



SÃO TOMÉ AND PRÍNCIPE

2023 IFRC network country plan

Funding Requirement **CHF 624,000**

Appeal number **MAAST002**

In support of the São Tomé and Príncipe Red Cross



5

National Society branches



32

National Society staff



320

National Society volunteers

People to be reached



22,000

Climate and environment



22,000

Disasters and crises



22,000

Health and wellbeing



22,000

Values, power and inclusion

IFRC network multiyear focus

Longer term needs

- Disaster preparedness
- Climate change adaptation • Health
- Water, sanitation and hygiene
 - Social inclusion

Capacity development

- Communications
- Resource mobilization
- Digital transformation
- Risk management
- Financial management

Key country data

Population **223,000**

Human Development Index rank **138**

Population below poverty level **66.7%**

Hazards



Floods



Landslides



Storms



Disease



Sea level rise

Funding requirements

Total 624,000 CHF

Through the IFRC

624,000 CHF

IFRC Breakdown

Longer term needs

65,000 CHF
Climate and environment

65,000 CHF
Disasters and crises

267,000 CHF
Health and wellbeing

19,000 CHF
Values, power and inclusion

208,000 CHF
Enabling local actors

Participating National Societies

Japanese Red Cross Society*

NATIONAL SOCIETY PROFILE

The São Tomé and Príncipe Red Cross was created in 1976 and admitted to the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) in 1985. It has administrative and financial autonomy and is an auxiliary to public authorities for work in the social field, peace, and the prevention of diseases and disasters. It is present throughout the country and has five regional committees in the districts of Água Grande, Caué, Lembá, Cantagalo and the Autonomous Region of Príncipe.

With support from the IFRC Disaster Response Emergency Fund (DREF), the National Society has recently responded to the country's worst flooding in a decade. It has also been responding to a worsening dengue outbreak since October 2022, and has been instrumental in the fight against COVID-19. With climatic shocks and other crises becoming more frequent and intense, the São Tomé and Príncipe Red Cross expects its auxiliary role to continue growing.

The São Tomé and Príncipe Red Cross Strategic Plan 2021-2025 confirms the National Society's commitment to pursue and develop humanitarian assistance based on five strategic areas:

Institutional development: Strengthening the National Society's technical and financial capacities, and improving the quality of the services it provides to the population. It will particularly focus on digitalizing its work, and gradually improving its functional social protection system.

Information and dissemination: Improving the visibility of the National Society and the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, and disseminating the basic concepts of international humanitarian law.

Health, social protection and women's protection: Contributing to progressively and sustainably improving health conditions for vulnerable communities throughout São Tomé and Príncipe, while reducing domestic violence and empowering women.

Relief and disasters: Establishing a disaster response team and building its capacity to respond, and recruit and train new volunteers as emergency back-up.

Youth and culture of peace: Establishing and training youth structures in the districts of Água Grande, Lembá, Cantagalo, Caué and the Autonomous Region of Príncipe to carry out social and humanitarian activities within communities.

IFRC NETWORK ACTION IN 2023

Joint situational analysis

The Democratic Republic of São Tomé and Príncipe is an island country of over 220,000 people, located in the Gulf of Guinea, off the west equatorial coast of Central Africa. It is made up of two archipelagos around the two main islands of São Tomé and Príncipe, which are about 140km apart and located about 250km and 225km respectively from the northwest coast of Gabon. In 1977, two years after it gained independence, the country was divided into two provinces (São Tomé and Príncipe) and six districts. Since the adoption of the new constitution in 1990, those two provinces have been abolished and the districts remain as administrative sub-divisions. Since April 1995, the island of Príncipe has been an autonomous region, with only one district: Pagué. The larger island of São Tomé is divided into six districts: Água Grande, Cantagalo, Caué, Lembá, Lobata and Mé-Zóchi.

São Tomé and Príncipe ranks 138 in the UNDP Human Development Index, which is above average for sub-Saharan Africa. However, according to the Gini Index, it is also one of the most unequal countries in the world. According to the Human Development Report 2020, São Tomé and Príncipe has a Gender Inequality Index value of 0.537 in 2019, ranking it 133 out of 162 countries. According to recent World Bank estimates, about one-third of the population live on less than US\$1.9 per day and more than two-thirds of the population are poor, based on a poverty line of US\$3.2 per day.

Over the last decade, the country has made considerable progress in reducing maternal and infant mortality and malnutrition, and in improving maternal health. The progress in maternal and infant mortality is largely due to an increase in skilled birth attendance. Life expectancy at birth is 64 years. Significant progress has also been made in the fight against malaria – with record low

incidence – and in reducing the prevalence of HIV/AIDS, which is now below 1.5 per cent.

São Tomé and Príncipe has made excellent progress in the education sector, particularly primary education, and is close to achieving a primary completion rate of 97%. There is not yet the desired universal coverage of secondary education, although the authorities are committed to extending it across the country.

With a combination of equatorial and tropical climates, and high rainfall, the archipelago has a relatively secure food and forestry context. This is in contrast to an unhealthy urban environment. No cereal crops are grown on the islands, so São Tomé and Príncipe is heavily dependent on food imports and food availability

is unpredictable. There is no deep-water port and bad weather makes landing on the country's short airstrip difficult. The country is exposed to natural hazards such as floods and landslides, which affect crop development, restrict access to roads, and destroy houses and property.

Following the torrential rains and floods of late 2021 and early 2022, some people's livelihoods were completely destroyed, and bridges were destroyed or severely weakened. The floods also caused power outages and fuel shortages for several days. This disaster demonstrates the devastating impact that extreme weather events, which are becoming increasingly unpredictable and severe, can have on the country.

Strategic priorities

Climate and environmental crises

Like most Central African countries, São Tomé and Príncipe is vulnerable to hydro-meteorological hazards, which are exacerbated by climate change and compounded by environmental degradation. As well as facing increased risks of floods, landslides and storms, the islands of São Tomé and Príncipe are being increasingly affected by sea level rise, storm surges and coastal erosion.

Floods are a natural hazard in São Tomé and Príncipe and have a considerable impact on the country, affecting more than 200 people each year. The people most at risk are concentrated on the main, most populous island of São Tomé, where the local economy is highly vulnerable to flooding. The areas affected by floods each year produce about 0.8 per cent of the nation's GDP, corresponding to about US\$2.8 million per year. The number of people affected is likely to increase considerably under future climatic conditions.

The rainy season in São Tomé and Príncipe lasts nine months each year on average, from September to May, with floods mostly occurring in the north. From December 2021 to May 2022, the country experienced its most significant flooding season in a decade. The most significantly affected areas were mainly in the districts of Lembá, Me-Zochi, Água Grande and Príncipe. These floods demonstrate the need to focus on reducing the current and future humanitarian impacts of climate and environmental crises.

Main actions and areas of support

The Sao Tome and Principe Red Cross is part of the [IFRC Global Climate Resilience Programme](#), which aims to foster an unprecedented scale-up in locally led climate-smart disaster risk reduction and adaptation efforts to prevent and reduce climate-related disaster impacts, and build community-level climate resilience. The programme aims to support 500 million people in 100 of the most climate-vulnerable countries, focusing on the least supported and marginalized communities. This holistic, multi-year programmatic approach consists of four operational pillars: (1) scaling up climate-smart disaster risk reduction, anticipatory action and preparedness; (2) reducing the public health impacts of climate change; (3) addressing climate displacement; and (4) enabling climate-resilient livelihoods and ecosystem services.

In line with the IFRC Pan-African initiative on Tree Planting and Care, and with support from the IFRC, the National Society will advocate with the authorities for reforestation through programmes such as One Pupil, One Tree.

In 2023, with IFRC support, the São Tomé and Príncipe Red Cross will:

- Create an early warning system in three pilot communities
- Develop contingency plans that take into account climate change and its impact on target areas

- Undertake communication actions to bring about behaviour change in regard to climate change, especially for people living in at-risk areas
- Build the capacity of youth volunteers to convey messages to the community about preventing and responding to climate change and related crises
- Seek to achieve sub-regional and regional exchange and cooperation between National Societies

Disasters and crises

For real-time information on emergencies, see IFRC GO page [São Tomé and Príncipe](#)

Changes in the climate in São Tomé and Príncipe have resulted in prolonged heavy rains and storms, leaving many parts of the country flooded. With support from the IFRC DREF [allocation](#), the National Society supported a large part of the population across the three most affected districts in 2021 and 2022.

Rainfall in São Tomé and Príncipe peaked between 28 and 29 December 2021, causing river levels to rise. In less than 24 hours, rain caused chaos in the capital and in several other parts of the country, especially near streams and rivers. The storm that hit the archipelago on 28 December 2021 killed two people, and at least six people in the community of Ponte Samu went missing. On 30 December 2021, the Government declared a state of disaster due to the damage caused and appealed for international assistance. While the National Society was still responding to the December floods, heavy rains hit the whole country on 4 March 2022, causing another wave of flooding. These floods varied in severity in the northern and northwestern districts of Lembá, Me-Zochi and Água Grande. Already exposed by the December 2021 floods, Lembá and Me-Zochi districts were heavily affected. Lembá, in particular, was more vulnerable due to its socio-economic situation. The most significant damage in the second wave of floods was recorded in the capital, Neves. A detailed assessment of the situation carried out by the São Tomé and Príncipe Red Cross on 22 March recorded people injured, widespread damage and material losses. The National Society began assisting 150 more families through additional support granted by the IFRC DREF.

On 23 May 2022, the Autonomous Region of Príncipe experienced heavy rainfall that caused severe damage. According to a situation assessment carried out by the National Society and the Government, a significant number of houses were flooded, and furniture and appliances were damaged. Several plots of farmland collapsed, and the flow of water damaged several roads.

Many communities were left with inaccessible roads due to rock erosion, including Bela Vista, Abade and Aeroporto in Picão via Teelé, with a total of 10 landslides or rockslides, and two homes partially destroyed. Petrol stations were unable to function, and the floods affected the municipalities of Santo António, Lenta Pia, São Mateus, Porto Real and Santo António II, with a total of 61 homes and 350 families affected. Through another extension of the DREF, the National Society included the communities affected in its response.

Main actions and areas of support

In view of the evolving disasters in the archipelago, the National Society needs a permanent disaster response team, along with more trained volunteers to provide back-up in case of emergency.

In the coming years, the National Society will focus on developing an early warning plan, a contingency plan and simulation exercises in evacuation and assistance. Advocacy with the National Council for Disaster Preparedness (CONPREC), the national body responsible for civil protection and disaster reduction, will also be crucial. This is in line with the IFRC's Pan-African Red Ready initiative.

The National Society will also explore integrated interventions that support basic needs, prevent asset depletion and protect livelihoods, in line with the IFRC's Pan-African Zero Hunger initiative.

In 2023, with IFRC support, the São Tomé and Príncipe Red Cross will:

- Create an early warning system in three pilot communities for rapid response to disasters
- Develop and revise its multi-risk contingency plan, followed by simulation exercises in three targeted pilot communities
- Create a national network of first responders across the country, train 60 community staff in disaster preparedness and response, and set up rescue teams in all structures
- Carry out small-scale water pipeline works and install drainage mechanisms during floods
- Support target communities to put emergency plans in place, developed in collaboration with local Government, authorities and communities
- Train staff and volunteers in [vulnerability and capacity assessments](#), with community engagement and accountability, and protection, gender and inclusion training modules

- Prepare a mapping of urban risk areas across the country
- Develop contingency plans for each risk area
- Purchase and pre-position pre-identified kits and equipment in three pilot areas identified as being at risk
- Conduct a Preparedness for Effective Response (PER) process and develop an action plan to improve the National Society's preparedness and response capacity for disasters and crises

Health and wellbeing

The health and wellbeing of people in São Tomé and Príncipe has been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic and by the heavy rains of late 2021 and early 2022. As well as the immediate effects on health, the number of cases of malaria has increased sharply, as the disease is very poorly controlled in the country. At the same time, dengue has appeared in São Tomé and Príncipe. The Ministry of Public Health of São Tomé and Príncipe has followed cases since the end of March 2022, and reported the country's first ever dengue epidemic to the World Health Organization (WHO) in May. By 10 October 2022, 980 cases of dengue fever had been reported across all seven districts. Dengue is prevalent in tropical areas, given that local risk variations are influenced by climate parameters and social and environmental factors. These factors co-exist in São Tomé and Príncipe, and health officials fear that cases of dengue fever will increase considerably during the rainy season when mosquitoes breed. The rollout of preventive measures needs to accelerate in the coming months in order to prepare communities and reduce the disease's impact. The National Society, with support of an IFRC DREF [allocation](#), has engaged in extended disease surveillance and sensitization activities during the months of intense rainfall.

All these events have increased the workload in hospitals, resulting in added pressure on already overloaded hospitals, and have negative impacts on the health and welfare of the population.

Main actions and areas of support

The São Tomé and Príncipe Red Cross has a long history of providing primary health care to vulnerable people. In collaboration with the Ministry of Health, WHO, United Nations Children's Fund, World Food Programme and other stakeholders, it supports vulnerable communities to prevent malaria, tuberculosis, HIV/AIDS and other diseases. Activities include providing information and sensitizing the parents and guardians of children under

five years of age to the risks. The National Society has also supported Government actions in the fight against COVID-19, in particular around risk communication and community engagement, as well as in the area of community water, sanitation and hygiene.

The National Society's main objectives are to contribute to the progressive and sustainable improvement of health conditions for vulnerable communities throughout the country, and to strengthen the National Society's capacities in water, sanitation and hygiene.

In 2023, with IFRC support, the São Tomé and Príncipe Red Cross will:

- Provide health care to the most vulnerable older people, including basic monthly subsistence payments to 150 abandoned older people and hot meals for seniors in day care centres
- Rehabilitate the National Society's care infrastructure (the headquarters and a social house in Príncipe, and the Palmar reception centre), while equipping and recruiting staff for its health centre
- Establish a community-based epidemic and pandemic alert system based on district focal points
- Train volunteers in water, hygiene, primary health care and epidemic control, in order to progressively reduce communicable diseases
- Raise awareness and promote positive behavioural changes in hygiene and the prevention of diseases such as malaria, HIV/AIDS and tuberculosis
- Establish a system of functional mobile clinics to be deployed in case of emergency or disaster, one in São Tomé and one in Príncipe (each clinic with an equipped ambulance, medicines and first aid consumables)
- Organize first aid services at all levels and provide all the necessary basic supplies for first aid
- Organize a blood donation campaign
- Train 10 community health agents and National Society volunteers on the COVID-19 rumour information system
- Set up a system to deal with rumours and vaccine misinformation by establishing a website for the volunteer group in each committee
- Establish and manage psychosocial support listening centres in targeted neighbourhoods
- Participate in coordination bodies for epidemic and pandemic preparedness and response

Migration and displacement

The São Tomé and Príncipe Red Cross does not carry out activities specifically aimed at vulnerable migrants and displaced people, however, it serves their needs through its main programmes reflected in the other strategic priorities of this plan.

Values, power and inclusion

São Tomé and Príncipe experiences issues around inequality and the social exclusion of marginalized groups. There is a need for further investment in initiatives, including those that support socio-cultural integration, advocacy and awareness-raising through networks for civil society, women and young people.

Pensions and social protection schemes in the country still do not meet the basic needs of the active population, particularly in terms of pensions for retired people and older workers. This situation has led to an alarming poverty rate among older people. Despite financial constraints, the National Society continues to meet the resulting shortfalls, including food, home care, rehabilitating and constructing housing for older people, and holding funerals.

Main actions and areas of support

The Sao Tome and Principe Red Cross identified gender and diversity as thematic priorities in 2019, creating a department dedicated to gender and inclusion. In 2023, the focus will be on institutionalizing the [protection, gender and inclusion](#) approach across all operations. The National Society will aim to adopt a policy on gender and diversity, and follow it up with training, the

establishment of a reporting and data collection system, and the implementation of pilot projects on the prevention of gender-based violence. The National Society is doing its best to ensure that its services are accessible to everyone, especially people from marginalized groups, without discrimination.

The participation of young people in the Sao Tome and Principe Red Cross is gradually improving, however, the representation of young people in decision-making bodies needs to be strengthened. The National Society plans to use its experience to encourage and promote, among young people, the importance of working together, a culture of peace, civic education, humanitarian aid and aid to the most vulnerable.

In 2023, with IFRC support, the São Tomé and Príncipe Red Cross will:

- Train National Society staff and governance members in protection, gender and inclusion
- Include sexual and gender-based violence prevention messages in all the outreach work it carries out
- Train staff and volunteers in [community engagement and accountability](#)
- Systematically integrate communications, participation and feedback mechanisms into the National Society's programmes and operations
- Establish partnerships with youth associations and neighbourhood groups to promote the sustainability of National Society youth structures
- Establish a National Society National Youth Council
- Develop a youth and volunteering policy

Enabling local actors

The São Tomé and Príncipe Red Cross is committed to institutional strengthening and investing in its development. The National Society carried out the self-assessment part of the IFRC Organizational Capacity Assessment and Certification (OCAC) process in 2018. The self-assessment part of the OCAC process is intended to capture the strengths and weaknesses of National Societies as a whole, in relation to a wide range of organizational capacities.

The National Society seeks in particular to reinforce its decentralized and peripheral structures, and expand its presence across the districts. It also aims to diversify its

partnerships, modernize its forms of communication, and strengthen its management systems.

Main actions and areas of support

In 2023, with IFRC support the São Tomé and Príncipe Red Cross will:

- Review its strategic plan
- Advocate with traditional partners to support the search for new partners for the National Society
- Advocate for more regional and sub-regional communications and cooperation between National Societies

- Organize two workshops (25 participants per session) to develop a resource mobilization strategy and action plan
- Organize a training and awareness workshop for 15 employees, managers and volunteers on resource mobilization techniques and the importance of accountability in resource mobilization
- Develop a website for the National Society and provide resources for its operationalization
- Acquire communications and broadcasting equipment (one laptop, one camera and one internet modem) to better carry out its activities
- Develop and implement a human resources policy
- Train staff in financial management and database management
- Develop a risk management plan and a monitoring mechanism for its implementation
- Train all staff and volunteers in [prevention of sexual abuse and exploitation](#), including through online training
- Provide district and regional committees with means and equipment for better functioning (desktop computers, printers, furniture)

THE IFRC NETWORK

The IFRC

The IFRC supports the São Tomé and Príncipe Red Cross from its country cluster delegation in Yaoundé, Cameroon, which also covers Cameroon, Gabon and Equatorial Guinea. IFRC support to these National Societies centres on strategic and operational coordination, National Society development, humanitarian diplomacy, and strengthening their auxiliary roles.

In 2022, the IFRC supported the National Society through two DREF [allocations](#) for operations relating to floods and landslides, and a disease outbreak. The National Society was using DREF for the first time, and the IFRC offered the required support for the operations. Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, the IFRC has supported the National Society's COVID-19 response through its [Global Emergency Appeal](#).

As part of these operations, and through ongoing collaboration, the IFRC provides technical support to the National Society in a wide range of areas.

IFRC membership

IFRC membership engagement in São Tomé and Príncipe is limited, and the IFRC aims to involve the National Society in more National Society peer exchanges and relevant platforms. The Sao Tome and Principe Red Cross is part of four IFRC Pan-African initiatives focusing on Tree Planting and Care, Zero Hunger, Red Ready and National Society Development. These initiatives are reflected under the relevant sections of this plan.

Participating National Societies provide support through the IFRC.

Movement coordination

The IFRC liaises with the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) on regional and sub-regional areas of collaboration, including support to National Societies in Central Africa. There is closer coordination during emergencies. This is carried out in line with the Strengthening Movement Coordination and Cooperation (SMCC) principles and the newly adopted [Seville Agreement 2.0](#).

The ICRC provides support to the São Tomé and the Príncipe Red Cross from its Yaounde delegation. It supports the areas of first aid and emergency response, and provides structural support, information technology equipment, running costs, and support for the National Society's participation in regional trainings and meetings.

Coordination with other actors

In line with its auxiliary role, the São Tomé and Príncipe Red Cross collaborates closely with the authorities in the country. The National Society is a member of the National Council for Disaster Prevention and Response, with which it works in the field of disaster risk management. It also collaborates with the Ministry of Health

in the field of malaria, HIV/AIDS and tuberculosis. As a small island nation, São Tomé and Príncipe has very few opportunities to work with international or national companies and organizations, although it does currently have a partnership with Companhia Santomense de Telecomunicações.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

- [IFRC Global Plan and Country Plans](#)
- [Subscribe for updates](#)
- [Donor response](#) on IFRC website
- [Live Disaster Response Emergency Fund \(DREF\)](#) data
- Operational information: [IFRC GO platform](#)
- National Society data: [IFRC Federation-wide Databank and Reporting System](#)



The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) is the world's largest humanitarian network, with **192 National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies** and around **14 million volunteers**. Our volunteers are present in communities before, during and after a crisis or disaster. We work in the most hard to reach and complex settings in the world, saving lives and promoting human dignity. We support communities to become stronger and more resilient places where people can live safe and healthy lives, and have opportunities to thrive.

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