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Council of Delegates of the International Red Cross
and Red Crescent Movement

Geneva, 26 November 2011 – **For humanity**



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Original: English

**COUNCIL OF DELEGATES
OF THE INTERNATIONAL RED CROSS
AND RED CRESCENT MOVEMENT**

Geneva, Switzerland
26 November 2011

**Movement components' relations
with external humanitarian actors**

Background report

prepared for resolution 2 "Movement components' relations with external humanitarian
actors"

adopted at the Council of Delegates 26 November 2011

Document prepared jointly by

**The International Committee of the Red Cross
and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies**

Geneva, October 2011

BACKGROUND REPORT

Movement components' relations with external humanitarian actors

1. Introduction

Movement components are keen to maximise the opportunities and mitigate the challenges that arise from engagement with actors outside the Movement. Trends in the external environment continuously influence how Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement components work with external actors. Such trends include the increased number of actors active in humanitarian operations; challenges in accessing beneficiaries in complex contexts; the increasing number and severity of natural disasters; developments in communication technology; changes in the global political economy and increasing competition for the funding humanitarian operations.

This paper highlights some of the key issues that need to be addressed in relations with external actors and makes recommendations that are taken up in a CoD resolution on this subject. It builds on the outcomes from the 2009 Council of Delegates workshop on "Relations with Actors outside of the Movement", on various reports commissioned by the British Red Cross¹ as well as on joint processes embarked on by the International Federation and International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). It also part of implementation of the Strategy for the Movement².

2. Movement components and external actors

"Relations with external actors" covers the wide range of relationships between Movement components and external actors that aim to meet various humanitarian needs. These include the simple exchange of information, ongoing informal collaboration or fuller partnerships with a wide variety of actors including public authorities, military and other armed actors, civil protection, UN agencies, national and international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and the private sector.

In non-emergency circumstances, a range of engagement opportunities exist, without necessarily posing any immediate risk to the perception of the Movement's application of the Fundamental Principles (FP). However, in situations of armed conflict and violence and in highly politicised environments, it may be more challenging to engage with some actors whilst adhering to the Fundamental Principles.

in the light of the above-mentioned opportunities and challenges, the diversity of actors and the commitment of all Movement components to work with the Fundamental Principles, the need becomes evident for Movement components to adopt a common method of assessing when to engage with which actor, with what role and in what manner.,

3. Existing policies, guidance and gaps

In recent years, Movement components have undertaken significant steps to better manage and develop relations with various external actors. Policies and guidelines have been adopted in previous Statutory Meetings to support decision-making on

¹ **British Red Cross, July 2008**, "The Red Cross/Crescent "pillar" in the 21st century: a discussion paper"; **Hofmann, C.A. July 2009**, "The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement's engagement with external humanitarian actors: a discussion paper", British Red Cross; **Hanley, T, July 2011**, "The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement: Relations with External Actors in Humanitarian Operations", British Red Cross.

² Action 9, implementation point 3.9.3 relating to guidelines for cooperation with political and military actors

how the Movement relates to different categories of external actors, such as military bodies, private sector and public authorities.³

The 2009 Council of Delegate workshop on "Relations with Actors outside of the Movement" identified concrete issues to be followed up by the Federation and the ICRC⁴. Among them was the need to:

- a. be perceived, communicate and act as a neutral, independent, impartial humanitarian actor;
- b. manage our collective Movement identity in a cohesive and coherent manner at local and global level and remain a strong humanitarian player;
- c. strengthen Movement capacity to manage varying types of relations and external expectations with different categories of external actors without compromising our Fundamental Principles and Movement distinctiveness;
- d. address particular future challenges relating to the increased role of the military as humanitarian actor, the evolution of civil protection mechanisms and the impact of emergency partnerships with International Organisations on the NS in the longer term;

The International Federation and the ICRC, in consultation with National Societies, have undertaken a number of steps⁵. Emphasis has been on improving and strengthening operational Movement coordination mechanisms in order to address the above listed issues at field level, in line with existing policies, strategies and guidelines.

4. Gaps in guidance on working with external actors

Despite this work undertaken over the past few years, a need has been expressed for current and future guidance to be disseminated and known more broadly within the Movement. Also, some voices have expressed a preference for developing more practical guidance and tools, which could support operational managers in decision-making processes in the field.⁶ Most notable perhaps is the interest in identifying

³ Council of Delegates documents: Relations between the components of the Movement and military bodies (2005); National Societies as auxiliaries to the public authorities in the humanitarian field (2005); Movement policy for corporate sector partnership (2005); Ethical principles guiding the ICRC's partnerships with the private sector (2002); Seville Agreement (1997) and Supplementary Measures (2005)

Other: Minimum elements to be included in Operational Agreements between Movement components and their external operational partners (2003); The Principles and Rules for Red Cross and Red Crescent Disaster Relief (26th International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent) -currently being revised. Code for Good Partnership; Federation's Protocol Handbook; Draft Handbook on Coordination

⁴ 2009 CoD, Workshop Report Relations with Actors Outside of the Movement

⁵ ICRC's work and policy development on armed conflict and other situations of violence including the Process on National Societies Preparing and Responding in Armed Conflict and Other Situations of Violence (OSVs) as prepared for a 2011 CoD resolution; Federation Strategy 2020 and of the ICRC's 2011-2014 strategy; both of which describe the need for partnership, resource mobilisation, influencing and investment in human resources; A Federation humanitarian diplomacy initiative with specific targets and outcomes identified for 2020; A new influencing initiative in the ICRC *Healthcare in Danger*; Ongoing work within the Federation on disseminating and promoting International Disaster Response Law (IDRL); A Movement-wide branding initiative; An initiative to explore, clarify and guide National Societies in how to relate to new national and regional civil protection initiatives, notably the EU at present; A Federation-wide Resource Mobilisation Strategy (FWRMS);

⁶ To enable this, the British RC study pointed out the need for the development of practical tools and mechanisms for management of relations with external actors. Some examples of these exist and maybe relevant to share more widely in a tool kit or similar⁶. Some examples may include:

a) *Scanning the operational landscape and identifying potential external relations and their nature*; b) *Negotiating relations*. There is a view that the Movement and particularly National Societies underestimated their leverage in negotiating relations with external actors. This is particularly in relation to UN actors and international NGOs which seek access to beneficiaries which a National Society maybe one of the few if not the only organisation able to provide; c) *Formalising relations*. The Movement has a number of global tools to manage relationships. Support to National Societies and also delegations would be needed to promote knowledge of these agreements and on how best to formalise relations and to make use of the global level agreements; d) *Evaluation*. There is a need to be able to evaluate the benefits and costs of relations with external partners, including the operational effectiveness of the relation and overall benefits of external engagement.

practical examples and case studies from which good practice and lessons may be drawn, highlighting some specific categories of external actors, contexts and coordination mechanisms within the Movement and between Movement components and external mechanisms.

Furthermore, some specific gaps in guidance were identified in a report on External Actors written by British RCS:

- a. **Relations with UN agencies:** Neither the few approaches or templates so far developed or in process of elaboration for cooperation with UN agencies (e.g. UNHCR, WFP) nor the Federation Draft Handbook for Coordination, provide sufficient advice on when and how to coordinate and cooperate with UN agencies and mechanisms, particularly in changing contexts (for example when conflict erupts).
- b. **Private sector:** current guidelines (Policy on Corporate Sector Partnerships, 2005) consider the private sector primarily as a donor and do not provide adequate guidance on how to engage with them as operational partners during emergencies.
- c. **Inter Agency Standing Committee-led initiatives, country team coordination mechanism and cluster system:** There is an ongoing debate within the Movement about the degree and form of Federation and National Society involvement in these mechanisms, including the Federation's leadership in the shelter cluster in certain contexts, particularly those of armed conflict or other situations of violence
- d. **Capacity and skills of Movement components to engage with external actors:** This covers a broad range of areas from developing, negotiating, and managing relations, with other actors⁷ to determining the appropriate nature of the relationship with external actors⁸. There is also a need to provide greater clarity on the shared and individual priorities of the Movement and its components. Developing staff and volunteer understanding of the Movement's distinctiveness is also required.

5. Relations between Movement components and UN agencies and country coordination bodies

In the light of the gaps identified, and the need for a coherent approach, the current working relationships between Movement components and UN agencies and country coordination bodies are set out below.

⁷ The nature of the relationship can range from: **a) a contractual relationship** where a component of the Movement contracts an external actor to carry out various services; **b) Informing:** The Movement or a component only provides information in one direction with information about the Movement and/or its operations; **c) Learning:** The Movement or a component seeks information from the external actor to learn from and inform its current or future operations; **d) Coordination:** The Movement or a component share information to avoid duplication and synchronise operations (e.g. Humanitarian Coordination teams); **e) Collaboration:** The Movement or a component share responsibility for particular tasks, for example, the evacuation of third nationals from Libya shared by the ICRC and IOM or the development of global humanitarian policies and mechanisms such as the cluster system involving the Federation Secretariat in the Inter-Agency Standing Committee; **f) Cooperation/partnership:** The Movement or a Movement component has a formalised relationship which acknowledges what each brings to the relationship, its duration and the aim of the relationship. For example, the ICRC - WFP agreement regarding exchange of food supplies and pipeline continuity; the Federation's involvement in the Road Safety Initiative; Turkish RCS relationship with WFP to distribute food in Somalia; **g) Strategic partnerships:** A formal alliance between the Movement and/or components of it with another organisation and/or group of organisations which commits both to cooperation in defined operational areas (geographical or thematic) and also includes the potential for the content and nature of the relationship to evolve over time.

⁸ There are many factors and characteristics of relationships with external actors which vary. These can, amongst other, include: a) the nature of the Movement communication with the external actor - providing information, seeking information, decision-making; b) the proximity or closeness (or otherwise) of the relationship; c) the role of the Movement and/or component of the Movement in the relationship (e.g. contributor, equal, lead, other); d) the extent to which relations with an external group are formalised is an important element of defining a relationship.

5.1 ICRC and the International Federation relations with UN agencies, and country coordination bodies

In order to maintain a good grasp of developments in the humanitarian sector, and where necessary to share its views or seek to influence decisions having a bearing on issues of humanitarian concern, the ICRC and International Federation closely follow the work of the UN on issues pertaining to humanitarian action. To facilitate such contacts, and in keeping with its neutral and independent status, ICRC and the International Federation have obtained observer status in several relevant fora (such as the UN General Assembly and governing bodies of humanitarian agencies).

As part of their efforts to engage in humanitarian sector affairs, both the ICRC and International Federation actively participate in the Inter Agency Standing Committee (IASC) and its subsidiary bodies, where the status of "standing invitee" is assumed (demonstrating that they are *cooperating with*, rather than being *coordinated by*, these bodies).

Both institutions maintain an ongoing bilateral dialogue with several UN agencies in order to discuss issues of common concern. For the ICRC, this includes so-called "High level meetings", which are held at regular intervals at senior management level, in which pressing thematic and operational issues are addressed. For the International Federation, the senior management contributes to on-going dialogue and processes to improve humanitarian assistance and coordination in the short and long term.

Country/Regional level interagency coordination: Where this brings tangible results for beneficiaries, the ICRC attends interagency coordination mechanisms as an observer. The ICRC's focus is achieving reality-based and action-oriented field coordination.

The International Federation attends interagency coordination meetings to ensure effective information sharing and coordination. It also coordinates global shelter sector preparedness and international humanitarian shelter activities in specific emergency situations.

5.2 National Societies and UN agencies, country coordination bodies

Many National Societies have partnerships with UN agencies and participate in interagency country coordination mechanisms. Particularly in disasters, National Societies will enter into agreements with UN agencies to deliver assistance. To facilitate these partnerships, model agreements are being developed at the global level to be adapted to the national context for National Societies' use. A model agreement has already been agreed with the UNHCR, which was put into effect early in 2011. Work is currently in progress with the WFP to ensure a similar agreement for its cooperation with National Societies. It is hoped that other agreements with relevant UN agencies will be developed in the near future. One of the key issues in developing these agreements is to ensure that adherence to the Fundamental Principles by National Societies is incorporated and respected.

6. Opportunities and challenges

Opportunities

Engaging with external actors during emergencies can contribute toward improving the Movement's operational reach, scale, effectiveness and efficiency and also toward sustaining the Movement itself in terms of finances, profile and perceived relevance. The key opportunities have been identified:

- a. **Strengthening humanitarian operations of Movement components:** both negotiating access with various stakeholders as well as ensuring a positive general perception of the Movement. It also includes engaging with other actors to gather and share crucial information contributing to the shaping of overall Movement priorities and actions such as during recent response to situations of floods and earthquakes.
- b. **Mobilizing finance, technical, human and material resources.** A noticeable trend in resource mobilisation is the shift to partnership. Donors increasingly want to be more involved in operations beyond providing financial resources.
- c. **Clarifying and asserting the distinctiveness and relevance of the Movement components in a changing humanitarian operational context** in meeting emergency humanitarian needs.
- d. **Strengthening the global humanitarian response** through participation in the overall coordination mechanisms with external actors at local, national and international level. The work of Movement components constitutes a significant proportion of the global humanitarian response.

Challenges

Engaging with external actors in today's emergency contexts continues to pose new and on-going challenges in maximizing and meeting the opportunities. The main ones are set out below:

- a. How can Movement components manage relations with external actors in ways that ensure an optimal response for beneficiaries and at the same time maintain Movement components' identities as neutral, impartial providers of humanitarian assistance?
- b. How can Movement components make informed choices about which external partnerships will enhance the Movement's action, and which could compromise the neutral, impartial, identity, particularly bearing in mind the additional challenges to neutrality, independence and impartiality that working in armed conflict brings?
- c. Could Movement components do more to influence the agendas of other providers of humanitarian assistance to ensure an optimal response for beneficiaries?
- d. Could Movement components further capitalise on their distinctiveness from other actors to promote a Movement response that both facilitates access to beneficiaries and attracts more resources for Movement components.. Elements of the distinctive image and identity of the Movement include the following factors identified 2009 Council of Delegates workshop on external actors:
 - the links of ICRC and National Societies with International Humanitarian Law;
 - the Fundamental Principles, in particular neutrality;
 - the use of the emblem;
 - the National Societies' auxiliary status;
 - the fact that the Movement is a truly global network with 186 National Societies, ICRC and International Federation
- e. How can National Societies respond to the demands increasingly made by their own governments to lead and coordinate their national response in all types of emergency and disaster situations?
- f. Can Movement components have a more coherent and predictable approach towards participation in coordination mechanisms run by UN coordinating bodies in international relief operations, particularly new onset emergencies?

How can the changing roles and responsibilities assumed by Movement components when a natural disaster becomes a complex emergency be managed effectively, particularly in situations where UN agencies may not be accepted as neutral and impartial?

- g. What should be NS involvement in national and regional civil protection arrangements which respond to domestic and international emergencies? How should NS respond to their obligation to operate within the Movement's international response mechanisms and pressure to become integrated into governmental or inter-agency coordinated responses?
- h. How can global partnerships with private sector relations be managed effectively? Managing relations with global organisations is complex and requires sophisticated partnership management processes. Relations with global organisations provide opportunities but also can expose the Movement to new risks. Both successes and problems or poor performance in one part of the world can affect relations in another.
- i. The growth in the number of National Societies operating in emergencies⁹ outside their own countries and representing diverse interests and opinions, is another important opportunity which comes with its challenges. This highlights the need to continue strengthening Movement coordination mechanisms at all levels, and giving particular attention to coherent and consistent strategic and operational approaches vis-à-vis engaging with non-Movement actors. As this is taken forward, particular attention should be given to ensuring coordination with the respective components of the Movement at the various levels of a host National Society.

7. Recommendations

Based on the opportunities, challenges and gaps identified in this paper, the following recommendations should be considered and used as the basis for a resolution at the Council of Delegates, 2011. Specifically,

- a) All Movement components should promote to external humanitarian actors how they work in accordance with the Fundamental Principles.
- b) The International Federation and the ICRC continue to analyse the needs for and, where relevant, further develop guidance with particular attention to:
 - i. Coordination with UN agencies and coordinating bodies, including for resource mobilisation.
 - ii. Relationships with various country coordination mechanisms and bodies (including country teams and clusters) including in changing contexts e.g. when conflict erupts where a natural disaster emergency operation is underway (or vice versa).
 - iii. The evolving role played by civil protection and Military and Defence assets in disaster and crisis situations.
 - iv. Use of the emblem in operations led by other organisations.
 - v. Ways to engage with the private sector as an operational partner
 - vi. Strengthening the capacities of all Movement components to develop and manage relationships with external humanitarian actors, in line with the Fundamental Policies, Movement Statutes, policies and guidelines.

⁹ For instance, more than 40 NS operating in Haiti and Pakistan.

- vii.** Maintaining an overview of existing policies, strategies and guidance relating to relations with external humanitarian actors and making these available in a user-friendly, manner.
- c)** All Movement components continue to strengthen Movement Coordination mechanisms at country and regional level, to use this as a means to improve relations with external humanitarian actors and capture and share experiences of this.