

**Power of humanity**

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

8 December 2019, Geneva



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

Geneva, Switzerland  
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**Movement-wide commitments for  
community engagement and accountability**

**Draft elements of resolution**

March 2019

## **Movement-wide commitments for community engagement and accountability**

### **Background**

The draft elements of the proposed resolution on a Movement-wide approach to community engagement and accountability seek to provide an outline of the possible substance of individual paragraphs, without providing a definitive text for the proposed resolution.

The Movement-wide approach to community engagement and accountability sets out a series of proposed commitments for all the components of the Movement to adopt and integrate into policies and operations (see attached annex with an outline of the proposed commitments). These commitments aim to improve the quality and effectiveness of humanitarian action and strengthen our individual and collective accountability to people vulnerable to and affected by crisis.

Each paragraph section (i.e. preambular or operative) is followed by a rationale explaining the purpose and objectives of the section.

This document is being shared for consultation with the members of the Council of Delegates of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement in order to gather a first round of comments and feedback, and to gain an initial understanding of whether the proposed approach on the substance would be acceptable and garner consensus.

When providing comments and feedback on this document, please consider the following questions:

- Do you agree with the proposed elements for the preambular and operative paragraphs of the proposed resolution?
- Are there any elements that are missing or should be included in the resolution?

Detailed comments on the wording of the draft elements of this resolution are not expected at this stage. There will be opportunity to comment on specific wording once the draft zero of the resolution is available at a later stage.

### **Introduction**

The Fundamental Principles of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement oblige the components of the Movement to work to prevent and alleviate human suffering in situations of crisis, and to provide assistance without discrimination and based solely on need. The [Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and Non-Governmental Organizations \(NGOs\) in Disaster Relief](#) also highlights individual and collective accountability to the people whom the Movement seeks to assist. It sets out the intention to involve them and support their participation in the design, management and implementation of aid programmes, to respect local culture and customs, and to recognize and strengthen local capacities and resilience.

Community engagement is critical to achieving this. By systematically engaging with vulnerable and affected people, consulting them on their needs, vulnerabilities and priorities for assistance, involving them in the design and implementation of programmes, providing them with life-saving information, and collecting and acting on their feedback on the quality and effectiveness of aid efforts, the Movement is better able to provide relevant, appropriate and effective assistance, and protect and preserve people's rights and dignity.

All the components of the Movement have made progress in improving the quality, effectiveness and accountability of their work. Many National Societies now have

accountability to affected people policies and procedures to integrate community engagement into their emergency operations and programmes. The IFRC and ICRC have developed [A Red Cross Red Crescent Guide to Community Engagement and Accountability \(CEA\)](#) and [other tools](#) building on existing National Society best practice. The ICRC has also adopted an [Accountability to Affected People Institutional Framework](#).

However, as recognized at the [workshop on community engagement and accountability at the 2017 Council of Delegates](#), and reaffirmed in other recent Movement conferences, workshops and events in the various regions, **the Movement needs to harmonize and align these efforts and ensure that there is consistency in the way the different components of the Movement engage with and are accountable to vulnerable and crisis-affected people.**

Accordingly, the ICRC and the IFRC, in consultation with National Societies, are developing draft Minimum Commitments for Community Engagement and Accountability, and submit this resolution to the Council of Delegates with a view to approving and adopting a common Movement approach to community engagement and accountability that recognizes the different roles, responsibilities and mandates of each component of the Movement.<sup>1</sup>

The Minimum Commitments seek to reaffirm individual and collective accountability in order to provide quality assistance and more effective results for vulnerable and affected people, and to preserve and protect their rights and dignity. As such, they will help consolidate and expand upon existing Movement commitments, experience and best practice.

At the same time, they will help the Movement demonstrate how it is contributing to achieving the Grand Bargain commitments around localization and participation, as well as relevant quality and accountability standards such as the Core Humanitarian Standard on Quality and Accountability, and other international and donor commitments to promote greater transparency, accountability and effectiveness in humanitarian action.

### **Preambular paragraphs**

The preambular paragraphs of this resolution aim to reflect a growing recognition of the importance of community engagement and accountability to affected people as a key to effective humanitarian action.

More specifically, the preambular paragraphs aim to: first, reaffirm and emphasize the rationale for the role that community engagement and accountability plays and should play in the Movement; and second, recall and recognize the existing commitments and efforts made in that regard across both the Movement and the wider humanitarian sector.

With respect to the first objective, the preambular paragraphs would stress that:

- the Movement's *raison d'être* – as well as its ethical and operational mandate – is to prevent and alleviate the suffering of people vulnerable to and affected by disasters, conflicts, and health and social problems, guided by a consideration of their needs
- the Movement's accountability to affected and vulnerable people rests on its capacity to provide support and assistance impartially and without discrimination to address their needs, and to protect and preserve their dignity
- this capacity is contingent on the Movement's ability to collect and act on relevant feedback from affected and vulnerable people in their role as experts in their own

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<sup>1</sup> Consultations on these draft Movement-wide Minimum Commitments for Community Engagement and Accountability are currently under way within the Movement. A finalized draft will be annexed to the draft zero resolution. A letter was sent to every National Society secretary-general inviting them to participate in this consultation at the end of February 2019.

situation, and to identify and recognize existing power dynamics as well as patterns of inclusion and exclusion that might impact this capacity

- efforts in this sense are conducive to more timely, relevant, appropriate and effective humanitarian programmes; build trust and proximity with the people and communities we serve; and positively impact the safety and security of our staff and operations.

With respect to the second objective, the preambular paragraphs would:

- reference existing efforts to strengthen and consolidate community engagement and accountability capacities and activities within the Movement; and call for these to be applied more consistently in emergency operations and programmes
- acknowledge recommendations and commitments made at the Movement level and internationally to foster greater engagement of aid actors with and the participation of vulnerable and crisis-affected people (such as the above-mentioned Code of Conduct and pledges made by the ICRC and IFRC as part of Grand Bargain).

## **Rationale**

The rationale for the preambular paragraphs is to highlight that there is considerable capacity, experience and a strong commitment within the Movement to strengthen our engagement with vulnerable and affected people and improve our accountability to them.

In this sense, the preambular paragraphs will start by highlighting the relevance of the subject with respect to the Movement's mandate and principles. Community engagement and accountability is at the basis of the Movement's commitment to respond to needs and protect and preserve dignity, and is reflected in the Movement's Fundamental Principles and the Code of Conduct, as well as in numerous other policy commitments made by each component of the Movement. It is also of high importance within the international community, where governments, UN agencies, NGOs and other humanitarian actors have consistently emphasized the need for greater engagement and communication with and participation of vulnerable and affected people in decision-making processes, and have recognized these efforts as an integral part of improving the quality, effectiveness and accountability of humanitarian action.

In this sense, the preambular paragraphs serve also to acknowledge that strengthening community engagement and accountability represents continuity for the Movement, and that this resolution builds on existing work. The resolution provides an opportunity to consolidate these efforts and move towards a more consistent, coherent Movement-wide approach that could significantly improve accountability to affected people.

At the same time, the unique strengths of the Movement and its long-standing experience working with communities through the Red Cross and Red Crescent network allow it to assume a leadership role in supporting and promoting community engagement and accountability in humanitarian action.

## **Operative paragraphs**

The operative paragraphs (OP) of the resolution would call on National Societies, the IFRC and the ICRC to adopt a set of Minimum Commitments for Community Engagement and Accountability, and to apply them individually and collectively in their operations, programming and organizational development/capacity-building efforts.

The operative paragraphs would also refer to the need for all components to regularly share progress and lessons learnt in applying the Minimum Commitments, with the aim of consolidating and scaling up best practice in community engagement and accountability across the Movement.

The operative paragraphs will also call on all components of the Movement to monitor and report on progress in applying the Minimum Commitments, potentially through existing capacity-assessment and reporting mechanisms, and provide a full report to the 2021 Council of Delegates on successes, challenges and achievements.

In more detail:

- OP1** would call upon the Movement components to accept and adopt the Movement-wide Minimum Commitments for Community Engagement and Accountability;
- OP2** would encourage consistent compliance with these commitments;
- OP3** would invite all the Movement components to work together and harness each other's strengths in engaging with and being accountable to vulnerable and affected people;
- OP4** would require all the Movement components to share knowledge and lessons learnt in relation to these commitments with the objective of constantly improving the outcome of humanitarian action;
- OP5** would recommend that the IFRC and the ICRC integrate the commitments into existing capacity-assessment, monitoring and evaluation, and coordination and cooperation tools and processes;
- OP6** would recommend that National Societies providing support and assistance to other National Societies also integrate the commitments into their cooperation strategies;
- OP7** would ask all the Movement components to report back to the 2021 Council of Delegates on progress made in implementing these commitments.

## **Rationale**

The operative paragraphs emphasize that all the components of the Movement have a mutual responsibility to adopt and integrate these commitments in their work. It is particularly important that the commitments are reflected in internal policies and procedures, and applied consistently as part of capacity development, emergency responses and other programming to ensure that the Movement acts in harmony.

The operative paragraphs call on the IFRC, the ICRC and all National Societies to support efforts to strengthen the Movement's capacity to better engage with and be accountable to vulnerable and affected people. This is important, as volunteers and local staff often have more direct interaction with communities, and need the skills, tools and support to integrate effective community engagement and accountability measures into their interaction, regardless of the programming context.

The operating paragraphs also highlight the need to monitor and report on progress – both as a means to demonstrate the mutual accountability to apply these commitments once they are adopted, but also as an important means to share lessons learnt and consolidate and scale up best practice. The final resolution is likely to include some additional recommendations for monitoring progress, including potential indicators.

## **ANNEX**

### **Summary of Movement-wide Minimum Commitments for Community Engagement and Accountability**

#### **Background**

The IFRC and the ICRC, in close consultation with National Societies, will be submitting a resolution to the 2019 Council of Delegates on adopting a set of Movement-wide Minimum Commitments for Community Engagement and Accountability. The commitments are aimed at improving accountability to affected people and the quality and effectiveness of humanitarian action through more coherent and coordinated approaches to community engagement and participation.

A consultation process with National Societies is currently under way to review and refine these commitments and identify recommended actions to integrate them into organizational policies and emergency-response operations and programmes. The following areas are currently being considered as the mainstays of the forthcoming Movement commitments:

#### **1. Strengthening a harmonized approach**

The commitments will include a clear Movement definition of community engagement and accountability to affected people and how this relates to the distinct but complementary mandates, roles and responsibilities of National Societies, the IFRC and the ICRC. It will also call on all the components of the Movement to adopt policies and take measures to consistently apply the commitments in emergency responses and programmes.

#### **2. Improving contextual analysis and understanding of the diversity of communities**

The commitments will highlight the need to better understand the diversity of experiences, risks and vulnerabilities faced by communities, and to ensure that protection, gender and inclusion are reflected in the ways in which assistance is designed and delivered.

#### **3. Promoting greater participation and use of local capacity**

The commitments will call on the components of the Movement to find meaningful ways for vulnerable people and communities to engage with and participate in decisions that affect them. This includes providing opportunities for vulnerable and affected people to participate in the design, implementation, monitoring and management of assistance activities. It also includes prioritizing the use of local capacity, knowledge and expertise whenever possible to find ways to reduce vulnerabilities and protection risks and increase resilience.

#### **4. Listening, responding to and acting on feedback**

The commitments will emphasize that all Movement members need to regularly collect and analyse feedback and inputs from vulnerable and affected people, use this to inform decision-making and take corrective actions, and report back to communities.

#### **5. Improving transparency and communication with communities**

The commitments will call on the components of the Movement to take measures to share information with vulnerable and affected people in transparent, accessible and appropriate ways. This includes information about the Movement's principles and values, programmes, available assistance and other relevant matters, with a focus on issues of gender, diversity and inclusion. To this end, advocacy and communication work related to risk reduction, resilience and behaviour change should respect local norms and practices and be based on appropriate engagement with communities.

## **6. Strengthening capacity in the Movement**

The components of the Movement will be asked to share knowledge, learning and experiences with a view to strengthening community engagement capacity at all levels. This includes ensuring community engagement strategies are an integral part of all programmes and adapted to the specific operational contexts and mandates of each component of the Movement. It also includes supporting measures to strengthen the skills and capacity of National Society staff and volunteers working with vulnerable communities.

## **7. Improving coordination in the Movement**

Finally, the commitments will reaffirm the need for coordinated approaches to communicating, engaging with and promoting the participation of vulnerable and affected people and communities in programmes and responses. This includes cooperation programmes between National Societies, and responses to crisis situations where other Movement components are present, with due respect for the mandates, roles and operational procedures of each.