



Power of humanity

34th International Conference
of the Red Cross and Red Crescent

28–31 October 2024, Geneva

OUTLINE OF COMMISSION III AND ITS SPOTLIGHT SESSIONS

Enabling sustainable, locally led action

Thursday 31 October 2024

Context

With steadily growing commitment towards “making principle humanitarian action as local as possible, as international as necessary”¹ and delivering it through “more support and funding to local and national responders”¹, localization has been mainstreamed into global policy discussions and articulated in a number of donor and aid agency strategies, frameworks and priorities. Across the humanitarian–development–peace and climate nexus, there is now also greater emphasis on the need for locally led solutions and leadership by local actors as they are well placed to take a more holistic and integrated approach to programming.

Overall objective and expected outcomes

Commission III will bring together the components of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement (Movement) and States to enhance locally led action and local leadership in humanitarian action and development, with a view to meeting the needs of communities in areas such as disaster, conflict, climate change adaptation, health and well-being. It will examine ways to strengthen and increase investment in the capacities and sustainability of local actors, including but not limited to National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (National Societies), and highlight the impact of their work at the community level. It will explore different aspects of locally led action – auxiliary role of National Societies, role of volunteers, diversity of local actors, partnerships, financing, risk sharing and coordination.

The Commission will explore ways in which States and other international actors can invest in local and national capacities and reinforce the auxiliary role of their respective National Societies in the humanitarian field in a complementary manner. It will identify the remaining key barriers to enabling sustainable locally led action and propose solutions and actions for the future.

Format

The Commission will consist of an opening plenary and a closing plenary and four spotlight sessions on the following topics:

- The vital role of volunteers and community-based actors in social safety nets for community resilience

¹ The Grand Bargain – A Shared Commitment to Better Serve People in Need, 2016,

https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/sites/default/files/migrated/2017-02/grand_bargain_final_22_may_final-2_0.pdf

- Working together with States and local authorities to manage and strengthen the auxiliary role at all levels
- Community health action and frontline preparedness: Learning from the past to shape the future
- Overcoming barriers to financing and risk sharing to foster locally led action

Description of the spotlight sessions

Session 1: The vital role of volunteers and community-based actors in social safety nets for community resilience

Thursday 31 October, morning

Objective

The World Bank and others define “social safety net programmes” as “non-contributory transfers in cash or in-kind and are usually targeted at the poor and vulnerable”.² These programmes, also known as social assistance or social welfare, include but are not limited to cash transfers (and near-cash benefits, such as fee waivers and food vouchers), in-kind transfers, school feeding and targeted food assistance, outreach to marginalized groups and assistance to the elderly.

In addition to formal social protection systems, many communities rely on the volunteer-based, community-led, social safety net-style initiatives that exist in most countries and that address wider situations of vulnerability. Many National Societies have services that contribute to or strengthen informal social safety nets, encompassing a broad spectrum of initiatives aimed at fostering community resilience and well-being, engaging a diverse range of local actors and drawing on the role of local volunteers in community engagement and support. Additionally, National Societies, in their role as auxiliaries to their government, are well placed to identify opportunities to leverage formal social protection systems.

Across this range of informal and formal social safety nets, it can be seen that they are most effective when they are rooted in people-centric systems, with volunteers often playing an essential role. By looking at the work of volunteers, both National Society and other community-led volunteers, including the families of missing persons, the session will emphasize the significant role that community-based actors play in both informal and formal social safety nets in addressing locally the economic and social factors that are essential to driving the shift from vulnerability to resilience.

The specific objectives of the session are to:

- 1) Recognize the significant role that volunteers, including those from National Societies, play in both informal and formal social safety nets in addressing locally the economic and social factors that are essential to driving the shift from vulnerability to resilience
- 2) Encourage States, National Societies and other local actors to invest in and create a stronger enabling environment to ensure that volunteers are protected and that volunteer-based informal social safety nets can thrive as a complement to formal social safety nets and contribute to scaling up local, community-led responses in times of crisis
- 3) Encourage States to build strong, inclusive, shock-responsive social protection systems and to establish stronger links with National Societies and other local actors to enable local, community-led responses in times of crisis.

² <https://www.worldbank.org/en/data/datatopics/aspire/indicator/social-assistance>

Key questions to be discussed

- a. How can we better protect and empower volunteers to act and extend social safety nets at the community level?
- b. How can the lessons learned from volunteer-driven efforts inform policy and practice in the broader context of social safety nets?
- c. To what extent should government and formal institutions support and integrate informal volunteer-driven approaches into broader social protection systems?
- d. How can Movement components work with each other and with community-based networks in a complementary manner in contexts where formal social protection is weak or non-existent? What risks and opportunities does this present?

Supporting resources

- Case studies on volunteer-based social safety nets:
 - Burundi Red Cross example – [Catalysing local action from within communities](#)
 - Spanish Red Cross example – [Supporting the homeless in Spain](#)
- IFRC [Limitless learnings and insights report](#)
- [Global Youth Mobilisation impact report](#)
- Research conducted on volunteering and contributions to social inclusion by Northumbria University
- [Strengthening linkages with Social Protection systems: Orientation guidance for Red Cross Red Crescent National Societies](#)
- [Supporting and strengthening work with relatives of missing persons, ICRC and Grupo de Acción Comunitaria](#)
- [Evaluation of the Social Safety Nets Programme, British Red Cross and ICRC](#)

Session 2: Working together with States and local authorities to manage and strengthen the auxiliary role at all levels

Thursday 31 October, morning

Objective

This session will convene States and the components of the Movement with the overarching aim of reflecting on the critical role of National Societies as local actors and auxiliaries to their public authorities in the humanitarian field and their power to convene other local actors for the delivery of humanitarian services in diverse contexts. The session will:

- 1) Explore the essence, key success factors and opportunities of such partnerships as well as the challenges of managing the auxiliary role in diverse areas, such as health care, essential services, disaster risk reduction and management and climate change adaptation, and in diverse settings, such as urban areas and contexts marked by fragility, violence and conflict
- 2) Examine the value of complementarity between National Societies and local, national and international actors and ways to deliver tailored services, informed by contextual dynamics, operational realities and expertise and based on the needs of affected people, in a principled, effective and comprehensive manner
- 3) Identify solutions and additional support required from States and local authorities to facilitate and enhance the role of National Societies in support of their authorities
- 4) Identify lessons learned and best practices that can be shared thanks to their power to convene other local actors.

Key questions to be discussed

- a. How do National Societies achieve complementarity with local, national and international actors while upholding the Fundamental Principles in diverse contexts and supporting or partnering with the authorities as service providers to communities? How can the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) best support these partnerships?
- b. What are the main operational challenges in managing the partnership between National Societies and local public authorities in the humanitarian field in diverse contexts? What strategies have been most effective and what lessons can be drawn from these experiences?
- c. Drawing on comparative analysis of best practice, what are the key takeaways from these examples? How can States and the components of the Movement best work together?

Supporting resources

- [Resolution 4, 31st International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent](#)
- [Resolution 2, 30th International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent](#)
- [Guide to Strengthening the Auxiliary Role through Law and Policy](#)
- [Joining forces to secure water and sanitation in protracted crises, report by ICRC, World Bank, UNICEF](#)

Session 3: Community health action and frontline preparedness: Learning from the past to shape the future

Thursday 31 October, morning

Objective

Over half of the world's population cannot access the health services they need because they are either unavailable or unaffordable. Health workforce deficiencies, inadequate distribution and quality and performance challenges are some of the main obstacles to scaling up essential health-care activities. Lack of access to basic health care is a universal challenge. In conflicts and disasters, unmet health needs are compounded and exacerbated. Conflict, violence and disasters disrupt the health-care system when people need it the most. Sometimes, disruptions can be so severe that the entire system collapses, especially during armed conflict when it is targeted and/or overwhelmed.

This spotlight session will explore the critical and essential role of frontline workers in community health action and related preparedness activities and how States and the Movement can best support frontline workers across the preparedness, response and recovery continuum. Strong, integrated frontline preparedness for response is crucial and will continue to grow in importance as we face the global consequences of climate change, increased population movements, the continued impacts of COVID-19 and other global health threats. It is also crucial to invest in the protection and development of volunteers and community health workers, including maintaining a duty of care, creating a conducive environment and ensuring recognition for them at the local level.

The specific objectives of the session are to:

- 1) Explore the critical and essential role of frontline workers in health action and related preparedness activities and how States and the Movement can best support frontline workers across preparedness, response and recovery
- 2) Discuss ways to strengthen the preparedness of frontline workers as first responders and leaders in community health action and preparedness, prioritizing the safety, protection, health and well-being of these workers and the people they serve

- 3) Explore challenges and opportunities for strengthening local capacities, partnerships and coordination and the role of local actors, National Societies, community health workers and other frontline workers.

Key questions to be discussed

- a. How can we enhance the preparedness of local communities and frontline workers to effectively recognize and respond to health and multi-hazard threats in conflict and disaster settings?
- b. What concrete steps and investments are needed from the Movement, States and the international community to ensure that community health workers and other frontline workers are recognized, have their capacities strengthened and are integrated into community health systems, with a view to reducing gaps and ensuring equitable access to primary health-care services so that no one is left behind?
- c. How can health action be integrated with broader resilience-building measures, such as early warning systems for climate events, social inclusion and livelihood support, to strengthen community preparedness comprehensively?
- d. How can local actors (disaster risk management, health and others) join efforts to address increasing challenges and maintain capacities to respond to different health and multi-hazard scenarios?
- e. What practical insights and lessons can be drawn from the adaptive responses of National Societies during recent emergencies and how can these experiences inform future preparedness strategies?

Supporting resources

- [IFRC Global Health Security White Paper](#)
- [IFRC Health and Care Framework 2030](#)
- [IFRC Care in Communities Guidelines 2030](#)
- [IFRC Disaster Risk Management Policy](#)
- [National Society Preparedness Framework](#)
- [Resolution “Time to act: Tackling epidemics and pandemics together”, 33rd International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent](#)
- [Ambulance and pre-hospital care in risk situations, Norwegian Red Cross, ICRC, Mexican Red Cross](#)
- [First aid training programme: an overview](#)

Session 4: Overcoming barriers to financing and risk sharing to foster locally led action

Thursday 31 October, morning

Objective

The Grand Bargain commitment to achieving an aggregate global target of 25% of humanitarian funding being delivered to local and national actors “as directly as possible” is proving challenging, especially in silent and chronic crises. Institutional barriers to reaching the target include the lack of consistent data, internal systems (particularly those of intermediaries) that are not set up to track or measure the required indicators and the lack of funds to cover overhead costs which limits the ability of local and national actors to maintain or strengthen their institutional capacity to operate effectively. These barriers often result in partners transferring risks or generating new ones for other actors down the delivery chain. Ultimately, this lack of risk sharing is manifested in continued gaps in funding support between international donors and local actors, such as National Societies.

The question of trust is at the root of financing and risk issues. Often, the lack of trust in local actors is driven by a perception of risk and the different risk appetites of donors and international organizations. This has prompted a search for a better balance of trust and controls in the way actors working in an assistance delivery chain manage their risks, which has recently been further unpacked in dialogue on risk sharing, for example, by the Risk Sharing Platform co-led by the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the ICRC and InterAction.

It is important to note that beyond increasing the volume of funding going to local and national actors, there are other important measures for supporting locally led action, such as providing quality funding to or partnering with local and national actors, that address barriers to financing and risk sharing for local actors.

The specific objective of this spotlight session is to increase knowledge on risk sharing and financing innovation to deliver locally led action that is more effective and relevant for people in need and to:

1. Explore equitable ways of sharing risks among partners in a humanitarian delivery chain that can be utilized to maximize the collective potential reach of partnering organizations and look at how this new approach can support localization objectives
2. Explore innovative funding mechanisms that predictably invest in the sustainability of local actors and enhance and contribute to scaling up locally led action
3. Identify the key barriers and enablers for risk sharing and financing for locally led action.

Key questions to be discussed

- a. What motivations and opportunities for change are there and what capacities do States and international humanitarian and development organizations need to implement their financing and risk management approaches to support locally led action?
- b. How can the risk-sharing process contribute to the building of partnerships between and among States and international and local/national humanitarian and development organizations that deepen trust and ultimately benefit affected people?
- c. What lessons can be shared from past initiatives on innovative financing and risk sharing to overcome barriers to locally led action for more equitable ways to manage risks collaboratively in the delivery chain?

Supporting resources

- [Bridging the intention to action gap: The future role of intermediaries in supporting locally led action](#)
 - [Risk Sharing Framework developed by the Risk Sharing Platform of the Grand Bargain](#)
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