

**Power of humanity**

Council of Delegates of the International  
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**COUNCIL OF DELEGATES  
OF THE INTERNATIONAL RED CROSS  
AND RED CRESCENT MOVEMENT**

Geneva, Switzerland  
8 December 2019

**Strengthening Civil–Military Relations in Disaster Management  
(Resolution 7 of the 2005 Council of Delegates)**

**Progress report**

**Document prepared by  
the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and  
the International Committee of the Red Cross**

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The guidance document “Relations between the components of the Movement and military bodies” (guidance document), annexed to Resolution 7 of the 2005 Council of Delegates, contains the key policy guidelines on relations between military bodies and components of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement (Movement). It is supplemented by the Principles and Rules for Red Cross and Red Crescent Humanitarian Assistance (Principles and Rules)<sup>1</sup> – which address the relationship between National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (National Societies), the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) and military bodies – and by Resolution 7 of the 32nd International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent, “Strengthening the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement response to growing humanitarian needs”.

Relations with military bodies that respond to disasters has evolved greatly since 2005, as evidenced by the 2010 Haiti earthquake, 2013 Typhoon Haiyan, 2014 West Africa Ebola outbreak, 2015 Nepal earthquake through to Cyclone Idai in 2019. The involvement of military bodies has become quite normal. Indeed, as the frequency and scale of disasters continue to outstrip humanitarian organizations’ capacity to respond, military involvement is likely to increase, resulting in greater interaction between Movement disaster responders and international military bodies. This growing involvement of and interaction with military bodies during disasters places a greater onus on Movement components to ensure that relations with military bodies are consistent across the Movement and to continue efforts to strengthen Movement cooperation and coordination in accordance with the Seville Agreement and its Supplementary Measures.<sup>2</sup>

Given this evolution in disaster response, the guidance document and the Principles and Rules must be implemented further to ensure that Movement civil–military relations (CMR) in disaster management are **consistent, principled, framed by common operational guidelines, supported by the appropriate expertise, tools and training, and understood and accepted by external stakeholders. Further implementation is also critical to safeguarding our “red pillar” space.**

To support this overarching intent within the parameters of existing policies, we recommend that a three-year plan of action be adopted with the following objectives:

- **develop a common operational framework** on CMR for Movement disaster-response practitioners by identifying, sharing and approving lessons learnt and best practice for implementation at the international, regional and national levels
- **develop a Movement-wide network** that uses common, consistent resources to enhance CMR authority, knowledge and expertise
- **conduct internal and external advocacy** to preserve the Movement’s humanitarian space and be an influential voice on future CMR developments worldwide.

CMR in disaster management is a term used within the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement to describe the interaction between components of the Movement and military bodies in disaster preparedness and response activities.

<sup>1</sup> Revised version adopted by the IFRC General Assembly in 2013 and endorsed by the 32nd International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent in 2015 (Resolution 7).

<sup>2</sup> Seville Agreement, 1997, and “Implementation of the Seville Agreement”, 2005 Council of Delegates, Resolution 8

## 1) INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Since the guidance document was endorsed at the 2005 Council of Delegates, the need for a Movement-wide approach to CMR in disaster preparedness and response activities has increased owing to several factors, including that:

- military bodies<sup>3</sup> are increasingly likely to play a role in disaster preparedness and response as the scope, scale, complexity and duration of disasters surpass the capacity of domestic and international civilian entities to respond effectively.<sup>4</sup> The various motives for increasing their role could create perception issues for Movement components.<sup>5</sup>
- the presence of domestic and foreign military forces and the increase in non-State armed groups in humanitarian operating environments further heighten the likelihood of Movement components interacting with military bodies and the complexity of those interactions.<sup>6</sup>
- other humanitarian organizations are engaging with military bodies in many domains, using varying approaches<sup>7</sup> that are often based on their interpretation of what constitutes principled engagement during a disaster response.<sup>8</sup> The absence of a common approach among humanitarian organizations confuses militaries and weakens efforts to preserve humanitarian space and principles.

Disaster response is now often transnational in nature, with both military forces<sup>9</sup> and humanitarian organizations operating around the world. The Movement therefore needs to adopt a common global CMR approach that is consistent in how it preserves humanitarian space in accordance with the Fundamental Principles.

The guidance document has helped the Movement be more consistent and coordinated in its disaster preparedness and response over the past 13 years. The Movement components have taken steps to operationalize the guidance document by developing tools and approaches that strengthen Movement cooperation and coordination on CMR in disaster-response operations, mostly at the regional level. Specifically, at the 19th Inter-American Conference in 2012, 35 National Societies recognized the importance of and recommended enhancing CMR as part of the auxiliary role of the National Societies. This, in turn, led to the Asia-Pacific region holding the first CMR forum in 2014 and the 9th Asia-Pacific Conference issuing the “Beijing Call for

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<sup>3</sup> As per the guidance document, military bodies are defined as “all bodies and groups carrying out military tasks and operations”.

<sup>4</sup> E. Ferris, *Future Directions in Civil-Military Response to Natural Disasters*, Australian Civil-Military Centre, Canberra, 2012; C.-A. Hofmann and L. Hudson, “Military responses to natural disasters: Last resort or inevitable trend?”, *Humanitarian Exchange*, No. 44, 2009, pp. 29–31; H. Ahmad *et al.* *The Effectiveness of Foreign Military Assets in Natural Disaster Response*, Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, Stockholm, 2008.

<sup>5</sup> D. Capie, “The United States and humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (HADR) in East Asia: Connecting coercive and non-coercive uses of military power”, *Journal of Strategic Studies*, Vol. 38, Issue 3, 2015, pp. 309–331; H. Karadag, “Forcing the common good: The significance of public diplomacy in military affairs”, *Armed Forces & Society*, Vol. 43, Issue 1, 2017, pp. 72–91; J.S. Nye Jr., “Get smart: Combining hard and soft power”, *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 88, No. 4, July/August 2009, pp. 160–163; A. Chong, “Smart power and military force: An introduction”, *Journal of Strategic Studies*, Vol. 38, Issue 3, 2015, pp. 233–244.

<sup>6</sup> S. Gordon, S. Haysom and V. Metcalfe, *Trends and Challenges in Humanitarian Civil-Military Coordination*, Humanitarian Policy Group, London, 2012.

<sup>7</sup> M. Berg and V. Metcalfe, *Country-Specific Civil-Military Coordination Guidelines*, Humanitarian Policy Group, London, 2012.

<sup>8</sup> In addition to the existing policies of the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, humanitarian organizations such as the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Oxfam, CARE International, Save the Children, the Norwegian Refugee Council and others have their own civil–military policies, while others are in the process of developing such policies.

<sup>9</sup> Most notably the US and UK militaries, which are engaged in disaster-preparedness and response activities in Africa, Asia-Pacific and Central and South America. Other military forces are also expanding their disaster-response activities in foreign areas of national interest.

Innovation”, under which 45 National Societies committed to working on a CMR strategy and standard operating procedures. These activities in the Asia-Pacific region laid the groundwork for sharing tools and practices across the Movement, seconding staff of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) to the IFRC and developing common guidelines and training. Similar initiatives have begun in the Americas region, and other regions have also committed to developing their regional CMR approaches. Efforts have also been undertaken by some National Societies domestically.

While this progress is welcome, National Societies, the ICRC and the IFRC have implemented the guidance document only partially and to varying degrees, shaped by operational challenges, their interpretation and pursuit of their mandate and the Fundamental Principles, their understanding of their role vis-à-vis the public authorities (including each National Society’s auxiliary role to authorities in the humanitarian sphere), and the resources available to them to engage in CMR.

A 2017 survey of 23 National Societies (nine from Asia-Pacific, five from North Africa and the Middle East, four from the Americas, three from Africa and two from Europe) and 55 IFRC representatives (26 heads of country offices and 11 heads of country cluster offices as well as regional and deputy directors) found that 66% believed more attention needed to be devoted to CMR, and only 20% considered existing Movement information and training materials on CMR adequate.

As a result of these developments and the increased interaction between Movement disaster responders and military bodies, it is clear that the guidance document must be more extensively implemented and promoted, by generating renewed support at the national and regional levels as part of a broader Movement-wide CMR approach set out in a multi-year CMR plan of action.

## 2) VISION AND GOALS

Based on regional experience, three core, interrelated objectives have been identified to further strengthen the Movement-wide CMR approach:

- **develop a common operational framework** on CMR for Movement disaster-response practitioners by identifying, sharing and approving lessons learnt and best practice for implementation at the international, regional and national levels
- **develop a Movement-wide network** that uses common, consistent resources to enhance CMR authority, knowledge and expertise
- **conduct internal and external advocacy** to preserve the Movement’s humanitarian space and be an influential voice on future CMR developments worldwide.

### A) DEVELOP A COMMON OPERATIONAL FRAMEWORK

A common Movement CMR approach needs to be grounded in a common operational framework for disaster responders that upholds existing CMR policies while reflecting the wider operating environment by drawing on lessons learnt and best practices. The framework should ensure a principled and coherent CMR approach for effective disaster response within the Movement. Using the existing guidance document as the overarching policy, existing CMR guidelines and tools will be reviewed. Where necessary, updated versions that are coherent with the Movement’s overall approach to CMR will be developed and circulated. Specifically, this will include:

- developing a Movement handbook. Based on validation of existing guidelines and tools, a Movement CMR handbook will be developed that puts into effect Resolution 7 of the 2005 Council of Delegates, “Guidance document on relations between the components of the Movement and military bodies”. It will also include regional and thematic supplements

addressing particular disaster scenarios, e.g. pandemics, and context-specific regional approaches.

- integrating CMR as a cross-cutting theme. As policies, guidance and frameworks are developed in areas such as health, protection, logistics and security, CMR will be incorporated into those documents.

## **B) DEVELOP A MOVEMENT-WIDE NETWORK**

A Movement-wide approach requires a network of staff from all components with responsibility for, knowledge of and expertise in CMR to mainstream it in all disaster-response activities and training. This network would ensure implementation of the CMR plan of action in support of effective and principled disaster management. Building a CMR network will require identifying and connecting staff from National Societies, the IFRC and the ICRC who will have a direct role in CMR and equipping those staff with the necessary knowledge to perform their functions.

Key elements include:

- establishing a human-resource architecture. This entails identifying those staff from National Societies, the IFRC and the ICRC who may need to engage in CMR or can support CMR roles or functions. This generally means CMR focal points whose role necessarily involves CMR and CMR coordinators for whom CMR is their primary responsibility in their role or function.
- creating a CMR learning pathway. The learning pathway will comprise a progressive series of training activities that will equip staff with the skills required for their respective roles. The training material will range from an online training package open to all Movement staff and existing courses updated to include CMR to a five-day residential CMR course similar to courses currently run in Asia-Pacific and the Americas that prepare staff to engage in CMR during disaster responses.
- building National Society CMR capacity. Using tools for National Society development such as the Preparedness for Effective Response approach, CMR capacity can be built via the learning pathway or tailored country-level training or mentoring.
- optimizing surge capacity. Within the human-resource architecture, a profile will be created specifically for surge staff who require technical proficiency in CMR. CMR will also be incorporated into the learning pathway with competency training for all surge staff.

## **C) CONDUCT INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL ADVOCACY**

With internal and external engagement, the Movement can ensure that our common approach to CMR in disaster management at the strategic and operational levels is understood and accepted by external stakeholders. Engagement will also ensure that the Movement has a global voice to influence future developments in CMR, including through partnerships.

Internal Movement messaging around CMR should aim to gain support for the approach, harmonize understanding of the Movement's CMR policies and equip identified individuals to perform outreach. This might involve including CMR in formal documents such as the Strategy 2030, internal awareness-raising (for example, through the *Red Cross Red Crescent* magazine and a CMR-awareness video) and specific engagement and CMR awareness-raising with senior leaders of National Societies, the IFRC and the ICRC.

Outreach will educate those outside the Movement, including other humanitarians, diplomats, donors and military bodies about disaster preparedness and response activities and the Movement's CMR approach, including the importance of adhering to the Fundamental Principles and preserving humanitarian space.

Key elements include:

- holding an international CMR forum in 2020 to provide an opportunity for dialogue between military bodies and the humanitarian community on CMR in disaster management
- Movement components coordinating and participating in CMR exercises, seminars, workshops and training for other humanitarians, military bodies, etc. using common messaging
- influencing the behaviour of military bodies and other humanitarians through dialogue and the aforementioned events to promote and preserve the “red pillar” space and “red channels” and to ensure respect for principled humanitarian action.

These three areas of activity will ensure that Movement CMR in disaster preparedness and response are consistent, framed by common operational guidelines, and supported by appropriate expertise, tools and training, and that our humanitarian space is preserved. Moreover, by reflecting the Fundamental Principles, this cohesive CMR approach will not only foster a more effective response, but also enhance access and acceptance, thereby improving the Movement's capability to serve affected people and communities.

### **3) IMPLEMENTATION, RESOURCES AND MONITORING**

A key factor in the successful implementation of a common CMR approach will be synergistically bringing together the collective skills, experience, resources and support of Movement components at all levels. In 2019, the new global CMR adviser has supported the process by facilitating CMR collaboration and promoting pan-regional coherence among Movement components. The support of all components of the Movement is essential to ensuring effective implementation of the proposed CMR approach, including through contributing resources to activities, e.g. developing a Movement handbook, developing and hosting training sessions, and supporting outreach activities.

To ensure progress is made, we recommend that a report on operationalizing the guidance document by pursuing the aforementioned objectives be submitted to the 2021 Council of Delegates.

### **4) CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

This common CMR approach is based on consistent, principled engagement with military bodies in disaster preparedness and response activities. Adopting this approach will strengthen Movement cooperation and coordination in a fashion that operationalizes the guidance document and the Principles and Rules. The CMR approach entails three key objectives identified as crucial for improving CMR throughout the Movement, which are to be implemented within a three-year period. They are interrelated and will require renewed support from the Movement as a whole and from all components at the national and regional levels, especially as all Movement components frequently interact and engage with military bodies. Meeting the objectives will ultimately improve disaster response.