Violence Prevention Policy
- → development of the National Disaster Risk Management Plan
- → update of the National and Regional Disaster Response Plans
- → development of the Disaster Relief Operational Procedures Manual development and update of 28 contingency plans for branches
- → human resources training on topics related to intervention and response in case of disasters and crises
- → expansion, maintenance and repair of the radio network nationwide strengthening of warehouse management
- → first curriculum and first NIT course with a specialty in restoring family links (RFL) in the Movement.

HRC has also made NSD investments that built local capacities to ensure transparent and accountable reporting of its services, performance and use of resources, both to the communities it serves and stakeholders supporting its work.

The key NSD investments to strengthen this area of its work included:

- ✓ community engagement and accountability (CEA), approaches which enabled it to work in a more participatory way and hear from the more marginalised parts of communities
- ✓ gender sensitisation investments that included revising and updating the current policy
- ✓ working with people in prison through community-based health and first aid (CBHFA)
- ✓ protection, gender and inclusion (PGI) activities that helped communities to work on their values, principles and inclusion.

9. Strengthening Movement cooperation and coordination – building complementarity and collective impact

The election of the new president and senior leadership of HRC from 2012 onwards brought two new dimensions to HRC. The first was a refocusing of its humanitarian vision, accompanied by a vision to refresh its services and achieve greater localisation through regionalisation. The second was a decision to reshape HRC's relationships with Movement components and partners, by more assertively defining its own national plans and aligning Movement support to them in a more coherent way.

(i) Using and adapting existing Movement mechanisms to enhance overall cooperation and coordination in country

Since 2011, HRC's new leadership has prioritised a special relationship with the IFRC to enable it to use regional resources, clustered assets, trainings and wider Movement resources more effectively.

Previously, HRC had managed partnerships through bilateral relations, but this transitioned into a stronger approach to co-creation and cooperation. For example, HRC's commitment to work on population movement issues turned more into a conversation that opened with: "This is what we want to do, how can you as partners join us?". It began to organise and lead partnership meetings more assertively than in the past. Earlier agendas based on information sharing on multiple projects transitioned into reporting with an accountability focus. These were followed by more strategic discussions on NSD needs and issues.

Key outcomes of enhanced Movement cooperation and coordination mechanisms are below.

- ✓ annual partnership meetings became a central platform for facilitating coordinated Movement support for HRC's overall development, with NSD for sustainable service delivery as a permanent priority topic.
- ✓ HRC was able to further strengthen a unified image of itself as the main Movement actor in Honduras, as opposed to the multiple partner visibility that had caused confusion in the past.
- ✓ HRC was able to negotiate access to direct humanitarian funding from the Honduran government and other state governments (such as Spain and the European Union) on the basis of the credibility it had achieved for the effective management of funds channelled through Movement partners.
- ✓ the Unified Country Plan was achieved in 2023, showing the contributions of all Movement partners in one harmonized support plan, aligned to HRC's latest Development National Plan 2021-2025.
- ✓ a unified response plan was developed for migration crisis, which includes all the activities funded by all sources of funds.

National driving course for all branch personnel nationwide, held in Tegucigalpa, 2022

Strengthening livelihoods of farmers, Trojes, 2023

10. Lessons learned on NSD strategies to adapt organisational relevance and capacities in fragile, complex, and violence-affected contexts

(i) Sustainability

HRC's lessons learned address sustainability of interventions in two dimensions: sustainable new behaviours in communities that support their own development into the future, and sustainability at organisational levels.

There is no doubt that HRC's community level interventions leave behind communities that are more equitable, empowered, responsive and better prepared:

> *"The Red Cross guides us so that we are not left alone without care. Let's hope no child will die now from fever or pneumonia. In case of emergency the Red Cross will take you in. When I heard the project in our area was coming to a close, I started to think of everything the Red Cross had done. So many things have changed. Now it's not the same. We don't want any more deaths. That's what the Red Cross is trying to accomplish. We realised that people die because they didn't know how to take care of themselves. We can now also all visit the community clinic. We are better organised, everything will now improve."*
>
> Community member

There remain challenges, however, in finding models to strengthen organisational sustainability, particularly at community level. Most donations remain spontaneous, coming from local NGOs, donations for ambulance services that deliver profits to meet other costs, and local municipality contributions to some local salaries. However, there are also promising examples of longer-term local resource mobilisation initiatives:

> *"In our branch, as part of a sustainability strategy we received a loan to refurbish our training facility including catering services to conferences and students. We had the auditorium and we thought of adding a kitchen. The project gave us kitchen appliances. When someone wants to use the auditorium, we don't charge anything but they must order food from us. This way we can earn money for our basic expenses such as fuel, the cost of the ambulances, or to organise activities in the other village. Our dream is to offer these services to other organisations and NGOs and cover all our costs."*
>
> HRC branch volunteer

HRC's revenue and resourcing streams come from several sources. Although 60% of its income is from its blood bank services, the government remains in considerable debt due to delays in back payments. Programmatic support comes from institutional partners who have trusted HRC's NSD investments in strengthening systems and accountability to receive funds directly (for example, from the Spanish and Swiss government development agencies, and the European Union). However, this income remains very project-oriented, and HRC has continued to struggle to find sustainable funding to support its organisational structures. Although there have been isolated examples of exploring networking with Rotary Clubs, universities and the business sector, HRC faces continuing challenges due to:

- the lack of a strong philanthropic sector in country, although the organisation is recognised locally, regionally and nationally
- a lack of consistent internal NSD investments in strengthening skills and abilities to form coalitions
- gaps in funding for investments in NSD.

(ii) Contributors to the success of transformative processes

"Transformation processes take between 10-15 years and are based on a stable succession of principled leaders. They are based on moving on from conservative paradigms to addressing contemporary challenges with foresight and integrity. HRC started to engage in different national and international fora and networks, focusing on how to better work with others and invest in itself. OCAC was seen as a journey which resulted in becoming a stronger and more relevant national network, as well as a regional influencer in the Americas. Honduran Red Cross works with four strategic areas:

1. *Integral management for risk reduction: actions in environment and adaptation to climate change, resilience, community, anticipatory actions, training and planning for response at national level, emergency, crisis and disaster response.*
2. *Community health: implementation of comprehensive community health projects, strengthening of institutional capacity and response in health services, health in emergencies, crises and disasters, pre-hospital care, blood and biotherapy, voluntary blood donation, implementing quality controls in health services.*
3. *Social development: implementation of comprehensive social development projects in communities, community empowerment and social inclusion, attention to mobile populations, restoring family links.*
4. *Organisational development: strengthening of the auxiliary role with leadership and innovations, strengthening of volunteer and staff capacities, monitoring, evaluation, learning and accountability in its actions, strengthening of the public image which allows it to mobilise resources, strengthening of financial, accounting and accountability management, digital transformation of the NS, strengthening of the incidence of the SN in the extended network of actors for humanitarian action.*

"HRC took a shared leadership and collective impact approach. Its strategic plans unpacked challenges and identified and delivered on clear targets. It has displayed a deep understanding of a journey towards growth both as a contributor to others, as well as with an ability to understand best practices and learn from experiences.".

Partner National Society

The NSD strategies and investments HRC has prioritized have resulted in several very positive outcomes, that have given it a unique positioning to respond to individuals and populations affected by crises, emergencies and disasters. The characteristics that distinguish HRC from other civil society and governmental organisations include:

- → remaining positioned as completely neutral and free of political or religious considerations, always independently verifying beneficiary lists received from municipalities during disasters, and rejecting potential volunteers and staff with political ties
- → maintaining stable leadership succession as a key factor of success, resulting in a strategic blend of experienced and new leadership to achieve innovative transformation based on lessons learned
- → strong, principled and relevant technical capacities, with good localised infrastructure in the form of warehouses, logistics contracts, migration centres etc, which generate access and acceptance through the work of volunteers and personnel who are seen to be continuously applying the Fundamental Principles in their daily outreach work
- → building on the legacy of having been there for people during Hurricane Mitch and on its proximity (e.g. through local services such as blood banks), and achieving a deeper credibility through localisation based on doing things that other actors cannot
- → not accepting violence as a 'norm', but using SAF training to build an organisational commitment to maintaining safety and security protocols – not just in individuals, but across the institution
- → involving a diversity of all ethnic groups and income-levels in its membership and volunteer base, which gives it advantage, acceptance, access and opportunities to serve and support all parts of communities

- → being able to provide first responder services to any emergency in 53 municipalities and 16 departments (offering greater coverage than the fire department), with support from National Societies such as the American Red Cross, Canadian Red Cross, German Red Cross, Italian Red Cross, Norwegian Red Cross, Spanish Red Cross, Swiss Red Cross, ICRC and IFRC, among others, and networking with other organisations and local governments to reach the most vulnerable people
- → gaining credibility, acceptance and access by using non-judgemental, neutral language – for example, not using the names of specific 'gangs' but calling them 'armed' or 'organised' groups
- → changing the focus of its work from rain, floods and droughts 10 years ago to encompass new internal contexts of displacement and migration
- → identifying gaps in the humanitarian situation and trends as a result of localised assessments, and filling the niche to show the added value HRC brings
- → achieving better independent alignment with local authorities to deliver auxiliary roles to "supplement or substitute" public humanitarian services, while retaining the right of independent humanitarian initiative
- → attracting and retaining a new profile of fresh volunteers during and after the COVID-19 mobilisation
- → being able to manage back-up support from the IFRC and Movement partners to mobilise assistance and surge capacity when and where needed (e.g. mobilising eight emergency response units (ERUs), which resulted in high visibility during the Hurricane Mitch response, and retaining its own national ERU thereafter).
- → being able to contribute to wider regional models of localisation and violence-sensitive community-based programming across the Americas. HRC's leadership and personnel are very active in regional networks such as the Inter-American Regional Committee (CORI), and regularly participate in leadership and technical peer-to-peer conversations
- → being able to leverage local learning for collective regional benefit and response: HRC's recently established Emergency Operations Centre (EOC) links its domestic regionalisation strategy to the wider RCRC Movement network across the Americas to enable branches to better respond to local crises and emergencies at all levels.
- → planning development through stable Strategic Plans, from 2001 until now

THE FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES OF THE INTERNATIONAL RED CROSS AND RED CRESCENT MOVEMENT

Humanity

The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, born of a desire to bring assistance without discrimination to the wounded on the battlefield, endeavours, in its international and national capacity, to prevent and alleviate human suffering wherever it may be found. Its purpose is to protect life and health and to ensure respect for the human being. It promotes mutual understanding, friendship, cooperation and lasting peace amongst all peoples.

Impartiality

It makes no discrimination as to nationality, race, religious beliefs, class or political opinions. It endeavours to relieve the suffering of individuals, being guided solely by their needs, and to give priority to the most urgent cases of distress.

Neutrality

In order to enjoy the confidence of all, the Movement may not take sides in hostilities or engage at any time in controversies of a political, racial, religious or ideological nature.

Independence

The Movement is independent. The National Societies, while auxiliaries in the humanitarian services of their governments and subject to the laws of their respective countries, must always maintain their autonomy so that they may be able at all times to act in accordance with the principles of the Movement.

Voluntary service

It is a voluntary relief movement not prompted in any manner by desire for gain.

Unity

There can be only one Red Cross or Red Crescent Society in any one country. It must be open to all. It must carry on its humanitarian work throughout its territory.

Universality

The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, in which all societies have equal status and share equal responsibilities and duties in helping each other, is worldwide.

Cruz Roja Hondureña

Honduran Red Cross

7a Calle

Entre 1a. y 2a. Avenidas

Comayagüela D.C.

T (504) 2237-1800

E *josejuan.castro@cruzroja.org.hn*