



*Red Cross volunteers in Thai Bin, Vietnam help a resident strengthen her home before a typhoon.*  
© Tran Quang Tuan/Vietnam Red Cross

# Year in Review 2014

Prepare. Innovate. Learn. Together.



**Global** Disaster Preparedness Center



## MESSAGE FROM DIRECTOR

One doesn't need to look too far to see that our global landscape is quickly changing. Technological advances, increased access to information and economic growth are among the many things that continue to strengthen community resilience worldwide. However, some global shifts, such as unplanned population growth in urban areas and changing climate patterns, have also increased disaster risks for communities.

Recognizing these heightened risks, the Red Cross is expanding its commitment to reduce human vulnerability and better prepare for disasters in all corners of the world. Much attention is going toward addressing needs in cities, where nearly 70 percent of the world's population is expected to live by 2050. The strains on urban infrastructure and demands on existing resources are already pervasive and increasingly complex. For example, today's cities are home to diverse, shifting populations, many of whom have limited connections to established safety nets, making it more difficult to identify and address vulnerabilities and risks. Changing climate patterns, which introduce a high degree of unpredictability and intensity to natural disasters, are compounding these challenges, particularly along coastal areas where there is disproportionate population growth among cities. And yet, despite these trends, there are tremendous opportunities to reduce human vulnerability. The concentration of wealth, knowledge and education, and innovative technology is an asset that can contribute to solutions that will foster stronger, healthier and safer communities. These solutions will require greater investment in research, learning platforms, new technologies, advocacy, partnerships, and above all, local capacity building.

The Global Disaster Preparedness Center (GDPC), as a resource center to all 189 Red Cross and Red Crescent national societies, is working with partners to make a contribution toward building resilient communities. As an integral part of the Red Cross Red Crescent network, we are well positioned to build on decades of disaster management

experience in order to mobilize communities at a global level and explore creative solutions for old and new problems through research and innovative programming. We can promote learning and investment in activities that address increasing risks and can be easily replicated at scale.

Over the past year, the GDPC worked with partners to launch the Universal App Program, aimed at putting life-saving first aid and disaster preparedness information into the hands of millions of people. We expect to reach nearly 100 countries in the coming year with the First Aid app, making it available in local languages around the world. In addition, the newly-launched Hazard app pairs disaster alerts from local emergency management or hydro-meteorological agencies with Red Cross preparedness tips, giving people the chance to make more informed decisions and take action before a disaster strikes.

Looking ahead, the GDPC is continuing work to build community resilience, with a focus on urban settings. We will be working alongside a growing number of diverse partners, including the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), to promote resilience by encouraging local-level coalition building and creating strong advocacy campaigns that prompt action.

I would like to thank all those who have collaborated on and contributed to our efforts— we could not have come this far without you. We look forward to working with old and new partners in coming year to help make communities safer and stronger worldwide.



**Rebecca Scheurer**, *Director*

# AIM

The primary aim of the GDPC is to strengthen disaster preparedness capacities of the global Red Cross and Red Crescent network in order to help safeguard and strengthen communities from future disasters.

Following a year-long research assessment in 2011, the GDPC was established in 2012 by the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and the American Red Cross. The GDPC promotes learning, knowledge sharing, innovation, technical assistance, research and networking amongst disaster preparedness practitioners worldwide.



A branch officer of the Solomon Islands Red Cross is educating school children on how to prepare for disasters.  
Benoit Matsha-Carpentier/IFRC

## ABOUT THE GDPC



### Knowledge management:

Identify, collect, store and disseminate disaster preparedness material and resources to practitioners around the world.



### Research:

Strengthen the disaster preparedness and resilience evidence base through applied research.



### Technical assistance:

Provide programmatic guidance to and share targeted good practices with Red Cross and Red Crescent partners.



### Coordination:

Promote effective cross-learning amongst disaster preparedness professionals inside and outside of the Red Cross Red Crescent network.

## COALITION-BUILDING FOR RESILIENCE

The compounding effects of changing climate patterns, growing urbanization and settlement in hazard-prone areas are posing significant risks for millions of individuals living in urban centers. What's more, these risks and other day-to-day stresses are exacerbated among poor and vulnerable communities due to uncertain and limited access to economic opportunities, natural resources and basic services.

Despite these challenges, people living in cities have a wide array of resources, skills and capacities to bring resilience efforts to their own communities and beyond. Throughout 2013, the GDPC, with support from Rockefeller Foundation, convened a series of workshops exploring innovative ideas, scalable solutions and new opportunities for disaster preparedness and resilience-building activities in urban areas. The regionally-focused 'Urban Risk Dialogues' were held in Arusha, Tanzania; Bangkok, Thailand and Panama City, Panama, with national society colleagues, international agencies and corporate sector partners in attendance. The IFRC later held a further series of dialogues in Tbilisi, Georgia; Tehran, Iran and Beirut, Lebanon. One of the primary findings from these workshops was that coalition-building at local, national, regional and global levels is critical to strengthen the Red Cross and Red Crescent's knowledge base around resilience and to ensure effective service delivery, advocacy and resource mobilization.

The Urban Risk Dialogues used a retrospective visioning process to explore 'resilience scenarios' in relation to priority risks identified for urban areas in the participants' countries. In the Panama City workshop, one set of participants looked at marginalized urban communities in Trinidad and Tobago that are characterized by gang violence and complex social structures. The group imagined a resilient

urban community as one with economic productivity, public safety, good health, adequate provision of infrastructure and guaranteed social services. In order to accomplish this, the participants envisioned the local Red Cross, along with its partners, building local level coalitions and alliances through volunteer networks, youth groups and religious organizations. Working together, these coalitions could change the perception of dangerous neighborhoods, fill in gaps in social and public services and ensure the integration of the most isolated and disparate populations in the resilience building process.

This scenario and others developed through the full series of Urban Risk Dialogues demonstrate that 'resilience' is a multidimensional, multisectoral and potentially transformative concept that entails holistic thinking and integrated programming. Building on the results from this activity, the GDPC is currently working with the global Red Cross Red Crescent network to identify opportunities for scaling up the role of the Red Cross and Red Crescent in anchoring the necessary partnerships and building effective coalitions with the goal of making every community a safer, better prepared and more resilient community.



Volunteers use cyclone alert information to warn residents on Haing Gyi Island, Myanmar about Cyclone Nargis.

© IFRC

## INNOVATION IN URBAN DISASTER PREPAREDNESS

To facilitate better coordination among a vast network of stakeholders, the GDPC focuses on strengthening existing relationships and developing new partnerships with humanitarian and international development practitioners. In February 2014, the GDPC hosted an event, "Innovation in Urban Disaster Preparedness", bringing together experts in the fields of disaster management, risk reduction, preparedness and resilience. The forum consisted of four

panel discussions that covered a range of topics from the Typhoon Haiyan response and recovery efforts in the Philippines to private sector partnerships that support long-term resilience. The event was well attended with nearly 100 participants and over 300 views on the online web stream. In addition to learning from experts in the field, participants had the opportunity to share ideas and grow their professional networks.

## STRENGTHENING THE EVIDENCE BASE THROUGH RESEARCH

The humanitarian community is increasingly dealing with fast paced developments that shape the nature of disasters and create the need for continuous re-thinking of ‘traditional’ ways of operating. Due to economic pressure and competing program priorities, practitioners need to find the most efficient and effective use of resources to enhance the resilience and coping capacities of vulnerable populations. To strengthen the knowledge and evidence base on disaster preparedness practices, the GDPC is collaborating with practitioners, university partners and research institutions to conduct action-oriented research that will deepen and advance Red Cross and Red Crescent practice areas, focused on enabling communities to better prepare for and cope with disasters.

The GDPC has focused on building out its research pillar by conducting a set of applied research projects and increasing the linkages between Red Cross front line practitioners and academic institutions to enhance collaboration. The GDPC’s research agenda guides the selection and prioritization of research activities according to four thematic focus areas: 1) Effectiveness of Disaster Preparedness Work, 2) Disaster Preparedness in Urban Environments, 3) Technology and Disaster Preparedness and 4) Innovative Disaster Preparedness Approaches. Over the last year, nine research projects covered an array of topics directly relevant to the disaster preparedness work of the Red Cross network. Research findings are applied through the direct involvement of practitioners in the planning and implementation of projects, and project results are disseminated through presentations, reports and information sheets on [PrepareCenter.org](http://PrepareCenter.org) as well as through the GDPC network.

PROJECT	PARTNER	OUTCOME
Practitioner Needs Analysis	University of Washington	Identification of key elements for the successful implementation of disaster preparedness practice with communities and vulnerable populations.
Early Action for Disaster Preparedness	Climate Centre	Development of thresholds of climate related forecasts and identification of forecast-based risk reductions activities.
Guidance for Improved Case Studies	Quimera, Inc.	Guidance document for the planning, design and implementation of case studies, with possible engagement of video technology.
Improved Decision Support for Community Resilience Interventions	IFRC	Convening of working group of Red Cross and external partners to explore simplified approaches to decision-support (e.g. cost benefit analysis) for community resilience.
Research on the Legal Elements of Disaster Preparedness	IFRC Disaster Law Program	Compilation of information on domestic laws for disaster preparedness and legal preparedness issues for international response.
Preliminary Urban Assessment Workshop Design	Institute for Social and Environmental Transition	Extraction of key elements and challenges of Vulnerability and Capacity Assessments conducted in urban communities in eight African cities. Development of facilitation guide for a workshop to conduct preliminary urban assessment.
Strengthening Knowledge and Information Management in SE Asia	IFRC Southeast (SE) Asia Regional Delegation	Support the enhancement of the Red Cross Resource Management System in SE Asia to establish key disaster management indicators of national societies and enhance the data collection and analysis tools at regional and local level.
Resilient Preparedness Research – Small Grants Program	Response 2 Resilience	Collaboration between research institutions and Red Cross practitioners to identify key gaps in local disaster preparedness knowledge, and provision of small grants to local researchers to address these knowledge gaps.
Community Resilience in the Face of Disasters	Institute for Social and Environmental Transition	Case study on the September 2013 floods in Boulder, Colorado. Documentation of lessons learned on how community and municipal action reflected resilient systems and approaches in response to the disaster.



# GROWING THE PREPAREDNESS COMMUNITY



## Research Projects

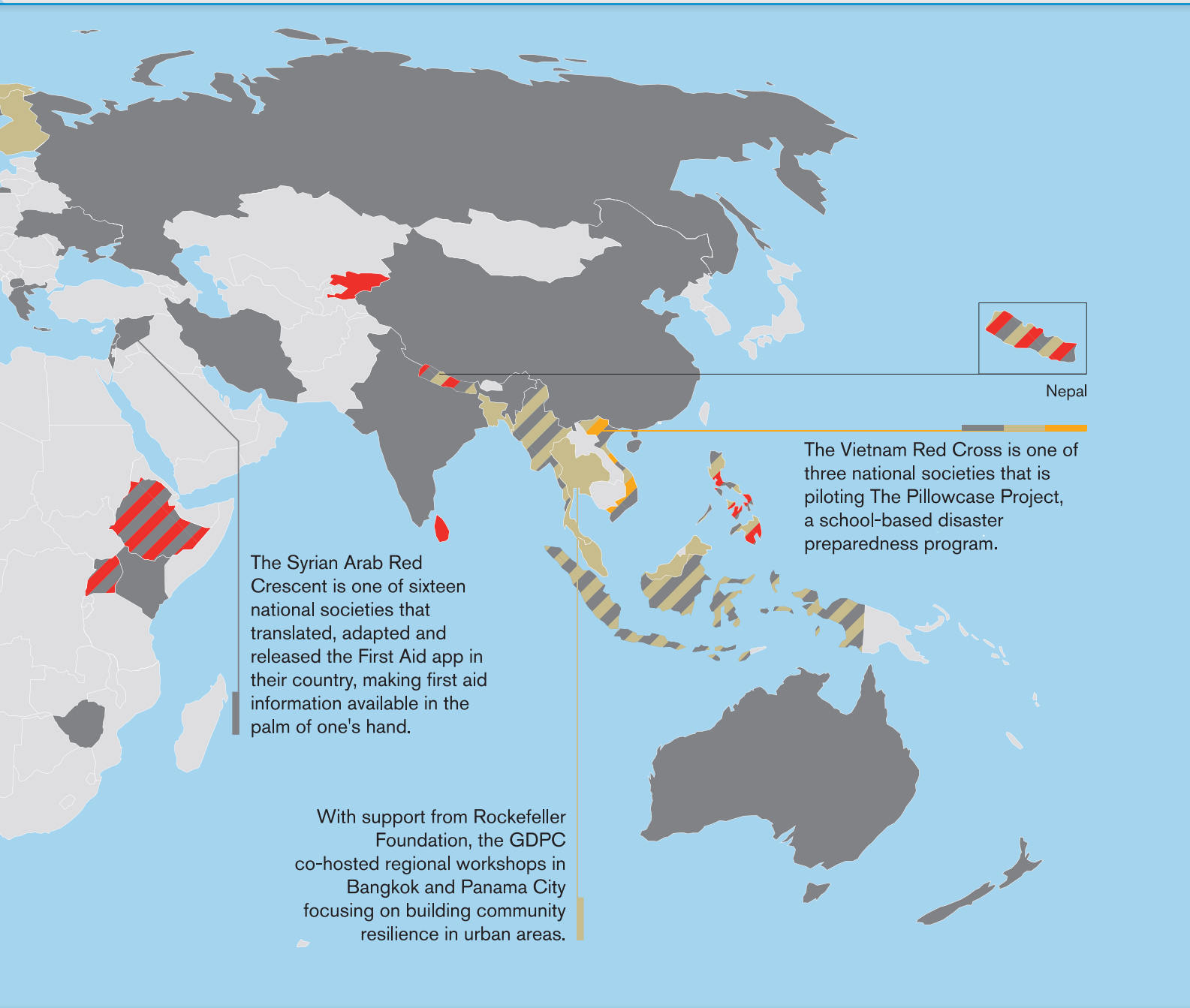
Burkina Faso	
Colombia	● ●
Ethiopia	● ●
Ghana	
Jamaica	● ● ●
Kyrgyzstan	
Nepal	● ● ●
Netherlands	● ● ●
Philippines	● ● ●
Sri Lanka	
Uganda	● ●

## Universal App Program

Antigua & Barbuda	
Argentina	
Australia	
Bahamas	
Barbados	
Belgium-Flanders	
Belize	
Canada	● ●
Chile	● ●
China	
Czech Republic	
Dominica	
Ethiopia	● ●

France	● ● ●
Greece	
Grenada	
Guyana	
Haiti	
Hong Kong	
Iceland	
India	
Indonesia	● ●
Iran	
Ireland	
Israel	
Jamaica	● ● ●
Kenya	
Lebanon	

Macendonia	
Malta	
Mexico	● ●
Myanmar	● ●
Nepal	● ● ●
New Zealand	
Philippines	● ● ●
Poland	
Portugal	
Russia	
Saint Lucia	
Singapore	
St. Kitts & Nevis	
St. Vincent & the Grenadines	
Suriname	● ●



Sweden	
Switzerland	
Syria	
Trinidad & Tobago	
Uganda	● ●
Ukraine	
Vietnam	● ● ●
Zimbabwe	

### The Pillowcase Project

UK	● ●
Peru	
Vietnam	● ● ●

### Fellowship Program

USA	
France	● ● ●

### Workshops & Events

Bangladesh	
Barbados	
Canada	● ●
Chile	● ●
Colombia	
Costa Rica	
Denmark	
Dominican Republic	
Ecuador	
Finland	
France	● ● ●
Guatemala	
Haiti	
Indonesia	● ●

Jamaica	● ● ●
Malaysia	
Mexico	● ●
Myanmar	● ●
Nepal	● ● ●
Netherlands	● ●
Norway	
Panama	
Philippines	● ● ●
Spain	
Suriname	● ●
Thailand	
UK	● ●
Uruguay	
Vietnam	● ● ●

## THE MOBILE APP APPROACH

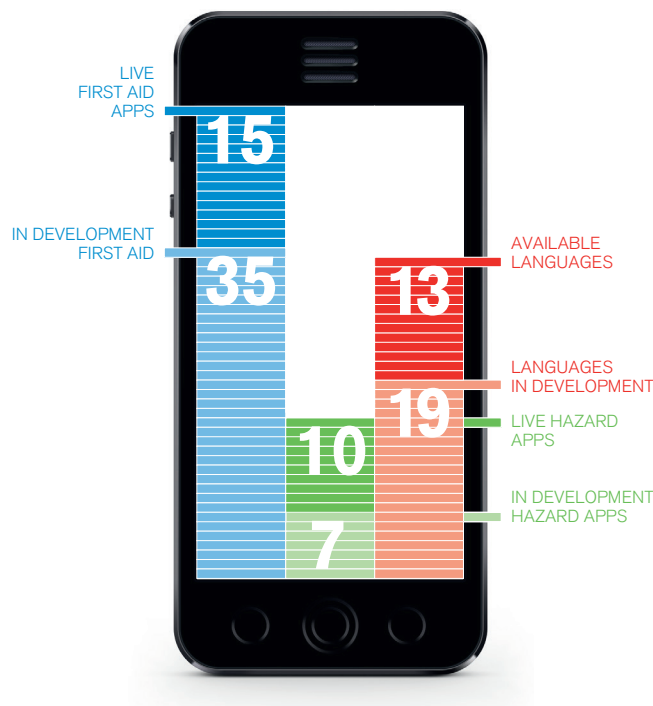
Building on the success of the Universal First Aid App Program in 2013, the GDPC embarked on the creation of a new multi-hazard app that would provide disaster preparedness and alert information for hazards such as earthquakes, tsunamis, floods and pandemics. Like the First Aid app, the Hazard app is adapted and localized by the national society to ensure the content is relevant and reflects the culture and guidance in the country. By partnering with local hydrometeorological and emergency management agencies, participating national societies can release an app that combines disaster alerts and early warning messages with preparedness tips.

The preparedness tips and information about what to do before, during and after an emergency is based on the *Public awareness and public education for disaster risk reduction: key messages* (also known as 'PAPE') published by the IFRC in 2013. The primary objective of this publication is to have a set of refined disaster risk reduction and preparedness messages

based on a universal template that can be contextualized for use anywhere. Through close collaboration with colleagues at the IFRC Secretariat in Geneva, the GDPC used the guidance from this publication and applied it to a mobile application template that would be easy to understand, concise and with emphasis on positive action for the user.

With support from the US Agency for International Development Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance, the American Red Cross and GDPC are working with national society partners in the Caribbean and Southeast Asia to release multi-hazard apps in their respective countries. Each national society will be able to monitor and track weather developments, prepare individuals and communities for disaster scenarios, find help, and notify family and friends of one's safety in a

disaster situation. The Hazard app will reach hundreds of thousands of individuals across 17 countries in order to enhance public access to preparedness information and improve decision-making toward safety and resilience.



*“For messages to have credibility, legitimacy and strong impact in a particular national or local context, they need to be standard and consistent, backed by a consensus of key stakeholders and based on the best knowledge available at the time.”<sup>2</sup>*

## PEER-TO-PEER COLLABORATION

As the Universal First Aid app expands to new regions, national societies are sharing videos, images and translated content to make the app easily available in multiple countries and languages. The Lebanon Red Cross translated the First Aid app content into Arabic, which was used by the Syrian Arab Red Crescent in their

own version of the app released in Syria. The availability of a mobile phone application that has the potential to put life-saving information in the hands of community members is a powerful tool to reach thousands, if not millions, of individuals in an emergency situation.



## PILOTING YOUTH PREPAREDNESS PROGRAMS

**E**ducating youth is a critical component of preparing communities for disasters and other risks. In the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, the Southeast Louisiana Chapter of the American Red Cross began an effort to educate youth residing in temporary housing communities about emergency preparedness through a fun, artistic activity: decorating pillowcases to hold emergency supply kits.

The GDPC, with sponsorship by Disney, is piloting the school-based disaster preparedness program internationally, based on the American Red Cross program, The Pillowcase Project. The pilot program educates students between the ages of eight and eleven in core disaster preparedness concepts such as appropriate protective actions for a disaster that may happen in their area. A unique component of the program is the addition of the ‘Coping Skills’ curriculum to address the psychosocial issues that may arise for children during a disaster. Two highlighted activities in this section are the ‘Breathing with Color’ and ‘Symbol of Strength’ activities. The ‘Breathing with Color’ activity has been used for decades by Red Cross disaster responders in post-disaster situations and shelters to teach younger children how to use deep breathing to calm themselves. The ‘Symbol of Strength’ activity is an exercise that teaches students to visualize an intangible concept—their own personal strength—and empowers them to use that image as a confidence-boosting mechanism in times of need. Another core component of the program is the emphasis placed on students sharing what they learned with their families when they go home.

The implementation of The Pillowcase Project in Vietnam is indicative of the unique and flexible nature of the program that allows for easy adaptation of the materials to complement existing school-based disaster risk reduction programs. In May 2014, the Vietnam Red Cross taught nearly 4,000 students in 25 schools across two provinces, Quang Nam and Quang Ngai. The program incorporated an interactive, child-friendly, multi-hazard brochure that refreshes students’ existing knowledge of hazards and prepares them for what to do before, during and after an emergency. Along with the educational brochure, students received backpacks designed and manufactured in Vietnam that can serve as a flotation device in the case of a flood, typhoon or tsunami. The program was met with such enthusiasm and positive support from the community that the Vietnam Red Cross hopes to expand it further next year.



Students participate in a school-based disaster risk reduction program in Vietnam.  
©Harleen K. Sohi/American Red Cross

*“People under 25 make up 43 percent of the world’s population, but the percentage reaches 60 percent in the least-developed countries.”<sup>3</sup>*

## VIRTUAL PRACTITIONER NETWORKS

Being part of the larger Red Cross and Red Crescent network provides unique opportunities for sharing information and growing the base and depth of disaster management information. The GDPC's website, [Preparecenter.org](http://Preparecenter.org), continues to make significant progress toward building and strengthening a virtual network of preparedness practitioners and will grow and evolve as it increases its site visits and user base.

[PrepareCenter.org](http://PrepareCenter.org) is a global site, allowing for collaboration among humanitarian and international development practitioners as well as the sharing of resources and experiences on disaster preparedness and related issues from across the globe. The site features topic, hazard and country profile pages in various languages as well as a cross-language search tool. With active contributions from users, resources materials continue to grow and are able to be categorized for accessibility and use. The GDPC also promotes the use of social media to engage practitioners in

real-time discussions and to share current information and resources, both of which will help strengthen our global connections and encourage joint collaboration.

[PrepareCenter.org](http://PrepareCenter.org) is a place collaboration among practitioners in the disaster preparedness and related communities (health, resilience, climate adaptation etc.), users can share their own experience, contribute to the content, and ask questions of the community. Enabling users to ask questions and comment allows open dialogue and highlights key considerations for those interested. Beyond the practitioner-level user, the site targets anyone interested in disaster preparedness at the household, business, community and government levels. [PrepareCenter.org](http://PrepareCenter.org) helps to foster growth and learning by enabling users to add new text and topics directly on the site, upload new resource materials and rate material already uploaded on the site. Over the coming year, it is expected that the site will continue to evolve and tangibly contribute to the disaster preparedness dialogue.



*At an urban disaster risk reduction workshop, participants listen to a representative from the Côte d'Ivoire Red Cross as she describes the challenges facing the most vulnerable urban centres.*

©Katherine Mueller/IFRC

## SHARE YOUR STORIES

The GDPC is encouraging community practitioners to share good practices, solutions and lessons directly from the field through 'Share Your Stories' on [PrepareCenter.org](http://PrepareCenter.org). Experiences from the field are not always easily captured by traditional or quantitative methods, but through story-telling, others can learn and envision new ways of working in similar disaster

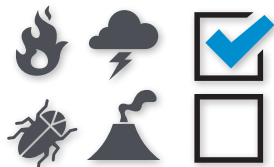
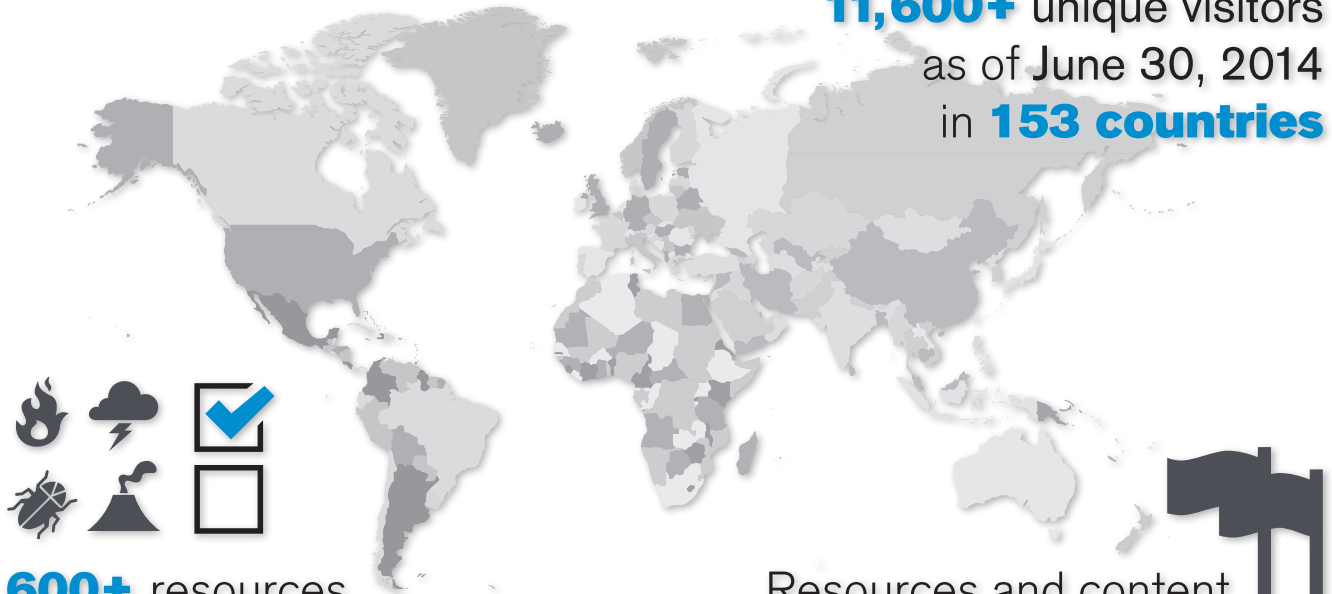
preparedness contexts. While anyone can contribute and upload their story directly to [Preparecenter.org](http://Preparecenter.org), by conducting interviews and outreach efforts, the GDPC hopes to continue to grow the library of relatable success stories while also looking for best ways to overcome obstacles and facilitate strong relationships in the field.

WEBSITE STATS

 **260+** active members  
from **33 countries**



**11,600+** unique visitors  
as of June 30, 2014  
in **153 countries**



**600+** resources  
on disaster preparedness

Resources and content  
available in **16 languages**



FEATURES

 **Hazards**

This section displays the 15 most prominent hazards. It helps the user to know how to prepare their home, business, community and governments.

 **Topics**

Cross-cutting topics are presented primarily for users who have little-to-some knowledge on the topic. For advanced practitioners, the site offers resources and 'Lessons and Examples'.

 **Resources**

The resource library contains a searchable inventory of documents related to hazards and disaster preparedness in communities around the globe.

 **Countries**

Every country has a profile that features stats, government policies, in-country partners, examples, and lessons and resources.

 **Stories**

Stories are a way for online users to share their best practices, lessons and challenges learned from the field.

 **Ask Community**

[Preparecenter.org](http://Preparecenter.org) provides a forum for the online community of disaster practitioners to ask questions and engage in debate.





Residents learn how to build safer shelters during the Participatory Approach to Safe Shelter Awareness meeting in Bangladesh.

©Agostino Pacciani/IFRC

## Prepare

[Preparecenter.org](https://www.preparecenter.org) engages disaster practitioners on every level, including how to prepare households, communities, business and governments around the world for disasters.

## Innovate

[Preparecenter.org](https://www.preparecenter.org) is a highly accessible, user-based site; is practitioner-oriented; and contains a robust set of tools to support collaboration across countries, languages, and contexts.

## Learn

[Preparecenter.org](https://www.preparecenter.org) features five interlinked areas for learning, including: topics on preparedness, a hazard section, a resource and tool library, country pages and user profiles.

## Together

The [Preparecenter.org](https://www.preparecenter.org) online community is able to add new topics, upload new resources materials, ask a question to the community, rate and discuss material already uploaded on the site.

Thank you for your support. Connect with us at:

 [www.preparecenter.org](https://www.preparecenter.org)

 [gdpc@redcross.org](mailto:gdpc@redcross.org)

 [disaster.preparedness.center](https://www.facebook.com/disaster.preparedness.center)

 [PrepareCenter](https://twitter.com/PrepareCenter)

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**American  
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