In support of the Red Crescent Society of Uzbekistan

People to be reached

- Climate and environment: 50,000–60,000
- Disasters and crises: 50,000–60,000
- Health and wellbeing: 50,000–70,000

IFRC network multiyear focus

- Longer term needs
  - recurring disasters
  - health
  - social vulnerabilities

- Capacity development
  - climate change adaptation
  - forecast-based action

Key country data

- Population: 35M
- Long-term Climate Risk Index: 170
- Human Development Index rank: 101
- Population below poverty level: 14.1%

Funding Requirement: CHF 138,000

Appeal number: MAAUZ002

IFRC Country Cluster Delegation for Central Asia, Bishkek
This document details IFRC network-wide figures and actions in areas agreed with the country National Society. For additional information, see last page of this plan. * National Societies which have contributed only multilaterally through the IFRC in the past two years.
The Red Crescent Society of Uzbekistan was established in 1925 and is the longest-standing humanitarian organization in the country. It has 595 staff, 42,000 volunteers and 210 branches across the country. As auxiliary to the public authorities in the humanitarian, medical and social field, it relies on the activities laid out in the President's Decree “On the Red Crescent Society of Uzbekistan” (1992), the State Law on the Protection of the Red Cross Red Crescent Emblem (2004), and the State Law on Humanitarian Activities.

According to its statutes, the National Society is an auxiliary to the state authorities in the humanitarian, medical and social assistance spheres, providing assistance to the most vulnerable groups of the population, including lonely older people, people with disabilities or chronic illnesses, multi-child families on low-incomes and orphans. It promotes healthy lifestyles, helps in the prevention of infectious diseases, provides first aid training, and participates in disaster response and disaster preparedness activities. It also helps to unite separated families, disseminates knowledge on international humanitarian law, develops youth activities, attracts volunteers, and ensures its own organizational development and fundraising activities.

In July 2022, the National Society's General Assembly approved the National Society's Strategic Development Plan 2021–2025, with the following three strategic goals:

- Ensure effective disaster preparedness, response and recovery in communities
- Promote healthy lifestyles leading to safe and dignified life in communities
- Mobilize communities, ensuring inclusiveness and peace in communities

In line with the three strategic goals, the Red Crescent Society of Uzbekistan aims to:

- reduce the negative impact of climate change and environmental crises on the vulnerable groups of the population, in collaboration with the Uzbekistan Ecological Party, the government, non-governmental organizations, and with enterprises that have an impact on the climate
- fulfill the National Society’s auxiliary role with the government and in partnership with other humanitarian organizations in response to such issues as unemployment, growing social differences and other disasters and crises
- assist national public health organizations through the provision of education and information
- reduce the negative consequences of migration processes
- promote values of mutual respect, tolerance, inclusive assistance, and protection of people in need
- expand inclusiveness in the work with people with disabilities, migrants, and others
- increase its potential and expand sustainable resources for ongoing activities
- involve members and volunteers in Red Crescent activities
- strengthen its branches and its headquarters

IFRC NETWORK ACTION IN 2023

Joint situational analysis

Uzbekistan has a population of 35 million, of which, about half live in urban areas. According to official sources, Uzbeks comprise a majority (84.4%) of the total population. Other ethnic groups include Russians, Tajiks, Kazakhs, Karakalpaks and Tatars.

The population of Uzbekistan is young; a quarter of its population are younger than 14. The birth rate has continued to outpace the growth of the working-age population over the past decade. This has led to young people struggling to find well-paid employment - young people who are not in education, employment or training represent 24% of young people aged between 16–24 and 26.4% of individuals between 16–29 years of age. According to the World Bank, the rate among young women is even higher at around 38.2 %. This is despite the fact the government provides free and compulsory education for 12 years and the educational system has achieved 99% literacy rates.

The presidential elections of 2016 led to the peaceful handover of power to Shavkat Mirziyyev. Uzbekistan still
Country plan • Uzbekistan

has ongoing delineation and demarcation issues with the neighbouring states of Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan, leading to occasional border incidents. Regional insecurity also affects the country, which shares a border with Afghanistan.

Uzbekistan remains heavily dependent on natural resources, despite significant investment in economic diversification. According to the World Bank, over the past two decades, real GDP growth in Uzbekistan has averaged 5% per year. Based to the official national definition of poverty, the poverty rate has fallen from almost 28% in 2000 to 11% in 2019 and most of the poverty affects rural areas. In 2020, official statistics estimated unemployment at 10.5% of the active labour force, while another 34% of the working-age population were inactive (that is, not working or looking for a job). High unemployment and low wages are the cause of labour migration, mostly to Russia. Remittances from labour migrants, on which the country is also dependent, have been affected by COVID-19 and the Russia-Ukraine conflict.

The economy of Uzbekistan remains vulnerable to various economic shocks, which can translate into increased risks and an increase in the number of vulnerable households, food insecurity and social discontent. Residents of Uzbekistan faced a sharp rise in food prices in mid-March 2022, when it became known that Russia had banned the export of sugar and grain. People began to panic-buy, fearing that there would not be enough flour, sugar and butter (these products are mainly imported from Russia) and prices have almost doubled in many stores.

Vulnerable groups, such as poor people, female-headed households, and ethnic minorities are disproportionately affected by shocks. Female-headed households, which make up 20% of Uzbek households, have lower incomes than male-headed households and are already 30–50% less likely to be able to afford utilities or food. These households rely on coping mechanisms, such as reducing food consumption, selling assets, or taking out loans, to meet their basic needs.

**Strategic priorities**

**Climate and environment**

Uzbekistan is experiencing an increased impact from climate change, which is exacerbating existing hazards such as landslides, flooding and mudslides. According to the World Bank, one of the most significant effects of global warming in Central Asia is glacial melting and the formation of glacial lakes, which are prone to sudden floods, which increase water-related hazards and damage the settlements, infrastructure and livelihoods of mountain communities and those living on river floodplains. Uzbekistan is projected to see average temperatures rise significantly above global averages by the end of this century. By the 2090s, temperatures could regularly exceed 35-degree Celsius, a measure of a temperature and humidity accompanied by significant health risks.

The Aral Sea, between Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, has become an ecological disaster. It has shrunk to less than half its former size since the early 1960s, due to excessive irrigation, which has caused areas previously habitable for wildlife or suitable as arable land, to become deserts. It is also associated with several health problems, including respiratory and parasitic diseases. Efforts to address the crisis have focused on preventing further shrinkage of the Aral Sea, however, because the damage is so severe, this is practically irreversible.

Combined with population growth and increasing water demand, climate change effects are having a social impact. Conflicts related to fresh-water access, decreased access to household heating, increased pollution, heat waves and cold waves, and increased overall demand on local electrical power grids and hydro-electrical power dams, are becoming more common.

**Main areas of support**

The Red Crescent Society of Uzbekistan 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; (4) enabling climate-resilient livelihoods and ecosystem services.
In line with the above, in 2023 the IFRC network will support the National Society to integrate climate change adaptation and mitigation measures into its disaster preparedness and risk reduction activities.

The Red Crescent Society of Uzbekistan will in particular further develop forecast-based financing, with a focus on heat and cold waves, and possibly on floods and droughts. This will guide the timely and effective implementation of early actions, when abnormal weather conditions have a high probability of reaching identified triggers and adversely affecting vulnerable groups of people, such as children, older people and those living with disabilities.

The National Society will also work to reinforce early warning systems at community level for a range of hazards, and increase public awareness on climate risks, in particular for heat waves.

The Red Crescent Society of Uzbekistan, with the support of the IFRC network, plans the following activities:

- Conduct climate change training for staff and volunteers
- Conduct training for the national disaster response team in the context of climate change
- Create animated videos about heat protection measures to be broadcast on local television and through social networks
- Distribute information, education and communication materials (leaflets, brochures, etc.) with information on measures for protection against heat and cold waves
- Install information boards with general advice and protection measures against heat (including first aid recommendations)
- Conduct workshops on first aid in heat wave emergencies (for example, to deal with sunstroke, heat stroke, fainting)
- Conduct seminars, training, competitions and tests among both schoolchildren and teachers on first aid, emergency response and climate change
- Create centres for children in schools, to deal with conditions of extreme heat and cold
- Install electric thermometers as public alerts in each target community
- Install air conditioners in nursing homes to keep indoor temperatures below 25°C in common areas during hot weather, and distribute coal and electric heaters to the most vulnerable families to keep their homes adequately warm in extreme cold weather
- Provide distribution of safe drinking water to residents of the most vulnerable remote villages, where the water source has dried up during extremely hot summers or sudden heatwaves
- Distribute “water cooling fans” to the most vulnerable residents of remote target villages to keep rooms cool and reduce dehydration
- Distribute blankets, mattresses and rugs in case of cold waves
- Distribute hygiene products for children (for example, a standard kit consisting of soap, hand spray, wet wipes, diapers, etc.) to improve hygiene levels
- Distribute window insulation materials to the most vulnerable families to keep their homes warm enough during extreme cold

Disasters and crises

For real-time information on emergencies, see IFRC GO page Uzbekistan

Uzbekistan is one of the countries with highest earthquake risk globally. According to OCHA, major urban areas in the region are particularly vulnerable due to high population density and continuing concerns over the seismic safety of buildings and infrastructure. Tashkent ranks first among nine cities in Central Asia and the Caucasus for earthquake hazard and exposure to seismic risk. According to the World Bank, more than 20 % of the population resides in buildings with high seismic vulnerability.

Although less than 15 % of the country's territory is at very high seismic risk, the danger is concentrated in the Tashkent and Bukhara regions, home to more than half the country's population and accounting for 65 % of the country's GDP. The World Bank estimates that the 1966 earthquake resulted in losses (adjusted for inflation) equivalent to over US$10 billion. Another major earthquake in Uzbekistan could have a major impact on the scale of around 30 % of GDP.

Ferghana Valley, at the intersection of Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, is becoming the most populated area in Central Asia. The region is susceptible to frequent tensions and border clashes. Repeated tensions since the collapse of the Soviet Union have left many areas disputed, leading to conflicts between
residents. There have been multiple escalations in armed clashes between security forces in the last two years, each of which has caused civilian injuries and led to evacuations. Such clashes further complicate access to critical water sources, affect livelihoods, and threaten stability.

As the likelihood of natural hazards increases, so does the vulnerability of the most exposed communities. This is further compounded by the socio-economic impacts of disasters on livelihoods, agricultural productivity and water availability.

Main areas of support
The IFRC network’s overarching regional objective for Central Asia is to continue its commitment to being the primary responder in a crisis or disaster, while improving response mechanisms.

The IFRC and network partners will support the Red Crescent Society of Uzbekistan in the following areas:

- Replenishing the central warehouse with emergency supplies of non-food items
- Providing all regional branches with computers and communication tools for monitoring in case of emergencies, as well as providing them with solar panels for uninterrupted power supply
- Setting up Young Rescuers teams in schools
- Conducting seminars, training, competitions and tests among both schoolchildren and teachers on first aid, emergency response and climate change

Health and wellbeing
In Uzbekistan, most people rely on public health care providers. These health care providers are divided into three levels: national, regional and city. The government is the main employer of health care workers and the main purchaser and supplier of health-related goods and services. While the healthcare system has improved with reforms in sanitation and access to healthcare, the death rate remains high. Uzbekistan ranks 114th in terms of maternal mortality, at 29 deaths per 100,000, and 93rd in terms of infant mortality, at 16.3 deaths per 1,000. Uzbekistan also has a low level of adult health. The country ranks 125th in terms of life expectancy, with an average life expectancy of 74.8 years. Non-communicable diseases are responsible for approximately 85% of all deaths, and cardiovascular diseases are the main cause of premature mortality. Uzbekistan ranks 115th in the world for HIV/AIDS, with a prevalence of 0.2% and is 123rd in the world in terms of obesity, with a prevalence of 16.6%. Uzbekistan is also in the world’s top 30 countries for the highest burden of multidrug-resistant tuberculosis.

Deaths from diarrhoea caused by unsafe drinking water, sanitation and inadequate personal hygiene are common, with around 41% of people living without access to safe drinking water. Inadequate access to water and sanitation alone is estimated to represent a cost to Uzbekistan of USD635 million a year (or 1.3% of GDP). These challenges are again largely concentrated in rural areas – for example, in 2018, only 22% of the rural households said that water services were “good,” compared with 58% of urban households (World Bank survey).

Main areas of support
The IFRC network’s overarching regional objective for Central Asia is to strengthen health facilities, raise awareness of health issues, improve capacity and training for health professionals, provide direct health and WASH services, anticipate and alleviate the health needs of vulnerable populations, and promote stronger physical, mental and psychosocial health outcomes. Over the past ten years, the Red Crescent Society of Uzbekistan has financed its activities in the field of health and social services with its own resources.

The Red Crescent Society of Uzbekistan has been actively involved, with IFRC support, in the COVID-19 preparedness and response, in coordination with the Ministry of Health and Ministry of Emergency Situations, WHO and other partners. It has also participated in meetings of the National Epidemic Committee. The National Society has prioritised Risk Communication and Community Engagement activities in local communities, including conducting awareness raising sessions and has distributed information materials on COVID-19 prevention in local communities and locations, such as marketplaces and public transport throughout Uzbekistan. The Red Crescent Society of Uzbekistan also organized local workshops on COVID-19 for staff and volunteers and distributed masks and hygiene items to staff, volunteers and to members of at-risk groups.

The IFRC and network partners will support the Red Crescent Society of Uzbekistan in the following areas:

- Strengthening the technical base / capacity for the nurses of the National Society’s Mehr-Shavkat service and equip service with first aid kits
- Providing the National Society’s 3,500 wards with special cell phones (e.g. with enlarged screen and large buttons) and other materials and items
• Producing and distributing flyers and manuals on First Aid and information materials on healthy lifestyles (e.g. on the prevention of infectious diseases, the development of non-communicable diseases, and on healthcare in emergencies) to the general population
• Producing a video on First Aid
• Hosting seminars for employees and volunteers on first aid, home care, provision of psychosocial assistance, promotion of healthy lifestyles and hygiene for prevention of infectious diseases

Migration and displacement
Many people in Central Asia work abroad and send remittances to their home countries, and the income received from these migrant workers is heavily relied upon in the region. The biggest challenges for migrant workers are exposure to diseases, lack of access to medical services, human trafficking and other protection risks, vulnerable families left behind, and systemic lack of reintegration upon return. The growing number of ‘social orphans’ in the region is a cause for concern. These are children whose parents are dependent on labour migration for their income. They are often left with relatives or put into children’s homes, making them vulnerable or exposed to violence or abuse.

Until 2017, movement within Uzbekistan was restricted. It was illegal for individuals to buy housing or other real estate in the region or city of Tashkent if they were not already permanently registered there, nor could they apply for a job. The “propiska” system has contributed to a large mismatch today between where workers live and where economic growth is most rapid. These rules were especially enforced in the region and city of Tashkent, which has the highest average wages and the highest employment rate in the country, and this contributed to the exceptionally low levels of internal migration in Uzbekistan. Following the launch of reforms in 2017, the elimination of this system and the limits it placed on mobility and on livelihoods has addressed one of the most deeply unpopular social policies that was in place from the previous economic model.

Tensions in the border areas in Central Asia also present political and safety concerns for communities and are a cause of internal displacement. Unresolved issues related to the distribution of water and land and illegal border crossings in the border areas between Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan also lead to frequent unrest.

Main areas of support
The Red Crescent Society of Uzbekistan supports people in need through its main programmes on disaster risk management and health and wellbeing. Hence support to vulnerable migrants and their families is embedded into the other sections of this plan.

Values, power and inclusion
The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated existing gender inequalities and worsened mental health issues. Its long-term effects vary depending on sex, gender, age, disability, legal status and ethnicity. From July to December 2020, an average of 51% of people living with disabilities in Uzbekistan evaluated their mental health as “fair” or “poor”, during the pandemic - this peaked at 61% in August 2020.

Since the Gender Development Index was first calculated in Uzbekistan in 2013, women have only ever scored higher than men in life expectancy. The labour force participation rate for women is much lower than for men, with a gap of about 28 percentage points in 2018. There is also strong gender segregation in occupations.

A World Bank study finds that about 13.5% of Uzbekistan’s population aged three and above might have some form of disability, and 3.5% might have severe forms of disability. At the end of 2019, 693,900 people with disabilities (295,500 females and 398,400 males), including 111,300 children under the age of 16 (48,800 girls and 62,500 boys), received pensions and social benefits in Uzbekistan. However, around 25% of children and adults living with disabilities in Uzbekistan do not receive the health services they require, compared with 10% without disabilities. People living with disabilities are almost three times more likely to lack access to prescribed medications due to financial constraints, lack of knowledge on how to access them, and other factors.
Enabling local actors

The Red Crescent Society of Uzbekistan is committed to pursue its own institutional strengthening, and carried out the self-assessment part of the Organizational Capacity Assessment and Certification (OCAC) process in 2012. The OCAC self-assessment is intended to capture the strengths and weaknesses of National Societies as a whole in relation to a wide range of organizational capacities.

The Red Crescent Society of Uzbekistan is also committed to the IFRC Preparedness for Effective Response (PER) process and is in the initial orientation phase. It is a continuous and flexible process that enables National Societies to assess, measure and analyze the strengths and gaps of their preparedness and response mechanisms, then take action to improve.

Main areas of support

The National Society in Uzbekistan will continue to focus on expanding its programmatic breadth and reach, alongside strengthening capacities. The support from the IFRC network will be aligned with the priorities of the Red Crescent Society of Uzbekistan, in the areas reflected under the strategic priorities.

THE IFRC NETWORK

The IFRC

The IFRC’s Central Asia Country Cluster Delegation is based in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan. The IFRC also has a presence in Uzbekistan. It supports the National Societies to collaborate, through formal and informal exchange platforms, exchange visits, and online and in-person meetings. By working together and with the IFRC, the National Societies in Central Asia stay up to date, relevant and influential in their approach to addressing humanitarian trends and challenges.

The IFRC also provides technical support in health, WASH, risk communications and community engagement, accountability to affected populations, disaster preparedness and response, finance, planning monitoring evaluation and reporting. The IFRC supports accountability as a cross-cutting theme.

Since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, the IFRC, through its global Emergency Appeal, has supported the National Society in its COVID-19 response.

IFRC membership coordination

The IFRC coordination involves working with member National Societies to analyse the humanitarian context, assess the humanitarian situation and needs, agree common priorities, co-develop common strategies to address issues, such as obtaining greater humanitarian access and acceptance space, mobilize funding and other resources, clarify consistent public messaging, and monitor progress. This also means ensuring that all strategies and programmes in support of people in need incorporate clear humanitarian or development actions and reinforce the auxiliary role of National Societies in their respective countries.

In addition to peer-to-peer collaboration between the Central Asian National Societies, the participating National Societies that provide support to the Red Crescent Society of Uzbekistan are the German Red Cross and the Italian Red Cross. The Red Cross Society of China provides support remotely. This support is outlined below:

In 2022, the Red Cross Society of China supported the Red Crescent Society of Uzbekistan with two projects on disaster management.

The German Red Cross has a regional office in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, and a country office in Dushanbe, Tajikistan. It has a history of long-term cooperation with all five National Societies in Central Asia, and has implemented multiple regional and cross-border community-based disaster risk reduction, climate change adaptation, and development projects with them. Since 2013, the German Red Cross has been undertaking a cross-border social structures development programme engaging the three bordering countries of Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. It aims to support the National Societies in their structural and institutional development, paying particular attention to field branches and capacity building.
In the last five years, the German Red Cross is focusing on assisting the National Societies with innovative programming, such as cash and voucher assistance and forecast-based action for heat and cold waves. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the German Red Cross provided substantial assistance for the National Societies to conduct emergency response operations, which included food and non-food items assistance to vulnerable people, and cash and voucher assistance to the most affected families and households. It encourages the National Societies to pay attention to the issues of gender equality, and the protection of rights and lives of people with disabilities, especially women and girls, who are in the most vulnerable positions.

The Italian Red Cross has been engaging with National Societies in the region through projects and activities for more than 10 years and has had its own permanent office in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan since 2018. It is interested in supporting the Red Crescent Society of Uzbekistan with resource mobilization, and strategic and capacity development.

### Movement coordination

The Red Crescent Society of Uzbekistan, the IFRC and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) work closely together throughout Central Asia. 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 supports the National Societies in Central Asia on restoring family links, international humanitarian law, mental health and psychosocial support, and emergency preparedness response programming. The ICRC’s Tashkent delegation helps the national authorities in their work on international humanitarian law and other humanitarian norms dissemination and integration into national legislation, academic curricula and the practices of military and security forces.

### Coordination with other actors

The Red Crescent Society of Uzbekistan is the only non-governmental organization in the State System of Prevention and Action in Case of Emergencies, which leads and coordinates national and local authorities alongside all other organizations in disaster response within Uzbekistan.

It has an ongoing partnership with the Ministry of Health, providing social care to vulnerable households, including people living with disabilities, older people, and families living below the poverty line. For COVID-19, the National Society coordinated with the Ministry of Health, World Health Organization (WHO) and the Risk Communication and Community Engagement sub-group to strengthen the response. It has supported WHO in translating COVID-19 information, education, training and other materials into the Uzbek and Karakalpak languages. The National Society has delivered several thousand units of information materials and conducted workshop sessions related to self-protection against COVID-19 and the proper use of personal protective equipment. The National Society uses mahalla community groups as platforms for reaching remote communities to carry out COVID-19 related risk communication work.
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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**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