



160,000

CHF  
Funding Requirement

18,000

People to be reached

20

Local branches of Bhutan  
Red Cross

324

Volunteers country-wide

2

Years of experience reaching the  
most vulnerable



## BHUTAN

IFRC Country Cluster Support Team Delhi

### COUNTRY PROGRAMME OVERVIEW

Bhutan is a small, mountainous country between the People's Republic of China and India. Despite its challenging geography and limited connectivity to the global markets, Bhutan has managed to transform itself from being a pastoral and subsistence economy into a rapidly growing low middle-income country by managing its natural resource endowment and unlocking its hydropower potential. Bhutan's development performance has been guided by its philosophy of gross national happiness – of striving to balance spiritual and material advancement toward total well-being through four pillars: sustainable and equitable economic growth and development, preservation and sustainable use of the environment, preservation and promotion of cultural heritage, and good governance.

Bhutan experiences frequent hydro-meteorological and geological disasters such as glacial lake outburst floods (GLOFs), earthquakes, landslides, windstorms, and forest fires. Currently, climate-related impacts are evident in the melting of the glaciers and attention is being given to GLOFs, which occur with regularity in the valleys and in low-lying river plains. In 1995, Bhutan was severely hit by a storm that affected 65,000 people and left 17 dead. The country has also had two devastating flash floods, one in 1994 and another in 2009. In 2017, one in three Bhutanese lived in urban areas. Rapid urbanization compounds the country's climate challenge and the severity of these impacts has yet to be determined.

The Bhutan Red Cross (BRC) was formally established in May 2017, following the adoption of the Bhutan Red Cross Act earlier that year. The National Society is still in the early stages of its formation and continues to make steady progress on its roadmap towards formal recognition by ICRC and membership of the IFRC. Technical assistance and cooperation will be required for both organizational development and for further developing a set of relevant and sustainable core programmes and services.

In 2019, IFRC will prioritize its support in the areas of organizational development and disaster risk management. Working closely with IFRC, ICRC, Swiss Red Cross and other partners, BRC will continue to develop its foundation, structure, systems and capacities. Immediate priorities include the recruitment of members and volunteers, the establishment of a branch network, the finalization of formal statutes, leadership development and the successful conduct of its first General Assembly with elections of a full governing board. Programmatic support will focus on strengthening BRC's disaster response capacity at the institutional level, building predictable response capabilities as part of its auxiliary role, and resilience-building at the community level.

## NEEDS ASSESSMENT

### Glacial Lake Outburst Floods and Climate Change in Bhutan

While Bhutan has committed to remain carbon neutral, the impacts of climate change continue to challenge the country. Erratic weather patterns, fast receding glaciers, and the risk of glacial lake outburst floods (GLOF) have now become a stark reality for the country. The GLOF threat is Bhutan's strongest climate change challenge so far. With a majority of Bhutan's development concentrated in large river valleys, climate-induced GLOFs could cause significant human and economic devastation. If left unaddressed, climate change can grow to become one of the biggest threats to Bhutan's population. Climate change awareness is high, with strong commitments improving climate resilience. The high-priority status of disaster risk management is reflected in the country's legislation, frameworks, and rules and regulations. The challenge for Bhutan lies in implementation capacity at the national and local levels.

## STATISTICS

**12%** of the population live below the poverty line

**25%** of households do not have access to improved sanitation

**1/3** of primary school children are stunted

## AREA OF FOCUS

### DISASTER RISK REDUCTION

**CHF 12,000 REQUIRED**

As the National Society gradually establishes its structure and presence across the entire country, the IFRC will facilitate tailored disaster risk management training for staff and volunteers at headquarters and branch level, and promote the adoption of a clear set of basic tools and standard operating procedures for emergency response. A small stock of relief items will be pre-positioned at selected branches to facilitate immediate response to areas that may become isolated in case of a major disaster. Volunteers from selected branches will be also be trained in promoting community resilience, engaging with local communities, authorities and other stakeholders in concrete risk reduction and climate change adaptation measures.

- BRC disaster response plan and standard operating procedures
- At least 30 staff and volunteers trained in emergency response system and tools, including needs assessment and initial response
- Small stocks of pre-positioned relief items at selected branches
- Volunteers from pilot branches trained in integrated risk management, combining disaster risk reduction, climate change adaptation and environmental protection

### STRATEGY FOR IMPLEMENTATION

#### STRENGTHEN NATIONAL SOCIETY CAPACITY

**CHF 142,000 REQUIRED**

The Interim Governing Board of the Bhutan Red Cross has adopted a detailed "roadmap to recognition," with an aim of meeting the ten conditions for formal recognition as a National Society by ICRC and subsequent membership of the IFRC.

Formal branches are being established across the country with office bearers elected from a growing number of members. Draft statutes are currently being finalized and it is expected that a General Assembly at national level can be conducted by early 2019, including the formal election of a full Governing Board. Both formal training and peer exchange opportunities will be used to familiarize new leaders with their roles and responsibilities, as well as Movement policies and minimum standards. Specific attention will be paid to the governance role in ensuring adequate oversight and risk management, and the need to develop a comprehensive policy base.

BRC has a growing number of volunteers who will be supported in areas such as general volunteer management and developing a youth engagement strategy tailored to the context and needs of Bhutan. The small but dedicated management team at national headquarters will also be supported, especially in building solid systems and procedures in areas such as finance and administration, resource development, and planning and reporting.

- BRC statutes and first General Assembly
- Training and peer exchange opportunities for leadership development, with focus on governance and risk management
- Development and roll-out of youth engagement strategy, and exploration of options to introduce "Youth as Agents of Behavioural Change" model
- Technical support on volunteer management
- Strengthened management systems and procedures, through core support, training and peer exchange

#### ENSURE EFFECTIVE INTERNATIONAL DISASTER MANAGEMENT

**CHF 8,000 REQUIRED**

The BRC, IFRC and ICRC are working with the authorities towards a formal pre-disaster agreement with an aim of facilitating response by Movement partners in case of a major disaster that requires international support. This will be linked closely with country-level contingency planning, pre-positioning of basic relief supplies, and the mobilization of standard Movement tools and capacities where needed.

- Pre-disaster agreement between Bhutan Red Cross, IFRC, ICRC and government of Bhutan
- Basic contingency plan and standard operating procedures for mobilizing tools and resources

## CONTACTS

For more information on the work of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies in Country, please contact:

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