

Resolution 3 – Time to act: Tackling epidemics and pandemics together

Elements of the resolutions implemented

Collaboration with Ministry of Health and Institute for Public Health to implement the following resolution points:

- acknowledging the increasing recognition and importance of effective preparedness, which can save time, money and lives
- Encourage State to integrate National Society, based on their mandate, capabilities, and roles as humanitarian auxiliary to public authorities, into national frameworks for disease prevention, control, and multi-sectoral preparedness and response. State should also, where feasible, provide funding to support these roles.
- emphasizing the importance of National Society working in close coordination with national authorities and other local and international organizations responding to epidemics and pandemics in order to assist States Parties in meeting their obligations to comply with the IHR
- emphasizes the need for promotion of active community engagement in outbreak prevention, preparedness and response, based on a multi-sectoral, multi-hazard and whole-of-society approach
- reiterates the importance of prioritizing and investing in prevention and preparedness as well as providing catalytic funding to support early action, including by National Societies;
- reiterates the importance of mobilizing resources and building capacities to enable developing countries and their National Societies to respond to the epidemic and pandemic threats;

Examples / Good practices

1. Support to health workers on vaccination points

As one of a main activities through whole period was a presence of volunteers at vaccination points for crowd management and temperature check, provision of assistance to medical staff through helping with hand disinfection, providing masks, providing information on the number of doses of vaccines, potential side effects and answer questions and respond to myths and misinformation with accurate information and by providing trusted sources. Volunteers were also helping people to complete the paperwork before being vaccinated, providing psychosocial support before and after the vaccination, in case of need. In RC Local branches, volunteers were organizing workshops in youth clubs, schools and universities about COVID-19 and vaccination.

2. Community perception survey on vaccination hesitancy

Red Cross of Montenegro conducted community perception survey on vaccination hesitancy, and according to survey people older than 60 were more likely to report being vaccinated with

three doses (49%), and the younger population (aged between 18 and 30) didn't received even one dose (52%). Having in mind the fact that this population was the most active, participated in different social activities that include bigger number of people or groups, this meant that the risk for spread of infection was very high, especially in summer touristic seasons.

Survey also pointed out that about half of the citizens do not trust and doubt the safety of the vaccine against COVID-19.

3. Workshops with communities about vaccination

After survey results, the way of approach needed to be changed, so Red Cross of Montenegro with Institute for Public Health organized three trainings for doctors and volunteers in September 2022. The trainings were about organizing educational workshops about vaccination and the aim was to increase the knowledge about COVID-19 – transmission, prevention and preventive measures, how to respond to rumors and difficult questions and how to ensure a community-centered and inclusive approach in the COVID-19 response. Trainers were doctors from Institute for Public Health in the part about vaccines and trainer from Red Cross of Montenegro in part for Risk Communication and Community Engagement.

RCM together with the Ministry of Health, Institute for Public Health and Health Centers launched an awareness raising campaign that focused on the importance of vaccination, trying to reach as many communities and individuals as possible. The focus of the campaign was to promote immunization and it was implement through different channels, while volunteers were distributing leaflets with information on vaccination. Workshops were implemented by doctors from Institute for Public Health with volunteers of Red Cross in almost every municipality in Montenegro.

Impact on the implementation of this resolution

COVID-19 pandemic was an unprecedented situation where the whole world faced this type of challenge simultaneously. At the beginning of the vaccination process, it was very important to share trustworthy information on the disease but also to raise awareness among general population on preventive measures and ways how to protect themselves. Red Cross was recognized as one of the main responders and its constant presence in the field enabled continuous communication with the population which also helped in communicating the right messages.

It was important that the Red Cross received support from the IFRC for organizing trainings for volunteers but also for procuring necessary equipment (Uniforms, PPE). This contributed to the safety of staff and volunteers and enabled them to continuously do their jobs. Constant presence on immunization points triggered a lot of attention among the general public, this was especially helpful for the local branches who managed to position as one of the main partners with local authority in time of crises. This helped in positioning the Red Cross even better in the communities.

The fact that the Red Cross assisted in vaccination points, then implemented survey on vaccination hesitancy as a first step in better understanding of people opinion on immunization and how to direct right messages, helped in creating new approach in the campaign. Red Cross of Montenegro shared



information about COVID-19 pandemic and prevention measures via distribution of informative material (leaflets and posters), on social media, TV stations and face-to-face with workshops implemented with doctors from Institute for Public Health, Health Centers and RC volunteers, in small groups of people in urban and rural areas.

Partners on the implementation

- Ministry of Health
- Ministry of Interior
- Institute for Public Health
- IFRC