



Waking the Red Giant

Movement Communication – Alignment and Strategic Importance

(Workshop 5)

Outline

Key highlight

The world's media and communication landscape has transformed dramatically over recent years. Affected people, journalists, domestic audiences, donors and interest groups all expect and demand faster and more targeted communication, information and engagement. These changes are both an opportunity and a challenge.

This workshop will consider where and how we should strategically invest in communication across the Movement in order to respond to new expectations within a shifting communication landscape and strengthen our position as a leading humanitarian brand and voice both locally and globally.

Background information on the topic

Communication has become a critical and strategic tool across sectors, including the humanitarian one. Research conducted in 2017 shows that global companies ranking highest in terms of public perception all prioritized communication strategies and investment.¹ In the humanitarian sector, public communication has a direct impact on security, acceptance, access and credibility. Investing in strategic communications is an investment in public trust, demonstrating value, transparency and accountability. Trust underpins every interaction our staff and volunteers have. From meeting with a crisis affected person, armed actor or government donor through to recruitment, investing in trust is paramount.²

In recent years, there has been significant transformation of the media and communication landscape. Previously distinct areas of information and communication technology, networks and media content have converged, blurring the distinctions between Movement operations, community engagement and traditional communications. Similarly, the media landscape is increasingly characterized by blurred geographical borders, technological frontiers and reach.

The rise of online technology may reduce the cost of reaching broader audiences, but it also renders the process more complex. A 'one-to-many' broadcasting model has been overtaken by the 'many-to-many' paradigm. This rapid evolution of both technology and the culture of consuming communication shows no signs of slowing. As digital convergence continues to

¹<https://www.forbes.com/sites/karstenstrauss/2017/02/28/the-worlds-most-reputable-companies-in-2017/#1b82b9322fe3>.

² <http://www.edelman.com/trust2017/>

challenge traditional business models, new companies and groups are innovating and emerging as market leaders – including in the humanitarian field.

The power of proximity and speed provided by digital tools means different audiences overlap and have themselves become communications influencers and opinion shapers – from domestic audiences and local communities to criminal groups and local authorities. More than ever, communication has become a new battleground, with different interests and groups competing for influence and support.

What does this mean for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement?

Cutting through the noise and establishing ourselves as the leading humanitarian voice and influencer, locally and globally, is a key strategic challenge for the Movement.

While communication has always been a cross-cutting element across the Movement, in today's and tomorrow's complex humanitarian landscape, the pivotal and strategic role of communications – across operations, fundraising, community engagement, diplomacy and public outreach – cannot be overstated. Communication is no longer an optional add-on that Movement components choose to invest in or not.

The way we engage, influence, educate and support our audiences and the environments in which we communicate will continue to change in ways that we may not be able to anticipate. For instance, whereas in the past, global organizations with a strong heritage, such as the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, could rely on the historical associations of their brands, this is no longer possible. Secondly, although there are more actors in the humanitarian space than ever before, resources remain finite. In such a competitive environment, the Movement must be aligned and proactive in investing in our future and creating communications capacity that is agile and quick to adapt.

In 2014, communicators from around the world came together at the Movement's Global Communication Forum. Delegates representing 64 National Societies, the IFRC and the ICRC mapped the challenges and opportunities that we will face in coming years and drafted the [Nairobi Declaration](#). The Declaration calls on the Movement to prioritize strategic investment in fundraising and communications. This is the minimum required to enable the Movement's components to expand their reach and realize their visions and missions both individually and collectively.

Building on the Declaration, this workshop will explore, discuss and define alignment and strategies for the Movement in order to foster engagement and leverage its communication potential as the leading humanitarian voice. The workshop is also an opportunity to better understand the strategic and cross-cutting importance of communications for the Movement's operations, credibility, fundraising and positioning, while looking at areas of investment and research for the coming years to strengthen Movement outreach, impact, trust and reputation.

Objectives of the workshop

1. To understand the current communication opportunities and challenges faced by the Movement, including visibility and reputation.
2. To agree on the commitments and actions that the Movement will make and implement over the next two years in order to strengthen and align strategic communication.
3. To endorse a common definition of what communication means across different Movement components.

Guiding questions

1. How can we harness the power and potential of the Movement's collective network for global humanitarian leadership through strategic coordinated communications?
2. How can we support different Movement components to be active and leading players in a rapidly and continuously evolving world of communication and information sharing?
3. What steps can we take to harness the power and reach of the Movement as a global network?
4. Which areas of communication should Movement components invest in over the next ten years to ensure that the Movement can continue to provide lifesaving humanitarian assistance?

Reference to official working documents and previous CoD, IC resolutions, etc.

- Nairobi Declaration of the 2014 Movement Global Communication Forum (available on FedNet): https://fednet.ifrc.org/FedNet/Resources_and_Services/Human%20Diplomacy/Communication/Meetings/GCF2014/GCF-2014-Declaration-Statement_EN.docx
- ICRC Doctrine 7 on External Communication: <https://www.icrc.org/en/document/icrc-external-communication-doctrine>