



**150 years of humanitarian action**  
Council of Delegates of the International  
Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement  
Sydney, Australia, November 2013



## Council of Delegates 2013

### OUTLINE OF THE WORKSHOP

#### Fundamental Principles of the Red Cross and Red Crescent

#### Introduction

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With a view to preparing the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the RCRC Movement Fundamental Principles in 2015, the Movement has embarked on a “Fundamental Principles initiative”. The initiative seeks to celebrate the importance and relevance of the RCRC Fundamental Principles, while critically reflecting together on their application in today’s humanitarian contexts.

Phase I of this initiative is a 'scoping' phase, running from early 2013 until the Council of Delegates in November 2013. This phase culminates in a workshop at the Council of Delegates in Sydney. A series of structured consultations and guided discussions were conducted within the Movement in the first half of 2013, the aim being to generate dialogue on the relevance and application of the Fundamental Principles across the Movement from different perspectives: the individual staff or volunteer’s one, the Movement perspective and the operational perspective. The aim is to also seek input and support for a second phase of the joint Movement initiative on the Fundamental Principles in 2014/2015.

#### Workshop aims

- Present key findings from the Movement consultations on the Fundamental Principles
- Further gauge and capture interest in the joint Movement initiative on the Fundamental Principles, and in particular, the involvement of a cross-section of different National Societies
- Gain feedback on different options for a Fundamental Principles project (second phase of the joint movement initiative) aimed at the 2015 International Conference.

#### Background

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2015 will be the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the official adoption by the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement of the Fundamental Principles. An expression of values and accumulated experience distilled from the Movement’s work over the previous century, the Fundamental Principles serve as a framework for the action and organisation of the Movement and are central to its common identity and purpose.

In celebration of their 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary, it is proposed that National Societies, the Federation and the ICRC come together, not only to celebrate this remarkable milestone, but also to

share experiences and to learn from one another as well as to reassert the contemporary relevance and importance of the Fundamental Principles. Celebration should be supported by an evidence-base, and to this end, a working group consisting of the ICRC, the International Federation and the British Red Cross conducted a scoping exercise in the period of February to July 2013, to collect the views from individuals in the Movement on the contemporary relevance of the Fundamental Principles. Based on the findings of this joint work, there is no doubt that both Red Cross Red Crescent volunteers and staff, as well as their organisations, consider the Fundamental Principles to be of great relevance and as a vital element of our collective identity and action.

This paper is in support of a Workshop taking place at the Council of Delegates in Sydney in November 2013. The objectives of this Workshop are to share feedback from the consultations that have taken place over the last few months and to propose a new Movement initiative that builds on the findings to date and contributes to principled Red Cross Red Crescent action and to the celebration of the 50th anniversary of the Fundamental Principles, including that which will take place at the Statutory Meetings in 2015. The discussion generated at the workshop will be captured in the workshop's conclusion.

Presented hereafter is a snapshot of findings from consultations and conversations held between February and July 2013 with Red Cross and Red Crescent volunteers and staff. This snapshot is a compilation of thoughts and impressions on the importance, relevance and impact of the Fundamental Principles, ranging from an organisational and operational perspective to the individual perspective of staff and volunteers.

The purpose of this scoping phase was to generate dialogue across the Movement about both the challenges and the opportunities that the Fundamental Principles bring for our identity and action. Importantly, it also sought to generate support from all Movement components and momentum for a joint Movement initiative that will run from the Council of Delegates until the 2015 International Conference and the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the adoption of the Fundamental Principles.

The broad consultation process conducted during this period addressed four main issues: the relevance of the Principles to Red Cross and Red Crescent volunteers and staff; the role of the Principles in our collective identity and positioning; their operational significance; and views on the future direction of a project on the Fundamental Principles.

### **Key findings of 2013 consultations (scoping phase)**

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Regional distribution of individuals consulted:

Zone	Number of National Societies consulted
Africa	31
Americas	14
Asia Pacific	22
Europe and Central Asia	33
Middle East and North Africa	15
TOTAL	115 <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> In fact, 179 consultations took place as some National Societies had more than one opportunity to provide input.

This significant and geographically representative sample was supplemented by other consultations with Disaster Management delegates<sup>2</sup> and other studies that were undertaken in parallel, which have looked at the application of the Fundamental Principles in specific contexts<sup>3</sup>. These strands of consultation provided a rich variety of views, based on lived experience, which was further complemented by the engagement of many individuals through a Facebook group set up to encourage discussion on the Fundamental Principles.

The headline conclusions that can be drawn from this process and which form the background to the project proposal outlined in the second half of this paper are:

- **The Fundamental Principles remain universally relevant and important across the Movement, at individual, institutional and operational levels, and are seen as an integrated package where all 7 fundamental Principles are inter-related and important.**
- **It is important that the understanding and application of the Principles be better contextualised so that the most benefit can be drawn from their use. National Societies have expressed a need for practical and operational guidance on the application of Fundamental Principles in today's humanitarian contexts.**
- **There is seen to be uneven understanding and application of the Fundamental Principles across the Movement. Given this challenge, the key role of the leadership in the Movement as guardians and promoters of the Fundamental Principles was emphasised by many throughout the consultation process.**

In terms of the specific areas of focus, the feedback was notably consistent across all components and levels of the Movement:

Individual perspectives: the relevance of the Principles to volunteers and staff:

**As well as forming the basis of the organisational culture of the organisations that make up the Movement, the Fundamental Principles provide a strong basis for individuals' commitment, decisions, values and behaviour:**

- National Society volunteers identify the FPs strongly with their own personal values, the Fundamental Principles is often what attracts volunteers to work for Red Cross and Red Crescent
- The Movement being based on Fundamental Principles is a source of pride and motivation for volunteers in particular
- Translating the Fundamental Principles into individual behaviour as Red Cross and Red Crescent volunteer or staff contributes to organisational adherence and operational impact

The role of the Fundamental Principles in our collective identity and positioning:

**The Fundamental Principles are a distinguishing feature of the Movement in the broader humanitarian landscape and, in spite of inherent challenges, are a force for unity within the Movement:**

- The Fundamental Principles and their consistent application are strongly related to the Red Cross and Red Crescent brand and reputation;
- The distinctiveness of the Movement is not assured: there is a sense that through the adoption of some of the Fundamental Principles by other actors, they alone no longer constitute the distinctive identity of Movement actors. However, certain characteristics of

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<sup>2</sup> 115 people responded around a third of whom work in global disaster response, another third work mainly in the Asia Pacific region and the final third is quite evenly spread across the other regions, Africa, Americas, MENA and Europe.

<sup>3</sup> Principles in Action studies on the Lebanon and Somalia, British Red Cross 2012 and 2013 respectively

the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement – linked to the application of the Fundamental Principles – were considered a distinctive feature e.g. close ties of National Societies to local communities through the principle of Voluntary Service;

- The principle of Unity is often seen to be challenged: on a national level, by increasingly independent branches; by National Societies working in another country in unilateral action without the consent of the host National Society ; and by a lack of unity between ICRC and the International Federation;
- There is a general sense that there is too much discretion in the application of the Fundamental Principles and insufficient compliance/accountability measures in place to curb this.

The operational significance of the Fundamental Principles:

**The Fundamental Principles are operationally relevant whether in strategic planning, decision-making or in direct contact with beneficiaries. All seven principles were mentioned in relation to access, acceptance, quality and impact:**

- A lack of staff and volunteer diversity (at all levels) is an impediment to the application and perception of certain Fundamental Principles, especially impartiality and neutrality;
- There was on-going and significant confusion expressed over the auxiliary role and its relation with independence;
- More guidance would be welcomed on how best to balance principles against one another, especially humanity and the extent to which it can override the application of other Fundamental Principles;
- There were issues noted around the political affiliation of staff and volunteers – especially at governance level – and the implications this can have for independence and neutrality (both real and perceived);
- There is a need to ensure that efforts are made to constantly and consistently disseminate and communicate the Fundamental Principles.

**It should be emphasised that, as well as the challenges that were highlighted, there is also a wealth of excellent reflection and action based on the Fundamental Principles that underpins the daily activities of Red Cross and Red Crescent actors and that this was also evidenced in the consultations.**

### **Going forward: Proposal for the Movement-wide initiative on the Fundamental Principles (2014-2015)**

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Building on this process, and on the input expected at the Council of Delegates, it is proposed that there be a joint Movement initiative on the Fundamental Principles between now and the 2015 International Conference. Drawing on the very clear messages given through the consultation, the proposed initiative will focus on 3 main elements over an 18-month period:

1. A series of consultative workshops will be undertaken with key decision-makers (senior management and governance and operational decision-makers), in order to identify real-life dilemmas which are of particular relevance to specific contexts (including contexts which are peaceful and less disaster-prone). Through these events, participants will explore the application of the Fundamental Principles to identify and contribute to capturing constructive approaches to addressing identified dilemmas. The workshops will also serve as an opportunity for leaders to reflect on what changes they can make in

their own organisations to more effectively utilise the Fundamental Principles in their broader practice.

2. Based on this, the project team will elaborate guidance and easily accessible learning materials which will facilitate the contextualised application of the Fundamental Principles.
3. Running parallel to this, there will be an on-going effort across the Movement to identify where and how the Fundamental Principles can be more explicitly integrated into the various training and capacity building processes, tools and activities which can improve our collective understanding and application of the Fundamental Principles. Specific 'inserts', drawing on the guidance and materials produced from the workshops will then be introduced over time.

While understanding that there is a need to have a specific and dedicated effort to reinvigorate the Fundamental Principles within the Movement, the aim of the proposed initiative is not to have a 'stand-alone' project which results in a Fundamental Principles approach, or manual. The aim is rather to acknowledge the scope of the challenge and to seek out opportunities to mainstream the learning about and practical application of Fundamental Principles where this can have real effect, notably through close engagement with existing initiatives.

The proposed initiative would be jointly owned and managed by the ICRC and the International Federation, with strong engagement from senior leadership not only from the two Geneva-based institutions (and through them from their respective offices and delegations), but also through a Steering Committee consisting of a small number of National Societies, which can provide their own specific perspectives and commitment. The initiative will also seek the active contribution of those already engaged in specific work on the Fundamental Principles within the Movement.

### **2013 Council of Delegates workshop on the Fundamental Principles**

The Fundamental Principles are a force that binds together the components of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement. They are an expression of our shared values and are a motivating factor as we work in the service of humanity. Not only do they shape our mission and our identity, but they also provide practical guidance for our action. It is a remarkable achievement that, across the different countries, cultures and peoples represented in the Movement; we have found and articulated common principles. The coming two years present a perfect opportunity to celebrate this achievement and to work together to explore and further embrace this set of principles.

It is hoped that this Council of Delegates workshop will serve as a launch pad for a meaningful process of reflection and learning within the Movement that will strengthen the bond between us as components of the Movement, enhance our work, and in doing so ultimately benefit those we seek to help.

#### **Workshop format (120 minutes)**

- Chair's Introduction
- Presentation of consultation process and findings
- Panellists sharing of concrete Fundamental Principles dilemma's reflecting main issues identified through consultations
- Plenary discussion, Q&A
- Proposal for the Movement-wide Fundamental Principles initiative 2014-2015
  - Chair presents proposal

- Feedback and input from the floor
- Chair wrap up and conclusions

In order to generate interest and to showcase feedback from across the world, the workshop room will be decorated with quotes, images and feedback on the Fundamental Principles generated through a social media (facebook) campaign. It is hoped that the workshop will also include multimedia contributions from those unable to be present in person at the workshop.

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The aim will be to generate a panel that is lively, engaging and diverse. The context will be set through providing some of the key findings from the consultations. This will, however, be limited to headlines and conclusions only so as to allow time for 2-3 short interventions from different Movement actors illustrating the relevance and application of the Fundamental Principles in different contexts.

A way forward will then be proposed and the floor will be opened up to workshop participants to give feedback and share thoughts.

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