



Power of humanity

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

19-23 June 2022, Geneva

SUMMARY REPORT ON WORKSHOP

Investing in communications: No risk, big returns

Date and time: 19 May 2022, 9:00 and 17:00 CET

Chair/facilitator/moderator: Veronica Pedrosa

Rapporteurs: Reeni Aminchua (IFRC) and Corinne Bahizi (ICRC)

Speakers/panellists/presenters:

- Nena Stoilkovic, Under Secretary General for Global Relations, Humanitarian Diplomacy and Digitalization, IFRC
- Sébastien Carliez, Director of Communication and Information Management, ICRC
- Hoda Abdel-Hamid, Senior International Correspondent, Al Jazeera
- Adam Johnston, Organizational Development Consultant
- Dr Assel Tastanova, Director General, Red Crescent Society of the Republic of Kazakhstan
- Patricia Rey, Head of Strategic Communication, ICRC
- Benoit Carpentier, Director of Communication ad interim, IFRC

Executive summary

There is no longer any doubt that building strong communications capacities across the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement (Movement), both locally and globally, is crucial if we are to build trust, acceptance and credibility at all levels.

. To achieve this, the components of the Movement must harness the power of our network and leverage our local presence, although building our brand is not without its challenges in today's increasingly complex and interconnected world.

The aim of this Council of Delegates workshop is to mobilize commitment, support and investment from the leadership of the Movement in identifying and implementing solutions to strengthen communications skills and systems across the Movement, especially at the national and local level, to better support our collective humanitarian mission.

General observations and key highlights

The ICRC and IFRC speakers stressed the importance of scaling up communications capacity strengthening work within the Movement to build stronger National Societies and, consequently, a stronger Movement that is trusted by communities, donors and partners, governments, the media and the public. They emphasized the importance of communications in protecting and strengthening the

Movement's local and global positioning and fundraising efforts and explained how improving our communications capacities would enable us to anticipate, mitigate and respond to any reputational risk in a world where there is increasing competition for visibility, pressure for transparency and accountability, and risk from trends such as disinformation.

Al Jazeera senior reporter Hoda Abdel-Hamid highlighted the Movement's positive reputation among journalists and the media. She also underlined the need for the components of the Movement to communicate more on its mission and mandate, improve its visibility and increase understanding of its work, particularly during crises.

The findings of a recent self-assessment exercise, conducted by an organizational development consultant with a sample group of 20 National Societies, were shared at the workshop, providing a snapshot of communications strengths and weaknesses across the Movement. Using a maturity model, several National Societies from each geographical region mapped and self-assessed their communications capacities across three areas: people, processes and technology. The results reflect the diversity of capacity among National Societies. The correlation in scores across areas also showed the interdependence between strategy and processes, people and infrastructure and equipment capacity, demonstrating that the task of building and safeguarding the Red Cross Red Crescent brand and image will remain a struggle for many unless there is the right investment in staff, skills, strategy and equipment.

The findings also highlighted opportunities for better collaboration between National Societies, the IFRC and the ICRC, including in collective knowledge sharing and learning and targeting financial support where insufficient resources are a barrier.

Dr Assel Tastanova, Director General of the Red Crescent of Kazakhstan, presented the case of her organization, explaining how this relatively small National Society has successfully improved fundraising outcomes and become a humanitarian partner of choice in the country. The National Society achieved this through a more strategic approach to communications, a clear vision and strong leadership, support and commitment on communications development, making it a crucial part of the National Society's strategy, systems and structure.

Key points raised

The main risks and consequences of the lack of adequate communications skills and capacities identified by participants are as follows:

- 1) **Operational impact:** lack of access and acceptance, inability to operate and support vulnerable people, lack of collaboration and lack of trust from affected communities.
- 2) **Impact on the support received for the Movement's mission:** missed funding/resource mobilization opportunities, difficulties in recruiting new volunteers, loss of integrity and lack of visibility.
- 3) **Impact on perception and reputation:** lack of trust, misinformation/disinformation, lack of understanding of the Red Cross Red Crescent mandate and principles, leading to confusion, and loss of influence.

The main solutions for investing in communications identified by participants for further exploration are as follows:

- 1) **Ensure better coordination:** coordinate more effectively on joint messages and ensure consistent messaging.
- 2) **Invest in communications capacity:** professionalize the métier of communicator, develop peer-to-peer support and share skills, build strategic plans and key skills and integrate communications as part of the National Society Development (NSD) programme.

- 3) **Develop a dedicated platform/working group to coordinate investment and capacity development in communications:** establish a Movement communications academy/coordination group/hub, organize regular Global Communication Forum events, develop training in communications and create a staff training system.
- 4) **Ensure leadership commitment:** integrate communications as a strategic component of National Society structure, with a dedicated budget for an autonomous communications department.
- 5) **Develop dedicated tools:** create a digital media platform and develop a key messages library.

Several National Societies stepped forward to work over the coming months on identifying solutions for investing in communications within our Movement in a sustainable way:

- French Red Cross – Laurent Amiard
- Mr Matsuda – Japanese Red Cross Society
- Zsofia Cseri – Hungarian Red Cross
- Efrosina Stoycheva – Bulgarian Red Cross
- Jamal Altwaiy – Yemen Red Crescent Society
- Muhammad Ghazi – Yemen Red Crescent Society
- Elfadir Eltahir – Sudanese Red Crescent
- Rindra Rakotomalala – Red Cross of Monaco
- PJ Raquel – Philippine Red Cross
- Mikee Latores – Philippine Red Cross
- Joycel Vincent V Dabalos – Philippine Red Cross
- JP Lagado – Philippine Red Cross
- Belen Vilorio – Spanish Red Cross
- Teresa (Tre) Goncalves – British Red Cross
- Maude Froberg – Swedish Red Cross
- Gerald Czech – Austrian Red Cross
- De-Jon Liburd – Saint Kitts and Nevis Red Cross Society
- Alice Szél – Hungarian Red Cross
- Mahmudul Hasan – Bangladesh Red Crescent Society
- Katharina Schindler – Swiss Red Cross
- Bessy Valle – Honduran Red Cross
- Andrés Lemus – Guatemalan Red Cross
- Luc Scheer – Luxembourg Red Cross
- Christine Pretto – Canadian Red Cross Society
- José Mario Mora Bogantes – Costa Rican Red Cross
- Diego Castellanos – Ecuadorian Red Cross
- Geir Arne Bore – Norwegian Red Cross
- Nabih Jabr – Lebanese Red Cross

Conclusions and recommendations

Numerous interesting ideas for better investment in communications within the Movement were raised by National Societies for further exploration in the coming years, and people from some 23 National Societies volunteered to be part of a working group to explore such solutions over the next few months. However, many of them are communications representatives, and the challenge now will be to secure endorsement of such a process from the leadership of their respective National Societies.