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# **Strengthening Movement Cooperation and Coordination (SMCC)**

FINAL REPORT

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## FINAL REPORT

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# Strengthening Movement Cooperation and Coordination

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### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Over a decade ago, the components of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement (“the Movement”) made a united call for stronger coordination and collaboration within the Movement. With a focus on large-scale emergencies, the Strengthening Movement Cooperation and Coordination (SMCC) initiative spanned four Council of Delegates (CoD) resolutions in the period from 2013 to 2024. The SMCC decade-long experience has inspired a commitment to maximizing our collective impact, showing that enhanced coordination of Movement response is necessary, possible and achievable. It has also shown that efficient coordination is demanding, time-consuming, context-specific and incremental, requires specific skills, continuous training, monitoring and commitment, and comes with a cost.

With the 2024 CoD, the SMCC, as a stand-alone initiative, is coming to an end, and will be mainstreamed globally into all situations requiring a collective response. To inform our ongoing work, it is therefore key to draw lessons from this ten-year process and ensure that all Movement coordination efforts are reinforced under one coherent approach, in line with the Movement Coordination for Collective Impact Agreement (Seville Agreement 2.0 – “SA 2.0”). The SA 2.0 is aimed at enhancing the collective impact of the Movement and centred around the strategic and operational priorities of National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (National Societies) in their own countries and our individual mandates.

Overall, the SMCC initiative has improved coordination between Movement components in challenging contexts. It has been instrumental in keeping the Movement components engaged in coordination at a time when the first Seville Agreement framework was hotly contested. It allowed for the development of useful tools and promoted greater trust among Movement partners. A transformation in mindset towards full acceptance of the need for coordination has, however, not been achieved, hampered by individualistic reflexes of institutions still present at times, siloed approaches, and cumbersome processes taking time and effort away from the operational response. Above all, it is now time for the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and National Societies to consistently “walk the talk”, in other words, to own Movement coordination and be accountable for it, as they faithfully implement the SA 2.0 using the effective tools developed under the SMCC process. In all circumstances, it is important to put the collective impact of the Movement before each individual institution’s interests for the benefit of the affected populations that we serve.

Key to maintaining the SMCC gains will be continuous investment in “SMCC literacy” (understanding of the normative framework, training and peer-to-peer knowledge-sharing), enhancement of interoperability in key areas of work (resource mobilization, communications, security, logistics, and so on), as well as ensuring full operationalization and adherence to the SA 2.0. The Movement remains committed to maximizing the complementarity and effectiveness of its response and to ensuring the National Society’s central role in its own country.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The SMCC has been an ambitious global initiative of the Movement, anchored in its Statues and its normative framework, namely the Seville Agreement (1997) and its Supplementary Measures, subsequently replaced by the SA 2.0 adopted by the CoD in 2022. Initially launched through the CoD in 2013,<sup>1</sup> the initiative's main aim has been to enhance the Movement's operational impact by ensuring quality and timely coordination and cooperation, in response to medium to large-scale emergencies.

The present report builds on:

- operational experience
- the four resolutions on the SMCC adopted by the CoD in 2013, 2015, 2017 and 2019
- the SMCC progress reports prepared for the CoD in 2015, 2017, 2019 and 2022
- the initial report of the major contexts drafted in 2013, *Vision Paper for Strengthening Red Cross and Red Crescent Humanitarian Response*, which paved the way for the first resolution
- the case studies on the five SMCC country laboratories<sup>2</sup>
- the Lessons Learned review report (Ukraine/Pakistan), as well as learning from the One International Appeal mechanism and various operational reviews (for example, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and Mozambique)
- the SMCC Summit in 2021<sup>3</sup>
- the input provided by the Movement implementation teams' (MITs) co-leads and the MIT optimization paper in 2022

### SMCC objectives and evolution

Originally conceived as a two-year transformation, it soon became evident that coordination not only requires standardized tools, but also a significant mindset change. The evolution of the SMCC's objectives and deliverables over time reflects a growing ambition for operational coordination and strategic planning within the Movement. Initial efforts focused on establishing frameworks for information-sharing and response coordination, as seen in the early stages of the crises in Yemen and the Ebola outbreak. Over time, these frameworks evolved into more sophisticated tools such as the **Movement Coordination Agreement** (which pre-dated but was further promoted under SMCC) and **Movement-wide operational plans**, which allowed at the time for a more unified and efficient approach to crises, as demonstrated in the responses in Nepal (2015) and the Philippines (2015).

By 2017–2019, the emphasis had shifted towards tailoring responses to specific regional and situational/country-specific needs, while maintaining an overarching framework for coordination and cooperation. While its implementation was not optimal, the “Concerted Approach for Africa”, which served as an inspiration for other regions, illustrates this SMCC shift.

Finally, throughout the 2020–2023 period, greater focus was placed on fostering increased engagement by National Societies in supporting the development of technical solutions, enhancing both the number and quality of the tools.

### SMCC and the normative framework

The interpretation and operationalization of the Seville Agreement (1997) and its Supplementary Measures presented challenges to Movement coordination from the outset of

<sup>1</sup> Resolution 4, CoD, Sydney, 17–18 November 2013 (CD/13/R4).

<sup>2</sup> SMCC country laboratories: Haiti, the Philippines, South Sudan, Syria and Ukraine.

<sup>3</sup> <https://solferinoacademy.com/smcc-summit-2021-agenda/>

the SMCC initiative, with some outdated concepts, including that of “lead organization”. Practical workarounds were sought, including trainings, increasing sectoral interoperability, standardization of coordination tools, and encouraging innovative approaches in resource mobilization. The experiences of the SMCC exposed shortcomings of the old agreement and paved the way to the new SA 2.0. The SA 2.0 reflects the gains made in the early years of the SMCC and provides an enhanced normative framework for Movement coordination with the local National Society at the centre.

While improvement is still required, by 2024 the use of SMCC tools in line with the SA 2.0, in contexts such as Ukraine, Yemen, Lebanon, Honduras or Mali, showcases the positive impact of coordination in enhancing the speed, efficiency and quality of the Movement’s humanitarian response. The ongoing adaptation and implementation of these tools across various global emergencies reflect a significant progression – to be continued – from establishing coordination principles to executing them effectively under diverse and challenging conditions.

### **SMCC National Society involvement and leadership structures**

Since its inception at the 2013 CoD, the SMCC initiative has truly been a Movement-wide effort. Originally, the IFRC and the ICRC<sup>4</sup> collaborated with a reference group of National Society representatives. This initiative later brought together over 140 National Societies in 2014–2015,<sup>5</sup> followed by 40 National Societies and five focused **SMCC laboratories** in 2015–2017.<sup>6</sup> In 2019,<sup>7</sup> 40 National Societies participated as members of technical groups focused on improving interoperability within the Movement, alongside the **National Society Reference Group**. Subsequently, 54 National Societies contributed as members of 11 **Movement implementation teams** (MITs), with 89 National Societies participating in the **SMCC Summit** in 2021.<sup>8</sup>

Overall, many National Societies have provided significant contributions to the SMCC process, such as the co-chairs of the MITs, those that have consistently supported the overall SMCC process, including with human and financial resources, and, very importantly, Host National Societies that have demonstrated great commitment to Movement coordination in their own context and operations.

## **2. SMCC ACHIEVEMENTS**

### **SMCC Spirit**

The “SMCC spirit” connotes a full commitment to coordination, placing the interests of the communities that we serve and of the Movement above individual interests. It embodies a pragmatic, collaborative approach, acknowledging that each humanitarian context and response entails unique considerations and specificities.

There has been progress in fostering the SMCC spirit among Movement components, even though the interests of the Movement in coordination may at times conflict with the individual interests of a given Movement component. The main principles of the SMCC spirit were defined and included in the preamble to the SA 2.0, constituting an essential component of the normative framework. Consequently, Movement coordination is not optional; rather, it is compulsory, and mechanisms for Movement coordination are established in all scenarios where various components of the Movement are present.

### **Centrality of the Host National Society**

<sup>4</sup> Steering Committee and a dedicated coordination group.

<sup>5</sup> [CoD-2015-SMCC-Progress-Report.pdf \(smcctoolkit.org\)](#)

<sup>6</sup> [CoD-2017-Progress-Report.pdf \(smcctoolkit.org\)](#)

<sup>7</sup> [CoD-2019-SMCC-2.0-Progress-report-final.pdf \(smcctoolkit.org\)](#)

<sup>8</sup> [21\\_CoD22-SMCC-Progress-Report-FINAL-EN.pdf \(smcctoolkit.org\)](#)

There has been an institutional shift in our approach during the last ten years, towards recognition of the centrality of the Host National Society. Previously, the focus of global discussions was on the collaborative efforts between the IFRC and the ICRC as international components. This has largely shifted to focusing on the practical application of the tools and assessing our collective impact at the country level. Key to this transformation is the recognition of the Host National Society as the central actor within its respective countries, a principle enshrined in the SA 2.0.

### **SMCC tools/toolkit**

At a practical level, the development of the SMCC toolkit<sup>9</sup> has equipped our Movement field practitioners with standardized and up-to-date tools to facilitate Movement coordination in all situations, including those requiring a collective response. Evidence indicates that the application of the SMCC tools has significantly enhanced our collective impact at the country level. Over time, the toolkit has expanded to include numerous tools, templates and guidance documents such as the Movement Coordination Agreement, SMCC Operational Readiness Checklist, Mini-Summit guidance note and checklist, Movement Joint Statements, Movement Security Agreement, Movement Picture, Well-Coordinated Appeals, Movement Coordination Officer/Adviser (MCO) pool of experts, Joint Communications Products, and joint Real-Time Evaluations (RTE) and Lessons Learned. With the approval of the SA 2.0, several of the main SMCC tools have become mandatory.<sup>10</sup>

### **Interoperability of systems**

From 2018 onwards, significant emphasis was placed on identifying synergies in the systems used by different Movement components and working on enhancing the interoperability of systems with the aim of improving the effectiveness of joint response. This work occurred through several Movement implementation teams. As a result, tangible progress was achieved in critical areas such as logistics, security, surge and information technology (IT).<sup>11</sup> In particular, logistics has experienced notable successes, resulting in tangible gains, particularly in key operational areas such as sourcing and procurement, fleet management and logistical support for cash and voucher assistance programmes.

### **Nursery of innovative approaches**

The SMCC initiative and the dedication of its members have reinforced trust among partners, creating unforeseen opportunities for creativity and innovation. This environment served as a laboratory for testing new ideas and tools to enhance Movement coordination securely. Successful innovations included, for instance, the conceptualization and creation of the Movement Coordination Adviser pool of experts, the new Movement Picture package, sustainable procurement, or a carbon accounting tool. This safe space also facilitated the exploration of pilot projects without the fear of failure, as was the case with the attempted implementation of the One International Appeal.

### **Operational achievements: evidence-based benefits of working together**

The effectiveness of the SMCC process is best assessed through the practical application of its tools in operational contexts. This level of application allows for a direct measurement of the incremental gains in coordination over time, as well as shifts in the coordination mindset.

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<sup>9</sup> <https://smcctoolkit.org/>

<sup>10</sup> Mandatory SMCC tools under the SA 2.0: Movement Coordination Agreement, Mini-Summit, Joint Statement and Mini-Summit Decision Table.

<sup>11</sup> For more information on MITs, see 2022 SMCC Progress report: [https://rcrcconference.org/app/uploads/2022/05/21\\_CoD22-SMCC-Progress-Report-FINAL-EN.pdf](https://rcrcconference.org/app/uploads/2022/05/21_CoD22-SMCC-Progress-Report-FINAL-EN.pdf)

The table below outlines key (quantitative) SMCC indicators from 2013 to 2024.

SMCC TOOL	NUMBER OF COUNTRIES
<b>Movement Coordination Agreements</b>	<b>60</b>
<b>Movement Security Agreements</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>Movement Contingency Plan<sup>12</sup></b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Movement Coordination Adviser deployments</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Mini-Summit</b>	<b>16</b> (aligned with SA 2.0)
<b>Joint Statement</b>	<b>16</b> (aligned with SA 2.0)
<b>Movement Picture</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>One International Appeal<sup>13</sup></b>	<b>5</b> (for the period 2017-19)
<b>Coordinated International Appeals</b>	<b>4</b>

Complementing the above, the following list summarizes some of the main emergency operations in the last ten years, very briefly highlighting several of the most relevant success stories and learnings associated with SMCC.<sup>14</sup>

### 2013–2015:

**Yemen crisis:** Systematic information-sharing among Movement partners such as the ICRC, the IFRC, Yemen Red Crescent and Partner National Societies (PNS) enhanced trust and coordination.

**West Africa Ebola outbreak:** Responsibilities were clearly divided among different Movement components, aiding in efficient response management.

**South Sudan conflict:** Special coordination due to numerous PNS involvement was emphasized, aligning activities under the South Sudan Red Cross' plan.

**Philippines Typhoon Haiyan:** A Movement-wide operational framework focusing on common strategies and priorities was introduced.

**Nepal earthquake:** A "One Plan, One Team, One Operation" approach was adopted, consolidating efforts under a single Movement-wide operational plan.

**Syria crisis and regional responses:** The development of country-specific plans in Jordan and Lebanon was initiated, adapted from experiences in the Syria crisis.

### 2016–2017:

**SMCC country laboratories:** Haiti, the Philippines, South Sudan, Syria and Ukraine were selected for focused SMCC tool implementation.

**African food crisis:** A "Concerted Approach for Africa" was developed, aiming for cohesive action on emergencies and National Society development across the continent.

### 2018–2019:

**Large-scale operations:** Enhanced technical and operational complementarity in responses were implemented in **Indonesia** and **Mozambique**.

<sup>12</sup> While there have not been examples of a full-fledged Movement Contingency Plan, it was deemed relevant to include these ten Host National Society contingency plans into which other Movement actors' contributions have been integrated.

<sup>13</sup> The One International Appeal initiative has been discontinued for now and replaced by the concept of coordinated international appeals.

<sup>14</sup> For more details, please refer to the SMCC progress reports 2015, 2017, 2019 and 2022.

**Ebola outbreaks in the DRC:** A fully integrated approach adjusting to the complexities of conflict-affected areas was demonstrated.

**Protracted conflicts:** Effective coordination in ongoing crises like **Yemen** and **Ukraine** was maintained.

**Politically sensitive contexts:** Highlighted challenges in **Venezuela** underlined the need for principled action and leadership in complex humanitarian environments.

#### **2020–2024:**

**Ukraine:** A “Movement plan for Ukraine” was developed in 2020–2021 (not finalized due to the escalation of the conflict), and SMCC mechanisms such as the Mini-Summit, Joint Statement and Movement Picture were effectively utilized during escalated conflict.

**Nagorno-Karabakh conflict:** Use of the Movement Contingency Plan highlighted the benefits of pre-crisis planning and coordination.

**Refugee crisis in Iran:** Demonstrated proactive planning through the Movement Contingency Plan to manage Afghan refugee influx effectively.

**Afghanistan:** After the earthquakes in Herat in October 2023, as well as new emergency operations carried out in both 2023 and 2024, Movement components have worked in complementarity. This collaboration encompasses coordinated relief efforts and a joint approach to humanitarian diplomacy.

### **3. MAIN CHALLENGES**

As evidenced through every SMCC report, efficient coordination requires a conscious effort. It is often a result of many challenging discussions and continuing commitment and is to some extent still personality-driven. In contexts where coordination is difficult, the Movement relies on its solid legal and normative frameworks, processes and tools, training and performance indicators, as well as clarity of intent. The SMCC has paved a solid path to move forward. Nevertheless, in doing so it has faced some challenges, as explored below.

#### **Leadership commitment**

A principal challenge has been, and remains, to ensure that the Movement components, at all levels, maintain and reinforce a mindset to coordinate, as also mandated by the SA 2.0. This can be a greater obstacle than technical or systemic incompatibilities. Committed leadership within different Movement components has been crucial to progress but has not been consistently high. It must be further developed through consistent engagement to avoid lapsing into the competitive attitudes and practices of the past, in particular in the early stages of emergencies and crises where the Movement components still too often focus on grabbing space and visibility rather than on coordination and impact. While there are inherent difficulties in coordinating – it takes time and effort – leadership at all levels of the Movement must be convinced, strongly committed and communicate strong and consistent messages to staff and volunteers.

#### **Ambitious SMCC plan**

The defined SMCC objectives at different stages of the initiative have sometimes been too ambitious and have been guided by IFRC and ICRC headquarters’ perspectives away from field realities and capacities to absorb, both for IFRC and ICRC delegations and for the National Societies concerned.

### **Resource mobilization coordination**

Coordinating our resource mobilization, a practice generally appreciated by donors, has also been challenging. In some contexts, it has brought us closer together as a Movement; in others, it has created difficulties and, therefore, different models have been tested with varying results.

### **Evidence and quantitative data**

Although qualitative indicators suggest that we are making solid progress, obtaining sound quantitative data to substantiate the impact of SMCC and the operational dividends of coordination has been an additional challenge. External and unforeseen factors such as the COVID-19 pandemic and data security threats have limited progress on IT interoperability, subsequently limiting our collective capacity to measure progress.

### **Engagement in the SMCC initiative**

General oversight and accompaniment of the SMCC initiative has fostered significant National Society interest and involvement. However, when it comes to technical and more time-consuming involvement, some of the challenges faced were associated with the lack of available dedicated resources and, at times, limited engagement due to competing priorities in their own National Societies, leading in some cases to changes in the members or co-chairs of various technical groups.

### **Transitioning to the SA 2.0**

Transition following the approval of the SA 2.0: As evidenced in the SMCC Lessons Learned review conducted in Pakistan and Ukraine, the transition from the previous normative framework to the SA 2.0 caused some confusion within the Movement. Furthermore, there was a notable emphasis on Movement politics in rolling out the SA 2.0, detracting from the essential need to ensure that Host National Societies comprehensively understand the **implications of their convener role** in large-scale operations.

### **SMCC structures**

SMCC structures proved challenging to manage efficiently. Identified issues:

- Inadequate multi-layer coordination and consultation structures leading to limited connectivity, inadequate follow-up and resources, and cumbersome processes
- Difficulty in connecting all the different initiatives within the SMCC, as well as in linking them with related works on similar issues implemented within the Movement but outside of the SMCC structures
- Difficulty in ensuring follow-up and accountability between the different levels of the SMCC structures. Furthermore, due to the complexity of the structure, the SMCC failed to fully leverage and optimize the capacity and knowledge of the participants in the process, including MIT co-leads
- Ambitious plans of action (for example of MITs), with difficulty in keeping track of what has been done and in ensuring follow-up of the many defined objectives

## **4. IMPLEMENTATION AND MONITORING**

This is the final report covering the entire period of the SMCC process (2013–2024). It is therefore the final communication to the CoD on this specific resolution. However, in alignment with the integration and mainstreaming of the SMCC initiative into the normative framework of the SA 2.0, support for Movement coordination, including monitoring of the application and utilization of the tools at the country level, will continue.

## **5. FUTURE OF THE SMCC AND MOVING FORWARD**

### **Integrating all SMCC efforts and legacies into overall Movement coordination**



- The **SMCC spirit** developed over the last ten years should continue to be nurtured and promoted. In all instances and in a pragmatic manner, from the leadership to all the other levels, the Movement components should **focus** their attention on how they can achieve the best possible **collective response and impact**, from the beginning of crises and emergencies, rather than on individual institutions' positioning and visibility, also ensuring the centrality of the Host National Society at the core of the coordination.
- A **siloed approach** should be avoided. The different initiatives under the SMCC should be integrated into a coherent and global approach towards the implementation and operationalization of the SA 2.0.
- Additional efforts should be undertaken to build knowledge, further disseminate and create ownership of Movement coordination among all Movement partners at all levels (leadership, staff, members and volunteers). The ICRC and the IFRC should take the lead in promoting the SMCC spirit, tools, good practices and ownership through **training and learning initiatives**.

### **Continuous review, use and promotion of the tools**

- All main **SMCC tools** have been integrated and become mandatory as part of the SA 2.0. Thus, they should be regularly reviewed, and their use consistently promoted by the ICRC and the IFRC, and all the Movement components.
- Efficient Movement coordination mechanisms should be in place in all contexts, including in situations of normalcy, supported by **Movement Coordination Agreements**.
- In all large-scale crises and emergencies triggering a collective response of the Movement as defined by the SA 2.0, a **Mini-Summit**, producing a **Mini-Summit Decision Table**, should be organized in the first 48 hours, followed by a **Joint Statement**, defining the roles and responsibilities of Movement partners, and the general directions and objectives of the Movement response. All international emergency appeals launched in this context should be in line with the decisions of the Mini-Summit and properly coordinated.
- As part of the accountability framework, the IFRC and the ICRC should ensure the continued monitoring of the use and application of SMCC tools at the country level. In addition, all Movement partners should introduce accountability towards Movement coordination in their human resource management systems.
- Further efforts should be made to collectively develop **Movement contingency plans**.
- The **SMCC toolkit web page** should be properly maintained and kept up to date by the IFRC and the ICRC. It is recommended that it should become a "**Movement coordination toolkit**" where all materials and good practice regarding Movement coordination can be found.

### **Assessing Movement coordination against its operational impact**

- With the present final ten-year report, the SMCC process (including related coordination structures), as a stand-alone initiative, is completed and will be mainstreamed at all levels.
- Consultations between IFRC and ICRC leadership on Movement coordination will be regular and supported by the recently established informal ICRC-IFRC Movement coordination working group at a technical level to advise on Movement coordination issues.
- The good technical collaboration on key thematic areas (including communications, surge, logistics, security) should be continued as a matter of normal practice between the Movement components.
- As a matter of principle, a strong focus should be placed on reinforcing the operational impact of Movement coordination at the field level, in addition to on ensuring the functioning of structures or processes at the global level.
- The establishment of formal cumbersome structures should be avoided, as they tend to complicate interactions with bureaucratic functioning and slow decision-making.

In conclusion, the SMCC initiative has improved coordination between the Movement components in challenging contexts. It has been instrumental in keeping them engaged in coordination at a time when the first Seville Agreement framework was hotly contested. It

allowed for the development of useful tools and to forge elements of trust among Movement partners. A full transformation in mindset towards coordination has, however, not been achieved, with individualistic reflexes of institutions still present at times, too much of a siloed approach, cumbersome processes and a lot of time and effort spent on transactions rather than on operational response.

Above all, it is now time for the IFRC, the ICRC and National Societies to consistently “walk the talk”, in other words, to own Movement coordination and be accountable for it, to faithfully implement the SA 2.0, using the quality tools developed under the SMCC process and, first and foremost, in all circumstances to put the collective impact of the Movement for the benefit of the affected populations before each individual institution’s interests. It is only through such a commitment that the positive developments of the SMCC will bear fruit and overcome its shortcomings.