

## Responding to disasters

### Regional Disaster Response Teams (RDRT) or Regional Intervention Teams (RIT)

Regional Disaster Response Teams (RDRT) are a cost-effective regional disaster response support system that is entirely staffed by members of **National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies**. The aim of RDRTs is to actively promote building of regional capacities in disaster management.

An RDRT team is composed of National Red Cross or Red Crescent Society **volunteers** or **staff**, usually members of their own national response teams, trained to work as a team and bring assistance to National Societies in neighbouring countries. They are made up of a core group of people with cross-sectoral expertise, such as health, logistics, water and sanitation, as well as generalist relief workers. Most are vastly experienced at providing disaster response in their own countries as well as regionally.

#### How does it work?

Within defined geographical regions, members of National Red Cross or Red Crescent Societies are trained together as a team to be deployed within 24 or 48 hours to support neighbouring National Societies responding to a disaster. These regions can be extremely large, such as the Central American and Caribbean, or limited to a few countries which often share the same language and culture. The Regional Disaster Response Team initiative started in 1998 with the aim of effectively utilizing existing capacities of National Societies within each region.

The training curriculum is standardized and is designed so that regional teams are both able to support national disaster response teams and work alongside international teams where necessary. The training is organized by the International Federation's regional delegations, which keeps a database of trained members, and alerts and deploys them on request of a National Society. Pre-prepared field equipment, including computers and telecommunications, is kept at the delegations and deployed with the team.

#### Deployments

In recent years, RDRTs have been deployed in most regions on a wide variety of high profile emergencies such as the **South Asian Tsunami in 2004**, the **Sahel operation** and during the **South Asia Earthquake in 2005**. Equally RDRTs have been deployed for less visible emergencies such as widespread flooding in Romania (2005-06) and Cholera outbreaks in Angola (June 2006.) The International Federation has deployed RDRT teams alongside international **Field Assessment and Coordination Teams (FACT)** in major disaster response operations, and to carry out assessments in the case of slow onset disasters, such as regional level drought.

In 2005 and 2006, 181 RDRT members were deployed during 18 different missions.