



Aki Kolehmainen/ Finnish Red Cross

Annual Programme Report 2024

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Yhteenveto ohjelmasta

Vuosi 2024 oli kolmas toteutusvuosi Suomen Punaisen Ristin kehitysyhteistyöohjelman nelivuotisesta (2022–2025) ohjelmakaudesta. Ohjelman toteutus jatkui täysipainoisesti ja siinä keskityttiin hankkeiden toimeenpanoon, vaikuttavuuden vahvistamiseen ja paikallisten toimijoiden kapasiteetin kehittämiseen. Ohjelman kaikki hankkeet kohdentuivat yhteen tai useampaan neljästä temaattisesta tavoitteesta: 1) katastrofivalmius ja varautuminen ilmastonmuutokseen, 2) naisten ja tyttöjen terveyden edistäminen, 3) pitkäjänteisen kehityksen turvaaminen kriisialueilla humanitaarisen avun ja kehitysyhteistyön välistä jatkumoa vahvistamalla ja 4) paikallisen toiminnan ja osallisuuden vahvistaminen tukemalla paikallisten Punaisen Ristin ja Punaisen Puolikuun toimijoiden kapasiteetteja.

Vuonna 2024 ohjelma tavoitti yli 819 000 ihmistä 15 maassa. Ohjelma painottuu entistä vahvemmin hauraisiin sekä konflikti- ja katastrofiherkkiin valtioihin. Välttämistä hyödynsaajista 60 % oli naisia ja 40 % miehiä. Monessa hankkeessa tehtiin kohdennettuja toimia erilaisille kohderyhmille ja pyrittiin näin vaikuttamaan yhteisöjen normeihin ja käytäntöihin. Yhteisöterveyden ja seksuaali- ja lisääntymisterveyden hankkeet sisälsivät toimia, joilla luotiin kannustavia ja turvallisia ympäristöjä terveyspalveluihin hakeutumiselle. Miesten osallistaminen edisti myönteistä sosiaalisten normien muutosta useissa maissa. Muun muassa Etelä-Sudanissa, Nigerissä ja Keniassa miesten mukaan ottaminen äitiysterveysten edistämiseen paransi naisten pääsyä terveyspalveluihin. Uskonnolliset ja yhteisöjohtajat olivat keskeisessä roolissa hoitoon hakeutumisen edistämässä Keniassa, Nigerissä ja Zimbabwessa.

Ohjelman avulla 84 000 ihmistä vahvisti elinkeinonsa kestävyttä ilmastonmuutoksen vaikutuksiin. Yli 545 000 henkilöä hyötyi parannetuista sää- ja varoituspalveluista. Paikalliset yhteisöt toteuttivat konkreettisia toimia, kuten puiden istutusta, vesivarantojen suojelua ja varautumissuunnitelmien päivittämistä.

Safer Access Framework (SAF) -lähestymistapaa laajennettiin uusille kriisialueille Afganistaniin ja Saheliin. Viestintästrategioita kehitettiin humanitaaristen toimijoiden turvallisen pääsyn varmistamiseksi ja väärän sekä vaarallisen tiedon torjumiseksi. Ohjelma vastasi myös kasvaviin humanitaarisiin Afganistanissa, Somaliassa ja Jemenissä, joissa turvallisuus- ja poliittisista haasteista huolimatta kansalliset yhdistykset tarjosivat peruspalveluita haavoittuvalle väestöosalle. Kansallisia Punaisen Ristin ja Punaisen Puolikuun yhdistyksiä tuettiin mm. taloushallinnon, raportoinnin ja teknisen osaamisen kehittämisessä.

Ohjelmalla vahvistettiin paikallisten toimijoiden katastrofivalmiuskapasiteettia ja resilienssiä. Maatasolle budjetoitujen joustomekanismien (crisis modifier) ansiosta kumppanit pystyivät reagoimaan nopeasti äkillisiin tai hitaasti kehittyviin kriiseihin. Lisäksi Suomen Punainen Risti hyödynsi käyttötarkoituksenmuutosta Nepalissa ja Myanmarissa vastatakseen tulvien ja maanvyöryjen aiheuttamiin muuttuviin tilanteisiin. Tämä joustavuus mahdollisti ohjelman toteuttamisen muuttuvissa ja haastavissa toimintaympäristöissä.

Suojelua, sukupuolten tasa-arvoa ja osallisuutta edistettiin läpileikkaavasti ohjelman kaikissa hankkeissa. Vammaisten henkilöiden osallistumista edistettiin, ja useissa maissa toteutettiin koulutuksia ja saavutettavuusarviointeja sekä edistettiin yhteistyötä paikallisten vammaisjärjestöjen kanssa.

Vuonna 2024 Suomen Punainen Risti syvensi entisestään yhteistyötä mm. Abiliksen, Punaisen Ristin kansainvälisen komitean (ICRC) ja Ilmatieteen laitoksen kanssa. Vaikuttamistyössä keskityttiin erityisesti ilmastonmuutoksen humanitaarisiin vaikutuksiin, inklusiivisiin varhaisvaroitusjärjestelmiin ja vammaisten henkilöiden oikeuksiin. Kehitysyhteistyöstä viestittiin laajasti ja monipuolisesti Suomessa.

Ohjelman toteutunut budjetti oli 9,34 miljoonaa euroa, josta 66 % rahoitti ulkoministeriö ja 34 % Suomen Punainen Risti. Laajan ohjelmatyön henkilöstökustannukset olivat suunniteltua suuremmat johtuen ohjelmatoiteutuksen kasvaneista tarpeista sekä erityisesti SAF-ohjelman laajentumisesta. Ohjelman kustannuksista 71 % kohdentui Afrikan mantereelle ja 78 % vähiten kehittyneisiin maihin.

Suomen Punaisen Ristin kehitysyhteistyöohjelma perustuu järjestön kansainvälisen avustustoiminnan strategiaan suuntiin: vaikuttavuusorientoituneisuuteen, muutoksenkykyyn, tasa-arvoisuuteen ja yhdenvertaisuuteen sekä avun paikallisuuteen. Vuonna 2024 painotettiin erityisesti paikallisoitoisia toimintatapoja ja siirryttiin kohti entistä laajempaa ja ohjelmallista lähestymistapaa kansallisten yhdistysten kehittämiseen. Ohjelman uusi vaihe (2026–2029) suunniteltiin tämän lähestymistavan pohjalta.

1. Programme progress in 2024

1.1 Global context and risks

Mounting humanitarian challenges leading to increased focus on partners' humanitarian capacities

The global humanitarian situation is extremely dire with the gap between needs and available funding increasing drastically. The year 2024 marked the second consecutive year of declining international humanitarian funding. Crises and conflicts are more protracted and complex. According to the UN, 305 million people globally were in need of humanitarian assistance and protection. Climate change is accelerating and intensifying disasters caused by natural phenomena. Violations of international humanitarian law are causing civilian casualties and unprecedented human suffering. Humanitarian work is dangerous and, in some cases, impossible. The year 2024 was the deadliest on record for aid workers – 325 lost their lives, with local staff bearing the greatest burden.

The Finnish Red Cross (FRC) Development Programme 2022–2025 aims to promote resilience for health emergencies, natural disasters and conflicts with a specific thematic focus on climate-smart disaster risk reduction and promotion of the rights of women and girls. The Programme's ability to reach the most vulnerable groups and communities lies in its strong emphasis on the capacities of the National Red Cross and Red Crescent (RCRC) Societies. As the Programme is focused on fragile, violence or conflict-affected countries, the FRC's nexus approach aims to strengthen mutual contributions and flexibility between the humanitarian and development work of the partners while strengthening the Programme's conflict sensitivity. An example of this is the flagship Safer Access Framework (SAF) approach with the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and National Societies in conflict and crisis-affected countries. This work was scaled up and expanded to protracted crises in Asia in 2024. The FRC also continued to support National Societies to provide health services in fragile states such as Burkina Faso, Somalia, South Sudan and Yemen. In countries where severe humanitarian, political and security situations continued to create significant challenges for the population – such as Afghanistan and Myanmar – National Societies carried out important community health work and responded to recurring crises and disasters alongside their long-term efforts.

The FRC's Programme approach remained relevant in identifying localised and effective solutions for preparing for and mitigating the impacts of disasters, increasing the capacity and resilience of local actors, and particularly supporting civil society service delivery in protracted conflicts and crises. With crisis modifiers built into budgets at country level, the partners could react to sudden-onset or slow-onset, localised shocks. This tool has proven to be essential – enabling flexibility and responsiveness in the environments with evolving and changing needs where the FRC Programme is delivered. In addition to these, the FRC used repurposing as a tool in Nepal to respond to changing situations and escalating crises caused by floods and landslides in mid and western Nepal, and in Myanmar after typhoon Yagi landing in the autumn of 2024.

Overall, the FRC Programme targeted fifteen (15) countries in 2024. Eleven of the fifteen target countries were in Africa, with 71%



of the budget channelled there. Thirteen of the target countries were among the least developed countries (LDCs), with 78% of the total funding allocated to them. There were no changes in 2024 in terms of partnerships or Programme focuses but towards the end of the year, the FRC started analysing and preparing for the transition to the new Programme phase, which will include transitions to some new types of partnerships. At the end of 2024, the long-term community health programme in Sierra Leone came to a planned end and the focus shifted to holistic National Society Development (NSD) to address key capacity challenges.

The key strategic basis of the Programme remained as defined in the Finnish Red Cross Strategic framework for international aid 2030 and its vision to be an impact-driven and adaptative international humanitarian partner, whose operating principles are driven by inclusion and localisation. In 2024 the FRC especially emphasised the last driver, marking the year with a significant shift in how it promotes locally led action. The capacity development of the local Red Cross Red Crescent (RCRC) partner has always been at the core of the programming. In 2024, the Finnish Red Cross started to comprehensively review its ways of working and shift from vertical, project-based NSD support to more horizontal and programmatic NSD, as well as fairer sharing of budgets and overheads, aligning reporting and other requirements with other partners and looking at better planning from a locally led perspective. An FRC localisation baseline report was finalised in early 2025, and the new Programme proposal for 2026–2029 was developed with this mindset.

Locally led action is also closely linked to the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) network's Way of Working approach, seeking to even further emphasise the partner National Societies' strategic leadership role in their programming (locally led) and becoming increasingly effective and streamlined in coordination with other RCRC partners, for example in support planning and reporting requirements. The FRC continued to be committed to this agenda and contributed both at country levels, e.g. working actively with partners in Ethiopia, and globally at senior management level.

Robust risk management ensuring quality programming

The Finnish Red Cross risk management process for international aid follows the overall risk management guidelines of the organisation. It involves documenting, rating, escalating and monitoring risks through the Project Information Management System (PIMS) at both project and stakeholder level. Efficient mitigation actions are planned and discussed at country level among the teams, and the FRC international aid management team assesses key operational and strategic risks biweekly. Addressing risks include trainings, whistleblowing, oversight at different levels, regular spot checks and monitoring, as well as structured audits, reviews and evaluations. In 2024, the FRC encouraged more sharing of information and mitigation plans with other RCRC partners in the countries and ensuring the capacities and risk awareness of the implementing National Society partners. The Programme-level risk matrix serves as a Programme-level risk management tool, aiming to keep the staff and management aware of the global-level risks and to help plan country-level mitigation. This matrix is updated during annual planning and reporting (Annex 2).

For prevention of sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment (PSEAH), the FRC has robust mechanisms in place, including training, whistleblowing and monitoring. As part of the ECHO partnership agreement, the FRC also reports on PSEAH at the global level annually. In 2024 there were no reported cases in FRC-managed or supported programmes, but the FRC received allegations about a possible sexual abuse case in Myanmar involving a Myanmar Red Cross Society (MRCS) staff member that may have harmed several MRCS staff and volunteers. The case was reported to the IFRC jointly with the Swedish Red Cross and Danish Red Cross.

In South Sudan, a staff member of the South Sudan Red Cross (SSRC) stole funds from projects funded by the Netherlands Red Cross and Swedish Red Cross. The case was investigated by the police. The SSRC acted openly, and the case was used to improve their processes to mitigate risks of this kind. The Nepal Red Cross Society (NRCS) continued to face a governance crisis, with its Governing Board not recognised by the IFRC, staff protesting by working from home, and operational disruptions including halted funding transfers to branches due to financial risk. In response, the FRC supports the updated Temporary Operational Modalities and revised

cost structures but has decided against direct cooperation with branches due to heightened accountability concerns.

The auxiliary role of National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies coexists with the Fundamental Principles of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement. In highly politicised contexts, or in contexts where the space for civil society is restricted, the auxiliary role can be questioned by different sectors of society. This continued to have an impact on the programming for example in Afghanistan and Myanmar, and was a focus of continued humanitarian diplomacy actions.

In 2024, the FRC commissioned an ex-ante assessment as part of its application for an ECHO Programmatic Partnership (PP) status. The assessment was conducted by KPMG in October 2024 and covered all relevant criteria, including the newly introduced PP requirements and the implementation of recommendations from the previous 2020 assessment. KPMG noted progress particularly in risk management and the implementation of earlier recommendations. Areas for improvement were identified especially in systems, training, and the absence of a formal quality management system. KPMG recommended the Finnish Red Cross to be granted a Potential Programmatic Partner status, and DG ECHO granted the certificate in early 2025.

1.2 Implementation progress, adaptivity and learning

In 2024, the Finnish Red Cross (FRC) entered its third year of the implementation of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs (MFA) funded Development Programme, reaching a total of 819,360 individuals. Of those reached, around 60% were women and 40% men. A summary of the aggregated programme-level results for 2024 can be found in Annex 1.

In addition to tracking progress through aggregated programme indicators, the FRC continued to evaluate the performance through mid-term reviews, endline assessments, end-of-project evaluations and case studies. The annual report 2024 is based on data collected from 22 FRC-supported projects. The number of projects collecting data disaggregated by disability increased from nine in 2023 to 14 in 2024, reaching a total of 10,507 people across these 14 projects. While the number of projects reporting disability-disaggregated data has notably increased, the data reported still cannot be considered fully reliable. For example, in 2023 the nine projects reported having reached 15,215 people with disability versus 10,507 in 2024 – thus it may be that the disability-disaggregated data reported in 2024 is an underestimation. The reporting of disability-disaggregated data requires further attention.

In 2024 the Programme strengthened the work around its four thematic focus areas. Among these, addressing climate change remained a key focus, reflected both in advocacy efforts and in programme activities aimed at enhancing climate-resilient disaster preparedness and risk reduction. In 2024, continuous capacity-building initiatives played a crucial role in improving the resilience of communities, including those with disabilities, to the impacts of climate change. Projects across the regions used an integrated approach that included capacity building and training for local actors, ensuring strong community involvement and ownership, and efforts to meet basic needs such as water, sanitation and livelihoods. Progress was also made at the institutional level as the National Societies participated actively in multistakeholder collaboration and policy development. Through the engagement in Early Warnings for All platforms and technical working groups, National Societies contributed to the development of early warning systems both at the community and national levels.

The Programme's work on improving the health of women and girls showed notable results, which was demonstrated by the findings of several mid-term reviews and assessments conducted in 2024. Knowledge of sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) was improved through community engagement, strengthening the understanding of maternal health and appropriate care-seeking practices. The mid-term review conducted in Niger reported measurable improvements in family planning knowledge, and the endline assessment in Sierra Leone demonstrated exceptional progress in maternal health knowledge. Care-seeking behaviours were strengthened by ensuring male engagement that contributed to positive social norms change. Structured approaches involving men in maternal health improved women's healthcare access for

example in South Sudan, Niger and Kenya. In addition to improving access to services, the service quality was improved by trainings and targeted innovations, such as a digital clinical decision support system implemented in Somalia.

In 2024, the FRC continued to support the implementation of water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) interventions that increased access to safe water and sanitation. In Sierra Leone, the household use of improved drinking water sources increased from 13% at baseline to 98% at endline. In Zimbabwe, Sierra Leone and South Sudan, the National Societies helped establish effective community management systems, with water committees maintaining regulations, responsibilities and inclusive membership. Despite the improved access to WASH across the countries, mid-term reviews also pointed out challenges in equal and continuous access to water as well as water quality. These challenges will be addressed in programme work in 2025.

The FRC continued to deepen its commitment to protection, gender and inclusion (PGI) throughout 2024. The efforts to address harmful traditional practices showed progress in Ethiopia where evidence-based social norms change approaches led communities toward public declarations against female genital mutilation (FGM) and child, early and forced marriages (CEFM). Strengthening sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) prevention and response remained a priority and was addressed in Burkina Faso, Kenya and Niger. The institutional capacities of PGI in the National Societies were also strengthened through policy development, development and implementation of PGI action plans, building staff and volunteer capacity, knowledge development, and promoting inclusive human resources and safeguarding practices.

Red Cross and Red Crescent alleviated needs in challenging contexts

Red Cross Red Crescent work continued to be highly relevant in 2024 as the socio-political contexts remained challenging in many of the Programme countries. Through FRC support, National Societies were able to advocate for the most vulnerable groups and respond to vast humanitarian and development needs. This was partially enabled by the crisis modifier and repurposing of funds.

The humanitarian situation in Afghanistan deteriorated further and the FRC continued to support the Afghan Red Crescent Society (ARCS) through the IFRC by channelling humanitarian and development aid funded by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs. Afghanistan's de facto authorities implemented additional restrictive measures affecting women's participation in social and economic activities, also impacting healthcare services and humanitarian aid delivery. The recommendations of the mid-term review, conducted in October 2024, such as increasing female trainers and involving out-of-school girls in community activities, aim to enhance women's participation and empowerment despite the progressively restrictive environment. Furthermore, the programme improves ARCS's capacity to respond to disasters by training volunteers in first aid and equipping them with supplies and skills to effectively manage emergencies.

In Yemen, the humanitarian situation continued to deteriorate, and the ongoing conflict, political instability and economic downfall posed substantial obstacles to project implementation. The banking crisis in the northern part of Yemen from May to August 2024 significantly impacted the project as liquidity shortages and the cessation of remittance transfers hindered procurement and delayed the implementation of activities. Frequent airstrikes further complicated access to project sites and the implementation of activities. The project implemented by the Yemen Red Crescent Society and supported through the Norwegian Red Cross made significant strides in improving access to healthcare, first aid services as well as water and sanitation services, and managed to deliver essential services to vulnerable communities across various regions.

Programme implementation was also hindered in Burkina Faso by the increased insecurity and tightened controls imposed by the military junta. Restrictions in data collection measures were tightened and thus a study of adolescent pregnancy and subsequent activities were delayed. Insecurity and limited access also required the use adaptive approaches, such as task shifting from healthcare workers to traditional birth attendants to ensure the continuity of access to maternal and child healthcare.

Advocacy and partnership building

In 2024, the Finnish Red Cross continued conducting humanitarian diplomacy at different levels, including participation in global dialogue in relevant international UN and EU fora with other Red Cross Red Crescent Movement partners, as well as domestically with stakeholders and decision-makers to keep the humanitarian situation and solutions to it on the agenda. The FRC continued dialogue with the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland and other stakeholders, as well as communication on protracted humanitarian crises in Afghanistan, Myanmar, the Horn of Africa and the Sahel.

Advocacy for the recognition of the humanitarian impacts of climate change remained the main priority of the advocacy done at the policy level. The FRC continued its close partnership with strategic partners such as the Finnish Meteorological Institute and Red Cross Red Crescent Climate Centre. Significant advocacy and partnership building at the country level was done related to PGI, in which advocacy efforts largely focused on community-level awareness raising and social mobilisation. The existing partnership with Abilis Foundation and CBM Global Advisory Board was further strengthened. Additionally, the FRC conducted advocacy work around global health with a community and mother-child health focus.

Partnerships with National Societies were also strengthened. In 2024, the Finnish Red Cross and Zimbabwe Red Cross Society (ZRCS) carried out a partnership review, focusing on values and experiences of the partnership. The discussions also identified strategies for increased localisation that will guide the cooperation between the FRC and ZRCS in 2025 and beyond. Partnership review discussions were also held in Myanmar. Discussions enabled the FRC and Myanmar Red Cross Society (MRCS) to jointly identify issues related to sustainability, accountability and humanitarian relevance and impact, which will be reinforced in the future cooperation between the partners.

Ensuring learning through assessments and reviews

In 2024, a total of six mid-term reviews were conducted: in Afghanistan, Ethiopia, Kenya, Nepal, Niger and South Sudan. In addition, an ex-post evaluation was conducted in Zimbabwe. An internal meta-analysis was carried out to collate findings and lessons learnt across the different evaluations. Many evaluations highlighted strong alignment between project objectives and target populations' needs and local priorities, such as SRHR and gender-based violence services, WASH and livelihood support as well as community-led disaster risk reduction in hazard-prone areas. Especially in crises-affected areas, interventions focusing on health and livelihoods were deemed highly relevant. However, rapidly changing political or security conditions were found to challenge the project implementation and required re-validation of project strategies to maintain continued relevance. Many FRC-supported projects were found to adjust to local realities and adapt to evolving environments.

Most projects were found to be on track or partially achieving intended outcomes despite implementation delays being common across the projects. Some challenges with the technical quality of certain project activities were identified in a number of evaluations, resulting in delays and/or increased costs. Weak monitoring and evaluation systems were found to affect performance tracking and adaptive management, thus limiting the effectiveness.

Community-based models and the use of volunteers to leverage the reach were found to be efficient, but the evaluations reported that challenges with volunteer retention reduced the efficiency. Integrated programming was found to increase the effectiveness. External shocks typically led to slow starts or cost overruns in hardware and infrastructure activities. Procurement and supply chain bottlenecks, particularly in remote or conflict-affected areas, caused inefficiencies.

While most of the analysed evaluations were mid-term reviews (MTR), making it too early to measure long-term impact, some immediate results were evident, including how FRC-supported programme work is improving resilience. It must be noted, however, that many evaluations noted challenges attributing broader socio-economic improvements or resilience strictly to a single project intervention.

Considerations of post-project continuity (sustainability) were a common finding in these MTRs, and many reviews questioned how volunteer incentives, service provision and/or hardware maintenance would be financed once the project ended. Dependence on external funds and insufficient financing of the branches were identified as key factors undermining the institutional sustainability. Continued government engagement was identified in the evaluations as one important factor enabling sustainability. The reviews also highlighted how community ownership is central to the sustainability of the supported activities. In addition, building the capacity of local Red Cross Red Crescent branches and volunteer leaders was a recurring success factor in the reports.

The reviews found a lot of evidence of working with authorities and within the RCRC Movement but did not capture collaboration with private sectors. Similarly, the collaboration with other organisations was limited. However, working in remote, underserved areas where other organisations are not present, add value to the FRC-supported projects.

2. Programme achievements per thematic focus areas

2.1 Focus area 1: Climate-smart disaster preparedness and risk reduction

In 2024, the Programme activities on awareness raising and capacity building significantly strengthened resilience of a growing number of people in the target countries, including persons with disabilities, to climate change. According to the data collected by the projects, in 2024 a total of 84,017 individuals strengthened their livelihood resilience towards climate change impacts, compared to 15,252 individuals in 2023. At the target communities, 313,484 individuals benefited from preparedness activities and 545,851 individuals from improved weather and climate services and/or early warning systems. This enabled communities, local authorities and stakeholders to take early actions based on weather forecasts and alerts.

Evidence at the local level indicated key elements essential to enhancing community resilience and implementing effective resilience programming. Continuous capacity building and training of community members, local municipalities as well as of RCRC National Society staff and volunteers was an essential foundation in enabling locally led actions for resilience and implementing effective disaster risk reduction (DRR) strategies. Secondly, strong community involvement, inclusion and ownership was emphasised in the projects supported by the Finnish Red Cross (FRC). This included a people-centred approach and the empowerment of local structures, such as municipalities, to manage and sustain DRR measures, such as erosion control or repair of irrigation channels, and active participation of persons in vulnerable situations in them. Thirdly, addressing the basic needs and livelihoods as part of resilience ensured greater impact and sustainability at community level and among people. Sustainability was also promoted in many country projects with the implementation of environmentally sustainable practices, such as tree planting, watershed protection and climate-smart agricultural techniques, which helped to reduce the risk of disasters and promoted long-term sustainability. Lastly, active collaboration between stakeholders, local communities and local governments enhanced disaster awareness, early warning activities and the overall effectiveness of resilience initiatives.

Multitude of efforts raised awareness and built local capacities

Communities were reached through contextualised and localised awareness raising activities and trainings. For instance, in Myanmar the trainings focused on community-based DRR and first aid, while in Ethiopia community awareness of water scarcity, drought patterns and hygiene practices was improved. In Sierra Leone and Zimbabwe, the focus was on climate and disaster risks. These trainings equipped local actors with skills to assess risks specific to their area and plan appropriate DRR measures.

In Zimbabwe, 500 lead farmers adopted skills and gained knowledge on climate-smart agriculture techniques and conservation strategies. A total of 4,100 farmers were reached with a transformative impact on participating communities, equipping farmers with practical skills to cope with erratic rainfall, dry spells,

heatwaves and declining soil fertility. Weather and forecast dissemination trainings targeted 120 climate change champions, community leaders and ward-based stakeholders. In Burundi, a vast awareness raising campaign on climate change and sustainable environmental practices reached nearly 2,300 people through 120 sessions.

In Nepal, trained Y-ADAPT Junior Youth Red Cross Circles and social mobilisers reached 4,700 persons in sessions and household visits on climate change, weather information, early warning systems and disaster preparedness. In a joint media campaign with the Department of Hydrology and Meteorology and the Finnish Meteorological Institute, a video was produced on weather and climate services to increase public awareness about warnings. The video was distributed through the social media channels of the Nepal government and the Nepal Red Cross Society and shared nationwide.

Assessments and studies increased understanding of the risks

Updates of Enhanced Vulnerability and Capacity Assessments (EVCAs) were conducted as part of the integrated health project in Burundi to inform revisions of community action plans. Communities made risk analyses, identified their priorities, and planned activities to reduce disaster risks. In Myanmar, EVCAs conducted in 43 villages resulted in development plans and action plans for the villages. Other projects built on previously conducted EVCAs or climate analyses, which remained key to understanding the impacts of climate change, hazard exposure and vulnerabilities at community level. A desktop review and a roadmap on Forecast-based Action was completed in Zimbabwe. Several assessments were carried out in Nepal, with technical support from the RCRC Climate Centre: A Framework for Operationalising Multi-Hazard Early Warning System at the local level, A Flash Flood Risk Analysis and Forecast-Based Action System all addressed the increasing flash flood risks in Morang District. A first-ever comprehensive Heat Action Plan was developed to address extreme heat events in Biratnagar Metropolitan City, endorsed by the authorities.

Diversification and climate-smart activities increased resilience of livelihoods

Community engagement, effective water management, agricultural improvements, disaster risk reduction and economic empowerment were important in enhancing climate resilience of livelihoods.

In Burundi, five agroforestry and fruit tree nurseries, maintained by volunteers, were set up. The distribution of the seedlings involved 100 supervisors (including 34 women) and reached over 4,500 beneficiaries. Land use practices were also improved, including erosion control, soil protection and installing of water retention ditches. In Ethiopia, shallow wells were constructed and solar water systems installed to ensure access to safe water for pastoralist communities. In Zimbabwe, food security was improved and reliance on costly external agricultural inputs was reduced through climate-smart techniques, including grain cultivation, water harvesting, the use of alternative fertilizers, timely planting and efficient resource management. In addition, Zimbabwe's 157 keyhole gardens represented a significant climate adaptation success, with 80–90% of households across four project wards establishing gardens that functioned year-round despite water shortages by utilising greywater. Approximately 50% of the households generated a monthly income of USD 20–50 from these gardens to support daily household needs, including healthcare expenses.

In South Sudan, kitchen gardens associated with water points demonstrated the connection between climate adaptation, nutrition and economic empowerment as women reported using garden proceeds to cover healthcare costs, pay for schooling, purchase clothing and access health facilities. In Nepal, the project initiated small livelihood support to 87 ultra-poor families, which created a positive environment and trust for community engagement. Seventeen (17) small-scale disaster mitigation projects, such as rehabilitating an irrigation channel, were implemented through a participatory approach and with important co-funding from the local government. The support to Village Savings and Loan Association groups established by the project enabled community members to invest in small businesses and home gardening, increasing household income and food security in Sierra Leone.

Community actions strengthened people's resilience

A variety of small-scale disaster risk mitigation measures and supporting locally led community structures took place in 2024. Disaster risk reduction (DRR) plans were updated, community early warning systems strengthened, vulnerable infrastructure rehabilitated, and water management and local weather monitoring improved. Soil preservation, ecosystem restoration and infrastructure improvements also contributed to enhanced water quality, agricultural production and community wellbeing.

Due to updated DRR and contingency plans, communities in Sierra Leone were better prepared to prevent the spread of fires. Community members were also assigned with different roles in the community early warning system, including river water level monitoring and ensuring support to ageing persons or persons with disabilities. Simulation exercises were conducted in collaboration with District Disaster Management Officers focusing on fire, flash flood, windstorm and cholera epidemic scenarios. Similar simulation exercises were conducted in many countries.

In Ethiopia and South Sudan, WASH committees, school WASH clubs and community development groups were established to take ownership of their water resources and enable quick repairs to water systems and management of water resources during crises, improving the ability of communities to withstand and recover from drought shocks.

In Zimbabwe, access to weather data was improved through the installation of 15 rain gauges, monitored by trained volunteers and agricultural extension officers. This helped farmers to optimise planting and harvesting times. Other resilience actions included fencing of community gardens and improvement of spring water sources. School DRR clubs, disaster management committees and water points were established at 12 schools in the target areas.

In Burundi, water quality and agricultural production were improved by tree planting, gutter cleaning and water retention ditches, and watershed protection reduced runoff flooding. The construction of a wooden footbridge between hills improved access to services and reduced drowning cases during the rainy season. DRR committees and municipal and provincial DRR platforms were established and equipped with essential tools and items.

In Nepal, a diverse local task force, known as the "squad", was established and trained. Key community structures, including Ward Disaster Management Committees and Junior Youth Red Cross Circles, were strengthened. The project enhanced Local Emergency Operation Centres in two municipalities, supporting their disaster management roles. This included developing Standard Operating Procedures and providing essential equipment, while local governments allocated resources and appointed focal persons.

Environmental sustainability promoted with concrete measures to reduce emissions and waste

Context-specific actions were taken to promote environmentally sustainable practices, such as waste reduction, recycling and use of eco-friendly and locally available materials, renewable energy, ecosystem restoration and community involvement. Renewable energy sources like solar power and the promotion of water conservation practices were supported in Ethiopia, Somalia and Afghanistan. Tree planting and ecosystem restoration were common measures to mitigate environmental impacts in Burundi, Sierra Leone and South Sudan. Community involvement in environmental protection and policy advocacy for climate action plans were emphasised in Kenya, Nepal and Sierra Leone. In Sierra Leone, community committees promoted by-laws to avoid the incident of fires in the dry season and protect the environment. Projects in Burkina Faso and Ethiopia included health and hygiene initiatives that also addressed environmental sustainability, such as reusable menstrual products and environmentally friendly hygiene kits.

Anticipatory action and early action protocol helped to get ahead of disasters

The Finnish Red Cross continued to promote links of anticipatory action to the overall disaster risk management of the National Society and authorities and to ensure sustainable early warning system development and impact-based forecasting. Instead of a stand-alone approach, the FRC is advocating for and

supporting a holistic approach covering preparedness, contingency, the institutional level and national processes. While government ownership increased in many countries, further efforts are needed to integrate anticipatory action into national and local disaster risk management frameworks, in order to ensure that pre-financing is in place and coordinated among multiple actors.

The Simplified Early Action Protocol for urban heatwaves was tested in Myanmar in a simulation to refine the proposed actions. Following a heatwave in Yangon in April 2024, the Myanmar Red Cross Society delivered cash assistance, provided first aid and awareness sessions, and set up shaded areas with first aid posts. Following the activation of the Early Action Protocol (EAP) for drought in Zimbabwe, the project supported the expansion of early actions through drought-tolerant seed distributions (4,100 farmers), livestock dipping and dosing (28,000), and in-kind food distributions (6,910 persons). In Rwanda, as part of the regional multi-country project, a flood EAP was developed. In Nepal, a heat Early Action Protocol was prepared, targeting four hottest cities.

Crisis modifiers and enhanced capacities led to early response to various emergencies

The use of crisis modifiers and strengthened capacities of local communities and National Societies improved the effectiveness of response and recovery. The capacities of the National Societies were enhanced through training, prepositioning relief items, strengthening of local and district level structures, and increased engagement with public authorities and other actors. A Preparedness for Effective Response (PER) assessment was conducted in Zimbabwe. The National Society is developing a Plan of Action to address priority areas for development with the support of the FRC and other partners.

In Nepal, the crisis modifier was activated twice due to forecasts of severe flooding and landslides during the 2024 monsoon. Key actions included early warning messaging, volunteer mobilisation for preparedness and fast evacuations to move people to safe locations before their homes were flooded, and distribution of ready-to-eat food. In Somalia, the crisis modifier was used to rehabilitate a clinic damaged due to a storm. In Burundi, the crisis modifier was activated for floods. The Myanmar Red Cross Society's Emergency Operation Centres (EOC) were strengthened and Emergency Response Teams expanded. In July 2024, Mandalay, Kachin, Magway and Yangon EOCs played a vital role in coordinating rapid response to floods, showcasing the value of improved early warning and communication systems.

Collaboration with disaster management and meteorological agencies increased

National Societies in most target countries participated actively in anticipatory action and Early Warnings for All platforms and technical working groups engaging with early warning early action value chain partners and contributing to the development of early warning systems at all levels. Multi-stakeholder trainings and workshops between meteorological and disaster management agencies, the Red Cross and communities in Kenya, Rwanda and Tanzania gathered key stakeholders to agree on triggers and thresholds for warning information and to improve the co-production of forecast products. Community-level feedback on hazard impacts also improved the timeliness and relevance of forecasts and warnings. In Myanmar, heatwave anticipation systems were improved through staff training and forecast communication enhanced with the Department of Meteorology and Hydrology. The Ethiopian Red Cross Society enhanced its role in national coordination mechanisms for anticipatory action and focused on community-based disaster risk management and early warning systems, with specific expertise on floods. Burundi saw the approval of a national early warning system plan, with active support from the FRC-supported project. Institut Géographique du Burundi (IGEBU) weather alerts broadcast via local radio stations helped communities anticipate and reduce vulnerability to climate events.

The Nepal Red Cross Society rolled out a new climate and environment policy in Koshi Province. It also contributed to national climate processes and to the establishment of an Anticipatory Action Clinic under the Ministry of Home Affairs. The project initiated a multi-hazard early warning early action mechanism with local authorities, involving extensive community consultations and inclusive communication channels using various

communication channels and methods to ensure that actionable information reaches all people timely. Results of the work were analysed with stakeholders of the Finnish Meteorological Institute's FNEP 3 project's exit workshop.

2.2 Focus area 2: Health of women and girls

Changing behaviour through enhanced knowledge and awareness

National Societies supported by the Finnish Red Cross made significant progress in enhancing sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) knowledge across diverse communities in 2024. Targeted awareness sessions for men and women, particularly mothers and fathers, were conducted in multiple countries including Afghanistan, Burundi, Kenya, Myanmar, Sierra Leone and Zimbabwe, strengthening understanding of maternal health risks and appropriate care-seeking behaviours. In Niger, community-based outreach resulted in measurable improvements in family planning knowledge, with self-reported contraceptive use increasing from 19% at baseline to 54% at mid-term evaluation. Community health volunteers and workers played central roles in delivering health promotion messages focused on diarrhoea, pneumonia and malaria prevention in Sierra Leone, Burundi and South Sudan. In Sierra Leone, trained volunteers conducted household visits, while mobile cinema events educated communities on preventative actions supporting child health, including handwashing demonstrations, mosquito net hanging, and oral rehydration solution preparation.

In Zimbabwe, the Enhanced Vulnerability and Capacity Assessment (EVCA) from 2022 had identified fishermen and associated communities as priority groups for integrated health interventions. Following training on SRHR, the participants reported improved understanding of family planning and disease prevention measures. The endline assessment in Sierra Leone demonstrated exceptional progress in maternal health knowledge, with recognition of pregnancy danger signs like vaginal bleeding increasing from 57% to 92% and awareness of baby movement cessation rising from 17% to 66%. These results were achieved through engagement of women's groups and community education sessions provided by volunteers and staff. Despite increased knowledge, people in these villages still face challenges accessing quality health care, which limits short term impact in terms of health outcomes of these efforts.

In Myanmar, baseline findings revealed low awareness of SRHR, WASH and disaster preparedness. The project interventions were targeted to address those. For example, Women's Clubs conducted cooking demonstration activities, providing households with practical and culturally relevant knowledge to reduce malnutrition and improve overall health. Through the evidence-based Community-Based Health and First Aid (eCBHFA) approach, volunteers enhanced prevention of epidemics and communicable diseases and hygiene promotion.

In Kenya, Community Health Promoters (CHPs) played a vital role in engaging local populations and ensuring the sustainability of health initiatives. CHPs strengthened access to health education and services by serving as trusted connections between the community and healthcare providers.

Burundi Red Cross's holistic Model Household Approach promoted SRHR knowledge while integrating critical HIV awareness, ensuring community members understood their HIV status as the first step to seeking appropriate care. The project utilised the eCBHFA approach for teaching about SRHR and particularly maternal health, providing systematic and standardised health education to communities.

In Afghanistan, WASH clubs were formed in schools and CBHFA volunteers were active in communities and grandmothers' clubs. The school clubs formed during the previous funding cycle were still active, even without external funding. Awareness-raising sessions were held on hygiene promotion and menstrual management. Girls bring the information to their communities, which is increasingly important as girls are not allowed to school after 12 years of age.

Creating supportive environments for appropriate care-seeking was built into all community health and SRHR programming. Male engagement contributed to positive social norms change across multiple contexts. In South Sudan, Niger and Kenya, structured approaches involving men as allies in maternal health improved

women's healthcare access. In Niger, husbands' clubs supported women's reproductive health choices, with community feedback suggesting increased acceptance of family planning choices for women. More broadly, religious and community leaders played pivotal roles in improving care-seeking in Kenya, Niger and Zimbabwe.

Towards the elimination of harmful traditional practices

Evidence-based social norms change approaches were used in Ethiopia to eliminate harmful traditional practices. The transformative approach engaged men alongside women as essential partners in changing harmful norms. The community conversation methodology facilitated dialogue among key stakeholders, including men, women, adolescents, teachers and the police, and created space for collective reconsideration of traditional practices. By involving religious leaders, the initiative addressed powerful normative influences while respecting community leadership structures. As a result, communities made public declarations against female genital mutilation (FGM) and child, early and forced marriages (CEFM). Six kebeles formally declared FGM elimination following a rigorous process involving layered verification by both the Ethiopian Red Cross Society and sub-regional administration to ensure uninitiated girls remained uncut.

Improving access to and quality of health services

Ensuring service availability and strengthening referral systems remained crucial for translating improved knowledge into health outcomes. In Sierra Leone, community-managed obstetric emergency funds facilitated transportation of pregnant women facing complications to health services. Community leaders expressed confidence that these funds would continue benefiting their community beyond the project timeline.

In Kenya, mobile clinics decreased barriers to SRHR service access in regions with high maternal health needs. By bringing services directly to remote communities, the National Society ensured that distance and transportation challenges no longer prevented women from receiving timely essential care. In addition, the Values Clarification and Attitude Transformation (VCAT) training worked to improve provider attitudes toward adolescent SRHR service provision in Tana River County. Through structured exercises that revealed unconscious biases, healthcare providers engaged with rights-based approaches to adolescent care. Journey mapping activities fostered empathy by examining obstacles young people face when seeking services, while participatory approaches in "safe spaces" made implicit biases visible and open for reconsideration. These types of attitude change, while meaningful for improving patient experiences of respectful care, need continued engagement of the government for the development of supportive infrastructure, training and staffing to have lasting impact.

In Burundi, nutrition services were provided through Learning and Nutritional Rehabilitation Centres (FARN). FARN are community-based structures that rehabilitate malnourished children through feeding demonstrations and education for caregivers while providing referrals for severe cases. Community health workers trained in FARN management not only screened children for malnutrition but also ensured referral follow-up, confirming that identified children received appropriate treatment.

The Finnish Red Cross supported targeted interventions to enhance healthcare quality in several contexts. In Somalia, the introduction of ALMANACH (Algorithm for the Management of Acute Childhood illness), a digital clinical decision support system, transformed paediatric care quality. The ALMANACH digital tool significantly improved paediatric care quality while promoting antimicrobial stewardship in a context where oversight of prescribing practices remains limited. A published evaluation demonstrated significant improvements, with antibiotic prescriptions reduced from 58.1% pre-implementation to 16.0% post-implementation. The tool

dramatically improved guideline adherence, with danger sign assessment increasing from 1.3% to 99%, counselling on follow-up rising from 12% to 94%, and preventive care measures like Vitamin A supplementation screening improving from 19.9% to 96.1%. Somalia's clinical services also improved through Basic Emergency Obstetric and Newborn Care (BEmONC) training given to seven facilities, which enabled facilities to provide critical lifesaving interventions for mothers and newborns.

Improving access to water, sanitation and hygiene as a foundation for health

The Finnish Red Cross supported WASH interventions across Afghanistan, Burundi, Ethiopia, Myanmar, Sierra Leone, South Sudan and Zimbabwe, using sustainable community management approaches to ensure lasting impact. In Sierra Leone, the project transformed water access, with household use of improved drinking water sources increasing from just 13% at baseline to 98% at endline. The project supported the construction or rehabilitation of water points for 56 of 62 target communities, dramatically improving water security. The project in Sierra Leone also demonstrated climate–health integration through mosquito breeding site elimination and climate-resilient water infrastructure. Communities reported this environmental management as one of the most significant health impacts, directly linking ecological interventions to disease reduction. In addition, Sierra Leone Red Cross's approach to reusable menstrual pad production demonstrated particularly strong outcomes, with participants reporting improved comfort, affordability and reduced stigma.

The National Societies of Afghanistan, Kenya and Ethiopia integrated menstrual hygiene management into school-based programming, providing both menstrual health information and hygiene kits through school clubs. This approach recognised the crucial link between menstrual hygiene and girls' education, addressing a key barrier to school attendance.

Based on a small survey done by the Zimbabwe Red Cross, 51% of trained women continued pad production despite material challenges, and 93% of respondents observed notable improvements in community menstrual hygiene practices, including increased awareness, better access to safe products, and reduced reliance on less sanitary traditional materials. Significantly, 88% of respondents expressed a preference for locally sourced materials, citing their durability, cost-effectiveness and suitability for daily use.

Inclusive water committees responsible for the management of community water projects, linked with either trained pump minders or local artisans who could perform repairs when needed, ensured prompt responses to infrastructure challenges. In Sierra Leone, committees successfully collected community funds to pay these local technicians, demonstrating financial sustainability.

The South Sudan Red Cross's approach to sustainable water management included strategic borehole drilling during the peak of the dry season to reach the deepest water levels, reducing the risk of infrastructure failure during drought periods. Community water point committees received comprehensive training on maintenance and repair, establishing clear management protocols before the construction began.

In Afghanistan, Community-Initiated Micro Projects consist of drilling boreholes to reach groundwater, pumping it with solar power to tanks and distributing it to households through a network of pipes. However, the approach faced a challenge in only providing some households with clean water and leaving others without, which is why the mid-term review included a recommendation to build communal wells rather than individual household pipes. WASH activities in schools consist of establishing WASH clubs, trainings on hygiene promotion and distribution of hygiene kits to schoolgirls. Hygiene promotion continues in the communities through grandmothers' committees and CBHFA volunteers.

In Ethiopia, sustainable community access to water was prioritised in drought-prone areas through cistern construction, providing more reliable access during dry periods. However, some cisterns were not accessible, and maintenance was insufficient at times. Water management committees faced significant challenges due to inadequate training and necessary materials.

In Myanmar, the project provided latrine pans, covers and pipes to 10 villages, with community members actively participating in constructing the accessible latrines. Campaigns during the Global Handwashing Day and World Toilet Day complemented the ongoing hygiene awareness sessions.

2.3 Focus area 3: Reinforcing the interlinkages between humanitarian and development action

In 2024, the Finnish Red Cross continued to enhance the National Societies' ability to have humanitarian access and safely reach beneficiaries in conflict situations, working in close partnership with the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) through the Safer Access Framework (SAF) approach. The primary focus of this flagship approach was to increase awareness among both the parties to the conflict and the public about the National Society's role as a neutral, impartial and independent humanitarian organisation. Achieving this requires deliberate communication before and during conflicts to reinforce the mandate and operational principles of the Red Cross Red Crescent Societies. The FRC also aimed to strengthen the organisational capacity of National Societies to effectively address misinformation and disinformation.

To support long-term communication capacity building, SAF initiatives were implemented with National Societies in Afghanistan, Ethiopia, South Sudan, Somalia and the Sahel region. In 2024, a new SAF Communication Adviser was recruited for Myanmar, bringing the total number of full-time SAF communication advisers specialising in strategic communication management, crisis communication and reputation management to four, and the SAF programming covering countries in two continents.

Ethiopia: Expanding safe access through strategic communication

In Ethiopia, a variety of conflict-sensitive community and stakeholder engagement strategies were implemented to improve safe access in conflict-affected regions, including Amhara, Tigray, Oromia, Somali, Benishangul-Gumuz, Afar and South Ethiopia. Dissemination sessions and awareness campaigns were conducted in collaboration with community-based organisations, government officials and security personnel to increase understanding of the Fundamental Principles of the Red Cross Red Crescent Movement, proper emblem usage and international humanitarian law.

Leadership and communications personnel from 11 Ethiopian Red Cross Society (ERCS) regional branches were trained in crisis communication, the Red Cross Code of Conduct and the SAF principles and tools. In addition, nearly 200 television and radio spots promoting emblem protection and safe access messaging were broadcast on national and regional media outlets in Amharic, Afar, Oromo and Tigrigna languages. This significantly expanded ERCS's public outreach across diverse regions.

The strategic use of multiple languages, communication platforms and engagement methods strengthened the understanding of ERCS's humanitarian mandate among local authorities, security personnel and community members. Standardised, evidence-based messaging in mass sensitisation campaigns reinforced ERCS's credibility while minimising the risk of misperception or interference in sensitive areas.

South Sudan: Strengthening trust and community engagement

In South Sudan, the South Sudan Red Cross (SSRC) implemented a series of carefully designed, conflict-sensitive strategies that meaningfully enhanced its perception as a neutral, impartial and independent humanitarian organisation. Nationwide radio messaging played a key role in improving public understanding of SSRC's auxiliary role and contributed to reducing misinformation. World Red Cross Day celebrations were leveraged to foster dialogue, increase visibility and build community trust. Targeted youth engagement further reinforced these efforts – students were trained as volunteer peace ambassadors, helping spread the Red Cross's humanitarian values organically within communities.

In partnership with the FRC and the ICRC, the first-ever SSRC-specific perception survey was conducted, providing concrete evidence to shape more effective and risk-aware communication strategies. By identifying trust gaps and incorporating community feedback, the SSRC refined its messaging to better resonate with local

populations. To ensure authentic representation of local voices, the SSRC also equipped its field teams with mobile journalism tools, enabling real-time content gathering that reflects on-the-ground realities. Together, these strategies formed a cohesive approach that not only strengthened SSRC's acceptance and protection in complex operating environments but also reinforced its operational independence and transparency.

Sahel and Coastal West Africa: strengthening humanitarian access through effective communication

In the Sahel region – specifically Mali, Niger, and Burkina Faso – the Safer Access communication partnership supported National Societies in strengthening safe access and community acceptance through localised communication strategies. These efforts have focused on training influential community members, volunteers, and local branch managers in operational and crisis communication, rumour management, and countering misinformation and hate speech. Equipped with contextualised tools such as image boxes and tailored key messages, these trained individuals have been instrumental in reaching hard-to-access areas. In Mali, an SAF strategy and action plan were developed in 2024, with implementation underway and a perception survey ongoing to inform future revisions. A dedicated communications officer now supports a trained pool of volunteers across sensitive regions. In Burkina Faso, a joint Movement communication strategy was launched, and over 400 volunteers have been trained in safer access and crisis communication, with further deployments planned under a new agreement with the Finnish Red Cross.

In Niger, support for SAF has been paused due to political tensions and the expulsion of several international organisations, including the ICRC. The country's rejection of perceived Western influence, following recent coups and severed ties with France, has created a challenging environment for humanitarian actors. Despite this, an access and perception assessment conducted in 2024 identified key challenges and informed recommendations, which have been incorporated into the 2025 budget. However, follow-up activities remain pending. Across the Sahel, these communication efforts are adapting to complex and evolving contexts, aiming to improve humanitarian access, reinforce the Red Cross's neutral image, and enhance the safety and effectiveness of operations.

In the coastal countries of Benin, Togo and Côte d'Ivoire, coordinated communication within the Red Cross Red Crescent Movement has proven essential for ensuring secure access and community engagement amid growing regional instability. These countries face increasing pressures from the Sahel crisis, including population displacement, refugee influxes and political tensions. In Togo, a comprehensive set of communication tools – such as Movement communication guidelines, key messages and safety protocols – was developed and validated through a collaborative workshop. Volunteers and branch managers in the crisis-affected Savanes region were trained and equipped to implement these tools. Similarly, in Benin, communication strategies and tools are being developed in response to a deteriorating security situation in the north. A workshop trained 30 volunteers in priority areas, and risk mitigation measures are being finalised. In Côte d'Ivoire, rising tensions ahead of the October presidential election and the spillover of the Sahel crisis have prompted the identification and training of volunteer communicators in sensitive regions. These SAF initiatives aimed to improve perception, facilitate humanitarian access, and counter misinformation and hate speech across the region.

Afghanistan: integrating crisis communications into operations

In March 2024, the Finnish Red Cross's Safer Access communication partnership expanded to the Afghan Red Crescent Society (ARCS). This partnership was planned together to focus on the structured roll-out of tools and strategies to strengthen the organisation's crisis management capacity.

Five practical tools were introduced, including a press release template, media inquiry tracker and incident recording format. A four-day crisis communications workshop was held with 51 participants, focusing on response protocols. Advisory support was provided for message development aligned with the Movement's Fundamental Principles, reflected on radio, television and in print materials such as brochures and information booklets. The workshop led to early behavioural changes, with four ARCS branches beginning to document and

respond to crises using the new tools in coordination with the headquarters. The ARCS social media team also began using analytics to refine content and engagement strategies.

As a result, a jointly developed communications action plan was endorsed by ARCS leadership and aligned with support from Movement partners, including the IFRC. Communication means facilitating Safer Access are now integrated into ARCS's broader communications strategy, moving from stand-alone support to an embedded component. Public messaging evolved from general references to the Fundamental Principles to more practical examples of how these principles are applied in humanitarian work. Together, these developments are enabling the ARCS to communicate more proactively before and during crises, counter misinformation more effectively and strengthen public understanding of its mandate – ultimately contributing to improved access, acceptance and security.

SRHR in protracted crises and complex emergencies

Ensuring continuation of basic health services and delivering effective sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) programming in protracted crises required innovative approaches across several challenging contexts. In Somalia, the Finnish Red Cross supported nine Somali Red Crescent Society's health clinics in 2024, reaching 112,569 individuals with essential health services, including 23,000 children. The comprehensive approach included 31,657 antenatal consultations, 7,235 skilled deliveries and 9,285 postnatal consultations in a challenging operating environment. For example, inter-clan fighting in the Buuhodle region led to protracted displacement in the Togdheer region where one FRC-supported clinic was able to provide for the surge of health needs of IDPs.

In Burkina Faso, the National Society responded to security challenges in blockaded communities by training traditional birth attendants (TBAs), who then facilitated 186 facility-based childbirths by accompanying pregnant women to functioning health facilities. These TBAs provided follow-up home visits for over 1,000 women and distributed delivery kits to ensure safer births even in the most isolated areas. The National Society alongside midwives and traditional birth attendants also developed a remote peer support model that allowed for immediate phone support when needed.

The grandmothers' clubs in Afghanistan are an important channel of information sharing and learning in remote communities. Community members and trainers reported better knowledge of pregnancy, deliveries, and newborn and postnatal care, including referral mechanisms to health facilities. They are also actively helping to abandon some harmful traditional practices like giving oil rather than breastmilk to newborns and giving food to infants rather than practising exclusive breastfeeding. In addition, community and school-based health promotion is providing life-saving skills for community members. Pregnancy danger signs are better recognised and referred. Contraception is available in health facilities for birth spacing, and the communities were made aware of that. Enhanced hygiene has reduced the occurrence of diarrheal diseases, and hygiene parcels have assisted girls in menstrual health. The mid-term review conducted in 2024 recommended to find new ways of engaging girls in communities after 12 years of age when they can no longer attend school. This may prove challenging in the current situation.

In Niger, the Safe Delivery App provided clinical support to 42 community health workers, who were the primary people conducting follow-up visits for women after birth. This digital solution supported improved quality standards even with limited supervision capacity in insecure areas.

2.4 Focus area 4: Building strong and inclusive local actors

Supporting the development of partner National Societies

In 2024, the Finnish Red Cross continued to support the development of its National Society partners through both direct and indirect National Society Development (NSD) support and investments, closely aligned with each partner's own development priorities. All NSD support by the FRC is partner-led and tailored to fit their

needs, ranging from sectoral capacity enhancement and institutional systems development to organisation-wide development processes.

A meta-analysis of the mid-term reviews conducted during 2024 indicates that the programmatic cooperation between the FRC and its partner National Societies has contributed to capacity strengthening, especially in the areas such as planning, monitoring evaluation and reporting (PMER), protection, gender and inclusion (PGI), and technical areas such as health, water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) and disaster risk reduction (DRR). Staff and volunteer competencies were identified and improved across all partner organisations, especially in financial management, PMER, and technical areas directly related to programme implementation.

In Afghanistan, for instance, the capacities of ARCS volunteers were strengthened in community and reproductive health, first aid and epidemic control – contributing to ARCS's overall disaster response capacity. In Zimbabwe, one of the NSD milestones in 2024 was the completion of the Preparedness for Effective Response (PER) assessment. This exercise enabled the Zimbabwe Red Cross Society (ZRCS) to identify key strengths and critical gaps in its disaster response capacity and has laid the groundwork for targeted improvements. In Somalia, the FRC supported the Somali Red Crescent Society (SRCS) in the development of a Community Health Strategy and an Early Action Protocol for epidemic response. These tools strengthened the SRCS's positioning within the national health system and disaster preparedness architecture. In Nepal, the FRC supported the Nepal Red Cross Society (NRCS) to revise its Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Policy and Response Manual. These updates are essential for improving operational preparedness and ensuring an effective disaster response mechanism aligned with national standards.

Financial sustainability

A central question guiding Finnish Red Cross's financial sustainability work in recent years has been how to ensure that its support complements efforts by the Red Cross Red Crescent Movement and external actors, avoiding duplication and fragmentation. In line with this, the FRC has been revising and refining its approach to financial sustainability support. Although the FRC has technical capacity and resources in financial development, it does not act as a specialised actor in any of the four pillars of financial sustainability. Instead, its approach is to stay informed and engaged at the global level – through alliance mapping, negotiating appropriate cooperation agreements and aligning with broader policy frameworks. At the country level, in contexts where other National Societies are already implementing and supporting financial sustainability initiatives, the FRC aims to complement or expand these efforts. In countries where no such initiatives are in place, the FRC may finance another Movement actor to provide support – such as Norwegian Red Cross's Financial Development Services or the Global Alliance on Financial Sustainability – or mobilise alternative resources. Guided by this evolving approach, the FRC remained committed to strengthening the financial sustainability of its partner National Societies. This commitment focused on building core institutional capacity that goes beyond project-based interventions and supports long-term resilience.

In Ethiopia, significant progress was made through continued roll-out and institutionalisation of the SAP Business One (SAP B1) system across ERCS branches. Key activities included the procurement of ten new user licences, payment of SAP subscription fees for 2024–2025 and comprehensive training for 26 finance staff. These efforts led to improved accuracy and timeliness in financial reporting, enhanced compliance with donor and internal requirements, and more effective use of SAP B1 for recording transactions and monitoring budgets.

In Zimbabwe, the FRC continued to support the ZRCS in its ongoing work to improve financial management and sustainability. As a precondition for developing core cost recovery policy, the ZRCS needed to clear a backlog of annual audits and consolidate its financial statements. The FRC provided financial assistance for these audits, and while the bulk of the work on core costs policy is planned for 2025, improvements in financial and risk management practice were already observed. Close collaboration between the FRC and ZRCS finance teams contributed to better financial reporting standards.

In Sierra Leone, although no dedicated financial sustainability budget was allocated in 2024, FRC support through the health project enabled the delivery of financial management training and mentoring for branch finance and administration volunteers and staff. As a result, improvements were reported in the quality and timeliness of both narrative and financial reporting.

Volunteer engagement and branch development

Branch development and volunteer engagement are foundational to building strong, resilient and inclusive National Societies. The Finnish Red Cross recognises that branch development is not only essential to strengthening local voluntarism and humanitarian service delivery but also critical to the long-term sustainability of National Societies' programming. The need for stable finances, structured volunteer management, and improved governance and planning systems are some of the elements of strong local Red Cross Red Crescent branches. Where branches have been able to integrate these elements into their operations, they have demonstrated stronger local legitimacy, deeper community engagement and greater ability to sustain services beyond the life of externally funded projects.

Assessment of a local branch's operational capacities is one of the key steps in the branch development process. In 2024, the FRC supported branch level capacity assessments and the use of the Branch Organisational Capacity Assessment (BOCA) tool in Ethiopia and Somalia. In Burkina Faso, the FRC provided financial support for the training of national BOCA facilitators to scale this effort.

In Nepal, through the Reducing Disaster Impact through Inclusive Preparedness and Anticipatory Action (REDI) programme, the FRC has invested in strengthening the institutional capacity of six local units of the NRCS in the Koshi province. The FRC supported both structural improvements and capacity building, including the installation of WASH facilities and the delivery of PGI training. In addition, province-wide financial management training sessions reached all fourteen district chapters in Koshi, covering areas such as procurement, warehouse management, administration, auditing, compliance, reporting and financial software use. With this support, a few district chapters developed their own resource mobilisation plans to sustain core services beyond the project cycle. Recognising that many branches operate in resource-constrained conditions – often without reliable electricity, internet access or transportation – the FRC allocated resources in 2024 to address some urgent branch infrastructure needs. This support included the installation of basic WASH facilities, improvements to training spaces and upgrades to essential branch infrastructure, helping ensure that staff and volunteers can work in safe, functional environments.

In South Sudan, the FRC contributed to multiple targeted NSD interventions under the IHIP (Integrated Health Improvement project) using a pooled funding mechanism. This support focused on the institutional strengthening of the Rumbek Branch of the SSRC. Activities included capacity building in financial accountability, business development, volunteer and youth engagement, and security management. Notably, in December 2024, business skills training was delivered to fourteen branch representatives, equipping them with foundational knowledge in business planning, financial literacy and the Business Canvas Model. In November, a dedicated training on security management equipped staff to apply the SAF during field operations.

The FRC also supported branch-level income generating activities in Burundi, Nepal and Sierra Leone. In each country, the support included tailored training and provision of essential equipment to enhance income generation capacities at the branch level. In Ethiopia, the FRC provided funding to ensure the continuity of core services in the Afar Regional Branch, including coverage of some key salaries and operational costs. This support was vital to maintaining functionality in a challenging operating environment.

2.5 Advancing gender equality and inclusion across the Programme

The Finnish Red Cross continued to deepen its commitment to protection, gender and inclusion (PGI) throughout 2024 by both increasing its own investments in technical resources as well as integrating PGI into all programming. In 2024, FRC's own capacity was further strengthened as the FRC Country Manager in

Myanmar assumed the role of PGI focal point for Asia, complementing the team of a Senior Specialist at headquarters and a Regional PGI Adviser based in Nairobi. Technical support on disability inclusion continued through collaboration with Abilis Consulting and CBM Global Inclusion Advisory Group (CBM), along with their global and local networks of organisations of persons with disabilities and women's organisations across Programme countries.

The FRC also contributed to knowledge development, notably through the revision of the "Building Blocks (BB) for Disability-Inclusive Programmes" tool, co-owned with the IFRC, Abilis and CBM Global. The participatory revision process involved consultations across the Movement and laid the groundwork for operational pilot testing of the tool in 2025. In addition to the BB tool, a new community-level disability inclusion awareness raising tool was also drafted, initially focusing on South Sudan.

At the institutional level, the FRC focused on supporting PGI-related policy development, development and implementation of PGI action plans, building staff and volunteer capacity, knowledge development, and promoting inclusive human resources and safeguarding practices with its partners. For instance, the Ethiopian Red Cross Society conducted a PGI Organisational Assessment and a Landscape Review, which identified systemic improvements, including better use of disaggregated data and the need for more inclusive leadership. In Nepal, two district-level PGI committees were further strengthened. These committees began holding regular meetings to discuss inclusion within the Nepal Red Cross Society's core service areas and developed annual Gender Equality and Social Inclusion plans. Their PGI and disability inclusion knowledge also grew through targeted trainings that had 51 participants, including 30 women.

Special efforts were made to strengthen diversity in leadership and staffing. In Burundi, 18 governance members – ensuring gender parity – received training on inclusion and contributed to an action plan promoting women's leadership within the Burundi Red Cross. To support safeguarding and the development and roll-out of prevention of sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment (PSEAH) policies, the FRC worked closely with several National Societies, including those in Sierra Leone and Ethiopia. Institutional commitment to PSEAH was reflected in structures such as Sierra Leone's Safeguarding Working Group. While training has improved awareness and confidence, harmonising safeguarding practices and moving from policy to effective implementation remain areas requiring further attention.

The integration of PGI principles and tools in programmes and operations progressed across several partner National Societies. For instance, needs assessments increasingly accounted for gender and disability risks, and project planning focused on equitable access and meaningful participation. Monitoring increasingly emphasised the use of sex, age and disability-disaggregated data (SADDD) – however, challenges remain in accurate data collection.

Disability inclusion was further advanced through practical, participatory approaches across various contexts. In Niger, inclusion targets ensured the participation of persons with disabilities and women in all project activities. In Burundi, 100 key community members – including religious leaders – were trained on disability inclusion. In Myanmar, approximately 5% of Cyclone Mocha cash recipients were persons with disabilities. In Somalia, disability inclusion training was delivered by a local organisation of persons with disabilities (OPD) to clinical staff. In South Sudan, accessibility audits guided improvements in physical access and service quality. In Ethiopia, collaboration with OPDs supported the construction of accessible water facilities. The Zimbabwe Red Cross has recruited volunteers with disabilities to strengthen inclusion. In Nepal, the REDI project worked to make early warning more inclusive by developing an inclusive early warning communication channel that links informal and marginalised groups – such as groups of persons with disabilities, i.e. inclusive self-help groups – to a formal communication channel, and is in the process to institutionalise it in the national early warning systems. Collaboration with OPDs was essential for ensuring the relevance and quality of programming. They bring critical knowledge, represent the priorities and voices of persons with disabilities, and play a key role in promoting accountability and local ownership.

FRC-supported programmes aim to move beyond gender-sensitive and gender-responsive approaches toward gender-transformative change. This includes challenging harmful gender norms, promoting equitable decision-making and strengthening the leadership and agency of women and girls, particularly in fragile contexts. In Afghanistan, grandmothers' groups played an accepted and influential role in promoting maternal and child health, gender norms and women's rights. Female trainers led awareness sessions and community dialogues, creating safe spaces for women to discuss protection, health and inclusion. In Kenya, training on leadership and advocacy enabled women to actively engage in local governance and advocate for their rights and those of other marginalised groups.

Strengthening sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) prevention and response remained a priority. Awareness raising and training campaigns – such as those in Burkina Faso – reached communities, health workers, teachers and local leaders, creating safer environments and shifting harmful norms. An intersectional approach increased the participation of diverse and marginalised groups. In South Sudan, kitchen gardens and village savings and loan associations (VSLAs) improved women's livelihoods and reduced child marriage risks. In Burundi, sensitisation efforts increased the number of SGBV cases referred to care structures. In Kenya, 60 Maslah leaders were trained on GBV and became advocates for survivors' rights. Income-generating activities targeting SGBV survivors and persons with disabilities were recognised as good practices that support empowerment and social inclusion.

Some common lessons in 2024 included the need for stronger leadership support for PGI development within National Societies, further investments in dedicated PGI funding, increased diversity among staff and volunteers, and more systematic collection and use of disaggregated data. Building on progress made, there is still room to increase the participation of women and marginalised groups in decision-making, deepen the inclusion of persons with diverse disabilities, formalise partnerships with OPDs, and advance accessibility.

3. Achievements in communication, global education and advocacy in 2024

3.1 Development communication

The Finnish Red Cross (FRC) conducts impactful communication about its development programme and the Programme's results. This communication raises awareness among people in Finland of humanitarian needs, complex development issues and the importance of development work in the world's most vulnerable communities. The communication also reinforces the role of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs as an enabler of development cooperation and supports the Ministry's development communication efforts.

Due to its unique position, the FRC supports the work of the local Red Cross Red Crescent in many of the protracted and forgotten crises. In many countries, development and humanitarian funding overlap, and the same National Societies are working both in development and humanitarian landscapes. FRC communication is dedicated to shedding light to these complex nexus situations.

In 2024, the FRC communicated extensively about development cooperation through its communication channels, including social media channels, the *Punainen Risti* magazine, web page punainenristi.fi, press releases, newsletters and various fundraising materials. The social media channels reach the widest audiences among FRC communication channels. They include Facebook, LinkedIn, Instagram and X, and have over 179,000 followers. The social media content reached a total of over nine million views in 2024, showing an increase of over 33% from the year 2023. On average, posts related to development cooperation were published three times a week. These posts gained over half a million views. As part of FRC's social media communication, a broad campaign focusing on the results of development cooperation was carried out, highlighting examples of successful programme work from 2023.

The *Punainen Risti* magazine, published four times a year, has a print run of 70,000. In 2024, the magazine featured three in-depth reports on development cooperation in Ethiopia, Sierra Leone and Tajikistan.

In 2024, the FRC web page gained a total of 2.4 million page views including all pages in Finnish, English and Swedish. Development cooperation was covered in more than ten online articles, which received thousands of reads. The articles highlighted, among other things, the results achieved through development cooperation, the impacts of climate change, and health work carried out in the local communities.

In 2024, the FRC made two communication field trips, one to Zimbabwe and the other to Ethiopia, to gather high-quality professional videos, photographs and interviews of people who had benefited from development cooperation, as well as of Red Cross staff and volunteers. The trip to Zimbabwe focused on the consequences of climate change. The trip to Ethiopia collected materials related to the impacts of drought and climate change. The materials from both trips were shared through the IFRC, facilitating a broad reach of the materials within the Movement network. Especially the Ethiopia piece on the impact of drought on pastoralist families and Red Cross work was widely used by other Red Cross societies, e.g. the Swedish Red Cross.

In 2024 one of the main focuses of FRC communication was to work on new video formats to reach new audiences on social media channels. The core of these concepts was to highlight the perspectives of the local employees, volunteers and beneficiaries. These new video formats were produced during the communication field trips to Zimbabwe and Ethiopia. In addition to publishing the videos on FRC's social media channels and web site, the videos were also shared with the IFRC.

The FRC always plans and implements its communications in close cooperation with the local partners and the National Societies. Communication efforts support the development of the communications capacity of local Red Cross Red Crescent societies through training and other forms of collaboration. In 2024, local communication was supported through remote meetings and online training sessions. Additionally, as part of the communication trip to Ethiopia, a five-day training was organised for the Ethiopian Red Cross communications team. The workshop focused on strengthening local communication skills and building capacity to produce high-quality communication materials for the use of the Red Cross Red Crescent Movement.

The Finnish Red Cross awarded the annual Development Journalism Prize in cooperation with the Union of Journalists in Finland, the Finnish Foundation for Media and Development (VIKES) and the Helsingin Sanomat Foundation. The purpose of the award is to raise the visibility and appreciation of journalism focused on developing countries. In 2024, the prize was awarded to *Helsingin Sanomat* journalist Tommi Nieminen and photographer Sami Kero.

3.2 Advocacy

Advocacy for the recognition of the humanitarian impacts of climate crisis remained as the main priority for 2024. During 2024 the Finnish Red Cross (FRC) further defined its advocacy objectives based on progress made in 2022 and 2023 and its partnerships with National Societies, the IFRC and strategic partners, such as the Finnish Meteorological Institute (FMI) and Red Cross Red Crescent Climate Centre (RCCC). FRC's objective in the short/medium term is to ensure that Finland's development (including humanitarian) policy does not decrease its support to developing countries' climate-smart disaster prevention/disaster risk reduction (DP/DRR), including early warning early action (EWEA). The FRC aims to ensure that the full value chain of the Early Warnings for All initiative is strengthened and stakeholders' focus on community-level early action increased. The FRC also contributed to the advocacy efforts related to the UN climate negotiations, aiming to ensure that the revision of nationally determined contributions are ambitious enough for the 1.5 degree target, that the global goal on adaptation strengthens local action, and that the Loss and Damage Fund becomes operational and accessible to local actors. In addition, the FRC advocated for increased inclusion of climate change impacts on health into the international climate policy agenda.

To ensure its advocacy is based on experience and evidence, the FRC focused in 2024 on producing explicit knowledge products on the basis of its programmatic support to National Societies, including a policy paper on why early warnings do not lead to early action on the basis of the East Africa EWEA programme, and two

studies on climate impacts on health in Myanmar and Nepal in cooperation with the RCRC Climate Centre and the IFRC. Additionally, the FRC initiated an update of and contributed significantly to a guidance document on cooperation with Meteorological Offices that was published by the Climate Centre. Also, one case study on a success story in Nepal, as well as a policy brief on multi-hazard early warning systems (EWS) in Nepal, and a more extensive study on inclusive early action practices in EWS in Nepal, Zimbabwe and the East Africa EWEA were initiated but will continue into 2025. Cooperation with WWF Finland continued especially on advocacy related to nature-based solutions with a joint op-ed and planning for deepening advocacy cooperation.

In 2024, the FRC supported the organisation of the first regional Dialogue Platform on Anticipatory Humanitarian Action in East Africa and contributed to the ones in Southern Africa and South Asia. The FRC took part in the Asia-Pacific Ministerial Conference on DRR as part of the IFRC delegation as well as in the Global Dialogue Platform in Berlin. The events continue to be excellent forums for learning and experience sharing, identifying opportunities for collaboration and scaling up, and more importantly, advocating for national policies and frameworks. The FRC remained a member of the Forecast-based Action (FbA) by the DREF Validation Committee along with 12 other National Red Cross Red Crescent Societies, the Climate Centre and the IFRC. The Validation Committee reviewed and validated 19 Early Action Protocols (EAPs) and simplified EAPs (lighter, more flexible plans) to be funded by the IFRC Disaster Response Emergency Fund (DREF) during 2024.

The second FRC international aid related advocacy priority during 2024 was to influence and contribute to the Finnish policies on development as well as foreign and security affairs. The FRC aimed for the policies to strengthen the role of development policy and cooperation as an important part of Finland's foreign and security policy, instead of instrumentalising it for economic or migration policy objectives. The FRC also advocated for Finland's continued commitment to promote and protect the principles of humanitarian assistance and respect for international humanitarian law and to generate increased funding for development and humanitarian work. Through the advocacy, the FRC aimed to ensure that the policies focus on persons and countries in most vulnerable situations, on promotion of equality, non-discrimination and inclusion, as well as on enabling environments for local civil society action.

The FRC created a policy paper with these key messages and distributed it widely to different political parties involved in the processes, held several dialogues with senior officials at the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, and contributed to the views and activities within the Development Policy Committee. It published an op-ed piece in *Helsingin Sanomat* on the importance of global development and sustainability for Finland's foreign policy and actively communicated about the results, importance and increasing needs of humanitarian and development work.

Additionally, the FRC did advocacy work related to global health with a community and mother-child health perspective and around disability inclusion. In health the main effort was connected to two global events, the World Health Assembly and the special health-related events at UNGA. At both, the FRC contributed actively to the advocacy work of the IFRC and supported policy and context analyses as well as links with government processes, and promoted the key messages of the IFRC network to the Finnish and EU positions. This included active participation in and contribution to the network on global health led by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, as well as to the Finnish delegation to the World Health Assembly.

At the global level, the FRC participated in preparing the Disability Inclusion Spotlight Session and model pledge for the 34th International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent (IC34), in collaboration with the IFRC and the ICRC. The FRC also co-developed pledges on disability and gender inclusion with Finland's Ministry for Foreign Affairs and worked with other National Societies to build momentum. Finnish Red Cross Secretary General participated in a disability inclusion side event at IC34, in which FRC's leadership in this area was increasingly recognised. A highlight was co-hosting the "Humanity for All" online event with the IFRC on 3 December, celebrating global National Society efforts to advance disability inclusion, and being the first time

that the IFRC celebrated this important day. Opened by the IFRC Secretary General, the event launched the Building Blocks tool and featured contributions from Kenya, Palestine, Guinea, Türkiye and others.

3.3 Global education

In 2024, the Finnish Red Cross successfully achieved its goal of exposing students, particularly middle and high school students, to global education themes.

The most important part of FRC's global education in 2024 was the Risk Zones e-learning material. Risk Zones is a high-quality package that presents the risks threatening our planet, such as climate change and conflicts, from the perspective of Red Cross work with the aim to inspire hope. The material is continuously maintained and developed as the world situation changes, utilising both FRC experts and the organisation's materials, such as images and texts from around the world.

The measures have been successful as FRC's learning materials had an average of 30,000 users in 2024, of which about 7,000 were registered users. According to feedback, the materials are considered to be of high quality and helpful for teachers, making them easy to adapt. In addition to middle and high schools, the material has also been used in elementary school education. Teachers, especially subject teachers, are an important target group for reaching students of these age groups. The material was actively promoted in the FRC newsletter for teachers, which has about 8,000 subscribers, as well as on the teachers' social media service Freeed. Risk Zones was also marketed at various events aimed at teachers. The most significant is the Educa fair, which attracts an average of 15,000–17,000 visitors each year. Risk Zones was prominently displayed at the event alongside other Red Cross learning materials. In addition to the Educa fair, Risk Zones was promoted to teacher trainees at events organised by Fingo, the umbrella organisation for development cooperation. Hundreds of students were reached during the school year through workshops held by the FRC. Additionally, the material was specifically marketed to, for example, biology and geography teachers at their own event.

In addition to the Risk Zones material, global education themes were featured at the annual World Village Festival. The event is Finland's largest free festival, with a total of 44,000 visitors in 2024. The Red Cross presented risks related to climate change at the event and encouraged visitors to consider who is responsible for combating climate change.

4. Finance and administration

4.1 Finance

All projects within the Programme were budgeted in cooperation with the partners, and actual costs were regularly followed by field staff. The needs for budget revisions were systematically assessed, and revisions were initiated as needed. The Programme is managed as one entity, and budget revisions aim to enable the Finnish Red Cross (FRC) to use the Programme budget optimally. The Regional Finance and Administration Delegates (RFAD) ensure the accuracy of financial data from partners and compliance with FRC policies and practices, and play a crucial role in risk management. They also provide support to partner organisations and possess knowledge of local conditions.

The original budget of the Programme was EUR 8,274,654, of which 75% was Ministry for Foreign Affairs (MFA) funding and 25% FRC's own funding. During the year, the FRC made two budget reallocations and one repurposing request. The allocations shifted budget funds from Burkina Faso (EUR -27,778), multi-country projects (EUR -41,767) and global education (EUR -29,889) to Myanmar (EUR 79,444) and Niger (EUR 33,333).

The actual total cost of the Programme amounted to EUR 9,339,484, which is EUR 1,064,830 (13%) higher than the original budget. While also the actual Programme implementation costs were higher than planned due to increased needs in certain countries such as Somalia, the largest main budget heading over-expenditure was under Delegate costs. Almost all FRC delegates work for more than one project, with the costs allocated to the

projects based on a daily rate and actual working hours, reported by the delegate and approved by their line manager. In 2024 there was both a planned increase in the number of positions, as well as difficulty in estimating work allocations to different projects in advance, leading to over-expenditure and an increased FRC's self-financing share. Starting from January 2024, delegates have recorded their working time directly to the project management system PIMS, whereas earlier each delegate used an Excel timesheet. In 2025, the FRC will improve the delegates' work time planning process. Several new, non-MFA funded development projects that were still in the planning phase in 2024 will enter the implementation phase in 2025. This will result to HR expenses spreading across more projects and donors.

The most significant budget overruns of Programme costs come from Somalia (EUR 108,855), Kenya (EUR 85,930), Zimbabwe (EUR 82,339) and Myanmar (EUR 90,525 vs original budget and EUR 19,025 vs reallocated budget).

Ten per cent (10%) of the total Programme cost is administration cost: it covers FRC headquarters cost not directly allocated to the Programme. The FRC work time recording system shows 20,902 working hours of such work in 2024.

Table 1 MFA development framework expenditure in 2024 (EUR)

Costs	Original Budget 2024	Actual 2024
A. Programme costs	5 879 914	6 108 518
B. Programme support	72 000	68 267
C. Delegates	1 360 275	2 135 492
D. Communication and advocacy	135 000	93 259
E. Administration	827 465	933 948
TOTAL COSTS	8 274 654	9 339 484
FUNDING	Per cent	EUR
Government (MFA) funding	66 %	6 200 000
FRC funding	34 %	3 139 484
Interest income	0 %	0
TOTAL FUNDING	100 %	9 339 484

4.2 Staffing for the Programme

In 2024, the FRC headquarters structure remained unchanged and focused on delivering core support functions such as coordination, administration, finance, human resources, as well as planning, monitoring, evaluation and reporting. Field teams were responsible for the day-to-day implementation, project monitoring and capacity strengthening of National Societies. Thematic specialists served as content managers and worked in close collaboration with technical advisers deployed to the field.

Field staffing remained diverse with recruitment focused on securing relevant technical expertise, strong programme management capacity and contextual understanding. Country Managers continued to oversee partnership and programme management with the National Society of each Programme country, and Regional Finance and Administration Delegates were responsible for financial oversight, compliance and capacity building support to partners' counterparts. Technical Advisers played a key role in programme monitoring, ensuring quality technical support and thematic capacity building of partners, including in, for example,

protection and inclusion policies and practices. Locally hired staff played a critical role in enhancing contextual awareness, particularly in finance, administration and specialised technical functions.

The Programme's staff planning for 2024 included ten positions for East Africa, eight positions for West Africa and nine positions for Asia. The core positions included Country Managers, Regional Health and Protection, Gender and Inclusion (PGI) Advisers, and Finance/Administration Officers. As usual, 2024 also saw changes in field staff. All Finnish Red Cross field positions are fixed term, and while many contracts are longer and cover more than two years, some turnover always takes place, creating both gaps and overlaps in the human resource structure. There were some smaller changes in technical advisers, including increases in anticipatory action capacities in Africa and health in Asia. The actual workload allocated to the Programme during the year ended up higher than originally planned. In the beginning of the year, staff plan their working time between various donor funded projects and sometimes the planned allocations are not sufficient due to changing needs and priorities. Furthermore, due to the scale-up of the SAF programme and its technical support orientated nature, there was an increase in the number of SAF Advisers. All these factors led to a much higher HR expenditure than planned for the Programme.

The few Finland-based positions directly covered by the Programme budget provided core programme support, including expertise in communications and climate resilience.