



SPECIAL APPEAL 2025
ON THE FRONTLINES
OF CLIMATE CHANGE:
BUILDING RESILIENCE IN
ARMED CONFLICT



ICRC

THE DEVASTATING IMPACT OF CLIMATE CHANGE IN CONFLICT AREAS

The global climate is changing at an unprecedented rate, placing approximately **3.6 billion people** in highly vulnerable areas.¹

The global consequences of climate change

Rising temperatures are driving more frequent and intense weather events—heatwaves, unpredictable rainfall, storms, droughts, desertification, and rising sea levels—that undermine livelihoods and critical services.² A recent report by the World Economic Forum projects that, by

2050, climate change could result in an additional 14.5 million deaths worldwide.³ These impacts threaten access to food, water, health care and shelter, while also exacerbating physical and mental-health challenges, especially in the world's most fragile regions.

While climate change affects all, its burden falls heaviest on marginalized communities already facing hardship. For those living amid armed conflict—where violence, weakened institutions, and disrupted essential services prevail—climate change compounds vulnerabilities and erodes the ability to cope. Often, governments and local institutions lack the capacity to respond effectively to these overlapping crises.

Conflict further damages the environment, degrading ecosystems that communities rely on and accelerating biodiversity loss.⁴ This environmental harm weakens resilience and deepens cycles of instability.⁵

Mozambique, 2020. A woman stands by the grave of a loved one who passed away after Cyclone Idai struck in 2019. Increasingly frequent and intense climate shocks like Cyclone Idai threaten the people of Mozambique every year. These cause deaths and injuries and lead to the disruption of livelihoods, the destruction of health infrastructure and the contamination of water sources, which exacerbate significant health risks. Sea level rise and saltwater intrusion reduce water quality and cause declines in crop yields that contribute to the rise in cases of malnutrition and hunger, and leave a devastating impact on a country where over 80 per cent of the population depends on agriculture to survive. Climate change predictions indicate an increase in the duration of dry seasons, as well as periods of heavy rains.



The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) currently operates in **46 of the 50 countries** considered most vulnerable to climate change and least prepared to adapt.

When armed conflict, climate risks and environmental degradation collide

Countries affected by conflict are consistently among the most exposed to climate risks.⁶ In Somalia⁷ and Afghanistan, for example, decades of violence combined with recurrent droughts and floods have intensified food insecurity and displacement.

Today, more than 122 million people are forcibly displaced worldwide, including 83 million internally displaced due to conflict and climate-related disasters.⁸ Nearly half of those displaced live in countries simultaneously grappling with conflict and severe climate hazards. In these settings, the compounding crises deepen humanitarian needs and overwhelm coping mechanisms. The Sahel's⁹ ongoing droughts and violence worsen food and water scarcity, driving further displacement and instability. Likewise, recent extreme droughts and floods in the Horn of Africa and the Middle East have increased tensions in already fragile contexts.¹⁰

In response, we at the ICRC, together with National Societies and operational partners, bring specialized expertise to navigate security constraints and restricted access. Our approach combines climate risk assessments, conflict sensitivity, and strict adherence to international humanitarian law (IHL), ensuring principled and adaptive assistance. We work to strengthen the capacities of local partners through climate-smart programming and resilience-building, supporting communities enduring protracted crises and multiple shocks.



Iraq, 2023. The Iraqi people are no strangers to the intersection of conflict, climate change and environmental degradation. They live in a region that has endured years of armed conflict, high temperatures, droughts and a dwindling supply of fresh water. All this causes deaths, displaces communities, disrupts livelihoods and increases health risks such as malnutrition, water-borne diseases and respiratory illnesses.

Water scarcity in the country has also been exacerbated by the direct and indirect consequences of repeated conflicts. For instance, in Fao, south of Basra, water and farming problems have persisted because date palms were cut down for military purposes during the Iran-Iraq war. In the 1990s, the Iraqi Marshlands were dried up, also for military purposes, and this contributed to sea intrusion, causing increased salinization and making parts of the land unfarmable. This led to reduced vegetation cover and more frequent and intense dust storms. Such conditions are transforming the Fertile Crescent into an increasingly unfertile wasteland.

The ICRC's commitment in addressing the impacts of climate change and environmental degradation

We cannot afford to wait for armed conflicts to cease before addressing the risks posed by climate change and environmental degradation, particularly given the protracted nature of many armed conflicts today.¹¹

Humanitarian interventions which do not incorporate climate considerations often fail to achieve sustainable outcomes or to uphold the dignity of those they aim to assist.¹² This not only undermines the effectiveness of humanitarian action but also results in inefficiencies and the loss of valuable resources. In contexts where we operate, the integration of climate and environmental factors is not optional—it is essential to delivering quality, impactful, and principled humanitarian assistance.

At the ICRC, we are committed not only to responding to the humanitarian consequences of armed conflict and other situations of violence, but also to supporting conflict-affected communities in strengthening their resilience to climate shocks and environmental degradation. Simultaneously, we are taking meaningful steps to reduce the ecological footprint of our own operations and limit the environmental impact of our activities.¹³

Our Institutional Strategy for 2024–2027¹⁴ identifies “climate and conflict” as one of six cross-cutting approaches fundamental to ensuring effective and responsible humanitarian action. This reflects our organizational commitment to adapt our response to the interconnected challenges faced by communities and to support them in coping with the cumulative impacts of armed conflict, climate risks, and environmental degradation.

Recognizing that addressing the climate and environmental crises requires collective and coordinated action, we, together with the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), launched the Climate and Environment Charter for Humanitarian Organizations in 2021.¹⁵ The Charter offers a shared framework for action and outlines a set of clear, actionable commitments to guide the humanitarian sector in integrating climate and environmental considerations into its operations—thereby ensuring more effective, sustainable, and principled humanitarian responses.

Under the Climate and Environment Charter, we have made the following core commitments:



1. Stepping up our response to growing humanitarian needs and helping people adapt to the impacts of the climate and environmental crises.



2. Maximizing the environmental sustainability of our work and rapidly reducing our greenhouse gas emissions.



3. Promoting awareness, understanding and implementation of international humanitarian law that protects the environment, among States and parties to conflict.

In alignment with these commitments, we have developed a comprehensive plan of action built around three pillars, ensuring that our humanitarian response remains relevant, responsible, and resilient in the face of evolving global challenges. The Framework for the Integration of Climate Risks into ICRC Operations¹⁶ is the main reference document for this. It enables delegations to make informed decisions about their priorities when it comes to preparing for, anticipating, absorbing and adapting to climate risks.



Nigeria, 2022. Herding and livestock keeping have sustained communities in Nigeria for centuries — but today, these livelihoods are increasingly under threat. Protracted armed conflict, combined with climate-related shocks such as recurrent droughts, erratic rainfall, and growing scarcity of natural resources, has displaced millions of people and severely undermined their means of survival.

To help communities build resilience to these pressures — and to reduce tensions over scarce grazing land and water — we implemented a multidisciplinary response that integrates climate adaptation with animal health and livelihood support.

In partnership with the local livestock ministry, we trained Community Animal Health Workers (CAHWs) to deliver veterinary care and vaccinations in remote areas, ensuring timely treatment for livestock and reducing mortality rates during droughts and disease outbreaks. CAHWs were also equipped with veterinary medicines and linked to local pharmacies, strengthening a sustainable supply chain.

In addition, we provided small grants to displaced livestock owners, helping them restore their herds and rebuild climate-resilient livelihoods.



The ICRC recognizes that the complexities of humanitarian needs are multiplied by climate change, increasing the vulnerability and number of people affected by armed conflict. It is only by integrating climate and environmental risks into our operations and decision-making that we can ensure our humanitarian response remains effective, adaptive and sustainable—supporting recovery, strengthening people’s resilience, and preserving dignity amid evolving climate risks.

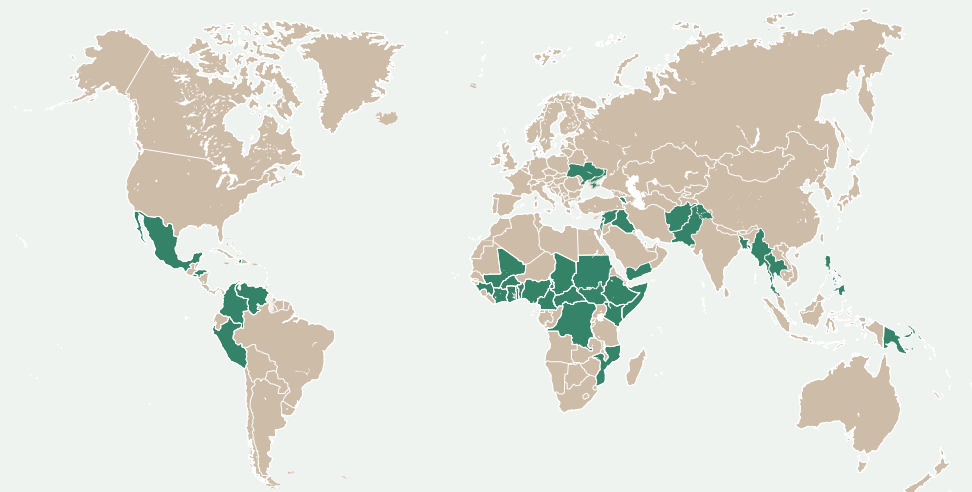
— **Bann Zahir**, Environment and Climate Change Advisor, ICRC

OUR DISTINCTIVE ROLE: A UNIQUE HUMANITARIAN MANDATE AND OPERATIONAL EXPERTISE

Our holistic approach integrates protection and assistance activities with our unique role in promoting and ensuring respect for IHL—including the rules safeguarding the natural environment during armed conflict.¹⁷

With a presence in, or near communities affected by conflict, we prioritize reaching populations in the most remote and hard-to-reach areas. We operate where few can, leveraging our unmatched access in conflict zones to respond to the needs of the people most difficult to reach. Our sustained engagement with these communities—in close collaboration with National Societies—enables us to gain a deeper understanding of their realities, the complexity of their needs, and the most appropriate and effective forms of support. In contexts such as Colombia, Mali, Somalia, and Ukraine, we continue to reach populations that remain largely inaccessible to other humanitarian actors, ensuring

that assistance and protection are extended to those most in need. For example in Colombia, we improved access to weather information and warnings in areas controlled by armed groups, in partnership with local meteorological services.



● **Featured ICRC delegations and contexts:** Abidjan regional (covering Benin, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Guinea and Togo), Afghanistan, Armenia, Bangladesh, Burkina Faso, Cameroon (under Yaoundé regional), Central African Republic, Chad, Colombia, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, Haiti, Iraq, Israel and the occupied territories, Lebanon, Mali, Mexico City regional (covering El Salvador, Honduras and Mexico), Myanmar, Mozambique, Kenya (under Nairobi regional), Nigeria, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea (under Suva regional), Peru (under Lima regional), Philippines, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, Syrian Arab Republic, Thailand (under Bangkok regional), Ukraine, Venezuela (under Caracas regional), and Yemen

The boundaries, names and designations used in this document do not imply official endorsement or express a political opinion on the part of the ICRC, and are without prejudice to claims of sovereignty over the territories mentioned.



“

I lacked knowledge of several important farming techniques, especially regarding post-harvest loss management. However, the ICRC's five-day training helped me gain valuable insights which I can confidently apply on my farm.

— **Abdul Mobin**, farmer from Kapisa Province

Afghanistan, 2024. Decades of armed conflict and climate shocks—droughts, unseasonal rains, and floods—have devastated agriculture, leaving millions food-insecure.

In 2024, we supported Afghan farmers in restoring their livelihoods and building resilience. We provided cash grants for seeds, tools, and fertilizer, and offered climate risk awareness training. Over 27,000 people gained short-term employment through community projects to repair irrigation systems, build flood protection walls and clean canals, helping thousands have better access to water. We also trained farmers and distributed metal silos to reduce grain loss and improve storage.

Colombia, 2024. We engage in confidential dialogue with members of armed groups on their obligations under IHL, including the the rules safeguarding the natural environment during armed conflict.



A MANDATE SET OUT IN INTERNATIONAL HUMANITARIAN LAW

The ICRC's distinct humanitarian mandate—enshrined in the Geneva Conventions and the Statutes of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement (hereafter, the Movement)—is to protect the lives and dignity of individuals affected by armed conflict and other emergencies, and to provide them with impartial assistance. In our role as the guardian of IHL, we are also committed to preventing suffering by fostering greater respect for its rules and the fundamental principles of humanity.

IHL—together with other bodies of international law—plays a critical role in protecting the natural environment during armed conflict. It sets legal obligations for warring parties to respect the natural environment in their military operations, prohibiting, for instance, direct attacks against any part of the natural environment and attacks that may be expected to cause disproportionate environmental damage. Any widespread, long-term and severe environmental damage is also strictly prohibited, regardless of considerations of military necessity.

We actively promote the protection of the natural environment in conflict settings. We advocate for the implementation and reinforcement of IHL as an international political and legal priority,¹⁷ while working to raise awareness of the sometimes still overlooked environmental consequences of warfare. Our aim is twofold: to reduce the environmental degradation caused by armed conflict and to contribute to mitigating the compounded impacts of conflict and climate shocks on communities already facing extreme vulnerability.

PROTECTION: UPHOLDING THE RIGHTS OF PEOPLE AFFECTED BY ARMED CONFLICT

Marginalized groups affected by conflict—including women, children, persons with disabilities, and detainees—are often among the first to feel the compounded impacts of violence and climate-related shocks. With limited resources at their disposal, they may be forced to adopt harmful coping strategies, such as moving to high-risk areas, selling essential assets (e.g. land or livestock), withdrawing children from school, resorting to begging, or engaging in survival sex. These measures not only expose individuals to heightened risks as they attempt to meet their basic needs but can also result in long-term consequences for their health, safety, and future opportunities.

When hostilities break out, we remind authorities and armed actors of their legal obligations to protect civilians and others no longer taking part in the fighting, particularly those from marginalized and at-risk groups. We also emphasize that fulfilling these obligations includes safeguarding access to basic necessities and preserving critical infrastructure, enabling the most affected communities to maintain their resilience in the face of overlapping conflict and climate-related challenges.

We seek to strengthen community-based protection measures, working with people to develop or reinforce ways to reduce their exposure to risks and enhance their positive coping strategies. Our programs contribute to protection outcomes by building communities' resilience and ensuring that essential services are safeguarded.

We also ensure climate and environmental risks are considered in forensic activities and handling of the dead with dignity. In places of detention, where people deprived of their liberty are disproportionately exposed and vulnerable to climate and environmental risks, we advocate for preparedness, prevention and recovery with dignity, maintaining minimal standards and building the capacity of detaining authorities to mitigate risks.



M. Cattani/ICRC

Mali, 2024. Detainees are highly vulnerable to climate-related hazards like extreme heat and floods, yet are often excluded from early warning and emergency preparedness systems.

We adopt a multidisciplinary approach to reduce climate risks in places of detention. We support infrastructure upgrades, promote low-cost food storage solutions, and provide training on malnutrition, heat-related illness, and basic first aid, always prioritizing detainees' dignity and protection.

In Mali's Central Prison in Bamako, where temperatures can exceed 46°C, poor ventilation and limited electricity left detainees at serious risk. We used weather forecasts to inform our decision-making and partnered with authorities to improve conditions by donating a generator, ensuring fans and water pumps ran longer, and training staff and detainees in first aid, specifically on early recognition of heat-related health issues. As a result, access to fresh air improved and cell closure times were adjusted to reduce heat exposure.



Lebanon, 2024. We work closely with the Lebanese Red Cross to provide much-needed relief to families affected by armed conflict and other challenges. We also support the capacity of the Lebanese Red Cross Disaster Management Service to respond jointly and sustainably in urban settings to climate and other complex emergencies, prevent water loss and ensure the readiness for droughts of the Bekaa Water Establishment, through training on Integrated Water Resources Management principles and environmental sustainability.

COOPERATION: LEVERAGING THE WORLD'S LARGEST HUMANITARIAN NETWORK

As part of the Movement, we work in close partnership with a vast and unparalleled network of National Societies operating in nearly every country. In 2020, we, along with the IFRC and the Red Cross Red Crescent Climate Centre jointly developed the Movement's Ambitions to Address the Climate Crisis¹⁹—the blueprint for cooperation aimed at ensuring that the most vulnerable populations are protected from the impacts of climate change.

Within the Movement, we work to anticipate, prevent, and address the consequences of climate change in contexts affected by armed conflict and other situations of violence. We do so in a way that is coordinated and complementary, and remains firmly grounded in the Movement's Fundamental Principles.²⁰

National Societies' deep-rooted presence and knowledge of local contexts enable them to design and deliver tailored, community-driven responses to climate-related challenges. Together, we are often uniquely positioned to access hard-to-reach, conflict-affected areas, engage with key stakeholders—including non-state armed groups—and respond rapidly to urgent needs, bridging critical gaps while longer-term solutions are developed.

In Somalia, for instance, we work hand-in-hand with the Somali Red Crescent Society (SRCS) to anticipate climate-related events—particularly floods—that may lead to family separation, in areas controlled by various parties to the conflict. In advance of such crises, the ICRC and SRCS disseminate self-protection messages through radio and social media to help reduce the risk of separation. During and after the crisis, the SRCS provides emergency family-links services to help displaced individuals restore contact with their relatives.

In Myanmar, we support the Myanmar Red Cross Society in scaling up activities that strengthen climate resilience in its humanitarian response in conflict-affected areas. This includes equipping staff and volunteers with the tools to integrate climate risk considerations into their work, ensuring that operations are better informed, more adaptive to evolving climate threats, and remain conflict sensitive.

WHAT WE WILL DELIVER IN 2025



more than 2.2 million people will use more climate-smart food production strategies, and bolster their resilience to climate shocks



over 250,000 people will improve their household income by enhancing resilience to climate and environmental risks



around 120,000 people will enhance their living conditions by addressing climate and environmental risks



over 30.8 million people will benefit from sustainable access to climate-smart water, energy, and sanitation infrastructure



66 health facilities will be made more resilient through climate-smart design and built-in redundancies

Strengthen the health system's resilience and reduce climate health risks through capacity building and preparedness support in:



149 primary-health-care centres

17 health facilities in places of detention

56 hospitals

HOW WE WILL DELIVER



17 delegations will apply climate risk information in the planning, design, and implementation of their programmes



8 delegations will include activities that integrate measures to identify, prevent and/or reduce environmental risks



8 delegations will implement activities that strengthen the capacity of local stakeholders to anticipate, adapt to, and manage climate and environmental risks

HOW WE DO IT: A MULTIDISCIPLINARY APPROACH TO ADDRESSING THE IMPACTS OF CLIMATE CHANGE AND ENVIRONMENTAL DEGRADATION IN CONFLICT SETTINGS

While the challenges are considerable, they can be addressed, especially when we work together. At the ICRC, we carry out a wide range of initiatives to support communities in adapting to increasing climate and environmental risks, while also reinforcing their resilience, essential services, and local systems.²¹ We do this by integrating a climate lens across our protection, economic security, water and habitat, and health programmes.

WE TAKE ACTION TO PREVENT AND REDUCE HARM TO CIVILIAN INFRASTRUCTURE, ESSENTIAL SERVICES AND THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

Armed conflict results in both direct and indirect harm to the natural environment, with climate risks further amplifying the consequences for communities already facing significant vulnerability. Hostilities can lead to the contamination of water sources, soil, and land; the release of hazardous pollutants into the atmosphere; and the presence of explosive remnants of war that not only endanger human life but also degrade ecosystems and threaten biodiversity.²²

The environmental impact of conflict is often severe and long-lasting, with far-reaching implications for public health, livelihoods, and the capacity of communities to adapt to climate change.

Enhanced respect for IHL can play a critical role in limiting environmental degradation and mitigating the risks faced by conflict-affected populations, particularly in the context of accelerating climate challenges. For instance, climate change contributes to water scarcity and reduces the availability of arable land, both of which are essential to civilian survival in many conflict-affected settings. By prohibiting attacks on objects indispensable to the survival of the civilian population, such as agricultural land and drinking water sources, IHL provides an essential safeguard against further damage to vital resources.



Central African Republic, 2023. We discuss with the authorities and weapon bearers the norms governing the conduct of hostilities, international standards for law enforcement, the protection due to all civilians and to civilian objects, including critical infrastructure and the natural environment. We work to strengthen knowledge that enables individuals to anticipate and better respond to climate effects, including reinforcing local networks, which will help minimize protection risks through improved livelihoods and coping mechanisms.

Promoting the laws that protect civilian infrastructure, essential services and the natural environment

Our prevention efforts are aimed at influencing attitudes and behaviors to mitigate the harmful consequences of armed conflict, including those affecting critical civilian infrastructure, essential services and the natural environment. We engage directly with actors who influence the lives of conflict-affected populations and whose cooperation is pivotal to our operations and access. These actors include members of the armed forces, police, and non-state armed groups, as well as policymakers and, to shape future generations, young people, students, and educators.

Our activities encompass a broad spectrum, ranging from awareness-raising initiatives to the promotion of IHL through training, education, and advocacy. We also support the integration of IHL into national legal frameworks, academic curricula, and the operational doctrines of state armed forces and non-state armed groups.

Engaging in confidential and bilateral dialogue

Through our privileged dialogue and role as a neutral, independent intermediary, we help parties to armed conflict understand and meet their obligations under IHL. This includes ensuring the protection of objects indispensable to the survival of the civilian population—such as foodstuffs, agricultural land, drinking water installations, supplies and irrigation works—and facilitating rapid and unimpeded humanitarian access.

We seek to inform weapon bearers about the environmental consequences of warfare and to support states in their efforts to integrate IHL protecting the environment into their military doctrine, laws and practice. For example, the identification and mapping of areas of particular environmental importance or fragility and placing these off limits to military operations can help reduce environmental harm and preserve the resources communities depend on to survive and recover.

When we identify potential violations—based on direct observations or reports from affected communities—we engage in confidential, bilateral dialogue with the parties involved. By reinforcing respect for the law, we aim to reduce harm, prevent further violations, and promote accountability both during and after hostilities.

WE RESPOND TO EMERGENCIES WHERE CONFLICT AND CLIMATE CRISES INTERSECT

Our long-standing presence in conflict-affected countries—combined with the extensive reach of our National Society partners and our close engagement with key stakeholders, including local, regional, and national authorities as well as weapon bearers—positions us to access communities that are hard to reach or underserved.

This proximity enables us to assess needs rapidly, respond promptly to emergencies, and prioritize assistance for those most acutely affected by armed conflict and natural hazards. By delivering timely and targeted support, we help reduce reliance on harmful coping mechanisms that can give rise to serious protection concerns.



Libya, 2023. Storm Daniel caused catastrophic flooding in northeast Libya, killing thousands, displacing many more, and sweeping away entire neighborhoods. Damaged roads made reaching affected areas even more difficult. In response, we partnered with the Libyan Red Crescent to deliver essential assistance to the hardest-hit areas. We distributed food, kitchen sets, mattresses and hygiene items, and provided medicine and supplies to local health facilities. We also donated thousands of body bags to support dignified treatment of the dead.

To help reconnect families, we collected over a thousand requests from people searching for missing loved ones and supported the National Society in setting up tracing kiosks equipped with internet hotspots and digital tools.

Each year, we provide assistance to hundreds of thousands of individuals whose lives, homes, and livelihoods have been severely disrupted by the combined effects of conflict and climate-related shocks. In countries such as Colombia, the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, Iraq, Myanmar, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, and throughout the Lake Chad Basin and the Sahel, our work supports people in meeting urgent needs and taking steps toward rebuilding their resilience.

Providing life-saving aid

In conflict-affected areas plagued by natural hazards such as drought, wildfires or flooding, people's living conditions deteriorate at an alarming rate. They are forced to abandon their homes, often relocating to high-risk areas, and seek refuge in temporary shelters or with host communities whose resources are critically strained. Access to essential services like water, sanitation and health care is severely compromised, putting people's lives at greater risk.

During emergencies in conflict-affected areas, we rapidly respond to provide or restore life-saving supplies or services, working closely with Movement partners, and local authorities. In close coordination with and in support of the host National Society, we distribute food parcels, clothing, blankets, hygiene items, and other household essentials, and provide cash or vouchers to help people meet their immediate needs. We deploy mobile water treatment units and support emergency repairs to water networks to prevent outbreaks of cholera and other waterborne diseases. At the same time, we deliver essential medicines and supplies to primary-health-care centres and hospitals, enabling them to treat the wounded and sick during sudden surges in need. These emergency efforts address urgent needs while helping critical infrastructure remain operational under extreme pressure.

Restoring family links

In the chaos of armed conflict and climate shocks, families can easily become separated, causing anguish and uncertainty about the fate or whereabouts of loved ones. Building on decades of experience in restoring family links during armed conflict, we have expanded our expertise to crises induced by natural hazards. In collaboration with National Societies, we support efforts to help separated families re-establish contact with their loved ones through a range of tools, including free telephone and video calls and Red Cross messages—short written communications that allow families to exchange news when calls are not possible.

WE STRENGTHEN THE RESILIENCE OF PEOPLE AFFECTED BY CONFLICT AND CLIMATE

We aim to deliver climate-informed and sustainable humanitarian impact by responding to emergencies while strengthening the resilience of communities facing conflict, climate risks, and environmental degradation. Working closely with research institutions and local stakeholders, our approach involves adapting our programmes through climate-smart strategies and implementing activities that reinforce the resilience of vulnerable populations.

In partnership with local, regional and global institutions, we integrate climate and environmental risks into our work, guided by tools and knowledge developed jointly with climate experts within the Red Cross Red Crescent Movement, such as the Climate Centre, and international and local universities.

Our extensive experience in conflict settings allows us to build trusted relationships and understand the complexity of people's needs. We work with communities to design solutions that foster self-sufficiency and resilience in the face of overlapping risks. To ensure relevance and sustainability, we consult affected populations, local authorities, and service providers to tailor our support – be it in food production, livelihoods, or water and habitat initiatives.



Ethiopia, 2025. People in the town of Lalibela, in the Amhara region, have been grappling with the effects of armed conflict for years, one of which being the frequent power shortages that have also interrupted the supply of water to residents. Recognizing the great need of Lalibela's people, we decided to intervene by making their water-supply system run on solar energy. The Lalibela project is currently our largest solar water-supply project in Africa, and it serves a town of more than 77,000 people.

In 2022, we implemented the first stage of the project by solarizing one borehole as part of emergency response, enabling people in Lalibela to have access to some water at a critical time. The next stage of the project involves upgrading three pumping stations to enable them to be operated completely with solar power. The final system will work with solar power during the day and with grid or generator power at night, ensuring an uninterrupted supply of water for the community.

Enabling access to essential services and reinforcing critical infrastructure

Sustainable access to essential services—such as health care, safe water, and electricity—is critical not only for ensuring survival and preserving dignity, but also for enabling communities to absorb and recover from shocks, whether triggered by armed conflict or climate-related hazards. These services are deeply interdependent: for instance, the effective delivery of health care relies on functioning water, energy, communication, and transport systems. The continuity of such services is contingent upon the resilience of the underlying infrastructure, which is increasingly exposed to frequent and severe disruptions because of climate change.

To address these challenges, we work to enhance the resilience of critical infrastructure by supporting the upgrade of essential services through climate-smart design, built-in redundancies, and hazard-resistant construction methods. In drought-prone areas, for example, we improve water management through aquifer recharge, extended water intakes, and increased storage capacity. In flood-prone regions, we implement protective measures such as elevated sanitation facilities, reinforced structures, safeguarded electromechanical systems, and storm-resistant designs. To reduce reliance on expensive fuel and unstable power grids, we also promote the use of renewable energy solutions.

These climate-resilient approaches extend to shelter interventions. In countries such as Myanmar, Nigeria and the Philippines, we support the construction of semi-permanent and permanent shelters for displaced persons and returnees that are adapted to withstand extreme weather conditions, including extreme temperatures and tropical storms. Similarly, new physical rehabilitation centres in Kenya, Mali and Nigeria are designed with bioclimatic principles to ensure greater resilience to heatwaves and other environmental stressors.

Providing agricultural and livestock support

In many conflict-affected settings, communities depend heavily on rain-fed agriculture and pastoralism—livelihoods that are highly sensitive to climatic variability. This reliance makes them particularly vulnerable to the intensifying impacts of climate change.

To address this, we promote a range of context-specific, integrated approaches aimed at strengthening climate resilience. These include nature-based and technological interventions—such as irrigation systems and coastal protection to safeguard agricultural land from seawater intrusion—alongside adjustments to planting calendars and the introduction of climate-resilient seed varieties. We also promote financial mechanisms, such as Index-Based Livestock Insurance (IBLI), used in Ethiopia, to provide a safety net against losses. In parallel, we support market-oriented solutions that enhance food security, such as the production, conservation, and commercialization of animal feed to sustain livestock during periods of scarcity.

By combining these complementary strategies, we aim to reduce communities' exposure to climate hazards, preserve livelihoods, and bolster their resilience in the face of compounded environmental and conflict-related pressures.



Myanmar, 2025. Myanmar is one of the most vulnerable countries to climate change, with communities facing more intense rainfall, extreme heat, rising sea levels and cyclones. These climate shocks severely affect agriculture, reducing productivity and worsening food insecurity.

In response, we help farmers adopt climate-smart agricultural practices by sharing knowledge on climate trends and sustainable farming techniques, including the use of ecofriendly fertilizer and seed bags. We also distribute salt-tolerant rice varieties adapted to local conditions. These efforts aim to strengthen communities' resilience to climate change while supporting sustainable agricultural productivity.



Yemen, 2024. In Yemen, farmers have seen their livelihoods destroyed by extreme drought, devastating floods, and ongoing conflict, making it harder for them to make ends meet.

In 2021, we worked to scope and expand agricultural-based livelihoods for conflict-affected displaced people, returnees, and host families to address income support and livelihood diversification. The Integrated Beekeeping Project is an initiative that drew directly on Yemen's proud beekeeping industry, that dates back thousands of years. In partnership with the ministry of agriculture and irrigation and the Yemen Red Crescent Society, we implement a wide range of activities such as the promotion of insulated beehives, strengthening of local beekeeping associations, capacity building of local institutions to improve the network of nurseries for afforestation activities, and the provision of seedlings to provide year-round fodder for bees. We also helped thousands of farmers with multi-purpose cash grants, microeconomic initiative projects or coffee or wheat seed donations.

Strengthening livelihoods

We provide financial and material assistance, complemented by targeted skills training, to support individuals and households in both urban and rural settings whose livelihoods have been disrupted by armed conflict and the impacts of climate change. Our support extends to farmers, small-scale traders, informal workers, and micro-entrepreneurs through vocational training, provision of essential supplies and equipment, and small business grants. These interventions enable people and communities to regain their economic footing, restore their means of livelihood, and enhance their resilience to future shocks. In selecting both small enterprises and value chains, we prioritize climate-resilient activities to mitigate the adverse effects of climate change.

In contexts of displacement where livelihood options are limited, we engage in cash-for-work to boost purchasing power from one side and environmental rehabilitation on the other. In informal settlements or camp settings, we prioritize livelihood diversification, which is also an adaptation strategy. This includes supporting people to shift away from environmentally destructive coping strategies—such as cutting trees for firewood or charcoal production—by introducing alternative income sources. Our microeconomic initiatives are designed to build inclusive local economies and generate income while preserving or restoring the environment.

Ultimately, these efforts restore dignity, reduce dependency on humanitarian assistance, and facilitate the transition from recovery towards sustainable development in some of the world's most challenging environments.

Enhancing early warning systems and anticipatory action

Communities regularly exposed to hazards require effective means to enhance their preparedness for the threats they face. In conflict-affected settings, however, these options are often constrained by damaged infrastructure, limited access to markets and agricultural support, and restrictions on movement. To address these challenges, we collaborate closely with communities, National Societies, and technical experts to strengthen preparedness and resilience.

Early warning systems, contingency planning with clearly defined triggers for early action, and, where possible, prearranged funding, constitute essential elements of effective risk reduction. Minimizing climate risks demands a comprehensive understanding of hazards, vulnerability and exposure; a reliable early warning infrastructure; trusted, accessible forecast and communication channels for reaching even the most remote communities; well-developed action plans; and adequate resources. Establishing relationships with national meteorological and hydrological services and climate experts prior to crises, are critical components of this approach.

In Mali, we enhance heat emergency preparedness in places of detention based on long-term risk assessments, seasonal and short-term forecasts, together with the detaining authorities, through contingency planning and early action to reduce extreme temperatures in facilities and enable early detection and treatment of heat stress. In Cameroon, we work with the Cameroon Red Cross to strengthen engagement with global alert systems and coordinate with the national meteorological authority. This partnership helps ensure timely access to climate information, the development of well-identified preparedness plans, and the capacity to anticipate, limit and mitigate the impacts of expected flooding.



Somalia, 2023. Farmers in Somalia faced the combined challenges of armed conflict and recovery from five consecutive years of drought. By the end of 2023, they had to also contend with heavier rains linked to El Niño, resulting in widespread floods. Informed by climate experts and in partnership with the Somali Red Crescent Society, we worked with local communities to prepare for potential floods. Tens of thousands of sandbags were distributed nationwide to help farmers build dykes that protect fields, health clinics, schools, and other vital infrastructure ahead of the floods. We also safeguarded 84 essential water points from flooding to ensure access to safe drinking water. These measures strengthened communities' ability to anticipate and withstand climate risks.



Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), 2023. A member of our team trained community members on establishing pilot fishponds as part of a fry multiplication project aimed at helping over 250 households strengthen both their nutritional intake and financial resilience. The initiative responds to key climate-related risks identified in DRC's National Adaptation Plan (2022–2026),²³ including the drying up of fishing waters due to erratic rainfall, declining fish stocks caused by temperature fluctuations, and the resulting impacts on food insecurity particularly for women.

WE BUILD CAPACITIES AND DRIVE SYSTEMIC CHANGE

We remain firmly committed to working in partnership with National Societies and other local partners, institutions, and systems, recognizing this as a cornerstone of our approach to achieving sustainable humanitarian impact. By working closely with a diverse range of local actors, we prioritize joint learning, knowledge exchange, and resource sharing to strengthen collective ability to anticipate, manage, and respond to the climate-related needs of communities affected by armed conflict. Supporting these actors ensures that interventions are firmly rooted in local contexts, tailored to specific circumstances, and sustainable over the long term.

Additionally, we strive to raise awareness of the distinct challenges faced by communities at the nexus of armed conflict, climate risks, and environmental degradation. Our objective is to promote systemic change by advocating for policies, programmes, and financing mechanisms that enhance resilience, mitigate climate-related harm, and promote equitable access to assistance.



The Philippines, 2023. The Philippines has some of the world's most overcrowded prisons. Detainees' difficult living conditions are exacerbated by climate hazards like tropical storms, heatwaves and floods. We launched a program to enhance climate resilience in places of detention and worked with the relevant jail management authorities.

We conducted risk assessments to measure climate and environment-related vulnerabilities and risks, provided training and capacity building to relevant authorities to enhance their ability to manage and mitigate climate risks, and shared methods and tools we developed. We also carried out measures to improve jail infrastructure, such as building flood barriers, and ensuring adequate ventilation and sanitation. This risk-informed approach helps prioritization of scarce resources of the authorities for retrofitting facilities to future climate risks, and enables more targeted contingency planning and preparedness.

Strengthening the capacity of our partners

We seek to strengthen local leadership, capacity, and service delivery through targeted and sustained collaboration with our Movement partners, relevant authorities, civil society organizations, local service providers, and community-based actors.

Our support to local authorities and institutions—such as water committees, ministries of health, and agricultural departments—focuses on enhancing their ability to manage and deliver essential services during and following crises. This involves reinforcing their technical and operational capacities, integrating climate and environmental considerations into service delivery, and fostering inclusive planning and decision-making processes that address the needs of the most vulnerable populations.

Furthermore, we collaborate closely with the Red Cross Red Crescent Climate Centre and National Societies to bolster our collective institutional and operational capabilities. This encompasses emergency preparedness, climate-smart programming in conflict-affected settings, joint training initiatives, technical assistance, peer learning opportunities, and the development and dissemination of tools and methodologies.

Driving systemic change

Our work on climate and conflict is guided by a clear set of policy and diplomatic objectives designed to raise awareness, influence action, and promote systemic change. We highlight the humanitarian consequences of climate risks and environmental degradation in conflict-affected settings, underscoring the shared responsibility to protect the most vulnerable populations. We consistently advocate for integrated responses that combine humanitarian assistance, development efforts, and climate action.

Drawing on our operational experience, we generate and disseminate knowledge on effective approaches to addressing the intersecting impacts of conflict, climate change, and environmental degradation, identifying both successful strategies and critical gaps. To translate global commitments into concrete outcomes, we collaborate with a coalition of multilateral development banks, humanitarian organizations, and research institutions to ensure that climate finance and adaptation initiatives reach communities frequently excluded from mainstream climate mechanisms.

Simultaneously, we partner with key stakeholders—including actors within the Movement—to broaden the impact of our advocacy. We also equip our staff and delegations with the necessary tools and expertise to engage effectively in climate policy discussions and negotiations.

JOIN US IN TURNING COMMITMENT INTO LASTING IMPACT



Communities hit by armed conflict are among the most vulnerable to climate risks and less equipped to adapt. Paradoxically, they are also among the most neglected by climate action and finance. As a humanitarian organization active on the ground, we witness the dramatic consequences of armed conflict and climate risks for millions of people. This calls for strong collective action, which strengthens the resilience of affected communities and is rooted in humanitarian law and principles. The ICRC remains more committed than ever to help ensure they are not left behind.

— **Gilles Carbonnier**, Vice-President, ICRC

The convergence of conflict and climate risks is no longer a future threat—it is a reality for millions. Encouragingly, more organizations now recognize this challenge and are stepping up. At COP 28, over 90 states and 40 institutions endorsed the Declaration of Climate, Relief, Recovery and Peace,²⁴ calling for urgent collective action to build climate resilience in fragile and conflict-affected settings.

But change is too slow—and the cost of doing nothing is deadly. Climate action continues to leave conflict-affected people behind, letting them face rising risks with depleting resources. Gaps in funding, access and inclusive planning persist.

Strengthening climate and environmental action in conflict zones is not just urgent, it is essential for people's survival and dignity. But we cannot do it alone.

We must act together to ensure those already suffering from violence are not also left on the front lines of the climate crisis.

2025 BUDGET: CHF 175 MILLION*

For more information or to make a contribution, please contact us at resourcemobilization@icrc.org.

Together, let's make a difference.

***DISCLAIMER:** The information on the ICRC's operations in this document has been taken from the [ICRC's Appeals 2025](#) published in December 2024 and does not include any updates beyond that date.

REFERENCES

1. Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), Headline Statements from the Summary for Policymakers, 2023. https://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar6/wg1/downloads/report/IPCC_AR6_WGI_Headline_Statements.pdf
2. World Health Organization (WHO), Climate Change Key facts, 2023. <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/climate-change-and-health>
3. World Economic Forum (WEF), Quantifying the Impact of Climate Change on Human Health, 2024. https://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_Quantifying_the_Impact_of_Climate_Change_on_Human_Health_2024.pdf
4. International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), The environment and warfare, 2025. <https://www.icrc.org/en/law-and-policy/environment-and-warfare>
5. International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), Norwegian Red Cross, Making Adaptation Work: Addressing the compounding impacts of climate change, environmental degradation and conflict in the Near and Middle East, 2023. https://www.icrc.org/sites/default/files/wysiwyg/Activities/Climate-Change/313551_policy_report_making_adaptation_work_uu_may23_new2.pdf
6. Notre Dame Global Adaptation Initiative (ND-GAIN), Country Rankings, 2024. <https://gain.nd.edu/our-work/country-index/rankings/>
7. International Crisis Group, Fighting Climate Change in Somalia's Conflict Zones, 2024. <https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/horn-africa/somalia/316-fighting-climate-change-somalias-conflict-zones>
8. United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), Mid-Year Trends 2024, 2024. <https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/111704>
9. International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), Conflict, Climate Risks and Food Insecurity in the Sahel Region of Africa – and the ICRC's Response, 2024. [https://xnet.ext.icrc.org/applic/extranet/rexdonors.nsf/0/0C0A19E0EB4763DEC1258B2B000BAD89/\\$File/2024_Sahel_Regional-briefer_ForExtranet.pdf](https://xnet.ext.icrc.org/applic/extranet/rexdonors.nsf/0/0C0A19E0EB4763DEC1258B2B000BAD89/$File/2024_Sahel_Regional-briefer_ForExtranet.pdf)
10. The Guardian, “I don’t want to be here. But we can’t go home”: what life is like for people forced to flee floods and fighting, 2025. <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2025/may/23/floods-trauma-displaced-conflict-climate-crisis-safety-bangladesh-sudan-colombia-idp-camps>
11. In 2023, the average length of time that the ICRC has been present in each of its ten largest operations (Afghanistan, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, Iraq, Nigeria, Somalia, South Sudan, Syria, Ukraine and Yemen) is 43 years. This does not mean that countries have been in conflict the entire time, but that an ICRC presence continued to be needed.
12. Robert Bosch Academy, Bridging the Gap: Climate Crisis, Humanitarian Aid, and Climate-Sensitive Interventions, 2024. <https://www.robertboschacademy.de/en/perspectives/bridging-gap-climate-crisis-humanitarian-aid-and-climate-sensitive-interventions>
13. We also have another workstream that focuses on better addressing the environmental impact of our operations, including through decarbonization and reducing our carbon footprint. This encompasses both efforts to reduce the damage our activities may cause to the local natural environment, particularly through environmental impact assessments and cutting our greenhouse gas emissions. The aim here is to ultimately limit our contribution to climate change and help mitigate it.
14. International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), ICRC launches 2024–2027 institutional strategy, 2023. <https://www.icrc.org/en/document/icrc-launches-2024-2027-institutional-strategy>
15. International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), ICRC and IFRC adopt the Climate and Environment Charter for Humanitarian Organizations, 2021. <https://www.icrc.org/en/document/icrc-ifrc-climate-environment-charter>

16. International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), Framework for the Integration of Climate Risks into ICRC Operations, 2023. <https://www.icrc.org/en/publication/framework-integration-climate-risks-icrc-operations-version-10-2023-2025>
17. International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), Guidelines on the Protection of the Natural Environment in Armed Conflict, 2020. https://www.icrc.org/sites/default/files/document_new/file_list/guidelines_on_the_protection_of_the_natural_environment_in_armed_conflict_advance-copy.pdf
18. International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), Geneva Conventions 75th Anniversary: Reaffirm commitment to IHL and make it a political priority, 2024. <https://www.icrc.org/en/statement/geneva-conventions-75th-anniversary-reaffirm-commitment-ihl-and-make-it-political>
19. International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), Movement Ambitions to address the climate crisis, 2020, <https://www.ifrc.org/document/movement-ambitions-address-climate-crisis>
20. International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), Our Fundamental Principles, 2025. <https://www.icrc.org/en/our-fundamental-principles>
21. International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), Weathering the storm: Reducing the impact of climate risks and environmental degradation on people enduring armed conflicts, 2024. <https://www.icrc.org/en/publication/4742-weathering-storm-reducing-impact-climate-risks-and-environmental-degradation-people>
22. International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), Making adaptation work, 2023. <https://www.icrc.org/en/publication/maw-making-adaptation-work>
23. Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ministry of the Environment and Sustainable Development, National Adaptation Plan to Climate Change (2022–2026), 2021. https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/DRC-NAP_EN.pdf
24. United Nations Climate Security Mechanism, COP28 Declaration on Climate, Relief, Recovery and Peace, 2023. <https://www.un.org/climatesecuritymechanism/en/essentials/rio-conventions/unfccc/cop28-declaration-climate-relief-recovery-and-peace>

Cover photo: Mali, 2024. Communities in the Taoudéni region must contend with the combined consequences of armed conflict and climate change. In 2024, a particularly difficult lean season exacerbated the circumstances of people dependent on livestock farming to survive. To help them sustain their livelihoods, we distributed livestock feed and wheat bran to herding households in violence-affected areas. (ICRC)



ICRC

International Committee of the Red Cross

19 avenue de la Paix
1202 Geneva, Switzerland
resourcemobilization@icrc.org
www.icrc.org
© ICRC, June 2025 REM 25/234