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## **COUNCIL OF DELEGATES**

### **OF THE INTERNATIONAL RED CROSS AND RED CRESCENT MOVEMENT**

Sydney, Australia  
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### **PROMOTING DISABILITY INCLUSION IN THE INTERNATIONAL RED CROSS AND RED CRESCENT MOVEMENT**

**Resolution**

**Document prepared by**

**the Palestine Red Crescent Society, the Norwegian Red Cross,  
the Australian Red Cross,  
the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and  
the International Committee of the Red Cross**

## RESOLUTION

### PROMOTING DISABILITY INCLUSION IN THE INTERNATIONAL RED CROSS AND RED CRESCENT MOVEMENT

The Council of Delegates,

*concerned by* the range and depth of problems faced by persons with disabilities worldwide, and noting that there are more than one billion persons living with some form of disability today, corresponding to about 15 % of the world's population,

*emphasizing* that persons with disabilities often face barriers to their social inclusion, full and effective participation, and economic development, which can negatively impact on their opportunity to engage in education and employment, impair their access to health services and lead to increasing poverty,

*recognizing* that disability is more common among vulnerable groups of people, in particular women, older persons and poor households and disproportionately affects marginalized populations,

*recalling* the adoption of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in 2006, which entered into force in May 2008, and the resolutions from the 24th, 25th and 31st International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent, which expressed the Movement's commitment to persons with disabilities,<sup>1</sup>

*identifying* that the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement's components, by virtue of their respective mandates, presence and activities, can do more to prevent the incidence of disabilities and to support the full inclusion of persons with disabilities, ranging from addressing their needs and contributing to the removal of barriers to their active participation, sense of belonging and inclusion through humanitarian diplomacy at the national, regional and international levels, to changing mindsets and behaviour from stigma and exclusion to respect for diversity and social inclusion,

*encouraging* the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement's components and, where relevant, their grassroots networks to work to prevent the incidence of disabilities, to support people with disabilities to lead the lives they choose and to create enabling environments to work and contribute to the work of our respective organizations for people with disabilities, as the composition of our members, staff and volunteers should reflect the diverse composition of society by virtue of the Fundamental Principle of Unity, as re-emphasized in the official report of the 2009 Council of Delegates workshop on non-discrimination and respect for diversity,

*noting* that exclusion is often the consequence of a lack of visibility or being unheard and strongly believing that an inclusive society enables a person with a disability to take her or his place as a full and equal member of their community,

1. *adopts* the "Position Statement Promoting Disability Inclusion in the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement" attached as Annex I;

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<sup>1</sup> As expressed in the resolutions adopted by the International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent (Resolution XXVII, Manila 1981; Resolution 28, Geneva 1986; and Resolution 2, Geneva 2011).

2. *calls on* the Movement's components to take all necessary measures to seek to ensure the protection and safety of persons with disabilities, particularly in situations of risk, including situations of armed conflict, humanitarian emergencies and the occurrence of natural disasters, but also in times of peace;
3. *urges* all of the Movement's components to work with governments, including through appropriate humanitarian diplomacy, to help address the needs of persons with disabilities, and to help implement relevant instruments of international law to support the rights of persons with disabilities and to address discrimination, change perceptions and combat stereotypes and prejudice;
4. *requests* that a Movement-wide Strategy on Disability be developed in a collaborative process actively engaging all components of the Movement and be submitted for adoption at the next Council of Delegates in 2015.

## ANNEX I

### POSITION STATEMENT PROMOTING DISABILITY INCLUSION IN THE INTERNATIONAL RED CROSS AND RED CRESCENT MOVEMENT

#### 1. Scope

A commitment to protecting human dignity underpins the work of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and its Fundamental Principles. This Movement Position focuses on articulating a Movement vision and proposed action on disability inclusion in order to address barriers to opportunity, access and participation faced by persons with disabilities, both physical and intellectual.<sup>2</sup>

The Movement's efforts to improve the quality of life of persons with disabilities are encapsulated by the following guiding principles:

- Respect for inherent dignity, individual autonomy (including the freedom to make one's own choices), and independence of persons
- Non-discrimination
- Full and effective participation and inclusion in society
- Respect for difference and acceptance of persons with disabilities as part of human diversity and humanity
- Equality of opportunity
- Accessibility
- Equality between men and women, and between boys and girls

To achieve this vision, the Movement will work through its unique global network, while ensuring effective coordination and cooperation with external actors. It will also seek to work to prevent the incidence of disabilities and include persons with disabilities in the design and implementation of any programme initiative.

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<sup>2</sup> This Movement position uses the descriptor contained in the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCPRD).

## 2. Context

Persons with disabilities include those who have physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments<sup>3</sup> which, in interaction with various barriers, may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.

According to the World Report on Disability,<sup>4</sup> there are over one billion persons who live with some form of disability, corresponding to about 15% of the world's population. The prevalence of disability is growing due to an ageing global population and increases in chronic health conditions. Children with disabilities, some of them socially excluded since the day of birth, are one of the most vulnerable groups and are disproportionately denied their right to education and are often exposed to institutionalization, violence, abuse, exploitation and abandonment.<sup>5</sup>

Patterns of disability in each country are influenced by trends in health, the environment and other factors. These include road traffic accidents, natural disasters, armed conflict, armed violence, nutrition, and substance abuse, as well as patterns of health and social protection systems.

Disability is more common among women, older people and households that are poor. Lower income countries have a higher prevalence of disability than higher income countries, with disability disproportionately affecting vulnerable populations.

The UNCRPD is the first human rights convention of the twenty-first century. It was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in December 2006, opened for signature in March 2007 and entered into force in May 2008. It has been signed by 158 States, 137 of which have ratified or acceded to it. The Convention represents a human rights framework with a constellation of civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, has a strong development dimension and includes a reference to international humanitarian law (IHL). A disability-inclusive society is pursued through removing barriers (physical, information and communication, policy and legal, institutional, attitudinal, and economic) and including persons with disabilities. The Convention seeks to address discrimination, change perceptions, and combat stereotypes and prejudice.

Article 11 of the UNCRPD is of particular interest to the Movement as it refers to situations of risk and humanitarian emergencies. It recognizes obligations under IHL and international human rights law and requires that all necessary measures are undertaken to ensure the protection and safety of persons with disabilities in situations of risk, including situations of armed conflict, humanitarian emergencies and the occurrence of natural disasters.

National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies in 189 countries have an auxiliary role to public authorities and experience and expertise in service delivery to the most vulnerable. We can play a crucial role at the national level to support our respective governments in the State-party reporting and implementation of the UNCRPD, particularly with respect to the above-mentioned Article.

The UNCRPD also reinforces the importance of respecting human rights in the process of assisting survivors of weapon contamination and their families. Consequently, the UNCRPD should inform all affected States, and States in a position to assist, in meeting their respective responsibilities under the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention, Protocol V to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons, and the Convention on Cluster Munitions.

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<sup>3</sup> Definition based on UNCRPD's definition of disability.

<sup>4</sup> World Report on Disability, World Health Organization and World Bank, 2011.

<sup>5</sup> *The State of the World's Children 2013: Children with Disabilities*, UNICEF.

### 3. Vision

This Position Statement reinforces the Movement's commitment to helping to promote and implement the relevant norms of international law in order to support persons with disabilities to improve the quality of their lives by accessing the same opportunities for participation, contribution, decision-making, and social and economic well-being as others. The vision calls for a flexible, multidisciplinary approach to prevent and overcome barriers faced by persons with disabilities, using the capacities and resources of the Movement for action. It aims to build, strengthen and mobilize the capacities and resources of all of the Movement's components and to ensure effective coordination and cooperation with all relevant actors with a view to supporting people with disabilities to lead the lives they choose and value. Disability is a political, social and humanitarian issue that requires changes and solutions on a societal level, where everybody enjoys equal rights and opportunities in the social, economic, cultural and political spheres of life.

### 4. Responsibilities

Under international humanitarian law, persons with disabilities may fall within the category of the wounded and sick or civilians enjoying special respect and protection. In addition, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies' (IFRC) strategy to focus on vulnerability with impartiality and humanity has led many National Societies to explore how best to respond to the needs of persons with disabilities, particularly given that they are often excluded from opportunities to participate in economic, social and cultural activities.

On a policy level, three resolutions adopted since 1981 at the International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent<sup>6</sup> have also voiced the Movement's commitment to persons with disabilities. The IFRC has recently released its Strategic Framework on Gender and Diversity (2013-2020), to be adopted at the General Assembly 2013, which, while focusing on gender, includes disability within the categories of diversity. With the background of these references over the last 30 years, this Position Statement recognizes that the Movement can still do more in relation to an explicit commitment to disability inclusion, and proposes the following roles and responsibilities:

**National Societies** – as the key Movement actors in their domestic contexts – will aim to direct their efforts towards promoting prevention and disability-inclusive programming, and supporting other Movement members in this area. As auxiliaries to government, National Societies can play a role in supporting signatory States' periodic UNCRPD reporting. Their grassroots networks and auxiliary role to their public authorities in the humanitarian field also make them uniquely qualified to contribute to national strategies for eliminating identified barriers to greater inclusion. Indeed, National Societies, through their ongoing response to vulnerability in their national contexts, will seek to mainstream social inclusion so that National Society initiatives respond to the needs and interests of excluded and marginalized persons, amongst whom are often persons with disabilities. The National Societies recognize the importance of working increasingly in coordinated partnerships with other national and international actors working to improve the social inclusion of persons with physical and intellectual disabilities.

The **IFRC** will provide the necessary organizational development support for National Societies in areas such as resource mobilization and financial and human resources management, and will assist them in incorporating programmes covered by this Movement Position in their development plans, corresponding to Strategic Aim 3 in the Federation Strategy 2020. The IFRC will also include work in this field in its own health, disaster-preparedness, humanitarian diplomacy, risk-reduction and emergency-response mechanisms. Through its presence in relevant international fora, the IFRC will aim to create

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<sup>6</sup> As expressed in the resolutions adopted by the 24th, 25th and 31st International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent (Resolution XXVII, Manila 1981; Resolution 28, Geneva 1986; and Resolution 2, Geneva 2011).

opportunities for National Societies to present their experiences of inclusive practices and use these platforms to raise the voice of people with disabilities and draw attention to their needs and interests.

The **International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)** will continue to implement activities related to persons living with disabilities, such as their rehabilitation programmes, based on need – both directly and in association with national authorities and National Societies during armed conflicts and other situations of violence. It will identify specific types of legal, capacity-building and other measures that authorities can take before, during and after armed conflicts to address the needs and challenges of persons with disabilities in times of armed conflict and communicate these proposals to relevant authorities and to National Societies. It will also provide expertise, advice and support to National Societies which wish to launch programmes responding to specific needs of persons with disabilities before, during or after armed conflict.

## **5. Action**

A more complete Strategic Framework on Disability Inclusion, together with relevant resource materials, will be developed by the IFRC, the ICRC and a reference group of National Society representatives, thereby ensuring the involvement of all components of the Movement. In the interim, the following actions are included to guide Movement components in disability-inclusive programming and responses:

### **Engaging with persons with disabilities**

Persons with disabilities are uniquely placed to understand the context they live in, their interests and needs. By including persons with disabilities in programme design and implementation, the Movement will ensure that its services better respond to that context. The Movement will:

- aim to work in full partnership with persons with disabilities and with their representative organizations;
- aim to build trust, a sense of belonging and confidence in its dealings with persons with disabilities;
- recruit persons with disabilities to participate as Movement volunteers and staff.

### **Enabling access to all systems and services**

Persons with disabilities have everyday needs relating to their health and well-being, their economic and social security, and their ability to learn and develop skills and to live in their communities. These needs can and should be met in mainstream programmes and services. Mainstreaming is the process by which all stakeholders ensure that, insofar as possible, persons with disabilities can participate equally with others in any activity and service intended for the general public, such as education, health, employment, and social services.

Mainstreaming requires a commitment at all levels, and needs to be considered across all sectors and built into new and existing legislation, standards, policies, strategies, and plans. Adopting universal design in shelter and WASH<sup>7</sup> programmes is an example of an inclusion strategy to meet access needs of persons with disabilities. The Movement will aim to:

- promote the access of persons with disabilities to mainstream programmes, to services developed and managed by the Movement and to the Movement's premises;
- advocate with governments to follow through on their commitment to persons with disabilities in terms of access to mainstream programmes and services in times of conflict, disaster and peace through their development work, global initiatives and disaster-preparedness programmes and activities.

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<sup>7</sup> Generally stands for Water, Sanitation and Hygiene.

### **Promoting access to programmes and services for persons with disabilities**

In addition to mainstream services, some persons with disabilities may require access to specific measures that will help them lead the lives they choose and value. These measures may include support services, rehabilitation, assistive devices, or training to improve functioning and independence. A range of assistance and support services in the community can meet needs for care, enabling people to live independently and to participate in the economic, social, and cultural lives of their communities. Vocational rehabilitation and training can open labour market opportunities. Where appropriate, the components of the Movement will aim to:

- develop and implement specific programmes and services for persons with disabilities;
- advocate with governments to ensure persons with disabilities have access to specific programmes and services.

### **Supporting learning and development in relation to disability inclusive-policy and programming frameworks**

Disability inclusion should be a part of all development strategies and action plans. It is also recommended that specific disability policies are adopted at the institutional level where relevant. A disability strategy sets out a consolidated and comprehensive long-term vision for improving the well-being of persons with disabilities and should cover both mainstream policy and programme areas and specific services for persons with disabilities. It should also provide for institutional learning relating to disability inclusion. In this respect:

- each component of the Movement will aim to develop and incorporate disability-inclusion policies and plans according to its mandate and scope of work;
- Movement members will deepen their understanding of good practice in relation to disability inclusion by participating in relevant learning communities and programme exchanges.

### **Increasing public awareness and understanding about disability**

Mutual respect and understanding contribute to an inclusive society. Therefore it is important to improve public understanding of disability, confront negative perceptions, and represent disability fairly. The Movement will aim to:

- support government disability-awareness campaigns that target attitudinal change;
- participate in disability-awareness campaigns that target attitudinal change;
- raise awareness by including persons living with a disability as staff and members of governance, and in its programmes;
- raise awareness within the Movement of our national responsibilities under the terms of the UNCRPD, particularly with respect to taking all necessary measures to ensure the prevention of the incidence of disabilities wherever possible, and the protection and safety of persons with disabilities in situations of risk, including situations of armed conflict, humanitarian emergencies and natural disasters.

### **Employing persons with disabilities**

Given the right environment, persons with disabilities are able to participate productively in most forms of employment. However, persons living with a disability experience significantly higher rates of unemployment than the rest of the population. The Movement will aim to:

- develop policies facilitating employment of persons with disabilities (each component of the Movement will develop such programmes, according to its mandate and scope of work);
- support and advocate with governments to increase their own targets for employment of persons living with a disability.

### **Reducing preventable impairments**

Prevention of health conditions and other factors which may lead to a disability is a development issue. Attention to environmental factors – including nutrition, preventable diseases, safe water and sanitation, and safety on roads and in workplaces – can greatly reduce the incidence of health conditions leading to disability. The Movement will:

- support and implement programmes to reduce preventable impairments;
- advocate with governments to ensure that programmes to reduce preventable impairments are in place.

### **6. References**

*IFRC Strategy 2020*, IFRC, Geneva 2009.

IFRC Strategic Framework on Gender and Diversity Issues, IFRC 2013.

United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, UN, New York, December 2006.

WHO/World Bank.

*World Disability Report*, Geneva, WHO 2011.

*The State of the World's Children 2013: Children with Disabilities*, UNICEF.

Resolutions adopted by the 24th, 25th and 31st International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent (Resolution XXVII, Manila 1981; Resolution 28, Geneva 1986; and Resolution 2, Geneva 2011).

### **Co-sponsorship of the resolution:**

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As of 2 October 2013 the abovementioned members of the Movement are co-sponsors of the resolution. If your National Society wishes to co-sponsor the resolution, please contact the Norwegian Red Cross's Mines and Weapons advisor Tobias Köhler <[Tobias.Kohler@redcross.no](mailto:Tobias.Kohler@redcross.no)>