Over recent decades Nicaragua has been affected by natural hazards, such as earthquakes, volcanic eruptions and floods. Just in the past 20 years, 10 hurricanes have impacted the country. The disproportionate effects of climate change translate into more frequent storms and more intense rainfall, with a significant decline in overall precipitation. For a small country of only six million people with widespread unemployment and poverty these impacts mean chronic calamity as people’s everyday life gets harder due to food insecurity, public health problems, and damaged infrastructure that persist to undermine people’s long-term well-being and livelihoods.

Nicaragua is located in one of the most violent areas of the world, and it is extremely vulnerable to the impact of the skyrocketed violence of the Northern Triangle (El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras). The rates of violence in the country have also accelerated in the aftermath of the 2018 socio-political crisis. A deeply divided society is also taking root. Likewise, an increasing number of people are fleeing the country. The rates of Nicaraguan migrants in Honduras have increased by 24%.
Moreover, 30% of the Nicaraguan population already lives in poverty, and more are expected to join this group due to the crisis. 250,000 people have already lost their jobs and the Nicaraguan economy is predicted to fall by 5.6 percent this year, economic loss already surpasses USD 900 million. Poverty levels could reach those observed in the first half of the 90s, where practically half of the population lived in poverty.

National Society Role and profile

Nicaraguan Red Cross has 42 branches scattered across the country, reaching urban areas as well as the most vulnerable rural communities, and 2800 empowered volunteers, who are deeply committed to achieve meaningful impact in their communities.

The National Society is widely recognized and respected by the Nicaraguan people, who count on its support in times of emergency and/or crisis, and in the search to overcome human development issues in times of peace. The National Society coordinates closely with the National Civil Defence System and enjoys high credibility with the national private sector.

Moreover, Nicaraguan Red Cross is constantly improving its functioning and knowledge to be able to provide a better service to communities. Currently the National Society is working on revising and updating its internal regulations on volunteering, finance and branch management. It has developed Communication and Resource Mobilization strategies, and adopted strong policies on Risk Management, Social Inclusion and Violence Prevention.

Additionally, The National Society has expertise in WASH, Psychosocial Support, EDAN, Logistics, Health in Emergencies, Epidemic and Vector Control, and Operational Security.

Nicaraguan Red Cross receives support from Red Cross Movement partners including the American Red Cross, the Canadian Red Cross Society, Italian Red Cross and Spanish Red Cross, as well as the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC).
IFRC Role

IFRC is committed to support the Nicaraguan Red Cross on its mission to protect and improve the living conditions of Nicaraguans, their health and dignity, while reducing their vulnerability. IFRC’s strategy to achieve this is by strengthening the capacities of the National Society as an effective and sustainable local humanitarian organization. A strong Nicaraguan Red Cross will be able to provide high quality services and effectively reach the most vulnerable people, hence saving lives and alleviating suffering.

In line with Nicaraguan Red Cross 2019 country operational plan, IFRC will support the response of the National Society in all the areas of focus to provide vital services and strengthen capacities.

Additionally, IFRC will support the National Society to consolidate their leadership and management capacities and continue with the improvement of financial systems and internal procedures, which will later facilitate the implementation of programs. Special attention will be placed on logistics, cash transfer preparedness, development of business models, disaster risk reduction and risk management.

IFRC will also support the Nicaragua Red Cross to engage with partners in the region to share and learn from others and will continue with its national coordination role in humanitarian crisis.
AREAS OF FOCUS

**DISASTER RISK REDUCTION (DRR)**

12,500 people in affected areas will restore and strengthen their safety.

**SHELTER**

1,250 people to be made resilient against disasters.

**LIVELIHOODS AND BASIC NEEDS**

3,750 people will restore and strengthen their livelihoods.

**HEALTH**

11,250 people will improve their health through increased access to appropriate health services.

**WATER, SANITATION AND HYGIENE (WASH)**

5,000 households will improve access to clean water.

**PROTECTION, GENDER AND INCLUSION**

7,500 vulnerable children will benefit from protection, gender and social inclusion support.

**MIGRATION**

200 people separated will restore family links.
STRENGTHEN NATIONAL SOCIETY CAPACITIES

ENSURE EFFECTIVE INTERNATIONAL DISASTER MANAGEMENT
AREA OF FOCUS

DISASTER RISK REDUCTION

Disasters tend to hit Nicaragua hard, as it is still vulnerable and has limited capacity to cope. Therefore, the National Society focuses efforts on identifying, assessing and reducing the risks and understanding and addressing vulnerability.

The Nicaraguan Red Cross has embarked on strengthening their institutional capacities and developed a strong strategy, as well as properly implemented the Preparedness for Effective Response (PER) approach, to be ready to respond when disaster strikes. It is committed to work on community resilience and drives significant initiatives to support environmental conservation programs through its network of branches and volunteers to reach the most vulnerable communities.

IFRC will build on their work of the past years in strengthening the National Society’s capacities, as well as sharing and developing tools and methodologies for an efficient and effective response and supporting the improvement of early warning systems at community level.

IFRC will continue the important role of providing technical support to encourage the uptake of the Guidelines for the Domestic Facilitation and Regulation of International Disaster Relief and Early Recovery Assistance” (also known as the IDRL Guidelines). This action aims to assist the Nicaraguan government to be better prepared for the common legal problems in international response operations, avoiding needless delays in the dissemination of humanitarian relief, ensuring better coordination and quality of the assistance provided and will reinforce the auxiliary role of the National Society.
Key activities for IFRC support:

1. Institutional Risk Reduction and Climate Change Strategy
2. Community-based evacuation plans for emergencies
3. National Society radio communications network for emergencies
4. Implementation of the Preparation for an Effective Response (PER) approach as a measure to strengthen the management capacity of disasters and risk, and update contingency and response plans
5. Expansion of National Intervention Teams by certifying National Society members to be part of the RIT, ERU, FACT teams
6. Implementation of environmental initiatives

NICARAGUAN RED CROSS DRR CAPACITY STRENGTHENED

COMMUNITY EARLY WARNING SYSTEMS ESTABLISHED OR IMPROVED AND LINKED WITH LOCAL OR NATIONAL METEOROLOGICAL SYSTEM

CONTINGENCY PLAN IS IN PLACE

OUTCOME

COMMUNITIES IN HIGH RISK AREAS ARE PREPARED FOR AND ABLE TO RESPOND TO DISASTERS WITH ENVIRONMENTALLY RESPONSIBLE VALUES AND PRACTICES.
AREA OF FOCUS

SHELTER

Over the past years Nicaragua’s government has taken the lead on provision of shelter services in emergencies and disasters. However, based on the current socio-political situation that the country is facing, the Nicaraguan Red Cross needs to be ready to take a more prominent role in this matter. Providing shelter is a critical aspect in humanitarian response in any given crisis and the country is frequently exposed to hazards. The goal in these situations is to save the lives of those who are most at risk. Nevertheless, the National Society has limited capacities and expertise in shelter that need to be improved.

Consequently, IFRC is determined to support the development of these capacities by training volunteers and staff in temporary shelter management. It will as well safeguard the proper inclusion of this component in the updated National Society contingency plans. In case of an emergency or disaster, IFRC will also be ready to provide the financial support needed and ensure the effective distribution of kits.
Nicaraguan Red Cross responds in times of emergency in coordination with the national civil protection system SINAPRED. However, IFRC takes the lead in coordinating with all national partners. IFRC, together with the National Society, will continue to promote the establishment of the Shelter National Board in the country together with other organizations such as OCHA and the civil protection systems (SINAPRED) to promote an inter-agency work plan and to respond to accommodation needs in emergencies ensuring an orderly and focused response.

Key activities for IFRC support:

1. Development of Institutional Program for the Management of Temporary Shelters
2. Ensure and promote coordination with the national systems of civil protection (SINAPRED) in Nicaragua
3. Support distribution of Hygiene kits and safe water in shelters in disaster situations
4. Provision of a training program for volunteers and leaders in Shelter

PEOPLE PROVIDED WITH SAFE, ADEQUATE, AND DURABLE RECOVERY SHELTER AND SETTLEMENT ASSISTANCE IN CASE OF EMERGENCY

1,250

HOUSEHOLDS PROVIDED WITH EMERGENCY SHELTER AND SETTLEMENT ASSISTANCE

250

OUTCOME

COMMUNITIES IN AFFECTED AREAS RESTORE AND STRENGTHEN THEIR SAFETY, WELL BEING AND LONG-TERM RECOVERY THROUGH SHELTER AND SETTLEMENT SOLUTIONS.
AREA OF FOCUS

LIVELIHOODS AND BASIC NEEDS

Every year the economy in Nicaragua is affected by disasters, crises, natural or human emergencies. In these scenarios the means of securing the necessities of life such as food, water, shelter and clothing tends to get lost. The opportunity to work and earn a living is affected, and with that the chance to rebuild people’s lives is diminished. Furthermore, 2018 encompasses events that have caused a serious deterioration of the Nicaraguan economy and the livelihoods of the most vulnerable people. The recent context of insecurity and violence generated by the country’s sociopolitical crisis, has required the Nicaraguan Red Cross to increase support to the most affected communities in Masaya, Jinotepe, Sébaco, Matagalpa and Granada, where people’s means of living have been lost and the economic situation remains dire.

The National Society understands how critical it is to provide support to the population most affected to overcome the negative economic impact and rebuild sustainable livelihoods opportunities. Therefore, strategies aiming at recovering lost livelihoods and/or building new ones to facilitate a satisfactory financial recovery will be in place and a comprehensive cash transfer program will be implemented in affected communities.

IFRC will support the National Society’s efforts by building their capacities in livelihoods and cash transfer and assessments. IFRC will also provide technical support and transfer operational tools.
Key activities for IFRC support:

1. Provide technical support to the mapping of families most affected
2. Technical support to the analysis of possible alternatives for the recovery of the livelihoods of the communities
3. Cash transfer program for the recovery of families affected by the crisis
4. Support the National Society to provide food and materials to families affected by disasters, through cash transfer
5. Capacity building on cash transfer program for emergencies

PEOPLE STABILIZE THEIR NET INCOME THROUGH SKILL BUILDING, IMPROVED ASSETS, MICRO FINANCE SUPPORT, ETC 3,750

HOUSEHOLDS HAVE ENOUGH CASH TO MEET THEIR SURVIVAL THRESHOLD. 250

PEOPLED REACHED WITH FOOD ASSISTANCE OR CASH FOR BASIC NEEDS. 1,250

OUTCOME COMMUNITIES, ESPECIALLY IN DISASTER AND CRISIS AFFECTED AREAS RESTORE AND STRENGTHEN THEIR LIVELIHOODS
AREA OF FOCUS

HEALTH

According to information derived from the Country’s Ministry of Health, the ten main causes of death over the past two years are: cancer, acute myocardium infarction, diabetes, chronic kidney disease, stroke, hypertension, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, pneumonia, vehicle accidents and alcoholic liver disease. The sedentary lifestyle, poor eating habits and self-medication are some of the factors that are impacting negatively on the health of the population, as well as the combination of factors such as promiscuity, alcohol consumption and poverty.

The National Society focuses its efforts on developing actions that promote healthy habits and preventive mechanisms to address the high rates of prevalence of Non-communicable diseases in the communities, while also implementing initiatives for prevention of road accidents, as it is the principal causes of mortality and morbidity in the country.

IFRC will continue supporting the Nicaraguan Red Cross efforts in these areas by strengthening and building the capacities of Red Cross personnel in health promotion (through the Community-based Health and First Aid [CBHFA], Epidemic Control for Volunteers [ECV], Psychosocial Social Support [PSS] approaches), community-based surveillance, and risk management, among others. In the case of PSS, IFRC is coordinating and providing support to the National Society to improve knowledge through the Reference Center for Institutional Disaster Preparedness in El Salvador, while also providing technical advice. IFRC will support the implementation, planning and monitoring of programs focused on road safety education, and the design of a communication campaign.

IFRC will continue to support the National Society’s Zika project and capacities will be also strengthened to respond to health emergencies by training more volunteers and technical staff.
Key activities for IFRC support:

1. Capacity building activities on Zika, Dengue and Malaria prevention
2. Mobilization of 200 Red Cross volunteers to provide health services
3. Capacity building of 50 new volunteers in care and support in the prevention of Zika
4. Development and improvement of contingency plans to respond to health emergencies
5. Capacity building of 30 people in psychosocial support
6. Implementation and monitoring of a road safety program
7. Development of a radial campaign on road safety

PEOPLE REACHED BY NS WITH SERVICES TO REDUCE RELEVANT HEALTH RISK FACTORS 10,000

PEOPLE REACHED BY NS HEALTH PROGRAMS AND SERVICES 1,250

VOLUNTEERS MOBILIZED BY THE NATIONAL SOCIETY FOR HEALTH ACTIVITIES 250

CONTINGENCY PLAN TO RESPOND TO EPIDEMIC AND PANDEMIC IN PLACE

VOLUNTEERS TRAINED IN EPIDEMIC CONTROL 200

VOLUNTEERS TRAINED IN PSYCHOSOCIAL SUPPORT 30

OUTCOME VULNERABLE PEOPLE’S HEALTH ARE IMPROVED THROUGH INCREASED ACCESS TO APPROPRIATED HEALTH SERVICES
AREA OF FOCUS
WATER, SANITATION AND HYGIENE

The Dry Corridor in Central America is experiencing one of the worst droughts of the last ten years with over 3.5 million people in need of humanitarian assistance. In Nicaragua the impact of drought and poverty continues pushing the agricultural frontier towards the Caribbean coast. Experts predict that by the year 2050 this area will have lost its forests and nature reserves.¹

The Dry Corridor comprises 37 municipalities in central and northern Nicaragua, which begins in the west, at the border with Honduras, and ends in the departments of Matagalpa and Jinotega, bordering the eastern North Caribbean Coast Autonomous Region (RACCN). The cyclical droughts have been aggravated by climate change and the gradual devastation.

The lack of water has become a chronic problem, and without good management of river basins and management of drinking water systems, the absence of water will continue to be an imperative. This problem also extends beyond the areas encompassing the Dry Corridor. According to the estimates of the Humboldt Center, between 2012 and 2016 the rainy seasons were marked by a monthly deficit of rain, while in 2017 they exceeded the historical norms, but it is not known how much of this rain could infiltrate.
Population growth, so-called influence peddling, valve manipulation, geographical position and obsolete pipelines, are some of the factors that influence the unequal distribution of water in Nicaragua and cause many families to walk miles to achieve some of the vital liquid.

The National Society aims to preserve and rehabilitate water sources in the most affected communities, while also promoting waste management activities. They are committed to strengthening the Emergency Response Teams capacities on WASH and be ready when a disaster hits.

The IFRC will provide technical support to National Society in formulating their action plans for the implementation of the Regional WASH Strategy, sharing of experiences and methodologies will be also promoted. Emphasis will be placed on providing training to National Society volunteers and personnel in emergency response. IFRC will also support the development of Action plans for Emergencies.

Key activities for IFRC support:

1. Identification of priority communities affected by climate change in the dry corridor
2. Development of diagnosis of needs in priority communities
3. Educational campaigns on the protection of water sources and the environment
4. Development of community microprojects for the protection of water sources and protection of the environment
5. Systematization of experiences
6. Update of the national water and sanitation strategy

HOUSEHOLDS PROVIDED WITH SAFE WATER SERVICES

COMMUNITY BASED WATER AND SANITATION MANAGEMENT PLANS DEVELOPED

OUTCOME

VULNERABLE PEOPLE HAVE INCREASED ACCESS TO APPROPRIATE AND SUSTAINABLE WATER
AREA OF FOCUS

PROTECTION, GENDER AND INCLUSION

While Nicaragua leads the region in terms of female representation in Government and in Parliament, with 57% and 40% female representation respectively, in general terms the participation and presence of women in decision-making is emerging and is far from equitable.

The figures are worrying, although efforts to pass laws to promote gender equality have been made in recent years, implementation continues to be a challenge. Nicaragua suffers as well from domestic violence and sexual violence, as well as different forms sexual harassment, along with femicide, human trafficking and institutional violence.

Moreover, the prevalence of violence in the region has been a significant issue. The civil unrest of 2018 had a substantial impact and a deeply polarized society has emerged. The promotion of a culture of peace will be critical to address this situation for the years to come.
In response, the National Society will be implementing actions in educational centres in marginalized areas to promote a culture of peace, gender equality, children’s right awareness and social inclusion. IFRC will support the implementation of the program and through the regional Youth Network will train the School Brigades of the national youth network on social inclusion.

IFRC will also focus on promoting gender, violence prevention and social inclusion policies with the purpose of raising awareness about the importance of systematically addressing topics such as: abuse, violence and harassment presented internally or externally in National Societies.

The incorporation of gender-sensitive practices and diversity into the programs, services, volunteering and tools of the National Society, will be promoted at community level, in coordination with the Regional Office and key Red Cross partners and external stakeholders.

Key activities for IFRC support:

1. Support for planning, implementation and monitoring of social inclusion programming
2. Support the strengthening of a gender equity approach in Nicaraguan Red Cross interventions.
3. Registration in the HELP Platform of the advances of Nicaraguan Red Cross humanitarian education programs

CHILDREN IN EDUCATIONAL CENTERS RECEIVE INCREASED AWARENESS IN SOCIAL INCLUSION, GENDER EQUALITY, CULTURE OF PEACE AND CHILDREN’S RIGHTS

NATIONAL SOCIETY ADOPTED GENDER EQUALITY AND SOCIAL INCLUSION STRATEGY

OUTCOME

COMMUNITIES BECOME MORE PEACEFUL, SAFE AND INCLUSIVE THROUGH MEETING THE NEEDS AND RIGHTS OF THE MOST VULNERABLE.
AREA OF FOCUS

MIGRATION

The socio-political crisis in Nicaragua has impacted the migration rates. Population movement has been reported, mainly to Costa Rica, Honduras and El Salvador. Nicaraguan asylum applications have skyrocketed in Costa Rica and according to UN data: at least 23,000 Nicaraguan people fled to this neighboring country from the civil unrest.

Nicaraguan Red Cross has limited experience in migration, therefore IFRC will build the National Society's capacities in providing services to migrants and management of tools. A better understanding of the National Society needs and role in migration will be analyzed through case studies. Special attention will be paid to cross-border issues and the links to social inclusion and violence prevention within vulnerable populations. In coordination with the IFRC Migration Cell, monitoring of the population movements in Central America will be established so that financial resources can be activated in time. Through the “Monarch Butterfly” Migration Initiative, the dialogue between the National Societies of Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador on migration will continue to be promoted, to develop a broad cross-border regional cooperation among National Societies. IFRC will be supporting the coordination between ICRC and the Nicaraguan Red Cross.

The National Society will also focus on restoring family links and IFRC will be supporting the implementation of that program.

Key activities for IFRC support:

1. Design and implementation of pedagogical tools for training key National Society personnel in the use of the migration protocol

2. The RCF program will be activated to connect family members separated by the country’s socio-political crisis
STRATEGY FOR IMPLEMENTATION

STRENGTHEN NATIONAL SOCIETY CAPACITIES

IFRC over the past years has supported strengthening the capacities of the Nicaraguan Red Cross in Logistics, Communications, Resource Mobilization, Volunteering, Leadership, IDRL, Disaster Management, and Planning, Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting (PMER). Going forward the continuation of these activities will contribute to further reinforce the capacities of the National Society. For instance, significant support will be given to the development of new business model as the economic situation of the country represents a substantial challenge.

Three areas of focus however, will be emphasized in 2019. On one hand, the National Society needs to have a new base of leaders due to an upcoming inevitable generational shift. Therefore, IFRC will be supporting a capacity building and leader’s empowerment program focusing on local branches.

IFRC will also support operational security to ensure safe conditions. IFRC will continue supporting the revision and effective update of internal rules and procedures, Organisational Capacity Assessment and Certification (OCAC) improvement plans and the exercise to self-assess the current capacities, identify gaps and prioritize critical areas that need to be addressed, and develop the National Society development plan for the upcoming period. Similarly, a mapping of the work done by other Movement partners in capacity development will be conducted to identify the gaps and work as a Movement to mobilize the necessary resources.

The periodic updating of National Society information on FDRS indicators will be monitored, with the objective of reflecting the current state of sustainability and development of the Central America Region.

OUTCOME

NATIONAL SOCIETY HAS THE NECESSARY LEGAL, ETHICAL AND FINANCIAL FOUNDATIONS, SYSTEMS AND STRUCTURES, COMPETENCES AND CAPACITIES TO PLAN AND PERFORM
STRATEGY FOR IMPLEMENTATION

ENSURE EFFECTIVE INTERNATIONAL DISASTER MANAGEMENT

During 2019, the Nicaraguan Red Cross will continue their efforts to contribute to the implementation of the Red Cross Movement Toluca Declaration (November 2016) to achieve effective and efficient coordination in emergencies, crises and disasters in the region. In partnership with the Centre of Reference for Disaster Preparedness (CREPD) in El Salvador, IFRC will continue to provide technical support to the National Society in the development of their Emergency Response Teams (ENIS), and the development of new tools, as well as the updating of their Response and Contingency Plans for Emergencies and/or Disasters.

With the help of the volunteer network and the Nicaraguan Red Cross technical departments, the use of the learning platform will continue to be promoted, so that the number of users increases and hence the capacities of the team will be improved.

The Regional Logistics Unit will continue to promote the strengthening of capacities in emergency warehouse management, procurement procedures, and will provide technical advice on the Vehicle Fleet management.

Training of Nicaraguan Red Cross staff in the development and use of innovative technologies will also continue, for expediting the collection of EDANES information, communication with beneficiaries, real-time information, generation of maps, and more.

IFRC will coordinate the relationship with the national response systems, United Nations humanitarian teams and the humanitarian network to share information, establish strategic alliances and maintain coordination situations in emergencies, crises and disasters.

In coordination with the Regional Office and through the Central America Disaster Management Coordinator, the CCST will promote a comprehensive approach to emergencies, with action plans that incorporate financial and technical components and the role of Movement Partners in the National Society. The use of cash transfer programming will be promoted as a quick and effective mechanism of providing support for families in need.

EFFECTIVE AND COORDINATED INTERNATIONAL DISASTER RESPONSE IS ENSURED
ENDNOTES

1 http://www.ipsnews.net/2017/08/climate-change-brings-migration-dry-corridor-nicaraguas-caribbean-coast/
Contact information of the IFRC Country office, for partners who wish to find out more

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International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies