



Power of humanity

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Empowering local leadership, capacity and delivery in principled humanitarian action and strengthening resilience

DRAFT ELEMENTS OF RESOLUTION

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BACKGROUND

The draft elements of the proposed resolution “Empowering local leadership, capacity and delivery in principled humanitarian action and strengthening resilience” seek to provide an outline of the possible substance of individual paragraphs, without providing a definitive draft text. Each paragraph is followed by a rationale explaining why it would be useful to include such a paragraph in the resolution.

This document is being shared for consultation with the members of the International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent in order to gather a first round of comments and feedback and to gain an initial understanding of whether the proposed approach 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 an opportunity to comment on specific wording at a later stage, once the draft zero of the resolution is available.

INTRODUCTION

Local action – supported, as and when needed, by global solidarity – has been at the heart of the operating model of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement (the Movement) since its inception 160 years ago. Today, the volunteers of National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies support their communities in building resilience, preparing for future threats, leading healthier lives and weathering crises when they happen. Such a network for local action is not just about matching local needs, it is also a key channel for addressing global challenges, such as the humanitarian impacts of climate change and the threat of future pandemics, at the local level.

Localization, an ambitious, broad-ranging policy agenda to increase the power and funding of local actors in humanitarian response, was given an important boost at the World Humanitarian Summit in 2016. At this event, participants committed to work towards a humanitarian system that was “as local as possible, as international as necessary”. A group of humanitarian donors and agencies signed the [Grand Bargain](#), which included, among other things, a commitment to provide “more support and funding tools for local and national responders”. Similar initiatives have recently been undertaken in the areas of development (see [Donor Statement on](#)

[Supporting Locally Led Development](#)) and climate change adaptation (see [Principles for Locally Led Adaptation](#)). In the urban sphere, the New Urban Agenda of 2016 called for a greater role for urban authorities in disaster risk management and building resilience.

Global progress against these commitments is mixed. Funding provided to local actors directly or “as directly as possible”, a major measure of progress in implementing the Grand Bargain commitments, has shown little improvement.¹ While some of the big donors are pushing for greater change,² the low risk appetite of others drives hesitancy and/or results in an ineffective balance between trust and control. Capacity-strengthening, especially for the longer term, remains underfunded, and decision-making power and leadership positions are still largely held by international actors. There is some movement, however, among international intermediaries to review and adjust their business models and partnership practices to enable and support locally led action.³

The Movement is a unique global network made up of 191 National Societies with an unparalleled local presence, supported and complemented by two international components, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), each with their specific mandate, roles and responsibilities recognized by States in the Geneva Conventions and the Statutes of the Movement adopted by the States party to the Geneva Conventions and the components of the Movement through resolutions of the International Conference. The Movement’s network has 16 million National Society volunteers serving at 188,000 local branches and units which are present in almost all the countries in the world and which adhere to the Movement’s Fundamental Principles of humanity, impartiality, neutrality, independence, voluntary service, unity and universality. National Societies, the IFRC and the ICRC work together to fulfil the Movement’s exclusively humanitarian mission “to prevent and alleviate human suffering wherever it may be found”.

National Societies are considered the basic units of the Movement and its vital force. They adhere to the Fundamental Principles, empower communities to advance local development and resilience and contribute to maintaining social cohesion and peace. Governments are bound to respect their adherence to the Movement’s Fundamental Principles, Statutes and mission (Resolution 2, 30th International Conference).

The purpose of this resolution is to acknowledge the contribution of the Movement model to local action and to secure the support of States and the Movement in order to: continue solidifying the National Societies’ auxiliary role and relationship with their national authorities in full respect for the Fundamental Principles; enhance the relationships of National Societies with local authorities and local civil society actors, ensuring respect for the Fundamental Principles and National Society identity and membership in the Movement; promote better understanding of the role of the National Society as a broker and convenor for humanitarian diplomacy in support of localization; ensure continued investment in capacity-strengthening; and adequately resource and prioritize these efforts.

¹ Only 1.2% of humanitarian assistance went directly to local organizations in 2022 (*Global Humanitarian Assistance Report 2023*). COVID-19 was not the tipping point it could have been as only 2% of funding went directly to local partners at the forefront of the response (*A more localized aid system: current status discourse*, ALNAP briefing paper, June 2023).

² The United States has committed to ensuring that 50% of all USAID programming will place local communities in the lead by 2030. The European Union has released a guidance note on promoting equitable partnerships with local responders.

³ See the following reports: [Decolonising Aid | Centre for Humanitarian Leadership](#); [Is Aid Really Changing | British Red Cross?](#); [Bridging the Intention to Action Gap: The Future Role of Intermediaries in Supporting Locally Led Humanitarian Action: Outcome Paper Towards Co-Ownership – Caucus on Intermediaries](#).

PREAMBULAR PARAGRAPHS (PP)

PP1 This paragraph should state that the goal of humanitarian action, including locally led action, is to deliver a response that meets the needs of people affected by conflict, disaster and crisis in a principled, effective and comprehensive way. Local action is critical to a timely, sustainable, well-grounded and effective response.

Rationale: It is important to put affected people at the centre throughout and recognize how local action and localization processes are a key means of improving the quality of the humanitarian response for such people.

PP2 This paragraph should articulate the unique identity of the Movement as a whole, which consists of local and global components working together in a complementary manner with and for affected people and communities, referring to the Movement Coordination for Collective Impact Agreement (Seville Agreement 2.0) and the role of volunteerism throughout the history of the Movement.

Rationale: The Movement has a unique identity within the broader landscape of humanitarian actors (including local actors), the value of which should be explicitly articulated.

PP3 This paragraph will acknowledge the centrality of localization and the definition⁴ of local and national actors, as recognized in multiple international documents and agreements, and recall references to local action in flagship instruments (e.g. the Sendai Framework, the Paris Agreement, the International Health Regulations and the Grand Bargain adopted at the World Humanitarian Summit in 2016), the IFRC's Strategy 2030 and the Movement's Seville Agreement 2.0.

Rationale: Localization, local action and locally led action are terms that are used interchangeably to refer to a process, a policy agenda or a change of mindset and/or behaviour to increase the power (leadership, capacity, decision-making, etc.) and funding of local actors.

PP4 This paragraph will take note of the IFRC's vision of localization adopted by the IFRC Governing Board in October 2023.

Rationale: Our distributed network is highly local and globally connected. National Societies have their local offices that deliver services and respond to needs. We see localization as supporting empowered National Societies providing sustainable locally led services in the areas of health, welfare, humanitarian response and community resilience-building. This shared vision is already a reality and makes us unique within the humanitarian ecosystem.

PP5 This paragraph will recall resolutions on the auxiliary role adopted at the 2007 and 2011 International Conferences.

Rationale: The special and privileged status of National Societies as auxiliaries to the public authorities in the humanitarian field is a commitment by States to localization and facilitates community engagement that supplements and substitutes for public action.

PP6 This paragraph will recall the Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) in Disaster Relief, under which signatories undertake to "build disaster response on local capacities".

⁴ [Categories for tracking funding provided as directly as possible to local and national actors.](#)

- PP7 This paragraph will recall the Principles and Rules for Red Cross and Red Crescent Humanitarian Assistance adopted at the 21st International Conference (Istanbul, 1969) and revised at the 22nd (Tehran, 1973), 23rd (Bucharest, 1977), 24th (Manila, 1981), 25th (Geneva, 1986) and 26th (Geneva, 1995) International Conferences.
- PP8 This paragraph will note the 2019 Council of Delegates resolution “Movement-wide Commitments for Community Engagement and Accountability”.
- PP9 This paragraph will take note of Resolution 3 of the 2015 Council of Delegates “International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement message to the World Humanitarian Summit”, which recognizes that “[l]ocal responders are often in the strongest position to deliver rapid, culturally appropriate and sustainable humanitarian assistance to their communities”, and further take note of the call for “[m]ore sustained investment in national response systems and basic services [which] will deliver stronger partnerships between local and international actors. The capacity of principled local actors needs to be prioritized and improved. This includes ensuring that local actors, like Red Cross and Red Crescent volunteers who operate in dangerous conditions, are protected and insured.”
- PP10 This paragraph will take note of efforts by the Movement to strengthen National Society capacity and remove existing disablers of local action, including the IFRC’s new certification scheme, which encompasses key due diligence areas such as safeguarding, IFRC strategies and tools, joint Movement funding mechanisms to support National Societies in strengthening key integrity aspects of institutional capacity and the ICRC’s efforts towards more equitable risk-sharing.

Rationale: Many local actors struggle to meet the multiple onerous due diligence and donor compliance requirements, hence the call for a general “passporting” system. The IFRC is establishing a tailor-made external certification system, based on due diligence elements and taking the specificities of the Movement into account. This certificate is intended to facilitate and simplify the due diligence process for donors. The IFRC has also established pooled funds, such as the Capacity Building Fund and, together with the ICRC, the National Society Investment Alliance, which are geared to supporting National Societies in addressing their development priorities.

OPERATIVE PARAGRAPHS (OP)

- OP1 This paragraph could underline the importance of local actors and local leadership as part of overall humanitarian activities, including conflict and disaster risk management, and highlight, in particular, the contributions of National Societies as front-line responders to disasters and crises and their work to build community resilience.

Rationale: Local actors, including National Societies, are present in communities before, during and after crises. They are therefore the first to respond and provide the vast majority of humanitarian assistance as well as support for resilience-building.

- OP2 This paragraph could acknowledge the important role and capacities of local actors in working across the interconnections between humanitarian, development, peace and climate action and call for greater investment to ensure their sustainability.

Rationale: Local actors, including National Societies, have always worked fluidly across the different sectors and silos created by the international aid system. National Societies play a critical role in priority areas, such as climate adaptation, disaster risk management and community health and care, and in supporting and promoting the inclusion of vulnerable and marginalized groups including displaced people.

- OP3 This paragraph could commend international actors that have made progress in increasing support and creating an enabling environment for locally led action and call for further steps to be taken towards transformative system-wide change, including by fostering equitable partnerships.

Rationale: It is important to recognize that some steps have been taken by international actors to turn rhetoric and commitments into action. These include donor policy changes and guidelines on localization and efforts by intermediaries to review their business models and “value-add” to support more locally led action. As local actors become more vocal and assertive, complex challenges and obstacles remain for international actors in relation to legislation, risk appetite and accountability to taxpayers, among other factors.

- OP4 This paragraph could underline the importance of local staff and volunteers as front-line workers in times of conflict, disasters and crises and could call on governments, donors and international humanitarian and development organizations to increase investment in security, including health security, and provide for their protection, safety and support, including insurance.

Rationale: Volunteers, especially Red Cross and Red Crescent volunteers, are often drawn from the communities they serve, and they possess unique insights into the local context, culture and needs. Their involvement not only strengthens community resilience, but also ensures that activities are contextually relevant and sensitive. In many cases, these volunteers put themselves at risk to help others during crises. Ensuring their safety, security and well-being is not only a moral imperative, but also a practical necessity to maintain their commitment and sustain local humanitarian efforts.

- OP5 This paragraph could call on governments, donors and international humanitarian and development organizations to take further steps in increasing quality investment in demand-driven and context-specific long-term capacity-strengthening for local actors, including National Societies. This also includes dedicated, flexible, multi-year funding, the provision of unearmarked funding/core cost funding that can support the development of appropriate policies, systems and practices and/or the allocation of a percentage of all programme funding to local actors specifically designated for capacity-strengthening.

Rationale: Investment to enhance local capacities before emergencies arise reaps huge returns when an emergency occurs, reducing the volume of external support needed and enhancing early recovery.

- OP 6 This paragraph could take note that funding remains a major measure of progress and that this is where least progress has been made. It could encourage States and international actors to bridge the gap between rhetoric and action on localization by increasing the quantity and quality of funding to local actors, including National Societies.

Rationale: While explaining the lack of progress on the Grand Bargain ambitions, the resolution should be able to demonstrate the value added of investing in National Societies as the most efficient and relevant actor for local action. It should be specifically highlighted that funding channels accessible to or directed at local actors, such as country-based pooled funds, make up just 10% of overall humanitarian funding and only exist in half of the countries that have humanitarian response plans.

- OP7 This paragraph could underline that local actors often bear a significant share of the risks and that operating in a risky environment requires equitable, quality partnerships that are built on trust. It could call for donors and international actors to provide sufficient funding and flexible resources to local actors, including National Societies, to enable them to manage risks and use core funding to build stronger compliance mechanisms. It could also make reference to the [Risk Sharing Framework](#).

Rationale: We know local actors bear an undue share of risk, especially security risks, and many staff and volunteers of local and national organizations, including National Societies, risk being injured or killed. Investment in longer-term/strategic relationships with local actors that are grounded in genuine partnerships, mutual respect, transparency, trust, shared responsibility and two-way accountability will lead to a higher likelihood of effective risk management. Investments to further strengthen the capacities of local actors will help address compliance concerns and support them so that they are better equipped to meet minimum standards for donor accountability.

- OP8 This paragraph could underline the need to reduce the administrative burden and complex compliance requirements imposed by donors and international humanitarian and development organizations on local actors, including National Societies, while supporting integrity and accountability through measures such as simplified and common reporting requirements and investment in capacities to implement critical accountability policies.

Rationale: Local actors, including National Societies, are often burdened with excessive controls and compliance frameworks that can undermine the trust that ought to be at the core of the relationship with their international partners. Risks cannot be mitigated at the expense of increasing risks and costs for the (local) partner.

- OP9 This paragraph could encourage National Societies and governments to promote, enhance and enable strong auxiliary relations at the national and local level between branches and local authorities, in line with the Fundamental Principles.

Rationale: National Societies are recognized as auxiliaries to the public authorities in their areas of competence through national Red Cross or Red Crescent laws; this role can be articulated in other national laws, for example, in sectoral laws. The support that National Societies provide in the form of specific services for the population must never undermine their adherence to the Movement's Fundamental Principles, especially the principles of impartiality, neutrality and independence. While this auxiliary role is mostly well known at the national level, efforts should be made to ensure that local authorities – which are increasingly called on to lead humanitarian response at the local level – understand this special status and respect the impartiality, neutrality and independence of local National Society branches.

- OP10 This paragraph could call on States to strengthen National Societies' legal base by enacting detailed and comprehensive Red Cross and Red Crescent laws and special legal measures to enable them to fulfil their mandate to provide quality and timely humanitarian assistance and contribute to building resilience, in accordance with the Fundamental Principles.

Rationale: The Movement has long recognized the importance of strong and modern Red Cross and Red Crescent laws. Each National Society has a formal legal status as auxiliary to its government in the humanitarian field. No other organization has this special status. The auxiliary role means that National Societies are formally responsible for supplementing or substituting for public humanitarian services, including in times of crisis or emergency. Government support – in the form of special legal measures – is necessary to ensure National Societies can work as quickly, effectively and efficiently as possible.

- OP11 This paragraph could emphasize the opportunities for dialogue, joint advocacy and learning exchanges on localization between local government and local actors, especially National Society branches, to advance the localization agenda. These efforts should go beyond humanitarian response to include the strengthening of local disaster risk management, climate action and other priority sectors/areas of work, such as health and social well-being.

Rationale: The current limited engagement of governments in developing countries in discussions and work around localization is mainly concentrated at the national level or

in capital cities. Lessons learned, good practices and other resources could be shared between local authorities and local actors, including National Society branches, to advance common objectives on localization.

- OP12 This paragraph could note the importance of community engagement being embedded in locally led action/approaches and encourage all Movement components and States to engage with and be accountable to the people they aim to serve in a manner consistent with the Movement-wide Commitments, international agreements and the Fundamental Principles and to dedicate adequate human, financial and technical resources to achieving this.

Rationale: Meeting the commitment to community engagement has proven easier said than done these past decades. It requires the right incentives, changes to structures and steady investment in community engagement systems with strong ties between health systems or disaster preparedness and response systems and communities.

- OP13 This paragraph could emphasize the importance of evidence on the progress and results of international actors in moving the localization agenda forward. The IFRC, supported by other components of the Movement, could develop and undertake a structured and formal review or evaluation to measure progress towards building sustainable locally led action in order to contribute to this body of evidence

Rationale: While various pronouncements and commitments have been made by international actors on localization, there are only a few mechanisms or processes that have been put in place to hold them to account. The Movement could embark on an analysis of "localization behaviour" that would go beyond the financial aspects, focusing on dimensions such as decision-making, leadership and equity in partnership or relationships. The aim is to help create and measure mutual accountability standards to ensure that progress is consistent, well-defined and appropriate to the context.