



**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**

### **REPORT ON THE WORKSHOP**

#### **PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES – DISABILITY INCLUSION**

**Chair:** Doan Van Thai, Vice-President and Secretary General, Red Cross of Viet Nam

**Rapporteur:** Kerry McGrath, Head of Community Programs, Australian Red Cross

#### **(A) EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:**

The workshop identified the social, economic and attitudinal barriers faced by people with disabilities (15% of the world's population). These barriers limit their access to full and effective participation, economic development, education, employment and health services, resulting in increased poverty and disempowerment.

Seven guest speakers highlighted the types of obstacle faced by people with disabilities, including: infrastructure; low expectations of participation; and a disempowering system that limits opportunities for people with disabilities to learn relevant skills to fully participate in their communities. Through their own experiences, speakers who live with disability emphasized their expert understanding of these obstacles and underlined the importance of including people with disabilities in any programme or measure aimed at their removal. As one speaker with disability commented, *"we are the experts – we live and work with our condition,"* while another stated that *"we must shift the power to people with disabilities, and give and teach us the skills to manage our own lives."*

The speakers noted that people with disabilities hold significant potential within our communities, yet this is often not recognized or tapped. Interventions from the workshop delegates highlighted the importance of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006) and specific previously agreed action plans from the Movement's International Conferences. The workshop participants agreed to work to:

- prevent the incidence of disability and increase the protection of people with disabilities in armed conflicts, humanitarian emergencies and natural disasters, as well as in times of peace;
- support the full inclusion, sense of belonging and empowerment of people with disabilities by: addressing their needs using a people-centred approach; contributing to the removal of barriers; engaging in humanitarian diplomacy efforts at the national, regional and international levels; and changing mindsets and behaviour from discrimination, stigma and exclusion to respect for diversity and social inclusion;

- implement relevant instruments of international law to support the rights of people with disabilities in order to address discrimination, change perceptions and combat stereotypes and prejudice; and
- adopt the Council of Delegates Resolution “Promoting Disability Inclusion in the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement” and support the development of a Movement-wide strategy on disability for consideration and adoption at the next Council of Delegates, in 2015.

## **(B) GENERAL OBSERVATIONS**

As noted above, panel speakers provided an insight into the personal experience of living with a disability, and the work of the Movement. The speakers were:

- Dr Mark Bagshaw – Managing Director of innov8 Consulting Group, Red Cross volunteer and adviser; has a disability and advocates for disability inclusion reform in Australia
- Brett McClymont – Australian Red Cross staff member and Special Olympian;
- Christopher Banton, Special Olympian
- Lucy Murillo, Youth Delegate, Colombian Red Cross
- Dr Katrien Beeckman, Head of Principles and Values, International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
- Pascal Hundt, ICRC Assistance Division & Head of ICRC Delegation in Sudan
- Rabah Jaber, Head of Operations, Palestine Red Crescent Society.

Workshop participants provided unanimous support for the Council of Delegates Resolution. The representatives of the Kenya Red Cross, Cambodian Red Cross and Chilean Red Cross expressed a willingness to co-sponsor the Resolution. There were a number of Movement speakers during the workshop including from: the British Red Cross, Federation, Australian Red Cross, Kenya Red Cross, Uganda Red Cross, Senegalese Red Cross, Chilean Red Cross, Red Cross Society of Guinea, Cambodian Red Cross, Colombian Red Cross, Cyprus Red Cross, Jamaica Red Cross, and the Red Cross Society of Belarus. The workshop participants unanimously endorsed the presentation of the Resolution to the plenary of the Council of Delegates. The workshop also endorsed the practical next steps as detailed below in sections (C) and (D).

## **(C) KEY POINTS RAISED ON GUIDING QUESTIONS**

The workshop determined the following action lines in relation to the guiding questions and position statement:

- Ensure the principle of “*nothing about us without us*” is firmly embedded in all approaches and that people with disabilities have a sense of belonging to their communities – in other words, that people with disabilities are central to all decisions and at all levels in Movement activities.
- Ensure that Movement components recruit people with disabilities, including as volunteers, in line with the Movement’s commitment to be open to all.
- Implement disability-inclusion measures based on empowering people with disabilities and ensuring their sense of belonging within each Movement component, through revised or new policies, strategies, practices and programmes.
- Work to change attitudes, values and mindsets – within and outside of the Movement – to break down myths and stereotypes; proactively involve youth and youth networks in awareness-raising; support behavioural change initiatives to further expand within National Societies (Federation).
- Share lessons learnt and approaches taken to ensure that the needs of people with disabilities are met in situations of risk, armed conflicts, humanitarian emergencies and natural disasters.

**(D) CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The workshop endorsed the submission of the Resolution “Promoting Disability Inclusion in the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement” for adoption at the plenary of the 2013 Council of Delegates. It also supported the development of a Movement-wide strategy on disability for consideration at the next Council of Delegates, in 2015.

In the meantime, workshop participants urged the Movement to continue the momentum of ensuring disability inclusion across the Movement, as detailed in section (C) above. This is on the basis that people with disabilities are driving forces for, and central to, the disability-inclusion methodology and agenda within the Movement.

ENDS

Kerry McGrath, Australian Red Cross, Rapporteur

Approved: Doan Van Thai, Red Cross of Viet Nam, Workshop Chair

17 November 2013