



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



## **Council of Delegates**

Sydney, Australia: 17 November – 18 November 2013

### **REPORT ON THE WORK OF WORKSHOP 4**

**17 November 2013**

**11.00 – 13.00**

### **Safer Access and the protection of staff and volunteers**

**Co-hosted by Colombian Red Cross, the ICRC and the International Federation**

**Chair: Fatima Gailani, President, Afghan Red Crescent Society**

**Rapporteur: Silvana Faillace Latorre, Executive Director, Colombian Red Cross**

**Aide Rapporteurs: Jeremy England, ICRC**

# REPORT TO COUNCIL

## **SPEAKERS:**

- Natia Loladze, President, Georgian Red Cross Society
- Jorge Serrano, Legal Adviser, Honduran Red Cross
- Abukadir Ibrahim Haji (Afi), Director for Programmes and Organizational Development, Somali Red Crescent

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:**

Having access to those we aim to serve is a key pillar to our humanitarian mission. Upholding our fundamental principles, with particular emphasis on Neutrality and Independence, is fundamental in guaranteeing safe access to those we intend to serve, protecting the lives of our staff and volunteers. National Societies in close collaboration with ICRC, the Secretariat and Movement partners should ensure that all actors receive information and are aware of those principles.

We face new and existing challenges in our countries, where there is armed conflict and other situations of violence including social unrest, gang violence, criminal gangs, among others. We must be prepared to protect our volunteers, staff and members in National Societies to ensure safe access to those in need and respond to those emerging challenges.

To achieve this we need to understand well the current country security situation and have the tools to be prepared to face future challenges. The use of the Safer Access Framework can be a very useful tool in operational security risk management. More importantly there is a need for all National Societies to carry out a risk assessment and plan accordingly. Dissemination of policies and training of staff and volunteers is fundamental if we are to continue to protect them.

Movement coordination is fundamental if we are to guarantee our safety. National Societies should continue to lead these processes and ensure that in-country the Movement is visible with one voice. Participating National Societies and other Movement partners should not act in jeopardy of safety, contrary to the National Society's needs and development.

The indicative and protective use of our emblem should continue to be one of the top priorities in ensuring our safety. There is a need for National Societies, with the support of the ICRC and the Secretariat, to continue to assist National Societies in disseminating the appropriate use and protection of our emblem and create the necessary links with governments to advocate for emblem protection laws. Sharing of information between National Societies on this vital topic is fundamental and should be facilitated and encouraged.

Guaranteeing our neutrality and independence in situations and settings where our safety is at risk requires constant dissemination and communications of our work and our fundamental principles.

## **KEY POINTS RAISED:**

- There is a wide range of country security contexts faced by National Societies. However even in these diverse contexts there is relevance in the Safer Access Framework tool.
- Safety is not an end in itself but a fundamental tool for reaching those we wish to help.
- Risk analysis and identification are needed in all contexts. National Society staff and volunteers not only face risks when carrying out operations, but also within their offices at headquarters and branches, e.g. occupational health and safety should be part of the safer access policies and strategies.

- National Societies must continue a dialogue with governments and other actors to disseminate information about our work and principles.
- Promotion of neutrality and independence is crucial
- Clear emblem and legal framework for its use and protection is needed. The protection of the emblem was universally raised. Need to protect and respect our own emblems and work with governments to assure this.
- Stronger Movement coordination is fundamental for our safety.
- The action of some PNS put us all at risk – we need a unified voice and action as one Red Cross / Red Crescent.
- There remains a lack of information and dissemination, all components of the movement must do more both internally, between each other and externally.
- Each National Society's experience is important and needs to be shared. The ICRC and the Secretariat should facilitate that sharing of these experiences.
- Importance of insurance coverage for volunteers (only 20% currently insured). Some National Societies have taken steps, but more must be done.
- Need to understand better how all actors (e.g. the diaspora) in PNS countries work, broadening dissemination and services to them in PNS countries, and improve understanding of delegates before deployment.

## **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- While there is great diversity of NS experiences and needs, this SAF tool is relevant for all
- There is a need for all NS to complete security risk assessments and to set up a road map (systems, processes, policies and resources)
- Stronger action on emblem protection laws is needed in many countries – work with ICRC, Federation and NS who have experience to ensure respect for the emblem.
- Consider the wider legal framework defining NS roles in country and clarify with the government
- Strong need for all NS to ensure the dialogue with all actors, including their governments and any other actors, to assure independence and neutrality
- Stronger coordination of all components of the movement in any given country – crucial leadership from host NS needed and must be respected
- Need for all NS to go through this process – be prepared before instability or risks hit
- Call on all NS to share experience with ICRC and to learn from and support each other. ICRC and Federation to create spaces and processes to allow NS to work on this together
- Invest in training at all levels – governance, staff and volunteers (strategic and operational levels, HQ and branches)
- Internal and external dissemination is essential
- Further work is needed on insurance – it needs to be accessible, comprehensive and sufficient to cover all RC workers (volunteers and staff). Need to work on improving it, disseminate it and clarifying financial and documentary issues.