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**Council of Delegates of the International  
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## **COUNCIL OF DELEGATES**

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

Geneva, Switzerland  
7 December 2015

## **Adoption of the Strategic Framework on Disability Inclusion by the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement**

### **Background report**

**Document prepared by  
The International Federation of Red Cross Red Crescent Societies  
in consultation with the International Committee of the Red Cross, the Australian Red  
Cross and the Norwegian Red Cross**

Geneva, October 2015

## BACKGROUND REPORT

### Adoption of the Strategic Framework on Disability Inclusion by the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement

#### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of this background report is to provide key contextual information to the Council of Delegates to support the adoption of the Movement-wide Strategic Framework on Disability Inclusion through resolution..

The 2013 Council of Delegates resolution *Promoting Disability Inclusion in the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement*, called for the development of a Movement-wide strategy on disability inclusion to be presented for adoption at the Council of Delegates in 2015, thus providing the basis for the development of the strategic framework.

Persons with disabilities represent approximately 15% of the world's population and often face multi-faceted barriers that negatively impact their health, education and employment outcomes, leading to increasing poverty. In addition, persons with disabilities are disproportionately affected in times of conflict and disaster, and are at higher risk of becoming victims of violence or abuse when compared to the general population.

The purpose of this strategic framework is to provide specific strategic directions to the Movement to ensure that all actions, policies and internal practices are non-discriminatory towards and inclusive of persons with disabilities; to increase participation of persons with disabilities across the Movement and to promote disability inclusive practices throughout its work.

The success of this strategic framework relies upon the implementation of three interrelated objectives: firstly, all components of the Movement adopt a disability inclusive approach; secondly, persons with disabilities have equal access to the services and programs the Movement provides, thereby enabling their inclusion and full participation; and thirdly, all components of the Movement endeavour to change mindsets and behaviours in order to promote respect for diversity, including disability inclusion.

It is therefore recommended that the Council of Delegates adopts the Movement-wide Strategic Framework on Disability Inclusion and requests all components of the Movement to provide a progress report, outlining the achievements to date and showing progress against baseline data, to the 2017 Council of Delegates.

#### 1) Introduction

It is estimated that one billion people live with some form of disability, representing approximately 15% of the world's population. Furthermore, rates of disability are increasing globally due to factors such as ageing and the increase in chronic health conditions.

Persons with disabilities face multi-faceted barriers – environmental, institutional, attitudinal – that negatively impact their health, education and employment outcomes, leading to increasing poverty. In addition, persons with disabilities face higher risks of becoming victims of violence and abuse, and are disproportionately affected in disaster, emergency and conflict situations, when compared to the general population.

The Movement has expressed its commitment to persons with disabilities in several of its statutory decisions in the last few decades. The latest one, the 2013 Council of Delegates

resolution *Promoting Disability Inclusion in the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement*, called for the development of a Movement-wide strategy to be presented for adoption at the Council of Delegates in 2015; thus becoming the mandate for the development of the strategic framework that this resolution seeks to endorse.

The Movement-wide strategic framework hereby presented further develops the content of the 2013 Council of Delegates resolution and is firmly grounded on the language and spirit of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), approved by the United Nations General Assembly in 2006.

Articles 11 and 32 of the CRPD are of special interest to the Movement as they refer to situations of risk and humanitarian emergencies, and to international cooperation, respectively. Art. 11 in particular recognises obligations under International Humanitarian Law 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<sup>50</sup>. Since disasters and conflicts exacerbate both poverty and barriers to persons with disabilities, addressing disability and promoting inclusive practices is at the core of the Movement’s mission.

This strategic framework is firmly aligned with International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (International Federation) *Strategy 2020* and International Committee of Red Cross (ICRC) *Strategy 2015-2018*. It complements the International Federation *Strategy on Violence Prevention, Mitigation and Response 2011– 2020* in that it recognises that violence is both a cause and an increased risk factor of disability and it specifically requests the implementation of violence prevention components in disability inclusion initiatives and viceversa. This strategic framework also complements the International Federation *Strategic Framework on Gender and Diversity Issues 2013-2020*; it recognises that disability can affect women, men, girls and boys differently and actively encourages the Movement’s work with persons with disabilities to be responsive to their gender-specific vulnerabilities, needs and capacities at all times.

The ultimate goal of the strategic framework is that all components of the Movement become inclusive organisations, build their own internal capacities, mobilise internal and external resources and involve and support persons with disabilities and their caregivers to address barriers hampering their full enjoyment of rights and freedoms. See point 3 for an outline of the framework.

Finally, the inclusion of persons with disabilities was also an area of focus during the Third United Nations World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction (March 2015). The resulting *Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030* explicitly establishes that a gender, age, disability and cultural perspective should be integrated in all policies and practices<sup>51</sup>. The key message was that disaster risk management that includes everyone, including persons with disabilities, contributes to sustainable development and that disability inclusive disaster management has to be addressed by individuals, civil societies and governments. In addition, the inclusion of all people is anticipated as a cornerstone of the post-2015 Summit on Sustainable Development Goals, due to take place in September 2015.

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<sup>50</sup> United Nations (2006) Convention on the rights of persons with disabilities, available from <http://www.un.org/disabilities/documents/convention/convoptprot-e.pdf>

<sup>51</sup> United Nations (2015) *Sendai Framework of Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030*, available from [http://www.preventionweb.net/files/43291\\_sendaiframeworkfordrren.pdf](http://www.preventionweb.net/files/43291_sendaiframeworkfordrren.pdf)

## 2) **Background**

As mentioned previously, the 2013 Council of Delegates adopted unanimously, with significant support from 33 National Societies, the ICRC and the International Federation, the resolution "*Promoting Disability Inclusion in the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement*", which called for the development of a Movement-wide strategy on disability inclusion.

The development of the strategic framework presented for adoption through this resolution is the result of a highly participatory drafting process. The International Federation Secretariat, the ICRC and a small network of National Societies with technical expertise, together with civil society organisations such as International Labour Organisation (ILO), United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), International Disability Alliance, Leonard Cheshire Disability, CBM, Special Olympics or European Disability Forum and persons with disabilities themselves have been involved in this process.

Furthermore, all 189 National Societies have been given the opportunity to comment on the draft strategic framework and the draft baseline questions as part of the official preparatory process for this Council of Delegates.

## 3) **Outline of the strategic framework**

The strategic framework has been developed to provide specific strategic directions to the Movement to:

- ensure that all actions, policies and internal practices are non-discriminatory towards and inclusive of persons with disabilities,
- increase participation of persons with disabilities across the Movement,
- promote disability inclusive practices throughout its work.

The strategic framework incorporates learnings from similar disability inclusion initiatives as well as feedback from relevant internal and external stakeholders. The result of this was the development of three interdependent strategic objectives whose implementation is consubstantial to the success of this strategic framework:

- Strategic Objective 1 requires that 'all components of the Movement adopt a disability inclusive approach'. Having an inward focus, this objective encompasses the revision and modification – when necessary- of the Movement's organisational systems, processes and policies, to ensure they are disability inclusive. It specifically calls for an increase in the number of persons with disabilities that work and volunteer within the Movement. For example, it suggests the development and implementation of a targeted recruitment and retention plan, awareness raising training and other learning activities and programs as vehicles to achieve this.
- Strategic Objective 2 focuses on ensuring 'persons with disabilities have equal access to the services and programs the Movement provides, thereby enabling their inclusion and full participation'. This objective is thus outward facing and requires the inclusion of a disability perspective throughout the design, implementation and evaluation of the Movement's mainstream programs and services. It also encourages the implementation of disability specific services, where needed and relevant.
- Strategic Objective 3 dictates 'all components of the Movement endeavour to change mindsets and behaviours in order to promote respect for diversity, including disability inclusion'. This objective requires all components of the Movement to challenge

negative perceptions on disability and promote disability as one of many ordinary differences that create human diversity and enrich humankind.

This strategic framework is also accompanied by a series of questions aimed at setting a baseline from which to monitor progress within each component of the Movement over the next four years.

The implementation of this strategic framework provides an example of the application of the Fundamental Principles in action. The Fundamental Principle of Humanity is of particular relevance, since its main components- alleviate and prevent suffering, protect life and health, and assure respect for and protection of the individual – underpin all three strategic objectives, together with the human rights based approach enshrined in the CRPD.

In addition, the Fundamental Principle of Impartiality – providing assistance on the basis of need and without discrimination – directly requires the Movement to reduce barriers so that persons with disabilities are not excluded from the humanitarian response and other services provided. Finally, it may also be argued that the Fundamental Principles of Independence and Unity are upheld when persons with disabilities can fully participate in society and have the individual autonomy to make their own choices.

#### **4) Conclusion and recommendations**

Based on all of the above remarks and information, it is recommended that:

- the Council of Delegates adopts the strategic framework on disability inclusion as presented in annex 1 of the resolution,
- all components of the Movement develop their own implementation plan, identifying what financial, human and other resources as well as program and process alignments are required to operationalise the 3 strategic objectives outlined in the strategic framework,
- an implementation committee, with equitable regional representation from National Societies, International Federation and ICRC as well as representatives of persons with disabilities, is promptly established to monitor and support implementation,
- all components of the Movement provide a progress report to the Council of Delegates in 2017, outlining the achievements to date and showing progress against baseline data - and a final report to the Council of Delegates in 2019 – including achievements to date and recommendations on future revisions to the strategic framework.

There is an expectation that with the adoption of this resolution and subsequent implementation of the strategic framework, all components of the Movement will have a clear way forward towards becoming disability inclusive.

By becoming fully disability inclusive, the Movement will not only be more representative of the rich diversity already present in the societies and communities in which it operates, but will also be better prepared to identify and respond to the specific needs of persons with disabilities within their programs and services, particularly in times of conflict and disaster. For example, if persons with disabilities have been actively engaged in the design and implementation of Movement programs and materials, and partnerships formed with relevant organisations, then the expectation is that, if and when conflict or disaster strikes, the Movement will have the relevant knowledge, skills and resources to respond effectively and inclusively.