



Power of humanity

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

DRAFT ZERO RESOLUTION

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

The 34th International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent,

acknowledging 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 other emergencies in a principled, effective and comprehensive way that helps people to reduce their vulnerability and strengthen their resilience, both individually and through the social safety nets inherent in strong communities,

noting that localization is about putting local actors at the centre of humanitarian aid and entails the determination of humanitarian needs and strategies, participation in decision-making and the delivery of humanitarian assistance by diverse and representative local actors and the support of international actors to achieve this, in line with humanitarian principles,

emphasizing that the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement (the Movement), which has a unique structure and identity based on the Geneva Conventions and the Statutes of the Movement, consists of local and global components working together in a complementary manner with and for affected people and communities,

emphasizing that National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (National Societies) are the backbone of the Movement, with a network of local volunteers who are often affected themselves and the first responders in crisis situations, have an understanding of the needs of local communities, including those related to gender, age, disability and other diversity factors, have knowledge of the context and the threats they face and are trusted and therefore able to lead effective and accountable local humanitarian action,

noting that the 2019 Council of Delegates resolution “Movement-wide Commitments for Community Engagement and Accountability” recognizes that vulnerable and crisis-affected people have existing skills, capacities, community systems and structures, direct knowledge, understanding and experience of their situation and the right to participate and lead in designing, implementing and making decisions about the humanitarian activities that concern them,

recalling that the central role of local actors and the importance of locally led action are recognized in multiple international documents and agreements and referenced in flagship instruments, in particular, the Grand Bargain adopted at the World Humanitarian Summit in 2016, the Sendai Framework, the Paris Agreement and COP28, and the International Health Regulations,

noting 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 contains a call to prioritize and improve the capacity of local actors through “[m]ore sustained investment in national

response systems and basic services [which] will deliver stronger partnerships between local and international actors”, including ensuring that local actors, such as Red Cross and Red Crescent volunteers, who operate in dangerous conditions and have diverse needs are protected and insured,

noting that the new Movement Coordination for Collective Impact Agreement (Seville Agreement 2.0) gives greater recognition to the central role of National Societies whenever a collective Movement response is needed,

noting that in October 2023 the IFRC Governing Board adopted a vision of localization that is about supporting empowered National Societies that provide sustainable locally led services in the areas of health, welfare, humanitarian response and community resilience building and emphasizes the need for collective investment in basic local structures that allow National Societies to become sustainable in the context they operate in,

recalling that the special and privileged status of National Societies as auxiliaries to the public authorities in the humanitarian field is a commitment by States to locally led action and facilitates community engagement that supplements and substitutes for public action (resolutions on the auxiliary role adopted at the 30th and 31st International Conferences),

recalling the Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) in Disaster Relief, developed in 1994 and “welcomed” in an International Conference resolution the following year, under which signatories undertake to “build disaster response on local capacities”,

recalling 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, which emphasize the principles of accountability in the decision-making of National Societies,

noting the development of the revised Red Cross and Red Crescent model law and its utility as an assessment tool to guide the development and review of Red Cross and Red Crescent laws, with an emphasis on recognizing and formalizing the special role of National Societies as principled and effective local actors,

emphasizing that the IFRC National Society development (NSD) framework, policy and compact are aimed at ensuring National Societies’ continued relevance, effectiveness and sustainability, in full respect of the Fundamental Principles, as key local actors delivering accessible, quality services to communities at all times, and that NSD support is aligned with the priorities defined by each National Society,

noting that investment in strengthening the capacities of local actors, including National Societies, is the foundation for achieving effective locally led action and greater collective impact for the Movement and *acknowledging* that while progress has been made, there is much more that can and should be done,

recalling that the IFRC Protection, Gender and Inclusion Policy emphasizes the continued focus on locally led action as a transformative and inclusive means through which to build resilience and prevent violence, discrimination and exclusion by taking into account people’s different capacities, strengths and needs, based on their gender, age, disability and other diversity factors, and by engaging diverse local actors in local solutions,

noting that funding mechanisms established by the Movement to support local action by National Societies include the pooled NSD funds, specifically the IFRC Capacity Building Fund

(CBF) and the IFRC and ICRC National Society Investment Alliance (NSIA), and for humanitarian activities, the Disaster Response Emergency Fund (DREF),

noting that while some progress has been made in delivering on the commitments on the localization of aid, in particular the Grand Bargain commitments, increased support and funding for local and national responders and the creation of an enabling environment for locally led action, States and international actors, including Movement components, need to take further and more significant steps and provide more support in order to achieve transformative system-wide change,

1. *urges* States and international humanitarian and development organizations to review their business models, including their value add in terms of partnering with local actors, to ensure that the visible and valued role of international organizations and intermediaries is about creating enabling conditions for local actors to drive, define and deliver principled humanitarian action in their communities;
2. *calls on* States and international humanitarian and development organizations and the components of the Movement to resolve the legislative and administrative constraints around direct funding for local actors and the excessive controls and complex due diligence and compliance requirements imposed 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, and *recognizes* the newly developed IFRC certification system as an effective tool for due diligence and accountability;
3. *calls on* States and Movement components to ensure the safety, security and well-being of local volunteers, including Red Cross and Red Crescent volunteers, by increasing investment in security, including health security, and providing for their protection, safety and safeguarding;
4. *requests* States and international humanitarian and development organizations to increase investment in demand-driven and context-specific capacity strengthening for local actors, especially in fragile, conflict and vulnerable contexts, including in the form of dedicated, flexible, multi-year funding, unearmarked or core cost funding to support local leadership capacity and systems for financial accountability and sustainability or tax privileges provided by States to local actors, such as tax benefits for donations and exemption from value added tax;
5. *requests* States, National Societies and international humanitarian organizations to increase investment in the Movement's pooled NSD funds, specifically the CBF and the NSIA, in order to deliver relevant, accessible, quality services in full respect the Movement's Fundamental Principles;
6. *calls on* States and international humanitarian and development organizations to increase the quantity and quality of innovative approaches to providing funding to a diversity of local actors for programme delivery, including investment in volunteering (new forms of volunteering, diversification of volunteer pool, and motivation, retention and safety of volunteers), ensuring that such funding is direct or as direct as possible and making funding channels more accessible to local actors;
7. *calls on* States and international humanitarian and development organizations to invest in longer-term strategic relationships with local actors that are grounded in genuine partnerships, mutual respect, transparency, trust, shared responsibility and two-way accountability;

8. *requests* States and National Societies to promote, enhance and enable strong auxiliary relations at the national and local level between branches and local authorities, in accordance with the Fundamental Principles, ensuring, in particular, that local authorities understand the special status of National Societies and respect the impartiality, neutrality and independence of local National Society branches;
9. *calls on* States to initiate a dialogue with their National Society on strengthening their legal base and to enact detailed and comprehensive Red Cross and Red Crescent laws that provide National Societies with the legal foundation required to serve as principled and effective local actors in their role as auxiliaries to the public authorities in the humanitarian field;
10. *encourages* States to initiate and/or take advantage of opportunities for dialogue, joint advocacy and learning exchanges between local authorities and local actors, especially National Society branches, on advancing the localization agenda, going beyond humanitarian response to include the strengthening of local disaster risk management, climate action and other priority sectors or areas of work, such as health and social well-being;
11. *calls on* States and Movement components to meet commitments on community engagement by providing the right incentives, making changes to structures and ensuring steady investment in inclusive community engagement systems with strong ties between health systems or disaster preparedness and response systems and communities;
12. *acknowledges* the commitment of the IFRC to conducting a review or evaluation, with support from other components of the Movement, to measure progress towards building sustainable locally led action, with a view to contributing to the body of evidence on achievements and results in moving the localization agenda forward;
13. *encourages* States and international humanitarian and development actors to ensure that local actors are represented and/or exercise leadership in key decision-making and coordination mechanisms.