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Strengthening the Resilience of Urban Communities: Our Way Forward (CD/22/R11)

PROGRESS REPORT

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PROGRESS REPORT

Strengthening the Resilience of Urban Communities: Our Way Forward (CD/22/R11)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The 2022 Council of Delegates (CoD) adopted Resolution CD/22/R11 “Strengthening the resilience of urban communities: Our way forward”. This resolution recognizes the increasing challenges of a rapidly urbanizing world and the growing vulnerabilities of urban populations to climate change and other hazards. It emphasizes the importance of building resilience among vulnerable populations to mitigate worst-case disaster scenarios.

In response to this resolution, the Movement Urban Resilience Working Group (MURWG) was established to formulate globally applicable principles of action (PoA) to guide all Movement components in supporting urban community resilience. The MURWG includes:

- A global Movement Urban Resilience Strategic Leadership Group (MURSLG) to provide strategic leadership and direction and to present the finalized PoA at the 2026 CoD and subsequently at the 35th International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent (International Conference) in 2028
- Five thematic Movement Urban Resilience Working Groups (WGs) to lead Movement-wide consultations on the themes proposed in the resolution
- A global-level drafting group to consolidate the recommendations of the thematic WGs into the PoA draft elements and to oversee the final consultation process leading up to the 2026 CoD.

This progress report details developments since the adoption of Resolution CD/22/R11 and outlines the MURWG’s next steps.

1) INTRODUCTION

In 2010, the *World Disasters Report* on urban risk, published by the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), highlighted the surge in urban poverty, especially in low- and middle-income countries. It noted that urban populations face increased exposure to environmental and health hazards, including cyclones, floods, earthquakes, epidemics/pandemics, crime and violence, fires and industrial accidents. As a result of global trends in migration, rapid urbanization and the unplanned growth of informal settlements, approximately one billion urban dwellers were living in substandard conditions in 2020, lacking basic housing and infrastructure. Highly urbanized areas exacerbate the risk of climate-related disasters, such as flooding and heatwaves, which disproportionately impact poor urban communities, affecting lives, livelihoods and assets.

The background paper on shifting vulnerabilities and the final report of the 33rd International Conference mention urban contexts in relation to internal displacement but fall short of addressing the multifaceted challenges cities with rapidly growing populations face. Addressing these multi-hazard risks and challenges in complex urban environments requires a radical rethinking of humanitarian assistance. Understanding the root causes of vulnerabilities and taking a systems approach to analyse effective actions is crucial. National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (National Societies) may need to re-examine their roles and look at where their added value can make the greatest difference, particularly in operations

and programmes in urban contexts. Focusing on building resilience by reducing vulnerabilities, improving living conditions, preventing worst-case scenarios and mitigating the adverse effects of shocks and crises is the recommended way forward. The IFRC, through its network, is exploring the transformations and support needed to move forward on this path.

The IFRC's Strategy 2030 identifies five global challenges that need urgent attention: climate and environmental crises, evolving crises and disasters, growing gaps in health and well-being, migration and identity, and values, power and inclusion. All these challenges are intensified in urban centres. The seven transformations outlined in Strategy 2030 emphasize supporting and developing National Societies as strong local actors, mobilizing volunteerism, ensuring trust and accountability, working effectively as a distributed network, influencing humanitarian action, undergoing a digital transformation and financing the future. However, many National Societies traditionally focus on remote rural areas, and tools developed for rural contexts are not fit for urban settings. Adapting operations to urban contexts is essential to enable the Red Cross and Red Crescent network to respond effectively to the identified challenges and build the resilience of urban populations.

Strengthening urban resilience aligns with broader global objectives and contributes to achieving several Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 11, which aims to create inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable cities. The IFRC supports the implementation of the New Urban Agenda developed by UN-HABITAT, leveraging the expertise of National Society urban branches to facilitate discussions that bring community perspectives to city authorities. Other relevant SDGs include:

- SDG 1: No poverty – Enhancing urban community resilience helps mitigate poverty-related vulnerabilities and promotes equitable access to resources
- SDG 3: Good health and well-being – Resilient cities foster healthier living conditions, reduce health risks and enhance overall well-being
- SDG 10: Reduced inequalities – Resilience-building initiatives address disparities and promote social inclusion in urban areas
- SDG 13: Climate action – Climate change adaptation and mitigation help safeguard communities against environmental challenges.

Numerous initiatives, networks and organizations, such as Making Cities Resilient 2030 (MCR2030), Resilient Cities Network (RCN), Global Alliance for Urban Crises (GAUC), C40, United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG) and ICLEI – Local Governments for Sustainability are dedicated to building urban resilience. These efforts focus on improving urban governance, urban planning and disaster risk management. The IFRC collaborates with these organizations to incorporate operational thinking and community-based approaches into urban governance, risk management, early warning systems and disaster management. The IFRC, as a founding member of the MCR2030 initiative, links participating municipalities with corresponding National Society city branches to strengthen community-based early warning systems and anticipatory action measures.

Additionally, a global-level memorandum of understanding with ICLEI has resulted in joint advocacy and resource mobilization, with the promotion of the Heat Action Day campaign on 2 June 2024 and the organization of the Coastal Cities Dialogue at the ICLEI World Congress 2024.

Resolution CD/22/R11 “Strengthening the resilience of urban communities – Our way forward” complements and strengthens several other resolutions on thematic areas, including:

- CD/22/R6 “War in Cities” and its Movement Action Plan for 2022–2027, which aims to increase the capacity of Movement components to better prevent and respond to the

humanitarian consequences of war in cities, according to each component's specific mandate and capacity

- CD/22/R1 “Endorsement of the Climate and Environment Charter for Humanitarian Organizations”, which calls for increased action within the Movement and the broader humanitarian community; cities account for up to 75% of global CO₂ emissions, making climate advocacy and action crucial at the city level
- CD/22/R9 “Towards a Movement strategy on Migration” and, in particular, the 2018 ICRC report *Displaced in Cities: Experiencing and Responding to Urban Internal Displacement Outside Camps*, which provides key recommendations on working with internally displaced persons and local authorities in urban settings
- CD/19/R1 “Movement-wide Commitments for Community Engagement and Accountability”, addressing gaps in tools and approaches for community engagement in urban contexts
- CD/19/R3 “Movement approach to strengthening National Society statutory and constitutional base and complementary frameworks such as the Volunteer Charter”, which emphasizes the importance of strengthening the auxiliary role at the municipal level
- Volunteering Policy (2022), especially new forms of volunteering relevant in urban contexts
- CD/17/R2 “Movement-wide principles for resource mobilization”, with CD/22/R11 supporting this approach
- IFRC Digital Transformation Strategy.

2) BACKGROUND

To address the issues set out above and understand what role the different Movement components can play in resolving them, not only as first responders and providers of humanitarian services but also as long-term partners in building resilience, several consultations were carried out in the lead-up to the 2022 CoD and beyond. A workshop organized for the General Assembly on 11 May 2022 ([final report GA Workshop Urban Resilience](#)) and the Urban Collaboration Platform events held in November 2021 (online/Berlin) and in June 2023 (in person/Geneva) provide useful insights about the challenges and successes National Societies have experienced when working in urban contexts.

In 2022, the CoD adopted **Resolution CD/22/R11 “Strengthening the resilience of urban communities: Our way forward”**. It calls on all Movement components to advocate for more investment in urban resilience, continue strengthening the auxiliary role vis-à-vis municipal authorities and scale up their work on urban resilience. It also requests National Societies to mainstream urban community resilience into their regular programming.

The resolution then “invites the IFRC, in close collaboration with National Societies and the ICRC, to establish and lead a **Movement Urban Resilience Working Group (MURWG)** whose aim will be to produce a globally applicable set of **principles of action for urban resilience** to be adopted at the 2024 Council of Delegates and subsequently presented to States and partners at the 35th International Conference”.

The objective of the proposed MURWG is to formulate these globally applicable PoA which will help to define the role of the IFRC network and the way forward to meet the challenges of preparing for and responding to urban crises. Furthermore, to motivate other key stakeholders to join the efforts to strengthen urban resilience by adopting the proposed PoA.

It should be noted that the process for the development and endorsement of the PoA, as stipulated in the resolution, has been delayed by about one year. Therefore, the work is still ongoing and the PoA will not be ready for presentation and adoption at the next CoD in October

2024. The main reason for this unexpected delay was the time it took to officialize a number of key documents required to set the process in motion, such as the terms of reference (ToR) for the MURSLG and the joint leadership agreement between the IFRC and the German Red Cross, which is co-chair of the MURWG. These negotiation processes were finalized in the course of 2023, and it was possible to hold the first meeting of the MURSLG in September 2023. Given this delay in the schedule, the intention is to finalize the process in 2025 and have the PoA adopted either through a written process or at the 2026 CoD.

3) ANALYSIS/PROGRESS

Establishment of the Movement Urban Resilience Strategic Leadership Group (MURSLG)

The first step in establishing the MURWG was to set up an inclusive governance structure for the Movement components involved in this endeavour to provide strategic leadership and oversight and secure wide engagement and ownership of the process.

The MURSLG was established with representatives of the IFRC, the ICRC and National Societies from all regions with diverse experience in tackling different urban challenges. The MURSLG is the decision-making body that guides the work of the thematic Movement Urban Resilience WGs in accordance with the recommendations set out in the CoD resolution.

The following 21 National Societies (listed in alphabetical order) were invited to join the MURSLG:

Argentina, China/Hong Kong Branch, Colombia, Fiji, Germany, Ghana, Guatemala, Honduras, Japan, Kenya, Lebanon, Liberia, Madagascar, Maldives, Nigeria, Palestine, Philippines, Spain, Syria, Türkiye and United States.

The first meeting of the MURSLG was held on 28 September 2023 to agree on its objectives and working procedures. The MURSLG will be responsible for delivering the final PoA to implement Resolution CD/22/R11 and for presenting them for adoption at the 2026 CoD and subsequently to States and partners at the 35th International Conference (scheduled for 2028). The participating National Societies, the IFRC and the ICRC have committed to this long-term engagement.

In further quarterly meetings, the MURSLG established five themes for the thematic WGs to deliberate on, drawing on the recommendations made in the operative paragraphs of the resolution. The respective ToR and thematic briefs have been endorsed, as has the methodology for the consultations they will facilitate and the PoA drafting process led by the global-level drafting group.

Thematic WGs

Each thematic WG will be chaired by a National Society and co-chaired by IFRC or ICRC colleagues with relevant thematic expertise, ensuring the participation of National Societies from all regions. The IFRC will provide secretariat services to facilitate the work of the WGs.

The themes for the thematic WGs are based on the calls made in the operative paragraphs of Resolution CD/22/R11. Initially, this led to a proposal to establish seven separate WGs.

However, at the suggestion of the MURSLG members and ensuing discussions, it was agreed to reorganize the work ahead into the following five WGs:

1. Resource mobilization and strategic partnerships for urban resilience
2. Advocacy and strengthening the auxiliary role at the municipal level
3. Urban community empowerment and volunteering in cities
4. Provision of services and mainstreaming urban resilience
5. Research, innovation, knowledge and capacity-building to support humanitarian work in urban contexts.

While the working procedures and deliverables of all the thematic WGs are the same, each one has a specific annex to the ToR with a more detailed thematic briefing and the main questions identified for discussion.

When drafting the ToR and the thematic annexes, the IFRC Urban Resilience Team consulted with the relevant colleagues from Strategic Partnerships and Resource Mobilisation (SPRM) (for WG1), Auxiliary Role (for WG2), Community Engagement and Accountability (CEA) and Volunteering (for WG3), Operations and Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) (for WG4) and digitalization/innovation (for WG5). The thematic WGs will also draw on relevant thematic experts to chair and/or provide inputs for the deliberations. Where they are not co-chairing, the IFRC and the ICRC will participate in the WGs providing relevant expertise.

While the drafting of the PoA is the main objective of the WGs, the consultation process also aims to put into practice a holistic approach, drawing on expertise from all technical and thematic areas and promoting systems thinking and multi-stakeholder collaboration to demonstrate the mindset and approach required for working effectively in urban contexts.

Consultation methodology

The MURSLG decided that each thematic WG will be free to organize the consultations and the discussions in the way that makes most sense for the topic at hand. As some of the themes are rather broad, additional sub-groups and regional or expert consultations can be undertaken if the WG deems it necessary. Each WG has to make sure that consultations include inputs from National Societies from all five regions.

Each WG will be tasked with organizing at least two (online) consultation sessions on its topic, drawing on the knowledge of external experts where needed and distilling the inputs into a concise report with recommendations for the PoA on its respective topic.

The IFRC will support the WG co-chairs with secretariat services for the organization of consultation meetings, documentation and facilitation as necessary. The timeline for the deliverables from the consultation process will also be established and monitored by the IFRC.

The template and the main components for the report document will be developed by the IFRC support team and provided to the WG chairs.

The outputs of the WGs will be consolidated by the global-level drafting group, composed of the chairs and co-chairs of each of the WGs and the IFRC Urban Resilience Team. It will formulate the PoA based on the outputs of the thematic WGs and follow through with the

process to develop the elements of resolutions (draft elements, draft zero and final draft for endorsement).

Each iteration of the document will be shared with the thematic WGs for comments, and the final draft will be presented to the MURSLG for endorsement and presentation at the CoD.

Preliminary timeline moving forward

The timeline for the consultations and drafting process is geared to the presentation of the PoA at the 2026 CoD. The official consultation process on the PoA draft elements will start approximately one year in advance of the CoD.

Assuming the CoD will be held in June 2026 at the earliest, the global-level drafting group will have to submit the PoA draft elements by June 2025, which means the consultations of the thematic WGs will have to be finalized in the first quarter of 2025 to give the drafting group time to formulate the PoA draft elements.

As soon as the date for the 2026 CoD is confirmed, the timeline will be adapted accordingly and the exact dates set for the milestones in the process.

4) RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

The initial timeframe proposed in Resolution CD/22/R11 was to present the PoA at the 2024 CoD (the CoD planned for 2023 referred to in the resolution was postponed to 2024) and subsequently to States and partners at the 35th International Conference in 2028.

This schedule was revised to allow the time necessary to set up a structure and process owned and led by National Societies.

The revised timeline establishes the submission of a progress report for the CoD in 2024, the presentation of the PoA for endorsement at the CoD in 2026 and the presentation of the PoA at the 35th International Conference in 2028, as initially planned. While the adapted timeframe does not affect achievement of the overall goal of presenting the PoA at the 35th International Conference in 2028, it does have implications for human resources planning.

The German Red Cross and the IFRC have entered into a shared leadership agreement to promote the urban resilience agenda in general and to support the process of drafting the PoA in particular. To this end, the German Red Cross has seconded three urban focal points to IFRC offices in Geneva, Nairobi and Kuala Lumpur. These focal points provide critical capacity to co-chair the thematic WGs, facilitate the regional consultations and/or provide secretariat services to ensure the process is on track and results are well documented and reported. The urban focal points are also part of the global-level drafting group that will consolidate all the recommendations from the thematic WGs into the PoA draft elements and further support the process. However, this critical human resources support will stop when German Red Cross project funding ends in December 2024, and there is as yet no prospect of the contracts being extended. In consequence, the IFRC Urban Resilience Team will be reduced to two members in Geneva who will have to take on the task of supporting the continuation of the consultation process and the drafting of the PoA in addition to their other duties. There is therefore a considerable risk that these human resources implications could compromise the PoA drafting process.

5) IMPLEMENTATION AND MONITORING

The thematic WGs will facilitate the Movement-wide consultation process and submit their recommendations to the global-level drafting group that will formulate the PoA. Progress in

developing the PoA in fulfilment of Resolution CD/22/R11 will be monitored by the MURSLG on a quarterly basis. The MURSLG will present the PoA for adoption at the 2026 CoD.

6) CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The process and the multi-sectoral holistic approach are owned and led by National Societies and facilitated and supported by the IFRC. It is essential to make every effort to secure the necessary human resources to continue the facilitation of the process and ensure its successful completion. The ICRC provides specific thematic expertise for the process as relevant, and the parties involved coordinate as necessary to ensure the complementarity of the CoD resolutions with an urban focus.