



Power of humanity

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

22-23 June 2022, Geneva

SUMMARY REPORT ON WORKSHOP

Increased local action: Investing in sustainable and strong National Societies

Date and time: 28 April 2022

Chair/facilitator/moderator: Hayfa Khalidy (IFRC) and Michael Rudiak (ICRC)

Speakers/panellists/presenters:

Morning session (English/Arabic/Russian):

- Armenian Red Cross Society – Ms Nazeli Kirakosyan, Head of Organizational Development Department
- Palang Merah Indonesia (PMI, Indonesian Red Cross Society) – Mr Sudirman Said, Secretary General
- Lesotho Red Cross Society – Mr Kopano Masilo, Secretary General
- Lithuanian Red Cross Society – Mr Gediminas Almantas, President

Afternoon session (English/Spanish/French):

- South Sudan Red Cross – Mr John Lobor, Secretary General
- Lebanese Red Cross – Mr Nabih Jabr, Under Secretary General
- Argentine Red Cross – Dr Diego Tipping, President
- Lithuanian Red Cross Society – Mr Gediminas Almantas, President

Executive summary

Two sessions of 1.5 hours each were organized by the IFRC Secretariat and ICRC teams in Geneva. Approximately 200 participants, mostly National Society (NS) staff and volunteers and some IFRC Secretariat and ICRC field staff, attended the workshops. In sessions with an interactive format, seven NSs shared their experiences, learning and successes in National Society development (NSD), focusing on a number of cross-cutting issues. NS participants also contributed to a brief survey on NSD-related topics and actively engaged in Q&A sessions.

General observations and key highlights

The NSs presenting their NSD journey were very transparent about the issues involved, their structural/organizational weaknesses and what triggered their decision to change. Many mentioned the long-term dimension as an important consideration when deciding to work towards developing their

NS. Everyone emphasized that NSD is not a final destination but a journey with “many check points on the way”.

All the participants highlighted the positive impact on the development of their NSs achieved through the efforts undertaken in relation to their auxiliary role, the delivery and scaling up of humanitarian services, building their image through clear and consistent communication to improve public perception, prioritizing partnerships, firstly with their public authorities, and addressing one or more of the Financial Sustainability pillars. NSs often mentioned assessment/diagnosis as a crucial phase in the development process and highlighted the usefulness of the assessment tools at the disposal of NSs (e.g. OCAC, BOCA, SAF and PER) in identifying NSD and capacity strengthening needs and transformation priorities.

Specificities exist because each NS operates in a different cultural, social and political environment and in a context prone to different types of crisis and with different humanitarian needs to be met. Everyone agreed that there is no one single recipe for success when embarking on an NSD journey. Some NSs mentioned that NSD could take place in times of crisis as well as in normal times. The NS speakers listed their NSD priorities and focus areas, which naturally varied from one NS to another.

Key points raised

All NSs considered it important to bring all the organization’s layers/constituencies together when embarking on an NSD journey and underlined the necessity of coming to a consensus on the NS vision, core services and relationship with key stakeholders. Other crucial aspects include effective coordination between RCRC partners, led by the NS, with a view to fostering synergies and complementarities, and gathering and leveraging partner expertise. Long-term commitment from partners is a key factor in ensuring support for NSD.

All NSs mentioned the importance of funding NSD via direct financial contributions from RCRC partners or via existing NSD-related funds (e.g. CBF or NSIA) and of technical support from peer NSs, especially those of neighbouring countries, and other actors, such as the private sector.

An observation on demystifying the barriers between the private sector and NSs was put forward. Many agreed that NSs should also be striving to be more efficient and attract more talent and funds and that a lot of learning, approaches and tools from the private sector could be used by NSs.

NSs shared some specific experiences, such as the development of commercial first aid (Armenian RC), the “institutional building framework” (PMI), the journey towards greater financial independence involving thinking outside the box on resource mobilization (Lesotho RC), “organizational reshaping” with the adoption of a “mission-based methodology” (Lithuanian RC), the importance of the NS legal, statutory and policy framework (South Sudan RC), the importance of delivery at scale and alignment of NS strategy with government priorities (Lebanese RC) and the Leadership School (Argentine RC).

Conclusions and recommendations

The Mentimeter surveys showed that Financial Sustainability is rated by NSs as the number one NSD issue. Of the four pillars of the Financial Sustainability Framework,¹ high-quality leadership engagement was ranked highest in the first session, while in the second, mission/strategy/core services and high-quality leadership engagement were rated equally important. The importance of high-quality leadership engagement both in governance and management was also mentioned by NSs.

¹ Link to [Financial Sustainability pillars on FedNet](#) or [IFRC website](#)

Some participants highlighted their need for support on how to manage risks when partnering with other actors, in particular UN agencies, and especially when entering partnerships on an equal footing. Key existing documents were mentioned to the participants.

Most of the participants highlighted the fact that leadership at all levels of the NS is the foundation for any change process. More should be done to support leadership development, with a view to fostering a culture of change, and to establish a solid change management approach in order to address internal resistance to change within the organization.

Many of the participants commented that they enjoyed the session and that they could relate strongly to the presentations and experiences shared by the seven NSs. The event also provided networking opportunities for further exchanges. Some participants expressed their interest in getting more concrete examples from NSs of ways to achieve greater NS Financial Sustainability. The majority of the participants expressed an interest in continuing exchanges of experiences with NSs and facilitating approaches involving peer-to-peer support.