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Protection in the Movement: Improving our collective impact in protecting people

BACKGROUND DOCUMENT

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Protection in the Movement: Improving our collective impact in protecting people

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The resolution on protection in the Movement aims to clarify and enhance the roles and responsibilities of its components in the area of protection. It proposes the adoption of a Movement Protection Framework as a guiding tool that establishes a common understanding of protection within the Movement, minimum requirements and clear commitments,

The resolution accentuates the distinct roles of the National Societies, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), each with its unique contributions and collaborations. It further emphasizes the critical importance of adequate resources and the need for a tangible commitment from all involved.

This resolution also acknowledges the broad and diverse scope of protection work carried out by each component of the Movement. Based on this, it establishes what the Movement seeks to collectively achieve in protection, based on the clear complementarity, coordination and coherence of efforts.

The clarity that this resolution brings on the Movement's approach to protection will help to demonstrate the added value and the complementary character of the protection work of each component to external stakeholders and partners.

Collectively, this resolution offers a unique way of strategically positioning the Movement so as to provide humanitarian services in all circumstances including during peacetime, disasters, conflict and crises, ensuring clarity, commitment and accountability across the Movement.

Guided by the Movement Protection Framework, the Movement will strengthen its ability to support affected people, by upholding the dignity, safety and rights of all people in all contexts, wherever and whenever people are at risk of violence, or the discrimination or exclusion that precipitates violence. It considers the profound influence of gender and all aspects of people's diversity on their experience of protection risks and the multifaceted and changing nature of vulnerability.

Movement components are urged to consider the resolution with a commitment to strengthening the Movement's protective actions, ensuring that we not only respond to the needs of affected people but also protect them.

The resolution introduces mechanisms for accountability, including integration into strategic planning and a proposed review by the 2026 Council of Delegates.

1) INTRODUCTION

The mission of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement (the Movement) is:

“to prevent and alleviate human suffering wherever it may be found, to protect life and health and ensure respect for the human being, in particular in times of armed conflict and other emergencies, to work for the prevention of disease and for the promotion of health and social welfare, to encourage voluntary service and a constant readiness to give help by the members of the Movement, and a universal sense of solidarity towards all those in need of its protection and assistance.”

In line with this mission, the components of the Movement recognizes the pressing demand to address protection needs. Millions of people across the globe continue to endure violence, discrimination, exclusion, and other violations of their fundamental rights due to armed conflicts, disasters, crises and other emergencies, or due to ongoing deprivation and the denial of their rights. Seeking to reduce these risks by supporting people to be better protected from such threats has become increasingly crucial for all components of the Movement.

Over the past years, all components of the Movement have undertaken strategic and operational initiatives to address protection needs and reduce protection risks in various contexts. These efforts have contributed to enhancing the protection of individuals and communities around the world. However, a fully common understanding of the scope and practice of protection work within the Movement remains lacking. This lack of a common understanding risks causing confusion, limiting cooperation and deprioritizing protection work within the Movement, which ultimately has a negative impact on people on the ground.

To address this issue, the Protection Advisory Board, which was established in 2017 as an informal coordination body of the Movement on protection work, decided to submit a resolution to the Council of Delegates on protection in the Movement, aiming to improve our collective impact on protecting people.

2) BACKGROUND

Through the commitments in the resolution, and the guidance set out in the Movement Protection Framework, we endeavour to achieve the following **overall goal**:

To improve the collective impact of the Movement in protecting people experiencing or at risk of violence, discrimination, exclusion and other violations of their fundamental rights.

Through the resolution, and the guidance set out in the Movement Protection Framework, we shall endeavour to achieve the overall goal by meeting the following five objectives:

1. **Establishing a common understanding of protection work within the Movement**
The resolution seeks to foster a shared and unified understanding of what protection work entails within the Movement.
2. **Acknowledging the broad scope of existing protection efforts in the Movement**
Recognizing the diverse and valuable protection work carried out by each component of the Movement, the resolution aims to acknowledge and appreciate their respective contributions.
3. **Establishing what the Movement seeks to collectively achieve in protection**
This will be based on the clear complementarity, coordination and coherence of efforts of the different components of the Movement.

4. **Positioning a coordinated and coherent protection response externally**
The improved common understanding (objective 1) will help demonstrate the added value and the complementary character of the protection work of each component to external stakeholders and partners, to ultimately improve impact for affected people.
5. **Adopting a Movement Protection Framework**
This will set out common minimum requirements for all components, supported by clear commitments on how each component will further our collective aim to protect people's dignity at all times.

3) ANALYSIS

A. Establishing a common understanding of protection work within the Movement

Despite its longstanding commitment to protection work, the Movement has, until now, lacked a unified and explicit definition of what we collectively understand “protection” to be and how each Movement component complements the work of each other in this area.

In the ever-evolving landscape of humanitarian action, the importance of protection cannot be overstated, and we must underscore the central role of protection as an essential pillar of the Movement's mission to alleviate human suffering.

In addition to recognizing the “centrality of protection”, we must also acknowledge the pivotal role played by the Fundamental Principles and the principle of “do no harm” in shaping the Movement's protection efforts.

The Fundamental Principles lie at the heart of the Movement's approach to protection, guiding and shaping all our activities. The “do no harm” principle of humanitarian practice exhorts us to do all we can to avoid actions that would inadvertently harm affected populations. It is imperative to highlight how our protection work aligns with and promotes the integration of this principle across all areas of the Movement's operations.

The resolution offers a common definition that frames how we understand protection in the Movement. The framing endorses and builds upon the widely accepted definition of protection developed by Movement-led workshops and later adopted by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC), which is that protection means:

all activities aimed at obtaining full respect for the rights of the individual in accordance with the letter and spirit of the relevant bodies of law (i.e. international human rights law (IHRL), international humanitarian law (IHL), international refugee law (IRL)).

By acknowledging the origins of this definition, one that enjoys widespread acceptance within the humanitarian community, the resolution underscores the Movement's historical leadership in setting recognized global standards for humanitarian and human rights actors. It also highlights the resonance between this definition and the Statutes of the Movement, which enshrine our commitment to lasting peace, founded on the principles of respect, equality and human rights.¹

Furthermore, this definition's broad scope covers a wide array of protection activities, including the “do no harm” principle, protection mainstreaming, specialized protection initiatives and advocacy for standards, norms and laws – including the many contexts where the Movement

¹ From the preamble of the Statutes of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement: “By its humanitarian work and the dissemination of its ideals, the Movement promotes a lasting peace, which is not simply the absence of war, but is a dynamic process of cooperation among all States and peoples, cooperation founded on respect for freedom, independence, national sovereignty, equality, human rights, as well as on a fair and equitable distribution of resources to meet the needs of peoples.”

operates, in which local legal, cultural and social norms may take precedence over international legal frameworks.

In light of these considerations, the resolution aspires to foster a shared and unified understanding of protection work within the Movement. It seeks to clarify the scope of protection, emphasizing the Movement's distinctive role and contributions in this critical domain. Through this unified understanding, we can further strengthen our commitment to protecting the dignity and rights of those we serve, ensuring that protection remains at the core of our humanitarian mission.

B. Acknowledging the broad scope of existing protection efforts in the Movement

The resolution seeks to emphasize the importance of recognizing and appreciating the diverse and valuable protection work carried out by each Movement component. It also underscores the need to acknowledge the distinct roles played by National Societies, the ICRC and the IFRC in protection, as well as the benefits of better coordination in this regard.

Each Movement component plays a crucial and complementary role in protecting individuals made vulnerable as a result of violations of their rights. The Movement's collective efforts are geared towards preventing, mitigating and responding to the consequences of such violations, in line with their respective mandates.

National Societies, acting as auxiliaries to public authorities in the humanitarian field, play a significant role in alleviating protection risks while maintaining their neutrality and independence. Their invaluable local knowledge and understanding of the cultural, social and political contexts in which they operate enhance the effectiveness of protection efforts by them tailoring their actions to the specific needs of affected populations.

The ICRC, under international humanitarian law, is responsible for providing protection to individuals affected by armed conflict and other situations of violence. It has been at the forefront of leading the Restoring Family Links network within the Movement and serving as a technical reference organization for protecting civilian populations and detainees in armed conflict and other violence. Furthermore, the ICRC has been instrumental in setting professional standards for protection work and will continue to maintain its leadership role in these areas within the Movement. It has been contributing to building and strengthening the capacity of other Movement components in protection, especially the areas mentioned above.

The IFRC, in line with its constitutional role, coordinates and supports the strengthening of National Societies' capacity in the field of protection, gender and inclusion. This involves fostering a coherent approach to enhancing the skills, knowledge and competencies required to adhere to the IFRC's protection, gender and inclusion (PGI) policy. The IFRC's efforts encompass building institutional capacity, mainstreaming protection and conducting specialized PGI work in programmes and operations. Additionally, it supports advocacy, partnership development and learning initiatives related to PGI work through various policies, tools and processes. The IFRC reference centres also consolidate and make available the collective knowledge of IFRC members, much of which is relevant to protection issues.

In addition to recognizing the roles and efforts of each component, it is essential to reference relevant Movement statutory documents, strategies and technical guidance. This approach acknowledges the historical evolution of protection efforts within the Movement, emphasizing the ongoing commitment to addressing protection risks and the significance of past initiatives in shaping current approaches. The inclusion of these documents and strategies encourages collaboration among the different components, enabling them to draw on shared knowledge and experiences to enhance protection outcomes. The detailed study supported by the

Norwegian Red Cross on behalf of the Protection Advisory Board provides a comprehensive overview of previous resolutions and their contributions to the Movement's protection efforts.

C. Establishing what the Movement seeks to collectively achieve in its protection work

The importance of a collective objective is underscored by the shared global concern over ongoing protection needs. By setting a common goal, the Movement provide its components with a focus on addressing the wide spectrum of challenges that vulnerable populations face, including violations of fundamental rights and the emergence of new crises that present distinct protection risks.

Acknowledging the diversity of contexts where the Movement operates is essential. From conflicts, disasters, crises and other emergencies, and various types of discrimination, protection needs vary greatly. The collective objective thus functions to steer the Movement towards a comprehensive understanding and response mechanism that is effective across all these different scenarios.

The principle that the Movement is “driven by needs and informed by rights” is crucial – this principle was endorsed by the earlier work of the Advisory Board, and included in the Movement Protection Framework. It aligns the humanitarian work of the Movement with the entitlement of individuals to protection and assistance under various bodies of law, while ensuring that the actual needs of those affected determine the actions taken. This approach enhances the relevance and responsiveness of protection work.

By committing to people-centric protection work, the Movement places individuals at the heart of its mission. It recognizes that a one-size-fits-all approach is not realistic. This underscores the need for a collective objective that is adaptable and sensitive to the diversity of circumstances, thus facilitating tailored and effective protection outcomes.

The collective objective emphasizes the influence of diversity factors on protection risks. By understanding how attributes such as age, gender and ethnicity intersect to exacerbate vulnerabilities, the Movement can ensure that its protection efforts are inclusive and equitable.

A shared objective necessitates a systematic approach to identifying and addressing protection risks. Recognizing the complexity of these risks and the importance of inclusive analysis enables the Movement to craft strategies that are both effective and nuanced.

The collective objective facilitates the adoption of enabling actions such as capacity building and partnerships, which are vital for comprehensive protection strategies. By leveraging resources and expertise through cooperation and coordination, the Movement can enhance the efficacy of its protective actions.

A shared goal promotes collaboration among different Movement components, each bringing unique skills and resources. Such cooperation ensures that the components do not duplicate efforts but rather complement each other, leading to more efficient and effective protection work.

In conclusion, the collective objective for the Movement in protection is not just a statement of intent but a strategic foundation that shapes the very nature of the Movement's protection efforts. It brings cohesion, clarity and direction to the components of the Movement, ensuring that their collective actions are more than the sum of their parts and truly resonate with the needs and rights of vulnerable populations worldwide.

D. Adopting a Movement Protection Framework

The original Movement Protection Framework (MPF), introduced in 2018 by the Protection Advisory Board, has been a valuable informal reference guide for our various components engaged in protection work. Given its wide acceptance by the components of the Movement, the Protection Advisory Board aimed to build on this framework by proposing a revised version to the Council of Delegates to be adopted by resolution – a framework aligned with the evolving landscape of protection-related policies and programmes within the Movement.

The new MPF being proposed to the Council of Delegates is accompanied by a declaration of our collective and/or individual commitments to protection, embedded within the resolution. It will outline our Movement's overarching high-level objectives for protection and delineate how each component will contribute to achieving these goals. This will serve as the highest level of guidance on our actions, reaffirming our dedication to upholding the dignity of individuals at all times.

A most important aspect of the MPF is its emphasis on the integration and mainstreaming of protection activities and principles into every facet of the Movement's work. This holistic approach ensures that protection becomes an integral part of our efforts to alleviate human suffering, leading to a more comprehensive and effective approach to safeguarding the rights and well-being of individuals. By establishing common minimum requirements for all components and articulating clear commitments, we will collectively bolster our mission to protect people.

The MPF will present these three distinct types of engagement in protection, and the actions needed to support:

- 1) protection mainstreaming** (a minimum requirement for any action by Movement components)
- 2) specialized protection activities**
- 3) influencing norms, standards and laws to improve protection.**

Moreover, the resolution's significance extends beyond the current challenges, as it positions the Movement to address “emerging protection risks”, including those within the digital sphere. In an era where new challenges constantly emerge, the comprehensive nature of the proposed MPF equips us with the agility and preparedness required to tackle these evolving threats effectively.

In summary, the resolution seeks to adopt a new MPF, building upon the foundation laid by the earlier work of the Protection Advisory Board. By doing so, we signal our unwavering dedication to protection, fortify our collective resolve and equip ourselves to face the challenges of the future. It is a crucial step towards ensuring that the Movement remains a key actor in protecting human dignity in an ever-changing world.

E. Positioning a coordinated and coherent protection response externally

With a clear understanding of what the Movement means by “protection” and its objectives within the domain of protection, it is essential to enhance cooperation and coordination with external organizations involved in protection work.

Beyond the general advantages derived from effective collaboration and coordination – such as leveraging complementary expertise, optimizing resources, extending reach and impact, fostering shared learning and innovation, and increasing visibility – the Movement can underscore its contribution to achieving protection goals and improve its positioning accordingly.

The Movement can take various steps to enhance its engagement with external partners. In particular, the adoption of the resolution and the MPF can serve as a strong and robust narrative that explains the Movement's interpretation of protection and its pursuit of specific objectives.

Simultaneously, when engaging or closely cooperating with diverse actors in challenging environments, particularly amid armed conflicts, the Movement must uphold its Fundamental Principles. This ensures that neutrality, impartiality and the independence of the Movement's components remain uncompromised.

In summary, the Movement's interaction with external partners should be marked by strategic coordination, mutual learning, adherence to shared principles and a steadfast commitment to collective outcomes. By doing so, the Movement not only amplifies its protection efforts but also cultivates a more collaborative and impactful humanitarian ecosystem.

4) RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

Each component will make a commitment to enhance their contribution to the Movement's protection work and reflect it into their annual plans. This protection work will be financed by each organization's regular funding mechanism.

All the Movement components will be encouraged to mobilize sufficient resources to support its protection work. The resolution will only be useful and meaningful if they are adequately resourced – the Movement components should therefore commit to sufficient and equitable funding of different protection efforts based on their own plan to implement the resolution.

5) IMPLEMENTATION AND MONITORING

To ensure the integration of the commitments into the working culture and processes of the Movement, components should undertake to include the commitments made in the resolution within their own strategic and annual plans, with the aim of reporting the progress made in meeting those commitments in their standard annual reporting processes. A mechanism will monitor the overall integration of these commitments and report back to a future Council of Delegates.

6) CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

By adopting the resolution on protection at the Council of Delegates in 2024, the Movement will reinforce its commitment to safeguarding human dignity and well-being. Through enhanced complementary efforts, guided by the MPF and commitments adopted under the resolution, the Movement will strengthen its ability to protect more individuals and communities affected by conflicts, disasters, crises and other emergencies worldwide.