



To do more,  
to do better,  
to reach further!

# STRATEGY 2020





## THE ALBANIAN RED CROSS

Founded on 4 October 1921, the Albanian Red Cross (ARC) is one of the eldest humanitarian societies in the country. In 1923, while only 37 Red Cross Societies existed, ARC was officially recognized by the International Committee of Red Cross and since then it is a member of the International Federation (at the time the League) of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies.

With a commendable activity before and after the World War II, the Albanian Red Cross created its own profile as a modern National Red Cross Society thanks also to a regular exchange with the most developed Red Cross Societies of that time. After the war, the state gradually detracted from ARC the major part of its activities and reduced its operational capacities, with the consequence that our National Society lost its identity, becoming just an add on to the health propaganda, totally dependent on state institutions, which, with an arbitrary decision of 1969, finally suspended it also officially, so that the Albanian Red Cross ceased to exist for more than 20 years.

At the beginning of the 90s, ARC resumes its activity building up a complete legal basis as well as an organisational structure, which has constantly been consolidated.

Based on Art. 1 of the Law No. 7864 of the Albanian Red Cross, approved on 29.9.1994 by the Albanian Parliament, the Albanian Red Cross is a voluntary humanitarian society, which performs its activities autonomously, in line with the Fundamental Principles of the humanitarian International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949 – ratified by the Republic of Albania on 27 May 1957– and the Additional Protocols of 10 June 1977 – ratified by the Albanian Republic on 16 June 1993. ARC is an auxiliary to the public authorities in the humanitarian field all over the country.

The Albanian Red Cross counts 39 branches across the country. It has reached a good level of development, becoming the biggest humanitarian society in the country. Thanks to its volunteers ARC is always present where humanitarian aid is needed in the Albanian society, standing next to ordinary people, the beneficiary families or the several communities affected by natural disasters, who see in ARC their hope for relief from distress.

Everything we say and do is inspired by the Fundamental Principles of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement:

- Humanity
- Impartiality
- Neutrality
- Independence
- Voluntary service
- Unity
- Universality



During this period we have developed our National Society, increased its presence within the Albanian society, built and expanded our network of volunteers, increased the level of transparency, strengthened the accountability, as well as identified and extended our partnerships.

We have demonstrated our capacity in the organisation of humanitarian aid operations during crisis and disasters that have occurred in our country helping a critical number of affected people. We have also been active in providing social and health assistance to communities in need contributing to reducing vulnerability. We have also been engaged in conveying the concerns and interests of vulnerable people to the decision-making authorities.

At the same time we have identified a number of areas where we need to improve. Thus, in moving from Strategy 2010-2015 to Strategy 2016-2020, we want to do more, to do better and to reach further.

## **We aim:**

- To intensify the auxiliary role of our National Society in the humanitarian field throughout the country by continuously enhancing our human, material and financial capacities.
- To strengthen the elected and management structures as well as their independence at both national and local levels, respecting the diversity of thought.
- To extend the fields of intervention and enhance the level of expertise in providing our services to the public.
- To expand the focus of our activities in situations of disasters and crisis.
- To find better ways of working together so that all our capacities are deployed on time and to best effect, serving to the groups who need us most, thus being more open and flexible to collaborate with other partners outside the Movement.
- To increase the level of advocacy by speaking up and speaking out more on behalf of the vulnerable people, by complying with the Fundamental Principles of the Movement.
- To have a more harmonized approach with our Federation in the consolidation of the leading structures, planning procedures, management, administration and accountability.

## **THE STRATEGY OF ALBANIAN RED CROSS 2016-2020**

The Strategy of Albanian Red Cross for the period 2016-2020 is the result of a comprehensive assessment and deliberation process within the ARC structures at all levels, volunteers, elected members and employed collaborators.

With this strategy, we aim to enhance our achievements, extend our fields of expertise, and strengthen the status of the Albanian Red Cross as an auxiliary partner of the government and as a leader among the other humanitarian societies throughout the country.

This strategy considers the achievements of the ARC in the last 25 years, the socio-economic changes in the country and abroad as well as the impact of global changes, and is in line with the Strategy of the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies.





## COUNTRY CONTEXT

According to the data of the Statistical Institute, on 1 January 2015, Albanian population counts 2.893.005 inhabitants. The gender ratio in Albania is 102,1 males to 100 females. The average age of the population is 35<sup>1</sup>.

The country is still one of the poorest in Europe. The level of poverty has increased to 14.3% from 2008. Extreme poverty (difficulty to afford basic food needs) has increased from 1.2% in 2008 to 2.2% in 2014. The trend in urban and rural areas is the same. With a percentage rate of respectively 22,5%, 18,4% and 17,1% , Kukës, Lezha and Fier are the poorest districts in Albania.<sup>2</sup>

The main cause of poverty is unemployment. The level of unemployment has increased from 12.5% in 2008 to 18% in 2014.<sup>3</sup> The lack of job opportunities is more accentuated among young adults and women. The global economic crisis of the last years has caused the reduction of the remittances, an important income for the Albanian families, leading to an increase of the poverty level. Thus a large number of Albanians have sought asylum, mostly in Germany, for economic reasons. Meanwhile most of them have been repatriated and many others are expected to return.

Children, which have always been a target group of the Albanian Red Cross, suffer the short-term and long-term consequences of poverty at most,

1 INSTAT (engl.: Statistical Institute), Njoftim për Shtyp (engl.: Press Release), 2015:<http://www.instat.gov.al/al/publications/njoftim-për-media/njoftim-për-media-popullsia-e-shqipërisë-1-janar-2015.aspx>

2 INSTAT, Women and Men in Albania, 2015 <http://www.instat.gov.al/al/themes/popullsia/publications/books/2015/femra-dhe-meshkuj-në-shqipëri,-2015.aspx>

3 Raporti për Shqipërinë 2015, Komisioni Europian (engl.: Report on Albania 2015, European Commission)

often meaning bad health, poor quality education, deprivation of chances and opportunities that could change their lives as adults. Children are often victims of domestic violence. As regards youth, the current problems they face are the lack of an adequate vocational education that meets the market demand, high-cost university education, unemployment, etc.

The inclusion of women in political life and decision-making has been continuously growing, thus marking a noticeable progress, but their involvement in the labour market is still low. Despite the positive changes in the legislation, women and girls are still victims of gender-based violence. According to a national survey on domestic violence, 59.4% of women have experienced domestic violence in their life time<sup>4</sup>. In 2014 the number of violated women was 3,090<sup>5</sup>.

Elderly people are another disadvantaged category. Most of them live in poverty and have inadequate access to health and social services. Family support, once the main pillar of protection and care for the elderly has been decreasing.

The health system in Albania faces significant challenges. The quality of health care is not the same everywhere; moreover these services are not efficient, which negatively affects the health of the population. In 2014 the infant mortality rate per 1,000 live births was 7,8 for males and 8,0 for females<sup>6</sup>.

Albania is a country threatened by natural disasters, mainly flooding in recent years. The lack of taking preventive measures due to shortage of investments further increases the degree of risk and the vulnerability of people, especially of those living in poverty.

The number of car accidents in Albania is relatively high. In 2014 were recorded 1,914 accidents countrywide, resulting in death in 264 cases<sup>7</sup>. The main reasons relate to the absence of road signs, the disregard of traffic regulation, etc.

The administrative and territorial reform, with the drastic reduction of the number of local units from 374 municipalities and communes in 61 municipalities, creates greater opportunities for the non-governmental organisations to establish effective cooperation with the local structures. The decentralization will grant more competencies to the municipalities, what theoretically means services closer to the disadvantaged groups. In practical terms, the new competencies will require sufficient budgets, investments and human resources, which with their technical expertise shall be capable to cope with the needs of the urban and rural areas within the larger territories that municipalities now have under management.

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4 Domestic Violence in Albania. A national population-based survey, INSTAT and UNDP (2013)

5 INSTAT, Women and Men in Albania, 2015

6 INSTAT, Women and Men in Albania, 2015

7 INSTAT, Women and Men in Albania, 2015

## Our VISION

A society where everyone receives in due time and with adequate quality help and support when situations of vulnerability arise.

## Our MISSION

The Albanian Red Cross aims to develop and promote, at any time and by all means, its humanitarian activities in order to prevent and alleviate human suffering by safeguarding the dignity of every single person.

## WHAT WE WILL DO

Considering that the world is changing, the fact that people are constantly in movement for a better life, the different needs of communities which are coping day to day with difficult socio-economic situations, and at the same time bearing in mind the rights and freedoms that each person have, we have drawn up a Strategy for 2016-2020 which aims for the service, that everyone is awaiting for from us, to be at its height, contributing to building a more human, dignified and peaceful society.



**ALBANIAN RED CROSS STRATEGY '20**  
TO DO MORE, TO DO BETTER, TO REACH FURTHER!



**STRATEGIC AIM I**

Save lives and alleviate the suffering of people affected by disasters and crisis.



**STRATEGIC AIM II**

Strengthen the resilience of the communities for a safe and healthy living.



**STRATEGIC AIM III**

Promote social inclusion and a new culture towards volunteering and humanitarian activities.

Enabling action 1. Be a strong National Society

Enabling action 2. Further develop the elements of humanitarian diplomacy.

Enabling action 3. Collaborate more efficiently and transparently with all partners.

We will build on and enhance our current achievements by focusing on 3 strategic aims:

- **Strategic aim I:** Save lives and alleviate the suffering of people affected by disasters and crisis, thus intensify our auxiliary role and reconfirming our commitment to being a leading actor in the humanitarian action.
- **Strategic aim II:** Strengthen the resilience of the communities for a safe and healthy living, thus consolidate and expand the services we provide, as well as find solutions to preventing and reducing the causes of vulnerability.
- **Strategic aim III:** Promote social inclusion and a new culture towards volunteering and humanitarian activities.

The relevance of the Strategy consists in the fact that our National Society will do more and better to assist vulnerable people by addressing their specific needs. Members, volunteers and staff will be more active and motivated. All together we will be more efficient and persuasive in our advocacy for the more disadvantaged groups, fighting for the respect of their rights.

# STRATEGIC AIM 1

Save lives and alleviate the suffering of people affected by disasters and crisis

## **Preparedness and response to disasters and crisis**

During a disaster caused by nature or during a crisis caused by humans, the immediate imperative is to save lives, reduce suffering, damage and losses, and to provide psychological and social support to the affected people. To contribute to these aspects, it is our central obligation to be well prepared and ready to use all means in order to help effectively and on time.

Any humanitarian intervention must be comprehensive and assistance must be provided first to the most vulnerable people and delivered in a way that respects their rights and their dignity.

## **In order to be prepared for an effective humanitarian intervention during disaster or crisis situations.**

- We consolidate the network of volunteers and ensure their continuous training.
- We work to improve preparedness plans at all levels, especially at branch level.
- We take steps to ensure the provisioning and a contingency stock of essential supplies, logistical preparedness and an effective communication system.
- We respond to disasters or crises when they occur continuing our support with food packages, water and hygiene kits and offer other services as well as additional services such as first aid, basic psycho-social and health assistance, etc.
- We work to relieve anxiety and suffering among families by restoring family links where these have been disrupted due to disaster or crisis situation.
- We contribute to the provision of emergency shelters by coordinating our work with that of other structures that also provide this service.

## Resilience in disaster and crisis situations

We engage in building resilience in the following way:

- We engage in recovery from disasters and crises by offering assistance in order to prevent further damage and loss, as well as by contributing to the restoration of basic services in the community.
- We harmonize emergency response plans with other local structures as well as with the other members of the International Movement of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (ICRC, IFRC, NS).
- We work on the design and implementation of standard operation procedures in emergency situations by all the structures of ARC.

## Expected outcomes

- Consolidation of voluntary structures and increased material and financial capacities for timely and effective action during disasters and crisis situations.
- Alleviate the suffering of families affected by disasters or crises.
- Contribution in restoring normality in the affected communities.



## STRATEGIC AIM 2

Strengthen the resilience of the communities for a safe and healthy living

Our specific contribution to this strategic goal will be for a sustainable development of the communities as well as the improvement of their ability of resilience. This urges us to search for possibilities and forms of support that enables them to withstand the socio-economic changes and the global development challenges.

### Through our intervention, we seek:

- To strengthen or enable the community by helping people to be as healthy as possible.
- To enhance the capabilities of communities at risk to cope with the consequences and to return to normal life.
- To raise the awareness and sensibility of the community towards hazards and climate changes.

### For a better health

- We encourage activities which contribute to better health, putting emphasis on local factors that have a significant impact have a significant impact on the prevention and reduction of mortality, diseases, injuries and disability.
- We contribute to reducing the vulnerability of individuals and communities by offering sensitizing activities regarding maternal and child health, as well as reproductive health, by disseminating knowledge about personal and community hygiene, as well as about the prevention of infectious diseases such as AIDS and tuberculosis, by increasing the attention towards road safety, through the promotion of the environment and its protection, as well as through the improvement of conditions at work, at home and on the street.
- We contribute to involve as many deprived people in accessing public health services, including services in emergency situations.
- We contribute to creating an inclusive culture of voluntary blood donation and increase the level of advocacy for safe blood.
- We contribute to the promotion and dissemination of first aid knowledge based on contemporary techniques.
- Through our volunteers' network we aim to reach the general public especially the youth in order to encourage healthy life style education.



## Disasters' risk reduction

- We disseminate information on the risks and protection measures especially for communities living in high risk areas through making good use of knowledge, technology, formal and informal education.
- We promote the inclusion in the school curricula of the knowledge on the risks and risk reduction.
- We advocate for improving laws and policies related to risk reduction.

## Social support

- We work to improve the standard of living for vulnerable groups such as lonely elderly, women and girls at risk, children and youth in difficulty, victims of trafficking, refugees and migrants, as well as members of minorities.
- We contribute to empowering and preserving the autonomy of vulnerable groups by offering social services, such as vocational training courses, in order for them to have more opportunities for employment, quality education and social integration, by providing adequate health services and by improving their economic situation through the provision of staple food, as well as by promoting the fundamental human rights.

## Expected outcomes

- Communities are less exposed and less vulnerable to hazards and disasters.
- Communities and individuals are healthier and have increased access to health services.
- Life and health in the communities improve as a result of better and long-term services and activities.

# STRATEGIC AIM 3

## Promote social inclusion and a new culture towards volunteering and humanitarian activities

Despite of the positive developments in the country, among the communities there are groups that are socially excluded and deprived of general public benefits and services due to their unfavourable social and economic status.

We promote in our work a society in which people engage with their free will in helping the most deprived and vulnerable people.

Through our volunteers and the youth network we advocate for increased knowledge and better implementation of our Fundamental Principles, humanitarian values and International Humanitarian Law.

### In our intervention we aim:

- To support and advocate for the deprived groups, which do not enjoy the same benefits as the rest of the society, to have increased access to public services offered.
- We promote the dissemination of information on Fundamental Principles, humanitarian values and International Humanitarian Law for professionals and general public.

### Better integration of vulnerable groups

- We support and advocate for the vulnerable groups which due to their social and economic situation, unemployment, violence or discrimination are marginalised or excluded from the public services and benefits offered.
- Our assistance is designed and developed together with our beneficiaries using their strengths as a solid base for further empowerment.

### Promotion of Humanitarian Values and Principles

- During our humanitarian intervention we provide a welcoming environment, where vulnerable people can feel safe, not discriminated, protected, and where they are given an effective role to participate in our work.
- We promote community participation and the creation of a culture of humanitarian assistance.
- We promote international humanitarian law and contribute to building a new culture of voluntarism.

## Expected outcomes

- Increased community participation in humanitarian activities.
- Increased access to social care services for deprived groups and their integration in the society.
- The community has received the necessary knowledge on humanitarian law and voluntarism.

## HOW WE WORK?

Given the fact that our main aim is to prevent and alleviate the suffering of the people and protecting the dignity for every individual, we must mobilize all effective means and resources at our disposal and to act in three main directions:

1. Be a strong National Society
2. Further develop the elements of humanitarian diplomacy.
3. Collaborate more efficiently and transparently with all partners.

### 1. Be a strong National Society

The foundation of a strong organisation is its legal basis. This legal basis should take into account current developments and changes. It must be consistent with the challenges of our time and offer solutions to new situations which the population in general and our National Society in its humanitarian activity in particular face. It is therefore necessary that this Strategy considers the revision of the ARC Law and Emblem as well as of other basic documents of our organisation such as the Statutes, Policies, etc.

In order for the national society to function well we need to have clearly defined roles and responsibilities of governing and management structures, as well as effective regulations of the internal communication. Even if there is a well-defined division of the internal roles in the basic documents, our National Society must still pay more attention to its practical application in the headquarters and especially in the 39 branches. This requires a systematic work on the recognition of the basic documents of our National Society and the active participation in the humanitarian activities of the elected members.

At the heart of a strong National Society are its members and, especially, its volunteers, who represent different groups of the population, without any

distinction, and who bring their concerns and needs with them which are an important source for the decision-making bodies in designing several projects, activities or operations.

A special focus of our National Society is youth who is regarded as a crucial investment, not only for the present but also for future. Our National Society is committed to improve the quality, the standards and the training capacity for volunteers through offering a welcoming and inclusive environment.

By acknowledging their contemporary education, utilizing their abilities in innovative communication technology, young people are empowered to participate in voluntary activities, in implementing projects as well as in governance, and are motivated as beneficiaries:

- Youth in the leadership

Promoting and enhancing the role of leadership among youth in terms of decision-making, service provision, the role of assistance to people in need and partnership.

- Youth as volunteers

Promoting and developing of volunteering among young people as a civic commitment to the promotion of humanitarian values.

- Youth as beneficiaries

Promoting among youth the Fundamental Principles of the Movement and humanitarian education as a way to change attitudes, to save lives and to increase tolerance.

Sustainable communities make the society stronger. In every community no matter how poor it is, there are human capacities that need to be mobilised from the National Society in order to identify and help the most vulnerable women and men. The need to be closer to communities dictates the necessity of stronger branches, the extension of contact points supported staff, members and volunteers following the changes of administrative units.

Every year, we draft our strategic plan based on the need assessment, the identified vulnerabilities of the target groups and considering the capacities and sustainable resources of the National Society.

## Expected outcomes

- The legal basis is revised, disseminated and known by all structures at national and local level.
- Well-functioning and efficient cooperation of leadership and management structures, especially at branch level.
- Greater participation of young people in management, service provision and disaster response.

## 2. Further develop the elements of humanitarian diplomacy

Essentially humanitarian diplomacy is concerned with persuading executives, decision makers and the public to act at all times in the interest of people in need and in full respect of the Fundamental Principles of the Movement.

As defined in the IFRC policy, the humanitarian diplomacy is a multidimensional effort that highlights the needs and rights of people. It aims to give them a strong voice in all negotiation processes. The role of the ARC is to make continuous efforts to address the Albanian state structures attention to social categories in need and finding solutions to alleviate their suffering.

### ARC as government's partner in humanitarian issues



Governments are primarily responsible for addressing vulnerabilities that exist in their countries, whereas national societies play an auxiliary role, thus a supplementary one, in fulfilling this responsibility. Our auxiliary role in the field of humanitarian action demonstrates our neutrality and it provides access for us to act freely and without hindrance to serve vulnerable people.

Albanian Red Cross enjoys a high level of autonomy and independence to act in accordance with its mandate and auxiliary role in Albania. In general the relationship with the government authorities is satisfactory. The National Society maintains good relationship with line ministries, various departments and government institutions and there is a mutual cooperation in particular in the management of the disaster and crisis situations.

In this sense, ARC creates and strengthens its relations with public authorities in such a way that they are based on mutual trust, in accordance with the legal basis and our status as auxiliary to the governing bodies.

### **The role of ARC as an auxiliary partner is demonstrated in the following aspects:**

- Participation of the society in general and of the state in particular in the implementation of obligations by virtue of the international law and the resolutions of the International Conference of Red Cross and Red Crescent on cooperation issues with interconnected tasks, such as disaster management, first aid and road safety, health and social services, restoring family links, etc.
- The right to dialogue with the public authorities at all levels to consult on humanitarian issues and the use of domestic and international resources in cases of disaster.
- The state establishes an enabling environment for ARC, including the adoption of legislation and regulations thereof, the use of the emblem, the support with material and financial resources, which are used to carry out humanitarian activities, and other support to facilitate the work of our National Society, such as voluntary service, customs service, tax relief, etc.

### **Advocacy and communication**

At national and local level, our voice is going to draw attention to the protection of vulnerable groups and assistance towards them. These groups should be enabled to voice their concerns and have increased access to public services. We also seek ways to address the causes of their suffering and to prevent or reduce their vulnerabilities, and thus to be better prepared in cases of disasters and crises.

We advocate for national legislation, the development of disaster management plans and strategies, we advocate for better use of resources and capacities in improving services to the public and vulnerable communities.

We need to do more in improving the communication means that enable the communities in need to share their stories in relation to the vulnerability and its causes. It is important to consider them as partners in the learning and resilience process instead of a passive audience.

We work to develop a strategic approach in communication through promoting internal and external communication. We believe this approach will increase the number of parties interested to cooperate with us.

### **Expected outcomes**

- Our National Society has a better legal environment to fulfil its humanitarian mission.
- Greater support from government structures, the community and partners to raise material and financial resources to help vulnerable people.

### **3. Collaborate more efficiently and transparently with all partners**

We look at cooperation in three areas:

- within the Movement of the Red Cross and Red Crescent
- with domestic partners: government, UN agencies, other non-profit associations
- at the local level: between the branches of ARC and various institutions at the same level.

Albanian Red Cross is one of the key humanitarian actors in Albania. It is a well-functioning organisation, with a motivated and qualified staff and volunteers present all over the country.

Albanian Red Cross works closely with its partners, which are inside and outside the Movement. The cooperation within the Movement is based on the Fundamental Principles of the Movement and various agreements, such as that of Seville, which regulate roles and responsibilities of Movement components, both in peace time and in periods of disasters and crises.

The Albanian Red Cross is committed to strictly comply with any liability deriving from the Principles of the Movement, by increasing and improving accountability at the same time.

ARC has always been committed to having good relations with the government and its representative structures and we have requested the same from them. We have not always found agreement on certain issues, so this strategy will have strengthened focus on the respect of the Fundamental Principles of the Movement of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies by the responsible structures, in particular the principle of Unity, according to which “ There can be only one Red Cross or Red Crescent Society in any one country”. We will aim to have institutional support for the implementation of our humanitarian activities, as with these we help communities in need, but also the government that is the main responsible for providing the basic needs to the population.

Therefore, we will work to foster the agreements with the state structures, agreements in which our National Society is committed to deliver services to specific target groups of the community, while we will aim to ensure stable funds from the government and that will be used for the implementation of various projects serving the communities at risk or in need.

With regard to the financial sustainability we see as a necessity investing in mobilising the resources and professional expertise that would help us in identifying clearly the potential funding resources and defining a strategy for achieving the ambitions in this area.

At local level, ARC branches will aim within the spaces that are set by the basic documents of the National Society to further formalize their cooperation with local government structures and potential local donors for certain projects, in order to serve as more their communities, according to the particularities and needs that they have.

### **Expected outcomes**

- Cooperation, coordination and stronger support from domestic partners.
- Our National Society learns from and applies the best working practices of its partners within the Movement.
- Stronger branches, which have institutionalized their cooperation with and the support of local partners, such as local government, business sector and NGOs.

...që prej vitit 1921 **Albanian Red Cross**



- Humanizëm
- Paanësi
- Neutralitet
- Pavarësi
- Vullnetarizëm
- Unitet
- Universalitet

the power of humanity



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to do better,  
to reach further!

# STRATEGY 2020

**ALBANIAN RED CROSS**

Founded on 4 October 1921

Member of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red  
Crescent Societies, since 1923.

<http://www.kksh.org.al>, [www.facebook.com/kkshselia](http://www.facebook.com/kkshselia)