



**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 No. 9**

**11.00am-1.00pm, 18<sup>th</sup> of November**

### **MOVEMENT RESPONSES TO SEXUAL AND GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE IN ARMED CONFLICT AND DISASTER**

Chair: Dr Helen Durham, Australian Red Cross Society

Rapporteur: Dr Fawzi Amin, Secretary General, Bahrain Red Crescent Society

Aide Rapporteurs: Siobhán Foran, Gender & Diversity, IFRC and Sophie Graven Minnig, Women and War, ICRC

# REPORT TO COUNCIL

## **SPEAKERS:**

- Dr Michaële Amédée Gédéon, Former President, Haitian Red Cross Society
- Dr Asha Mohamed, Deputy Secretary General, Kenyan Red Cross
- Mr Morris Gbessagee, Secretary General of the Liberian National Red Cross Society
- Ms Eva Von Olreich, President, Swedish Red Cross Society
- Ms Charlotte Lindsey, Director of Communication and Information Management, ICRC
- Ms Joelle Tanguy, Under Secretary General, Humanitarian Values and Diplomacy, IFRC

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY (MAX HALF PAGE):**

- SGBV is often a continuum of a pre-existing situation of vulnerabilities and risk, discrimination and violence, exacerbated by the conditions of conflict/disaster.
- The workshop considered the issue of SGBV in conflict, post-conflict, disaster and its aftermath but also violence that is normalised in society and communities.
- SGBV is perpetrated against women, girls, boys and men. People with existing vulnerabilities – older people, people with disabilities, people from minority groups, detainees, etc. – are also at relatively higher risk
- The issue continues to be one that is shrouded in silence and stigmatisation.
- Despite considerable national and international efforts, legislation and investment, as well as Movement policies, the issue persists and indeed in many situations is increasing.
- The fact that the issue is a cross-cutting theme for which everyone is responsible was identified as a major challenge. Accordingly, there was a call for rethinking our strategy and increasing capacity and investment.
- Aid workers and Movement actors can themselves be victims, perpetrators and agents for change.
- The workshop concluded with three recommendations; namely, the elaboration of common terminology around gender, GBV and SGBV across the Movement; the importance of undertaking a mapping exercise of work in this area Movement-wide; to recall to Member National Societies the importance of signing onto the relevant Pledges (i.e. IHL, gender, violence prevention); and the recommendation that it be included in the agenda of the 32nd International Conference in 2015.

## **KEY POINTS RAISED:**

- SGBV is often a continuum of a pre-existing situation of vulnerabilities and risk, discrimination and violence, exacerbated by the conditions of conflict/disaster.
- The workshop considered the issue of SGBV in conflict, post-conflict, disaster and its aftermath but also violence that is normalised in society and communities.
- SGBV is perpetrated against women, girls, boys and men. People with existing vulnerabilities – older people, people with disabilities, people from minority groups, detainees, etc. – are also at relatively higher risk
- The issue continues to be one that is shrouded in silence and stigmatisation.
- Despite considerable national and international efforts, legislation and investment, as well as Movement policies, the issue persists and indeed in many situations is increasing.
- The fact that the issue is a cross-cutting theme for which everyone is responsible was identified as a major challenge. Accordingly, there was a call for rethinking our strategy and increasing capacity and investment.
- Aid workers and Movement actors can themselves be victims, perpetrators and agents for change.

- *Data deficit* – we need more evidence-based data; we need to understand the nature and extent of SGBV in pre-conflict/disaster situations in order to respond meaningfully.
- It is clear that the ICRC, IFRC and a large number of National Societies are already working on the prevention of and/or response to SGBV, from which lessons and good practices could be drawn. There was a call for a mapping exercise to be undertaken to understand what is to be done by the National Societies and where gaps may exist.
- A welcome development by both the ICRC and the IFRC, as well as the broader humanitarian community, is the *reversal of the burden of proof* and the assumption that violence will predictably increase in emergencies and that we need to act on this assumption.
- There is need for a multifaceted approach to address SGBV, to support government efforts and the security sector and to develop operational and advocacy programmes.
- The workshop identified that there is a need for training and capacity-building of staff and volunteers at all levels
- Many National Societies stressed the importance of the contextualisation of the issue, where poverty, lack of education, social marginalisation, a weak legal and policing system are key issues. It is important to adapt the messages to the local language and culture through community-based systems.
  - Much reference was made to the Canadian Red Cross and IFRC's work on Predictable, Preventable,
  - Encouraged approaching SGBV through three lenses; gender and diversity (including women and girls but also boys and men, older people and people with disabilities), a focus on violence prevention and disaster preparedness and risk reduction
  - Many National Societies emphasised that boys and men are also victims of SGBV both directly and indirectly. Indirectly, men may feel shame, anger and distress where women and children are affected by SGBV. Therefore, we need to engage men as victims and beneficiaries. We need to target them with social and psychological support. Men are key actors and agents in violence prevention and response.
- A number of National Societies recalled that rape and other forms of sexual violence are absolutely prohibited under human rights law at all times, and under IHL in both international and non-international armed conflict. A number of National Societies mentioned the importance of governments criminalising SGBV under domestic law and of working with law enforcement agencies in its implementation. It is important that work starts in peacetimes to establish a conducive environment, which includes legal environment and a culture of equality and non-discrimination.
- Much discussion was given over to the issue of the internal organisational culture of non-violence and non-harassment. Attendees raised the issue of preventing sexual exploitation and abuse, including establishing or strengthening Codes of Conduct and all associated complaints, investigation and redress mechanisms are required. The workshop attendees also raised the issue of establishing environments that foster a culture of respect.
- Existing gaps in knowledge and capacity of staff and volunteers on recognising or knowing what to do if a survivor discloses indicate the need for additional capacity-building in all sectors and at all levels
- The need for enhanced coordination between the members of the Movement and with external actors such as government, NGOs and UN Agencies.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- Need to develop a common Movement terminology and definitions of key terms, namely gender, gender-based violence and sexual violence.
- Importance of undertaking a mapping of the current activities being implemented by the Movement related to SGBV. This would enable us to develop a clearer picture of existing programmes, good practices and potential gaps and needs in terms of training and tools.
- There is a need maintain interest and momentum in this critical area, that it be included in the agenda of the 32nd International Conference in 2015