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

the power of humanity

COUNCIL OF DELEGATES

OF THE INTERNATIONAL RED CROSS AND RED CRESCENT MOVEMENT

Sydney, Australia

17-18 November 2013

**Movement coordination and cooperation
Summary of findings**

**Document prepared by
the International Committee of the Red Cross and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies in consultation with National Societies**

Geneva, October 2013

MOVEMENT COORDINATION AND COOPERATION

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

This report on Movement coordination and cooperation looks at the extent to which existing Movement coordination mechanisms have contributed to an efficient, effective and relevant response to humanitarian needs. It identifies areas for improvement and provides recommendations based on a sample of recent experiences in humanitarian coordination.

The report presents the key conclusions drawn from: four operational reviews of Movement coordination and cooperation, conducted between July and August 2013; surveys sent to Movement components in 12 countries; and other ongoing tasks relating to Movement coordination and cooperation, since the 2011 Council of Delegates.

INTERNAL MOVEMENT COORDINATION

1. Elements of effective coordination

Coordination can be best achieved when there is transparency, mutual trust and a commitment to working together, with leaders setting an example in this regard. A well-coordinated Movement projects a strong image to external stakeholders. This, in turn, is likely to increase humanitarian access, facilitate resource-mobilization and ultimately improve the Movement's response to the needs of affected populations. Indeed, poor coordination not only negatively affects the internal unity and coherence of the Movement but may also have a dire impact on resource-mobilization.

Recent operational experiences demonstrate that the Movement has not yet arrived at the point where its components always work together in the most complementary manner. There is scope for significant improvement in many contexts and across all phases of work, from conflict- and disaster-preparedness to humanitarian response, recovery and development.

The following key factors are seen to contribute to good coordination within the Movement:
1) <u>Clear roles and responsibilities</u> of Movement components. Understanding of and respect for the objectives and missions of each component.
2) <u>A spirit of coordination</u>, with open dialogue and regular communication at different levels and a willingness to coordinate and to be coordinated.
3) <u>A unified voice</u>. Joint strategic planning with commonly agreed direction, priorities and positions, based on shared analysis and identification of gaps, and a joint communications strategy.
4) <u>Field presence</u> of any Movement component, with long-term cooperation with the National Societies, creates the conditions for establishing coordination mechanisms. The process for achieving field-level coordination may be difficult, but is as important as the outcome.
5) <u>Framework agreements</u> for cooperation, tripartite agreements and defined action-oriented coordination mechanisms, with clear objectives and follow-up. These all serve to formalize the process and facilitate coordination.

Whilst a regulatory framework, guidance and tools for effective Movement coordination already exist, there is a need for appropriate dissemination and training in their use. Also necessary are a change in the current communication culture within the Movement and a commitment (on the part of institutions and leaders in operational positions) to moving beyond old inter-institutional conflicts and competition.

2. 'Lead agency' concept

Movement coordination has arguably improved since the adoption of the Seville Agreement and its Supplementary Measures, with more dialogue and a more pragmatic approach to deciding on the allocation of coordination responsibilities. However, in recent operations, various operation-specific arrangements have been made for leading the Movement's response, which move away from the traditional 'lead agency' approach. This reflects ongoing changes in the roles and capacities of Movement components, in particular of National Societies, in the humanitarian landscape, and in the roles and expectations of external actors.

In several contexts, lead-agency responsibilities are assumed by more than one entity, rather than assigned to a single organization. The key notion is to break down the lead-agency role into its various aspects. Consequently, discussions are less about which organization will take the lead and more about which entities will be able to assume responsibility for each element of the leadership role. A pragmatic approach is adopted in several contexts, with responsibilities being allocated according to the mandate and capacity of each component present. The result is a situation of joint leadership, with a division of tasks at the strategic, support and operational levels.

Although in many contexts there was a common understanding of the 'lead agency' concept, coordination was not necessarily effective, as misunderstandings arose over the roles and procedures of the different components. In several of the contexts reviewed, no explicit reference was made to the Seville Agreement and its Supplementary Measures in discussions about operational leadership. Better analysis of the capacities, strengths and weaknesses of each Movement component present – as well as of the constraints under which they operate in a given context – is fundamental to agreeing on leadership and shared responsibilities within the Movement.

The type of situation – armed conflict, other situation of violence, tension, disaster or a mixture of disaster and war – is important to bear in mind when assigning leadership roles. Clear mechanisms for determining the allocation of lead-agency responsibilities need to be established, preferably before an emergency arises, on the basis of an appraisal of the capacities and constraints of each entity present. Several of the countries reviewed called for greater transparency both in determining the type of situation at hand, including the criteria used, and in appraising capacities.

It is important for Movement components with lead-agency roles to be aware of and avoid any potential conflict of interests between their operational roles and their coordination roles; they may give, or seem to give, priority to their own programmes, to the detriment of effective Movement coordination. The way in which the National Society fulfils its role as auxiliary to the government may also undermine, or be perceived as undermining, the Fundamental Principles of independence and neutrality, in particular in armed conflict or polarized situations. This can impact on the whole Movement's response, notably where the National Society assumes the role of lead agency.

Movement coordination is critical during disasters, crises and conflicts in which many actors are involved. It is necessary to work together in a complementary manner in all areas of an operation, including security frameworks, emergency action, assessment and planning processes, National Society capacity-building and organizational development, internal and external communications, resource-mobilization and management.

3. Functioning of coordination mechanisms

Coordination meetings are the main mechanisms used to engage all Movement components at different levels: strategic, operational and technical. In addition, coordination or framework agreements are often concluded. Currently, 15 Movement Coordination Agreements are in force worldwide and others are in the process of being drawn up. In the countries reviewed, coordination mechanisms were generally seen as useful if they allowed for dialogue between the Movement components about how to capitalize on their comparative advantages and how best to use the complementary skills and resources that each can bring to a coordinated response.

However, there is the perception that coordination mechanisms have sometimes generated poor operational results and been somewhat weak in, for example, addressing the security situation, assessing needs and producing a strong, agreed Movement strategy. The extent to which Movement offices and services were shared varied significantly between the different countries and contexts reviewed.

Based on the recent reviews, major tensions and unresolved issues between Movement components are rare; most have been resolved through communication at field level and have not been escalated to higher levels.

It is widely accepted that the roles and responsibilities of Movement components in a given response should be agreed before a crisis arises, although in practice this does not happen in all contexts. Developing coordination agreements and memorandums of understanding not only clarifies roles and responsibilities but also builds understanding of each other's priorities, capacities and constraints, and improves communication between counterparts in different entities. Pre-disaster agreements and contingency plans should be developed in all contexts that are prone to sudden-onset emergencies. Similarly, the formulation of exit strategies was considered insufficient, in general, and was identified as an issue that Movement components needed to work on jointly.

4. Internal coherence and Movement identity

To achieve internal coherence and a clear identity for the Movement, it is necessary to promote the Fundamental Principles with a unified voice and to apply a coherent Movement approach towards affected populations, armed groups, national authorities, donors and external actors. Internal disunity is considered to pose the greatest threat to the reputation of the Movement as a whole. A perceived or real lack of unity can negatively affect the Movement's access to those in need of humanitarian assistance. A delay in agreeing roles and establishing rules within the Movement can slow down resource-mobilization and have an impact on the way the authorities, affected populations, and other aid actors perceive the Movement.

Internal communication is considered to be working relatively well, except in the case of sudden-onset emergencies, where challenges remain. Joint external communication, however, is an area where further improvement is required. Measures already taken to improve coherence in external communication – such as formulating joint reactive press lines, information bulletins and regional newsletters – were deemed useful, but there was general agreement that they must be taken more consistently and that additional tools must be developed.

The findings of the reviews and surveys confirmed the belief that the general public have a good understanding of the Movement's identity and values, perceiving it as one unit, but without necessarily being aware of the distinct mandates of its various components.

Other humanitarian actors, on the other hand, are usually well-informed of the distinct mandates and roles of the different components. The Movement's distinctiveness is recognized as lying in its consistent application of the Fundamental Principles, emblem use and unique operational approach. Movement identity has been strengthened by joint statements on the Movement's approach, issued by National Societies, the Federation and the ICRC, and by joint external communications conveying agreed key messages. There have also been efforts to harmonize annual planning processes.

Uncoordinated activities or unilateral actions have, in some situations, weakened the internal coherence of the Movement and its image. In a few contexts, participating National Societies have used armed escorts or contacted government officials in a unilateral and uncoordinated way, negatively affecting the Movement as a whole and creating a certain degree of confusion. Unfulfilled promises of assistance, inaction and indecision have threatened to undermine the image and reputation of the Movement and impeded its access to people affected by disaster and conflict. In cases where the Movement's identity is blurred, measures should be taken to reinforce its distinctiveness from the United Nations system, non-governmental organizations and other entities.

5. Resource-mobilization

Sustaining existing resource levels and mobilizing additional resources remain a challenge for the whole Movement. The main finding in this area was that there is a need for the Movement to make its donor relationships more strategic.

Although there have been some examples of joint fundraising and increased efforts to maximize resources across the Movement, components tend to fundraise separately, with little or no coordination with others. Many of those interviewed considered the current approach to fundraising to be working well, while others – particularly in large-size operations, where many Movement components were present – believed that the system for joint resource-mobilization required considerable improvement. The development of a Movement-wide resource-mobilization strategy – encompassing a more strategic approach to situation analysis and needs assessment, and a more coherent approach to field operations – would demonstrate greater Movement unity. This, in turn, would enhance its credibility and consistency in fundraising, reassure donors and lend weight to the Movement in its interactions with the United Nations.

The creation of consortia of several participating National Societies has proven successful and is worth developing further. Under this arrangement, the consortium presents a single project portfolio to donors, thereby increasing their fundraising capacity and decreasing the administrative burden on donors and host National Societies.

Ways of funding coordination activities must be further explored: good coordination is essential, but it comes at a cost. The Movement needs to find a way to share the cost of coordination rather than leaving one component (generally the lead agency) to cover this cost alone.

MOVEMENT COMPONENTS' RELATIONS WITH EXTERNAL ACTORS

1. Coordination with external actors

In all contexts, National Societies participate in different government coordination mechanisms and coordinate with their national disaster-management authority, or equivalent, and national coordination platforms. The Federation and the ICRC also participate, as observers, in a range of governmental coordination mechanisms in several contexts. The degree of National Society involvement with United Nations clusters or inter-agency platforms varies considerably between operational contexts, with some being active members or observers, and others being reluctant to participate in United Nations-led coordination. To a certain extent, the degree of involvement depends on the operational environment and, in particular, whether or not the National Societies are responding to armed conflict.

Most of those consulted agreed that the main benefit of coordinating with external actors was having the opportunity to gather information on what others were doing, which helped to prevent a duplication of efforts and facilitated the sharing of solutions. In all contexts, the need was highlighted for Movement components to consult each other and align their positions towards external actors. "Coordination *with* others, but not coordinated *by* others" is a common motto within the Movement, though in practice it is not upheld in certain contexts.

2. Operational partnerships with external actors

Operational partnerships with external actors present opportunities to extend the operational reach and influence of the Movement for principled humanitarian action. There is a commitment within the Movement to ensuring that external actors understand and accept the Fundamental Principles, in particular the principles of impartiality and neutrality, and that entering into partnership with an external actor does not compromise these principles or the integrity of any Movement component.

A well-coordinated Movement response is considered a priority in most operations. The more the Movement is able to rely on its own resources, the less motivation it has to seek partnerships with external entities. In several of the contexts reviewed, the National Society had decided not to form any operational partnership with external actors, as none was seen as sufficiently neutral, impartial or independent.

Decisions on whether or not to engage with an external actor have been based on several factors: adherence to the Fundamental Principles; compatibility with the National Society's strategic plan; the community's perception of the other entity; safe access for National Society volunteers and staff; and the National Society's organizational development capacity. Some National Societies have been pressured by external actors to form partnerships to address various humanitarian needs at country level, despite this not being in line with their strategy and having potentially negative effects on the National Society.

3. Relations with governments

In their role as auxiliary to their public authorities in humanitarian matters, National Societies are sometimes asked by their respective governments to respond to humanitarian emergencies in a way that exceeds their capacities and resources. In some cases, it is perceived that governments treat National Societies solely as auxiliaries, forgetting or ignoring the fact that they are also independent entities in their own right. For example, the

government may request the National Society to distribute relief under its security rules or expect the National Society to provide humanitarian assistance in certain areas. Such pressures may restrict Movement capacities or make it difficult to uphold the Fundamental Principles. In some cases, other humanitarian actors and the armed opposition may perceive the National Society as an instrument of the government, a perception that threatens to damage the reputation of the Movement, undermine the delivery of humanitarian assistance and put volunteers and staff at risk. The presence of an office or staff of another Movement component at the local branch of the National Society may be an asset for creating a unified Movement position at the local level.

Conversely – and more importantly – a good relationship with the government was seen as conducive to effective Movement action in many contexts, provided that the independence of the National Society was understood and respected.

4. Civil-military relations in disasters and other crisis situations

The role of the military is changing in many contexts, with military forces taking on more responsibilities in the country's security and civil-defence systems, in development work and in disaster response. The common Movement position on how to interact with civil-military actors at country level is not consistently respected by all Movement components. However, it is widely accepted that if civil-military relations are badly managed by one component, this can have significant repercussions on other components. Necessary coordination with the military is usually undertaken through the national disaster-management or civil-defence authorities. Some National Societies prefer to keep their distance from the military in order to maintain safe access to communities. The ICRC's experience in interacting with military personnel and weapon-bearers is widely acknowledged and the organization is often consulted by National Societies for guidance and support in this area.

Issues that remain to be addressed, particularly in conflict situations, relate to the use of military assets, operational dependency, security challenges and potential violations of the Fundamental Principles. However, in contexts where Movement components are not responding to a conflict situation, there may equally be opportunities for coordination with the military that could be exploited to improve the efficiency and efficacy of the Movement's action.

5. Fundamental Principles and use of the emblem

Strict adherence to the Fundamental Principles by Movement components at all times remains an important concern, as the safety of Movement staff and volunteers depends on it when responding to a humanitarian crisis. National Societies generally remain committed to addressing, in a timely manner, any issues that threaten to undermine their reputation or that of the Movement as a whole.

In many of the operational contexts reviewed, emblem misuse was perceived to have serious security implications and therefore needed to be dealt with quickly and carefully. In some countries, emblem misuse within the community was believed to pose a serious risk to the image and reputation of the National Society, as well as to the Movement's operations in a given context. National Societies and the ICRC remain committed to addressing the issue, together with the national authorities, which hold primary responsibility for ensuring respect for the emblem.

With regard to the use of the emblem by Movement components, the use of National Society logos for branding and fundraising continues to pose a particular challenge.

6. Engaging with the private sector

National Society partnerships with private entities vary from local-level cooperation to more significant global relationships. In general, these are seen as positive and successful in boosting the resources and impact of the Movement's action, with a manageable degree of risk. The use of the emblem by some private-sector partners was identified as a cause for concern in some cases.

Movement components are generally aware of the risks inherent in forming partnerships with the private sector, given the potentially political and commercial interests of private entities. Many also know that such partnerships can potentially undermine the image of the Movement and consequently hinder its access to certain areas, if armed actors perceive the private entities to be party to the conflict.

In some cases, National Society members who own companies have defended their own interests rather than acting in the best interests of the National Society (e.g. using the National Society as a platform to promote their business).

CONCLUSIONS AND WAY FORWARD

The results of the majority of the country reviews and surveys suggest that the focus for strengthening Movement coordination and cooperation should be, at present, on improving the delivery of humanitarian aid in the field through practical measures.

There is recognition that better use of existing rules, tools and guidance could do much to improve Movement coordination at the operational level and that existing Movement frameworks remain, in this regard, relevant and workable for the time being. It has been suggested that good and bad practices should be further examined and gaps identified before exploring what further work on revising regulatory documents, such as the Seville Agreement and Supplementary Measures, would be required.

Several key areas of Movement coordination were identified as urgently requiring further work, including the process for agreeing and allocating lead-agency roles and responsibilities, security management, resource-mobilization and external communication. There is also a need for better planning and predictability in the way that the Movement tackles the regional dimensions of a crisis.

The aim of the broader agenda for change must be to ensure that the collective impact of Movement components is greater than the sum of their individual efforts, across all areas of work, including National Society capacity-strengthening and longer-term programming. This will need the full engagement of all Movement components.

1. Operational leadership

The process for determining the need for and choice of a lead agency must be clarified, along with the allocation of responsibilities among Movement components. This will require better context analysis and a more in-depth assessment of which component is most suited to each aspect of the coordination role.

Further questions to be considered include the following: When is shared leadership a possibility and what can be done to ensure that all aspects of the role are fulfilled? What mechanisms are in place to assess the appointed lead agency's capacity to effectively

assume this function? How can the other components present support the lead agency (particularly when the lead agency is a National Society)?

2. Joint resource-mobilization

The Movement needs to make its donor relationships more strategic. The development of a Movement-wide resource-mobilization strategy – encompassing a more strategic approach to situation analysis and needs assessment, and a more coherent approach to field operations – would demonstrate greater Movement unity. This, in turn, would enhance its credibility and consistency in fundraising, reassure donors and lend weight to the Movement in its interactions with the United Nations.

Further work is required to ensure better coordination of resource-mobilization. The possibility of launching joint appeals should be explored, especially in the case of sudden-onset emergencies and situations where the demand for humanitarian aid is great. The creation of consortia of National Societies, through which they fundraise together for projects of common interest, is an interesting initiative that is worth expanding. The pooling of assets, logistical services, office space, telecommunications equipment, and so on, also merits further consideration. Finally, consideration should be given to how the cost of Movement coordination can be shared.

3. Movement identity and communication

Internal disunity is considered to pose the greatest threat to the reputation of the Movement as a whole. The Movement's distinctiveness is recognized as lying in its consistent application of the Fundamental Principles, emblem use and unique operational approach.

Under normal circumstances, the Movement's internal communications work relatively well. However, the situation becomes more complicated in emergencies, and challenges are encountered in both internal and external communications. There is a need to better align Movement components' external communications in these situations. Tools and approaches, such as joint reactive press lines, statements, information bulletins and newsletters, should be developed or more regularly utilized to improve joint external communication and ensure the coherence of key messages.

4. Tackling regional dimensions of a crisis

Although mainly non-international in nature, the effects of many of today's conflicts and disasters tend to spill over into neighbouring countries. When this is the case, there are always Movement components responding on both sides of the border. The Movement needs to strengthen its regional coordination, currently considered weak, to better tackle crises from a regional perspective.

5. Improving effectiveness of coordination mechanisms

A system must be created to encourage universal application of, and compliance with, the Movement's regulatory framework. Existing mechanisms should be strengthened and new mechanisms established to ensure sufficient dissemination of the framework and training in its application. Both headquarters and field-level managers should be held accountable for ensuring proper coordination in the field.

6. Coordination with external actors

Building relations with external actors and forming operational partnerships can help to maximize the overall impact of humanitarian action and strengthen the capacities of Movement components, by mobilizing resources and leveraging skills. Nevertheless, partnerships should never compromise the Movement's distinctiveness and should only be formed as an effective means of promoting principled humanitarian action.

The distinct mandates of National Societies, the ICRC and the Federation are reflected in the different relationships each component has with external actors. Compliance with the Fundamental Principles and existing policies and regulations is necessary at all times. It is particularly important in polarized situations, where acceptance by all authorities and weapon-bearers is essential; indeed, a lack of compliance could undermine the ability of all components to reach those in need of humanitarian aid and could put staff and volunteers at risk.

Common strategies and plans could be developed to support Movement components in coordinating and partnering with external actors, and ensure that this is done in a consistent and coherent manner. Such strategies should seek to protect collective interests and guide the actions of individual Movement components.