

Protecting People, Preserving Planet

Swedish Red Cross Framework for
Environmental and Climate Change Action



This document was approved by Anders Pedersen, International Director, Swedish Red Cross, on 22 March 2026. The document is valid for four years from the date of approval.

Swedish Red Cross is the Red Cross National Society in Sweden and is part of the Red Cross Red Crescent Movement. Together with 191 Red Cross Red Crescent National Societies, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), we are the world's largest humanitarian network with more than 17 million volunteers.

The Swedish Red Cross' actions under this framework contributes to IFRC network's [Global Climate Resilience Platform](#).

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Cover photo: Podroken village in Liberia. Half an hour's walk into the rainforest outside Podroken is the village's new community garden. Here, chilies and eggplants are currently thriving on cleared land. Villagers and Red Cross volunteers, like Linda B. The and Oretha Dweh, bend over small, yellow chili plants to clear away withered leaves. "We grow together now and many different crops, it's such a good thing. It's thanks to the Red Cross initiative. Before, we grew individually, which made it very difficult when the harvest failed" says Linda B. The.

Photo: Tomas Ärlemo, Swedish Red Cross

Fundamental principles of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement

As an organisation, we face daily choices that require careful judgment and balanced decisions. Our fundamental principles are our main tool and compass. They guide our goals, priorities, way of working, and approach to key issues. The entire Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement follows the same seven fundamental principles.

1 Humanity

The Red Cross, born of a desire to bring assistance without discrimination to the wounded on the battlefield, endeavors—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.

2 Impartiality

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

3 Neutrality

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

4 Independence

The Red Cross 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 Red Cross principles.

5 Voluntary Service

The Red Cross is a voluntary relief movement not prompted in any manner by desire for gain.

6 Unity

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

7 Universality

The Red Cross is a worldwide institution in which all societies have equal status and share equal responsibilities and duties in helping each other.

Definitions

Anticipatory Action: Refers to actions taken to reduce the humanitarian impacts of a forecasted hazard before it occurs, or before its most acute impacts are felt. The decision to act is based on a forecast, or collective risk analysis, of when, where and how the event will unfold ([Anticipation Hub](#)).

Climate change: A significant change in measures of climate (such as temperature, precipitation, or wind) lasting for an extended period (decades or longer) that is attributed directly or indirectly to human activity (e.g., deforestation, GHG emissions) that alters the composition of the global atmosphere and which is in addition to natural climate variability observed over comparable time periods (IPCC, UNFCCC).

Climate change adaptation: Also referred to as 'climate adaptation', means taking action to prepare for and adjust to the current and projected impacts of climate change (GCA).

Climate change mitigation: means reducing emissions of greenhouse gases by using less energy and replacing fossil fuels with clean energy solutions.

Green Response: The Movement's approach to saving lives and reducing suffering while avoiding harm to the environment, as well as to the livelihoods, assets, health and survival of affected people. This means promoting more environmentally friendly solutions and minimising the response's negative impacts on climate and environment.

Locally-led Action: approaches where programmes are conceived, shaped and delivered closer to the affected communities, highlighting the power and agency of affected people and local actors in humanitarian action (IFRC).

Locally-led Adaptation: refers to adaptation efforts driven by front-line actors (such as communities, civil society organisations, and local governments) who have the knowledge and capacity to identify climate risks and implement appropriate solutions (GCA).

National Adaptation Plan: outlines how a country will adapt to climate change in the medium- and long-term ([UNDP](#)).

National Determined Contributions: are at the heart of the Paris Agreement and the achievement of its long-term goals. They embody goals and efforts by each country to reduce national emissions and adapt to the impacts of climate change ([UNFCCC](#)).

Nature-based Solutions: Nature-based Solutions are actions that protect, sustainably manage or restore an ecosystem in order to address societal challenges – such as disaster risk, climate change, food security, water security or human health (IFRC).

Acronyms

AA	Anticipatory Action	PER	Preparedness for Effective Response
CEA	Community Engagement and Accountability	PGI	Protection, Gender and Inclusion
DG ECHO	The European Commission's Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations	PMER	Planning, Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning
DRR	Disaster Risk Reduction	SADDD	Sex, Age, Disability Disaggregated Data
EAP	Early Action Protocol	SRC	Swedish Red Cross
IFRC	The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies	UNDRR	United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction
ICRC	The International Committee of the Red Cross	UNEP/OCHA's JEU	United Nations Environment Programme's and United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs' Joint Environment Unit
NAP	National Adaptation Plan	WASH	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene
NbS	Nature-based Solutions	WFP	World Food Programme
NDC	Nationally Determined Contribution		
NEAT+	Nexus Environmental Assessment Tool		

Protecting People, Preserving Planet

Swedish Red Cross Programme for Environmental and Climate Change Action

The wellbeing of humans is intrinsically linked to the health of our planet. The planetary crises – climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution – have a direct impact on all aspects of people’s lives, from their ability to access food and water to their health and economic security. Urgent action to halt biodiversity loss, restore ecosystems and mitigate and adapt to climate change is essential if we are to prevent and alleviate human suffering.¹ This document outlines Swedish Red Cross ambition to step up response to growing humanitarian needs, support Red Cross and Red Crescent National Societies, and help people adapt to and reduce the impacts of the planetary crises.

The climate crisis has created an unprecedented need for humanitarian assistance. Some 83 percent of all disasters triggered by natural hazards in the past ten years were caused by extreme weather- and climate-related events, such as floods, storms and heatwaves.² Water is often the lowest common denominator - its scarcity, excess, or contamination is both a

cause and effect of climate change, conflict, and growing public health and food security risks. Climate-related natural hazards are already displacing more than 20 million people³ every year. Climate and weather extremes are also increasingly driving displacement in all regions, while flood- and drought-related acute food insecurity and malnutrition have increased.⁴ Infectious disease outbreaks are on the rise linked to human disruption of ecosystems and rising temperatures. The same root causes drive biodiversity loss at unprecedented scale, harming agricultural productivity which further add to food insecurity and malnutrition.⁵

Extreme weather events combined with poor faecal and solid waste management harm public health by increasing disease outbreaks and driving antimicrobial resistance. Antimicrobial resistance is a growing threat to human health, with a common source being environmental contamination from untreated human and animal waste. It increases the risk of infectious diseases, as well as the risk of further spread of antimicrobial resistance through the improper use and disposal of antibiotics.



Bangladesh, Sirajganj, Aug 2020. Jorina begum, 60, came back to her house which is submerged under floodwater. She, along with 4 other members of her family, left the house and moved to the side of a nearby road two months back. Severe floods struck Bangladesh in June 2020, which prolonged and intensified sufferings of 5.4 million people in the northern, central and north-eastern part of the country. Similar extreme flood events are happening more often and with higher water level as the rains are becoming more intense.

Photo: Bangladesh Red Crescent Society and Climate Centre

The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement is mobilising its network of 191 National Societies, 165,000 local branches and 17 million volunteers to address the crises' gravity and scale.⁶ **The Swedish Red Cross Strategic Direction 2023-2030**⁷ calls for reducing the humanitarian consequences of climate change, recognising the disproportionate impact the climate crisis has on world's poorest and most marginalised. In line with the principles of locally led action, the Swedish Red Cross will support National Societies, people and communities to strengthen resilience, reducing the impacts of extreme and unpredictable weather on health and livelihoods.

The Swedish Red Cross further recognises the critical role that a robust natural environ-

ment plays in providing a first line of defence against extreme weather events and the direct reliance of communities upon the environment for their livelihoods and wellbeing. By protecting and working with nature, we will strengthen people's and communities' ability to withstand climate-related and other disasters, ensuring a more sustainable and secure future for all.

Humanity faces a choice: to react and respond to growing humanitarian needs, which is costly both in terms of human suffering and financial investments, or to invest more in prevention, which saves lives and scarce resources. In 1984, the Swedish Red Cross launched the report **Prevention better than cure**,⁸ highlighting the risk of global warming and environmental degradation and the

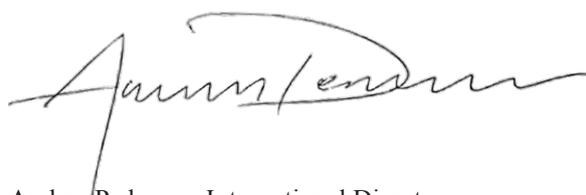
disastrous consequences that would follow. The report brought forward evidence for the need of investing in prevention instead of only providing cure for injuries and losses that already happened. Forty years on, it is no longer only a risk. Today we see how climate-induced hazards create devastating consequences for the most vulnerable people, while the gap in global climate finances continues to increase. Yet we know for every dollar invested in Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) in low- and middle-income countries, there can be a savings of up to 15 dollars in post-disaster recovery.⁹

Building on our extensive experience in disaster risk reduction, health, water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH), we will scale up our support for strengthened local capacity and resources for anticipatory actions that prevent and reduce impact on lives, livelihoods and humanitarian needs. Swedish Red Cross will also step up its efforts to address environmental and health risks of fecal sludge, wastewater and waste, including through circular economy approaches that turn waste into value, reduce pollution, and create healthier environments.

Climate and environmental risks are not gender neutral. Instead, a person's capacity to mitigate and adapt depends on social, political, and economic inequalities. Gender gaps, like restricted financial access and exclusion from decision-making forum, weaken wom-

en's and marginalised groups' ability to adapt to a changing climate.¹⁰ Swedish Red Cross recognises the different and disproportional risks climate and environmental degradation has on women, persons with disabilities, indigenous persons and other vulnerable groups. To be effective and sustainable, actions will be locally-led and done with a people-centred humanitarian approach. Protection, Gender and Inclusion (PGI) is at the core of our work, ensuring that interventions are inclusive, accessible, participatory, and responsive to the specific needs and protection risks of women and men of all ages, disabilities and intersectional backgrounds such as, but not limited to, indigenous communities, migrants, and other discriminated and marginalised groups.

Lastly, we are committed to reducing our own contribution to these crises by integrating environmental sustainability throughout our work and reducing our greenhouse gas emissions.



Anders Pedersen, International Director,
Swedish Red Cross

Key messages

Our key messages on the humanitarian consequences of climate change and environmental degradation

- 1** Governments should meet commitments under the Paris Agreement, and other international agreements, by reducing emissions, scaling up global engagement, and mobilising quality financing for climate adaptation and disaster risk reduction, particularly in the most vulnerable regions.
- 2** Governments and humanitarian actors should prioritise locally led action and inclusive policies by empowering vulnerable communities, amplifying their voices, and addressing critical links between climate change, displacement, migration, and public health. This includes promoting climate-resilient health systems and protecting displaced populations through informed and equitable policies.
- 3** Governments and humanitarian actors should scale up investments in anticipatory action and nature-based solutions to reduce the impacts of climate shocks, protect ecosystems, and build resilience. Governments and humanitarian actors must prioritise early warning systems, disaster risk reduction, and preparedness while ensuring future risks are treated as urgent priorities.
- 4** Humanitarian actors should stay firm to the principle of “do no harm” and the safeguarding of livelihoods, health and opportunities of affected populations today and into the future by integrating environmentally responsible practices across all humanitarian operations.
- 5** The private sector and academia are being called upon to engage more actively in developing and shaping innovative solutions to address climate and environmental challenges impacting the most vulnerable.

Our focus

Swedish Red Cross aims to be a relevant and driving humanitarian force that strengthens people's and communities' capacity to adapt to and prevent the impacts of climate change and environmental degradation. To achieve this, we focus on four key areas where we will strive to increase our reach and build knowledge and capacity for improved programming, policies and advocacy efforts.

1

Scale up locally-led actions to prepare for and manage impacts of climate change and environmental degradation

- Swedish Red Cross, in partnership with our sister National Societies, will enhance our support to communities in locally-led actions that help people to prepare for and manage impacts of climate change and other hazards throughout the disaster risk management cycle.
- Swedish Red Cross commits to supporting our sister National Societies upon request, in their capacity-strengthening ambitions in thematic areas such as Green Response, community engagement and accountability (CEA), volunteering development, protection, gender equality and inclusion (PGI), planning, monitoring, evaluation and learning (PMER), as well as financial sustainability.
- As a Movement rooted in communities most affected by climate- and environment-induced disasters, we call for the voices of local actors and volunteers to be amplified and prioritised in global decision-making platforms. Policies must be informed by the realities people experience in their everyday lives.
- Community planning will encourage representation and meaningful participation of women and men of all ages, disabilities and intersectional backgrounds. Noting the different impacts climate and environmental degradation may have on different groups and sufficiently incorporating these into is essential.
- Swedish Red Cross supports its sister National Societies to work on locally-led action to advance the achievement of Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) and leverage its auxiliary role to support the delivery and shaping of National Adaptation Plans (NAPs), where possible to do so.
- We urge policy makers to support more locally-led actions.

KPI 1:1 # of people reached by programs incorporating climate and environmental actions.

KPI 1:2 % of SRC-supported projects incorporating climate-smart methods.

KPI 1.3 % of SRC-supported projects incorporating climate-smart methods that demonstrate comprehensive inclusion — applying sex, age and disability disaggregated data (SADDD), gender and diversity analysis, adapted assistance, risk prevention and mitigation, and equitable representation.

Training on environmental screening at the Red Cross branch office, Fish Town, Liberia. In Liberia, the Red Cross is supporting 45 communities through a project in Liberia with the aim to reduce the risk of disasters by increasing community resilience to climate change. It starts by being able to identify the climate and environmental risks. The Swedish Red Cross has trained more than 200 Red Cross Red Crescent staff and volunteers across nine countries on how include climate and environment considerations in project planning.



2

Reduce the immediate impacts of climate-induced disasters through stronger Preparedness and Anticipatory Action

- Swedish Red Cross will strengthen Anticipatory Action (AA) as a core component of the disaster risk management cycle, bridging the gap between emergency response and efforts to enhance long-term resilience building. To ensure faster and more effective interventions we will support sister National Societies in developing and operationalising contingency planning that links forecasts to pre-agreed actions. Furthermore, we will assist National Societies in applying the Preparedness for Effective Response (PER)¹¹ approach, which systematically assesses, measures and strengthens response systems. An example on preparedness is Swedish Red Cross' developed intervention Ready to Respond ensuring emergency water sanitation and hygiene related systems are maintained, repaired and prepositioned safely in relevant locations with anticipated weather extremes.
- Swedish Red Cross will support the development of (AA) mechanisms such as Early Action Protocols (EAPs) by ensuring they are evidence-based, effective, and aligned with best practices. In addition to providing technical expertise to shape sound EAPs, the Swedish Red Cross is committed to ensuring that these protocols are inclusive, people-centred, and environmentally sustainable.
- Swedish Red Cross will advocate for governments and humanitarian actors to urgently invest in anticipatory action as a cost-effective approach to reducing the acute humanitarian impacts of forecast hazards. Recognising that the frequency AND the severity of climate-induced disasters ARE increasing, the Swedish Red Cross also calls for improved government policies and strategies to support such investments, along with dedicated financing for early warning systems and early humanitarian actions. While anticipatory action focuses on addressing the immediate impacts of hazards, such as pre-distribution of water purification kits to households, it is most effective when integrated with broader disaster risk reduction and resilience-building efforts, such as reinforcing at-risk water infrastructure.

KPI 2:1 # of AA mechanisms (including EAPs) developed with the support of SRC.

KPI 2:2 # and examples of SRC actions influencing Movement or external partners for investment in locally led AA.

3

Promote working with nature to strengthen resilient ecosystems to protect people and communities

- Swedish Red Cross will sharpen the support for strengthened community resilience, by strengthening and facilitating National Societies staff and volunteers' capacities in Nature-based Solutions and environmental mainstreaming. Healthy ecosystems and sustainable natural resources, such as freshwater, are crucial for effectively protecting people against hazards and for sustainable livelihoods.
- Swedish Red Cross will work to bridge local experience and knowledge on natural resources management with global insights and science to enable evidence-based actions. Combining remote sensing data with locally grounded knowledge about weather-related disasters and environment, is one example of how we can effectively strengthen local climate action. Swedish Red Cross works in partnerships with national universities, environmental experts, research institutes, and the private sector to advance knowledge for improving the humanitarian system.
- Swedish Red Cross will promote the equitable access to benefits and resources generated by Nature-based Solutions, ensuring women and men of all ages, disabilities and intersectional backgrounds such as indigenous communities, migrants, and other discriminated and marginalised groups are meaningfully participating in the decision-making. Swedish Red Cross will additionally advocate for the inclusion of indigenous and traditional knowledge to support project design and implementation.
- Swedish Red Cross will urge policy makers, and support humanitarian diplomacy efforts of sister National Societies, to keep environmental safeguarding on the humanitarian agenda and to invest in long-term initiatives that use nature to protect people from new climate-induced disasters. Nature-based Solutions for climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction must also be better integrated into policy instruments and fully implemented in line with globally agreed frameworks.

KPI 3:1 # and examples of SRC actions influencing Movement or external partners for greater environmental responsibility.

KPI 3:2 # and examples of NbS used in SRC supported projects to protect people from the humanitarian consequences of climate change.



Photo: Søren Bøge, Swedish Red Cross

Early actions to prevent a cholera outbreak and save lives in Kinshasa. In 2025, the Kinshasa suburbs along river N'djili in the Democratic Republic of the Congo was hit by severe flooding. Many residents — including 82-year-old André, a Red Cross volunteer for more than 30 years — lost everything when the water rose to two metres. Despite this, he helped evacuate his neighbours. Today, his efforts and those of other volunteers are more important than ever, as the risk of a cholera outbreak in the aftermath of the floods is high. We have developed an early warning system that enables us to act before an epidemic breaks out. And in February 2026, it was activated for the first time, triggering our anticipatory actions. Thanks to this, volunteers like André were able to quickly reach out with life-saving information on how to protect oneself and distribute hygiene kits to people in the area. By acting before the crisis fully unfolds, we can save many lives.

4

Enable people, communities, and institutions to tackle public health challenges linked to climate change and environmental degradation

- Swedish Red Cross will support the scale up of community-led and institutionally supported health and WASH initiatives that mitigate risk of climate related disease outbreaks and reduce the threat of antimicrobial resistance. Additionally, to ensure that health gains from WASH interventions are long-lasting, Swedish Red Cross will further ensure all WASH interventions are climate-informed.
- Swedish Red Cross offers practical tools for community-based health in relation to climate and environment impacts including addressing water, soil and air pollution and pathogens. Integrated efforts not only improve public health but also reduce growing pressure on health services, ensuring that communities can better withstand evolving health impacts.
- Swedish Red Cross will step up efforts to address the environmental and health risks of unsafely managed sanitation and waste. This includes promoting circular economy approaches that turn waste into value, provide earning opportunities for National

Societies, reduce pollution, and create healthier, more resilient environments that protect communities from climate impacts. In cooperation with the private sector and research institutions, Swedish Red Cross will continue to advance knowledge on how to safely manage waste in disaster response contexts using innovation, coordination and community-led approaches.

- Swedish Red Cross will advocate, and support the advocacy efforts of its sister National Societies, for stronger public health responses to climate change and environmental degradation in humanitarian action. This includes promoting climate-resilient health and WASH systems, Nature-based Solutions, and action on antimicrobial resistance.

KPI 4:1 % of Swedish Red Cross supported projects incorporating climate and environmental health interventions.



A woman in Jamalpur harvests vegetables with a smile from her homestead garden. Communities along the Brahmaputra River are supported by the Bangladesh Red Crescent Society, with assistance from the Swedish Red Cross, to strengthen their resilience to climate-induced disasters such as recurrent flooding. Small-scale mitigation activities have been introduced to reduce impacts, including Nature-based Solutions like homestead gardening to diversify livelihoods. Local early warning systems and preparedness measures have also helped make these communities more resilient to extreme weather events.

How we work

Climate and environmentally sensitive operations

Human life relies on a healthy planet. Swedish Red Cross aims to bridge the gap between humanitarian needs and planetary health, fostering sustainable resilience for people and communities most affected by the planetary crises. Swedish Red Cross integrates climate and environmental action as interconnected and inseparable issues.

We promote a climate-smart approach in humanitarian programmes and operations as developed by the Red Cross Red Crescent Climate Centre.¹² Being climate-smart means using climate information across timescales in designing and adjusting our operations. It entails making use of advanced data such as remote sensing and meteorological data, while at the same time building actions on local knowledge and practices. As an example, short-term and seasonal forecasts can be used for anticipatory actions, while climate projections can inform Nature-based Solutions and other climate change adaptation measures. The Swedish Red Cross' actions under this

Target groups

Target groups will consist of people and communities currently or potentially affected by weather-related disasters. They will be identified through national climate risk assessments that analyse historical, current, and future climate trends and impacts, as well as changing levels of vulnerability and exposure. These assessments will use sex, age, and disability disaggregated data (SADDD) and analysis through a lens of protection, gender and inclusion perspective to identify and ensure a focus on disproportionately affected groups, including women and men, children, older persons, people with disabilities, migrants, marginalised and indigenous groups, and other populations living in vulnerable situations likely to be most impacted by climate change.

framework contribute to IFRC's Global Climate Resilience Platform¹³ and are aligned with the global Red Cross Red Crescent Movement ambitions to address the humanitarian consequences of climate change.¹⁴

Through our network of 191 National Societies, 165,000 local branches and 17 million volunteers, we will make our work climate-smart and increase our climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction efforts, working with communities on the frontlines of climate change. We will consider climate risks in all we do and anticipate extreme weather events ahead of their impact. And we will reduce our own environmental footprint, greening our operations and pursuing nature- and ecosystem-based solutions. We also call on the world's citizens, governments and companies to do their part to reduce emissions but also to resolutely address the rising risks already facing the most vulnerable.

International Red Cross Red Crescent Movement joint statement in
Ambitions to address the climate crisis (2020)

A people-centered approach

To uphold a people-centered humanitarian approach, the Swedish Red Cross has developed the Sustainability Platform to ensure that all interventions are inclusive, participatory, and tailored to the diverse needs and protection risks of affected populations. The platform sets minimum responsibilities for staff to adhere to the principle of “do no harm” and integrates cross-cutting themes such as community engagement and accountability (CEA), protection, gender and inclusion (PGI), volunteering in conflicts and emergencies, and Green Response. PGI is a core component of the platform, with all projects required to follow IFRC PGI Minimum Standards, guarantee access for discriminated and marginalised groups and setting up safe referral mechanisms for survivors of violence. Community engagement mechanisms approaches are adapted to different languages, literacy levels, and physical abilities to ensure meaningful participation and safety for all.

Locally-led action

The Swedish Red Cross supports locally-led action to prevent and adapt to climate-related disaster impacts and build community-level climate resilience. Locally-led means that communities most affected by climate change take the lead in designing, deciding, implementing, monitoring, and evaluating solutions to adapt to its impacts.¹⁵ By following the Movement’s Roadmap to Community Resilience, Swedish Red Cross supported programs are developed through inclusive, integrated and multi-sectoral approaches which ensure that women, youth, indigenous peoples, people with disabilities, and other marginalised groups meaningfully participate in and lead efforts to build climate resilience at the community level.

The well-established approaches ensure the most affected people are at the centre of decision-making identifying vulnerabilities and capacities in their communities and turning findings into a locally-led and owned community plan of action. These efforts leverage indigenous knowledge, local risk perceptions,

and locally-driven solutions to ensure suitable and sustainable outcomes. Programs are designed to be flexible and adaptive, allowing for course corrections based on monitoring, evaluation, and changing circumstances.

Roadmap to Community Resilience empowers communities, builds on their strengths, and ensures that resources and decision-making are guided by those who understand the local context best. Longer-term programs allow for sharing of lessons, greater impact, stronger evidence, and the spread of innovative solutions. The Swedish Red Cross also foster collaboration across sectors and funding streams to enhance efficiency and avoid duplication of efforts.



Photo: Tomas Årlemo, Svenska Röda Korset

Locally led action in Liberia

“The Red Cross has helped us start farming in ways that enable us to cope with climate change. We are also planting palm trees and other trees around the village. They provide us with food and shelter when strong winds and heavy rains strike. The support has made all the difference for us. Before, we didn’t understand why the weather was behaving the way it was and why the rainy and dry seasons weren’t following the same pattern they always had. Back then, the children cried from hunger, but they don’t anymore.”

Emmon Q. Nyonosee, farmer from Podroken village, Liberia, a village cut off for months during the rainy season

To leave a lasting institutional legacy, the Swedish Red Cross provides capacity-strengthening support to sister National Societies, helping them better identify climate risks, address risks to the environment, and improve standards across operations. For example, training on the use of the Nexus Environmental Assessment Tool (NEAT+), an environmental screening tool for humanitarians which helps identify environmental risks and vulnerabilities in crisis-affected communities and provides recommendations that feed directly into program design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation.

Anticipatory Action

To tackle unavoidable short-term and seasonal climate risks, Swedish Red Cross is increasing its already strong focus on anticipatory action at all levels. By using forecasts, early actions are implemented before disasters occur and thereby reducing their impact and saving lives. Anticipatory actions act as a link between preparedness and response - and Swedish Red Cross is building the link by integrating anticipatory actions into contingency planning. While this approach has shown success in addressing some disasters, like cyclones, there is still room to expand its use in more countries and to apply it to other climate-related crises, such as disease outbreaks, conflicts, and displacement. For anticipatory action to work well, stronger local capacity and resources are needed to prepare and reduce the impact of extreme weather events.



Photo: Bangladesh Red Crescent Society

Nature-based Solutions in Bangladesh

Tree and grass planting in Camp 18, Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh. In Cox's Bazar, deforestation during the refugee camp's development left Rohingya refugees and infrastructure vulnerable to storms, erosion, and landslides, damaging costly water and sanitation systems. To address this, the Bangladesh Red Crescent Society, supported by Swedish Red Cross, planted deep-rooted grasses and trees to stabilise the soil. These efforts paid off during Cyclone Mocha in 2024, as while some trees were damaged, critical water and sanitation infrastructure remained protected.

Nature-based Solutions

Nature-based Solutions (NbS) address societal challenges through actions to protect, sustainably manage, and restore natural and modified ecosystems, benefiting people and nature at the same time.¹⁶ NbS play a vital role

Early Action Protocol for cholera in Mozambique

Droughts and cyclones often lead to repeated cholera outbreaks, affecting local communities. To respond before cholera outbreaks occur, Swedish Red Cross is supporting the Mozambique Red Cross in developing an Early Action Protocol for cholera. Once in place, the Early Action Protocol will release funding for relevant preparedness measures and mobilising volunteers, to help communities stop the spread of potential cholera outbreak.

in helping communities manage resources sustainably and reduce vulnerability to climate-related hazards, for instance by planting trees to protect against heat, storms and coastal flooding or increase the vegetation cover to reduce the risk of landslides, erosion and flooding. NbS can also provide essential goods like food, water, and livelihoods, e.g. through introduction of bee hives or improved agricultural practices for soil improvement, making them key to resilience. Being one of the tools in the disaster risk reduction toolbox, NbS offer greater adaptability and socio-economic benefits compared to hard engineering. Swedish Red Cross, in partnership with organisations such as WWF¹⁷, prioritises NbS in its international operational plan, actively captures lessons to scale up efforts and partnerships, and seeks opportunities to include them whenever suitable to address communities' needs.

Community-led health that address environmental and climate risks

Community-led health is at the centre of our work and Swedish Red Cross has the evidence and experience on how to, in partnership with our sister National Societies, integrate environmental and climate risks meaningfully when addressing community-based health issues. Addressing environmental risks in communities such as air pollution, stagnant water, faecal sludge and waste management not only improve public health but also contribute to long-term environmental sustainability, reduce growing pressure on health services, and ensure that communities can better withstand the health impacts of a changing climate. Red Cross volunteers across the world have improved sanitary conditions which reduced the risk of flooding in their communities and reduced the risk of spreading diseases. Additionally, initiatives such as tree planting for erosion control, safe water access projects, and promotion of sustainable cooking practices have contributed to healthier living conditions and strengthened community resilience against climate-related health risks.

Heat waves are now among the deadliest climate-related hazards. Community-based health approaches are critical in reducing these risks by raising awareness, ensuring access to safe spaces and hydration, and mobilising local volunteers who can identify and support those most at risk. In Romania, Red Cross branches are mobilising and training volunteers to identify and support those most at risk, and act during heat waves by providing hydration, rest, and information points in communities wherever community-health based teams are being established, offering practical dos and don'ts for coping with extreme heat.



Photo: DRC Red Cross

Community-led interventions for a healthier environment in DRC

Clean-up campaign to improve the sanitary conditions in Dingi-dingi. In the flood-prone suburbs of Kinshasa, Swedish Red Cross has supported the communities to connect with the local duty bearers and a local plastic recycler, providing a system for PET-bottle collection. IT not only improved the sanitary conditions in the communities and reduced the risk of flooding, but also gave the local Red Cross branch a small revenue to invest in preparedness material to better support community members for the next flooding event. Moreover it helped the project team to understand that poor waste management was one of the root causes for pluvial flooding.

Green Response

Swedish Red Cross launched the concept of 'Green Response' within the Red Cross Red Crescent Movement in 2012 and has remained a leader in developing and implementing the concept ever since. It is an approach to ensure environmental responsibility is taken in humanitarian action through mainstreaming environmental considerations throughout activities. Green Response extends the principle of 'do no harm' to the environment and ecosystems that communities rely on, ensuring that life-saving interventions today should not negatively affect communities in the future. Swedish Red Cross supports targeted measures to reduce the environmental impact and greenhouse gas emissions of operations. These measures include for example converting from fossil fuel to solar power for health facilities and boreholes, building additional drainage and silt traps around WASH facilities to preserve soil quality and reduce erosion, establishment of faecal sludge treatment plants, exploring options for more sustainable procurement, including local procurement, and investing in products of higher environmental

standards to reduce waste and consumption. Integral to the activities has been to ensure awareness raising, capacity-strengthening and behaviour change among targeted community members and sister National Societies.

Green Response in numbers

- 40% increase of patients when a Syrian Primary Health Care facility was solarised.
- 80 litre diesel per day saved by shifting to solar power for water supply in Cox's Bazar camp 18 (except during the Monsoon).
- 15.000 litre treated sludge per day is the capacity of Swedish Red Cross's chemical- and fuel-free faecal sludge treatment plant in Cox's Bazaar.
- 67% reduction of fossil fuel when solar panels were installed at Liberian Red Cross Society HQ office in Monrovia.



Photo: Kristoffer Ristimaa/Swedish Red Cross

Green Response in Lebanon

Lebanese Red Cross, with support from Swedish Red Cross, has supported Lebanese host communities converting boreholes into solar water pumping delivering clean and affordable water to the people.

Innovation and Partnerships

Innovation and partnerships are at the core of Swedish Red Cross's vision for a more sustainable and climate-smart humanitarian sector. Through partnerships with the private sector, academia, public institutions, and other humanitarian partners the Swedish Red Cross has brought new thinking and approaches that strengthen efficiency and sustainability.

As part of the Red Cross Red Crescent Movement, the world's largest humanitarian network, we see it as our responsibility to connect humanitarian challenges with cutting edge thinking. The climate and environmental issues we address are not unique to vulnerable communities in the Global South. Similar challenges are tackled in Sweden and Europe using technologies relevant to emerging economies. Community based approaches across the Movement also offer strong potential for raising awareness on climate and environment, local data collection and citizen science to support better informed humanitarian responses.

Innovation may also come in the form of new methods for financing such as carbon credits, humanitarian impact bonds and revolving funds. We seek to crowd in new and diversified funders to support a new era of humanitarian and development investment. Financing locally-led actions mean reducing both immediate as well as future climate risks and is a must for sustainable development.

Below is a selection of our ongoing partnerships that are bringing innovation and greater efficiency to the humanitarian sector at large.

Anticipatory actions to better respond to climate-induced disease outbreaks

Swedish Red Cross is working closely with the Mozambique Red Cross in exploring AA to

be used ahead of climate-induced disease outbreaks. The aim is to be able to respond faster to disease outbreaks such as cholera, breaking transmission routes earlier and thus reducing mortality and morbidity. Furthermore, we are exploring similar opportunities with the Red Cross National Societies in Sudan, DR Congo and Liberia in order to scale up efforts on AA. This is done by supporting the joint scoping and research of suitable triggers for early action through different approaches and models for scaling. The work leverages expertise from across the Red Cross Red Crescent Movement, such as the Red Cross Red Crescent Climate Centre, while linking to Swedish Red Cross core competencies within health and WASH. In Liberia, SRC invited the Swedish Meteorological and Hydrological Institute, SMHI, to take part in the first National Dialogue Platform on Anticipatory Action and exploring ways of strengthening the Liberian national systems for early warning and actions for extreme weather events.

Strengthening and greening the humanitarian sector

The Swedish Red Cross has been greatly involved in research and developing tools and methodologies to improve the systematic inclusion of climate and environmental considerations in humanitarian action. Previous examples include Swedish Red Cross's support through technical guidance and in piloting the UNEP-OCHA Joint Environment

Unit's (JEU) environmental screening tool NEAT+, and developing the Red Cross Red Crescent Sector Specific Guidance on Solid Waste Management. Swedish Red Cross is also the author of the Sphere thematic sheet on environment.

At institutional level, Swedish Red Cross has supported the Red Cross Red Crescent Movement with developing strategies, methods, and sharing of lessons learned. Swedish Red Cross is an active member of the Global Disaster Risk Reduction Working Group, the Green Response Working Group, the WASH and Climate Change Working Group, the Validation Committee for Anticipatory Action and co-chair of the Anticipatory Action & Health Technical Working Group.

Finding solutions to handling humanitarian waste created by emergency response

Swedish Red Cross continues to work with private sector actors, research institutions and others to generate new knowledge and

opportunities for addressing waste in humanitarian emergencies. There is a need of solutions for safely managing solid waste in humanitarian contexts. While there are several efforts within the humanitarian sector to address the growing waste burden by eliminating unnecessary wastes, there are few solutions to handle the necessary wastes that come from life-saving interventions such as emergency food parcels, hygiene kits and medical equipment. Swedish Red Cross is exploring avenues for strengthening the humanitarian sector's ability to manage its own wastes by looking at the role of technology, coordination, behaviour change and protecting the informal waste sector.

Leveraging on climate science expertise from our collaboration with the Red Cross Red Crescent Climate Centre

Our partnership with the Climate Centre aims to enhance resilience in communities facing the growing impacts of the climate crisis, both globally and in Sweden. Together, we will pro-



Photo: Paloma Diaz de Durana/Swedish Red Cross

In 2025, Swedish Red Cross piloted transitioning from offsetting to insetting by investing in renewable energy within our operations, ensuring long-term carbon reductions. This was achieved by supporting DRC Red Cross and Bangladesh Red Crescent Society to solarise offices and operations. In DRC, the Red Cross chose to use a technical measure reducing fossil fuel use, switching from generators to solar panels for the office. Within the first month of installation, the generator use was reduced to zero minutes, saving up to 400 litres of fuel and 600 USD monthly. In Bangladesh, the funds were used to invest in additional solar panels for a drinking water treatment system supporting more than 23 000 residents in the Cox's Bazar refugee camp, further reducing the demand on diesel generators.



Photo: Janet Lakony / Swedish Red Cross

In Yirou, Lakes State, South Sudan, women and youth have been trained on how to construct energy efficient cook stoves with locally made materials such as mud and grass. The locally made stoves reduce the use of fuel wood, keep heat for longer time, protect children from burning as compared to open traditional stove. It also reduces the need for women to move long distances to collect firewood, which reduces the risk exposure for sexual violence.

vide knowledge, evidence, and climate-smart solutions to adapt interventions, promote sustainable practices, and support policy development and humanitarian diplomacy.

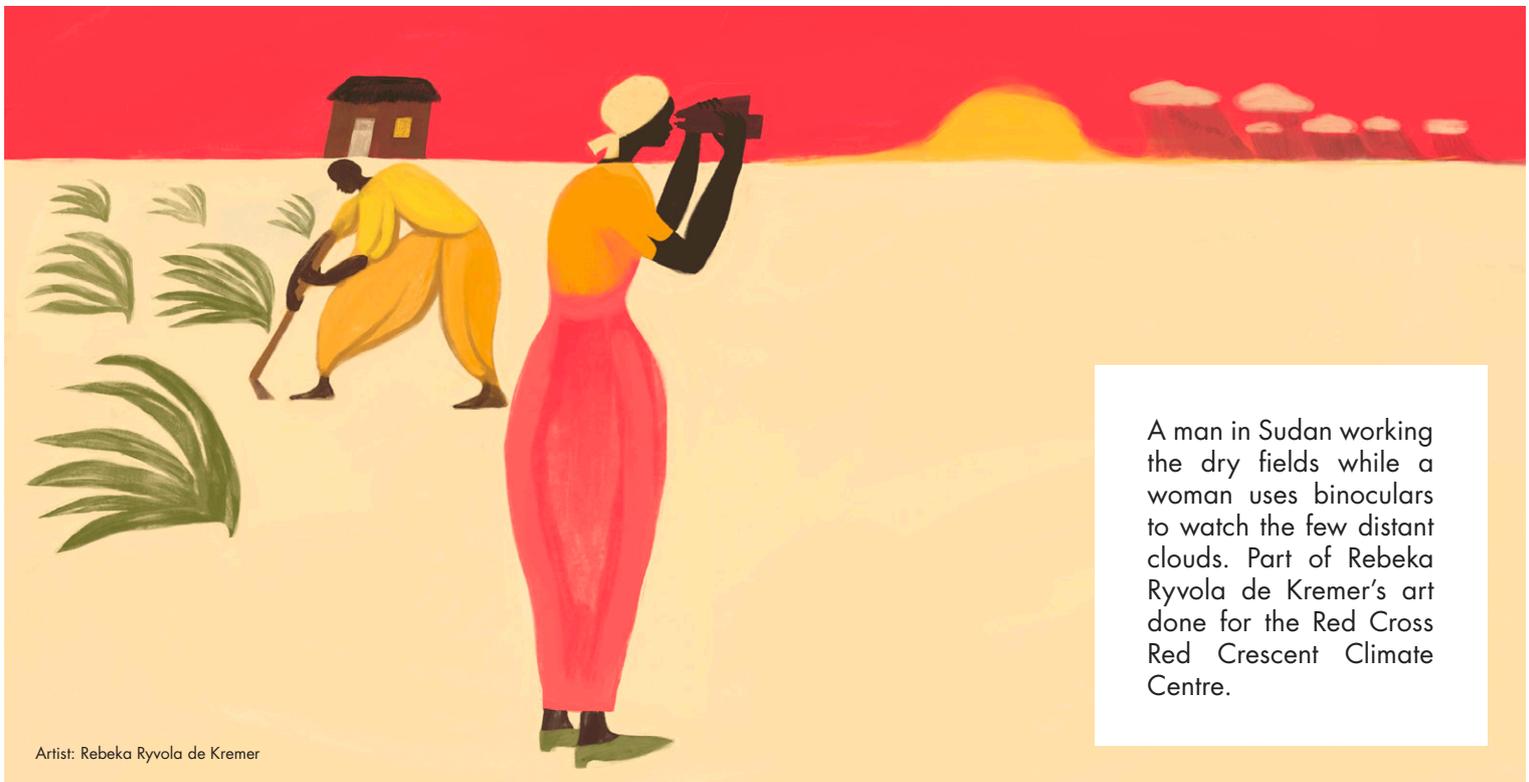
Reinvesting emission costs into impactful, value-creating solutions for people, communities, and nature

Swedish Red Cross was one of the first humanitarian organisations to begin carbon accounting, with its experiences being a central input to the creation of the ICRC hosted Humanitarian Carbon Calculator. Swedish Red Cross has calculated and actively worked to reduce the organisation’s carbon emissions since 2016, and has since 2024 increased its ambitions by adopting net-zero targets. The yearly calculated emissions will be converted into a cost which will be invested in impactful and value-creating solutions that make people, communities and our organisation more resilient while at the same time reduce our sister National Societies use of fossil fuel. The work also includes exploring innovative sustainable

financing such as a revolving fund for the transition to renewable energy at health care facilities and carbon credits for sustainable operations.

Strengthening community engagement and environmental sustainability in emergency response

The majority of environmental damage from humanitarian response comes from the earliest stages of emergency response when the largest number of activities are rolled out at lightning speed, with many Green Response activities being aimed at correcting damage already caused by these early-stage response actions. Swedish Red Cross is working with a variety of humanitarian actors to develop methods for better integrating environmental sensitivity into emergency operations and planning. The approach also addresses the common issue of environmental decisions being made without community input, which often results in confusion, a lack of community ownership and ultimately unsustainability.



Artist: Rebeka Ryvola de Kremer

A man in Sudan working the dry fields while a woman uses binoculars to watch the few distant clouds. Part of Rebeka Ryvola de Kremer's art done for the Red Cross Red Crescent Climate Centre.

Humanitarian diplomacy and advocacy

By 2030, Swedish Red Cross aims to be a leading partner in policy, advocacy and knowledge development to address the climate crisis and enhance environmental sustainability in humanitarian action. We work at community, national and global levels, striving to influence policies and increase investments that facilitate climate and environmental programming to protect the most vulnerable and support sustainable outcomes.

How we advocate

- **Evidence-based influence:** we use research, pilots, and learning from our operations to demonstrate the impact of anticipatory approaches and sustainable solutions, shaping policy and funding decisions.
- **Policy engagement:** we support governments in strengthening climate policies (disaster laws), and risk-informed investments that reduce vulnerabilities and build resilience. We advocate for policies that address the links between climate change, displacement, and migration to ensure the needs of affected populations are met.
- **Global to local action:** we translate global climate and resilience commitments into practical, community-driven solutions that prioritise those most at risk.
- **Partnerships and collaboration:** we work with governments, international organisations, private sector, academia and local actors to drive systemic change and create inclusive, scalable solutions. We will use our platform as a trusted actor in Sweden to connect stakeholders and fostering new thinking and partnerships to tackle humanitarian challenges.



Photo: Airony Cuco

In Mozambique's Manica province, everyone says the same thing: the rains have changed, bringing drought, extreme heat, and sudden heavy downpours that destroy crops. "When the rains change, there is hunger, and people die," says Saimone Madzungurusse, who is among many families supported by the Red Cross with seeds, saplings, and training in agroforestry. By combining trees and bushes with crops, farmers gain shade, wind protection, better soil, and plants adapted to the new climate conditions. Saimone sees real potential in the project and hopes to sell surplus harvest to buy essentials like soap and cooking oil. He brings his children to the fields, confident this knowledge will help future generations: "I want my children to learn this way of farming. They can go and look for work, but if they know how to work the land, they will always have something to rely on."

Red Cross Humanitarian Diplomacy in practice

Locally, advocacy is crucial for communities to increase resilience against climate-induced disasters, helping them voice their needs, defend their rights, and influence decision-makers. In Kinshasa's suburbs, the DRC Red Cross supported four communities in forming inclusive local resilience committees, comprising leaders, women farmers, and youth. Committee members were trained in prioritising issues, crafting advocacy messages, handling opposition, and creating action plans. To gain community backing, the committees held dialogues with street chiefs, mothers' associations, religious leaders, and youth. Through advocacy towards duty bearers, the Maziba community secured the construction of a gutter to manage water runoff, while all four communities collectively pushed for and received designated storage areas for plastic bottle collection. The joint efforts improved sanitation and reduced disease and flooding risks.

Globally, the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement works tirelessly to emphasize the need for adaptation to be locally led. During COP30

in Belem, the Red Cross co-organised the event Taking Locally Led Adaptation to Scale that took place in the Business Sweden Pavillion. The event showcased the latest experience on locally-led adaptation from a perspective of local actors, intermediaries, private sector actors, donors and governments, provided a platform for identifying common challenges, opportunities and lessons learned; and identified common ground in scaling up Locally Led Adaptation.

Speakers from the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), the International Institute for Environment and Development, the International Institute for Sustainable Development, Dominican Red Cross and Skogforsk/Business Sweden provided a range of perspectives, with a common emphasis on the importance of locally-led approaches in a time of shifting humanitarian, development and climate agendas. Key inputs were provided from the floor from donors, think tanks and academia, including around the need to discuss barriers to locally-led approaches, the importance of trust and respect, and the growth of nexus finance.

Overview of our projects 2024–2030

The DRR and Climate Change Adaptation (DRRCCA) project in Sudan contributes to strengthening the resilience of women, girls, men, and boys in targeted high-risk vulnerable communities by reducing disaster risks, including adaptation to climate change through Nature-based Solutions and harnessing traditional knowledge. (2022–2025)

The Environmental and Climate Mainstreaming in Humanitarian Action project, implemented in collaboration with Norwegian Refugee Council and Danish Refugee Council, covers 21 countries and aims to help reduce the environmental footprint of humanitarian aid by strengthening local capacities and establishing systems for environmental and climate risk identification and mitigation, with a focus on the environmental screening tool NEAT+. (2026–2027)

The Green, Inclusive and Resilient Liberian Communities (GIRL) project in Liberia aims to reduce the risk of disasters by increasing community resilience to climate change. (2023–2026)

The Nature-based Solutions programme in Mozambique and DR Congo, in collaboration with WWF supports communities in protecting, sustainably managing, and restoring natural or modified ecosystems that effectively and adaptively address societal challenges while simultaneously providing human well-being and biodiversity benefits. (2024–2026)

Sustainable National Societies and Resilient Communities programme in Bangladesh, DR Congo, Lebanon, Liberia, Palestine, and South Sudan focuses on community resilience through community-based initiatives. (2022–2025)

Ready to Respond strengthens local capacity to lead effective, inclusive, environmentally sustainable responses to crises. This supported Myanmar Red Cross, South Sudan Red Cross, Sudanese Red Crescent, Iraqi Red Crescent and DR Congo Red Cross with focus on WaSH and Logistics. (2022–2024, 2025–2026)

Sustainable Communities Engaged for Change programme in DR Congo, Liberia, Mozambique, and South Sudan focuses on community empowerment and sustainable change through community-based initiatives. (2025–2028)

Waste to value – Finding solutions for solid waste management and fuel demands in humanitarian settings is a research study that explores applications of waste gasification as a means to reduce the overall environmental impact of humanitarian response by providing an ecologically and socially sustainable solution for solid waste management. The project was carried out with Ramboll, SWECO and Bioliza. (2022–2024)

Community-informed Green Response in Emergencies develops replicable models for National Societies and other humanitarian organisations to reduce the environmental footprint of their response activities in a way that is responsive to and informed by community needs and preferences. The model is currently being developed in collaboration with Bangladesh Red Crescent Society and Lebanese Red Cross. (2023–2026)

Anticipatory Action method development project in Liberia, Sudan, and DR Congo focusing on supporting National Societies in anticipatory action with a specific focus on epidemics. (2025–2026)

Historical timeline

In 1984, Swedish Red Cross developed the report ‘Prevention better than Cure’¹⁸ which is considered to be a landmark moment because it widened the scope of disaster management to put more emphasis on development-oriented pre-disaster risk reduction and resilience building. Groundbreaking at the time it contributed to setting the Disaster Risk Reduction agenda. It was followed by a comprehensive programmatic initiative from SRC.

In 2012, Swedish Red Cross launched the concept of ‘**Green Response**’ within the Red

Cross Red Crescent Movement and has remained a leader in developing and implementing the concept ever since, including launching the Green Response Working Group in 2016. Green Response is an approach to ensure environmental responsibility is taken in humanitarian action through mainstreaming environmental considerations throughout activities. Green Response extends the principle of ‘do no harm’ to the environment and ecosystems that communities rely on, ensuring that life-saving interventions today should not negatively affect communities in the future.



A man threshes sorghum outside his home in the village of Chimoyo in the Muzarabani district of northern Zimbabwe. Climate change is forcing households, most of which depend on rain-fed small-scale farming, to adapt and change the crops they grow in the face of worsening floods and longer and more frequent droughts.

In 2020, Swedish Red Cross together with the government of Sweden, the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR) and the World Food Programme (WFP) organised *‘Anticipate and Act: The Stockholm High-Level Meeting on Addressing the Humanitarian Impact of Climate Change’*. The meeting included two high-level panels. The Panels explored the linkages and gaps experienced by development and humanitarian actors in addressing the humanitarian impact of climate change. The meeting came out with a number of recommendations concluding that the climate crisis acts as a risk multiplier and humanitarian and development programs have to integrate with investments disaster risk reduction, early warning and safety nets for the most vulnerable. This requires a shift from reactive and repetitive crisis response to more forward-looking and anticipatory risk management that also reduces future vulnerability.

In December 2020, Swedish Red Cross together with the Green Response Working Group prepared a study **‘Red Goes Green’** on identifying the barriers and enablers for effectively greening practices and strengthening environmental sustainability at an organisational level across the Movement. The report included a practical checklist for humanitari-

an organisations to effectively green practices and strengthen environmental sustainability. Many of the conclusions were also featured in the **IFRC World Disasters Report 2020** and the chapter written by Swedish Red Cross – **‘Going Green - Strengthening the climate and environmental sustainability of response and recovery operations’**.

Swedish Red Cross was a member of the drafting committee led by the IFRC and ICRC for the development of the **Climate and Environment Charter for Humanitarian Organisations** and its associated guidance on implementation. The development of the Charter comes out of the determination of humanitarian organisations to reduce risks and help people adapt to the growing impacts of the climate and environmental crises, and to maximise the environmental sustainability of humanitarian programmes and operations, including through proper assessments and management strategies to minimise any negative environmental impact.

Swedish Red Cross has been an active member in the consultations in preparation of **DG ECHO’s** minimum environmental requirements and supporting guidance on solid waste management.

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