



United for Humanity

**Council of Delegates of the International
Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement**

3–4 December 2026, Geneva

Humanitarian accountability of technology: Ensuring humanitarian principles guide our use of ICTs

DRAFT ELEMENTS OF RESOLUTION

December 2025

EN

Original: English

Document prepared by the ICRC and IFRC with the American Red Cross, Australian Red Cross, British Red Cross, Kenya Red Cross Society and Lebanese Red Cross.

DRAFT ELEMENTS OF RESOLUTION

Humanitarian accountability of technology: Ensuring humanitarian principles guide our use of ICTs

BACKGROUND

The draft elements of the proposed resolution “Humanitarian accountability of technology: Ensuring humanitarian principles guide our use of ICTs” seek to provide an outline of the possible substance of individual paragraphs, without providing a definitive draft text. Each section is followed by a rationale explaining why the paragraphs would be useful to include in the resolution.

This document is being shared for consultation with the components of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement (Movement) in order to gather a first round of comments and feedback, and to gain an initial understanding of whether the proposed approach would be acceptable and garner consensus.

When providing comments and feedback on this document, please consider the following questions:

- Do you agree with the proposed elements for the preambular and operative paragraphs of the proposed resolution?
- Are there any elements that are missing or should be included in the resolution?

Detailed comments on the wording of the draft elements of this resolution are not expected at this stage. There will be an opportunity to comment on specific wording at a later stage, once the draft zero of the resolution is available.

INTRODUCTION

In today’s world, information and communication technologies (ICTs) have become ubiquitous, and their influence and impacts wide-reaching. ICTs are no longer mere commodities – they have significant geopolitical and societal implications. ICT solutions and methods have been broadly integrated into our humanitarian efforts, with the promise of enhancing our work and improving our capabilities, but in reality they have also brought significant risks. Humanitarian organizations are already promoting digital literacy, data privacy and information as aid, but the rapid adoption of artificial intelligence is raising new ethical and practical questions.

ICT initiatives can erode or damage the trust of communities if not carefully built on their needs, contexts and perspectives. Without robust safeguards, these technologies can compromise our principles and unintentionally harm the very communities we seek to protect and empower.

Public scrutiny has grown around the potential negative impacts of ICTs on fundamental rights, conflict dynamics, the environment and security, alongside calls for greater transparency, responsibility, and accountability – especially for public and humanitarian entities. ICTs have also become politicized, with a few states and private companies dominating supply chains and markets. These tools often reflect socio-political interests and values, which must be

carefully weighed against the seven Fundamental Principles – especially humanity, impartiality, neutrality and independence – as well as the imperative to “do no harm” (including by strengthening data protection and cybersecurity measures).

The Movement increasingly relies on ICTs to support its mission. As operating environments become more digitalized and technological advancements accelerate, ICTs have become integral to the Movement’s operations, heightening its dependency on them. But the level of digital transformation, connectivity and resources varies widely across the Movement. In the communities we work alongside as well, there is great diversity in the ICT environments and practices and in community digital literacy.

By adhering to our Fundamental Principles and applying the same rigor that we use for our analogue practices to designing how we integrate ICTs into our work, we can secure better outcomes for the Movement components and the communities we work with. Reliance on our principles will also help ensure that we have continued access to communities.

The adoption of the first *IFRC Digital Transformation Strategy* in 2020 has set the IFRC’s members on a journey of digital transformation, committing to accountability and integrity grounded in the Fundamental Principles, to ensure that the use of and innovation in technology – including AI – are in line with our humanitarian mission and serve to strengthen the trust of communities.

The *ICRC Technology Strategy* for 2025 underscored that all technology choices must be measured against neutrality, independence and impartiality. The ICRC’s *Handbook on Data Protection in Humanitarian Action* addressed technology issues such as artificial intelligence and data protection by design. The report on *Digitalizing the Red Cross, Red Crescent and Red Crystal Emblems: Benefits, Risks and Possible Solutions* advanced a pathway for protecting humanitarian and medical digital infrastructure that has growing industry support. Together, these initiatives provide a framework that ties digital transformation, technological innovation and operational safeguards to Movement values.

In December 2023, National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (National Societies) were convened by the IFRC’s Solferino Academy and Global Disaster Preparedness Centre to discuss how to take an ethical approach to technology development, leveraging our core humanitarian principles. It led to a robust discussion on the critical need to improve our approach to implementing ICTs.

Within National Societies there have also been efforts to address this issue. For example, the Kenya Red Cross Society launched its *Data and Digital Transformation Strategy 2024–2028*, which focuses on six strategic pillars: empowering our people, developing inclusive digital systems, ensuring responsible use of data, fostering sustainable partnerships, promoting digital innovation, and driving community-centred digital transformation. Similarly, Humanitech, an initiative of the Australian Red Cross, has developed a series of principles for designing technology to put humanitarian principles at the forefront.

Research shows that when humanitarian standards on accountability are embedded into approaches to digital transformation, the digital solutions developed are more relevant and sustainable and better meet the needs of practitioners and the communities we serve.

Previous resolutions relevant to this topic include:

- 34IC/24/R2: “Protecting civilians and other protected persons and objects against the potential human cost of ICT activities during armed conflict”
- 33IC/19/R4: “Restoring Family Links while respecting privacy, including as it relates to personal data protection”
- CD/19/R1: “Movement-wide commitments for community engagement and accountability”

This resolution:

- will consolidate the perspectives of the Movement to improve humanitarian accountability in the digital era.
- will guide the Movement in navigating this complex landscape, ensuring that we adopt technology as thoughtfully as we pursue our humanitarian goals.
- will call on the Movement, our partners and the humanitarian ecosystem as a whole to take an iterative and principled approach to ensure that ICTs are successfully utilized by National Societies and the communities they serve.

Preambular paragraphs (PP)

PP 1: This PP could recognize the need for the creation, application and use of ICTs and technological processes to be guided by our Fundamental Principles. This PP could reaffirm the importance of humanitarian principles in guiding the work of Movement entities and their utility in helping protect communities from harm.

PP 2: This PP could acknowledge and respect that local communities are at the centre of all technology decision-making throughout the technology lifecycle, and that the Movement and partners play a collaborative role.

PP 3: This PP could note that the world is getting more digitalized, communities themselves are using digital technology more frequently, and emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence (AI) raise questions about the potential negative impacts on communities, which highlights the need to address inequalities (e.g. digital exclusion and biases), the handling of sensitive data, and ethical creation and use.

PP 4: This PP could emphasize that humanitarian organizations must continuously assess whether the negative impact of their use of technology outweighs the positive impact it can have and must ensure that affected people are effectively involved in that assessment and related decision-making, given the new risks from nondeterministic tools such as generative AI that can reduce transparency and quietly entrench and hide biases behind algorithms.

PP 5: This PP could express the need to address the variation in digital literacy and stages of digital transformation across the Movement, countries and contexts.

PP 6: This PP could express the need to adapt current approaches to technology research, design, development and adoption to embed humanitarian standards on accountability into the process and recall our humanitarian principles.

PP 7: This PP could evoke the partnership framework between the Movement and technology providers and highlight data sharing and privacy principles, the sustainability aspect of digital solutions and the level of ownership of each party in the partnership.

PP 8: This PP could recognize the concrete progress made towards the technical development of a digital emblem as a means of identifying the data and digital infrastructure of organizations and entities entitled to display the distinctive emblems recognized under international humanitarian law and to indicate, where applicable, their legal protection, and could welcome the collaborative work underway at international standardization bodies to incorporate the digital emblem into global information and communication systems.

PP 9: This PP could note the broader consequences of ICT developments in the very areas where the Movement provides support and in other areas that concern the Movement, such as sustainability and the environmental impact of new technologies and their widespread adoption. It could emphasize the need for a framework the Movement can confidently use to assess and mitigate the immediate impacts in order to reduce the broader consequences.

Rationale:

The increasing digital transformation of our day-to-day activities heightens the urgency to address the challenges and risks posed by these solutions. Key challenges identified in Movement discussions include accountability for AI-enabled decisions, the need to ensure human control in high-risk contexts, and the risks of harmful information, bias or error affecting civilians.

The Movement and our partners invest in digital technologies with an expectation that we will achieve our humanitarian impact and continuously assess that impact throughout the technologies' lifecycle. Technology, with guardrails, can help achieve our mission, especially as needs continue to grow and resources decrease. Technology shifts can be more effective when done safely and guided by our principles. While technology creators are trained to determine if a product has met standards for good engineering, it is humanitarians who bear the burden of determining if the process and product are meeting humanitarian standards for accountability.

This ambition is deeply influenced by the lessons and approaches from our other core humanitarian work. We stress the need to build with and work with communities across our activities, and technology should be no exception.

Operative paragraphs (OP)

OP 1: The OP could call for the support of the Movement for recognizing the need to integrate our foundational humanitarian standards on accountability into our digital processes, projects and products.

OP 2: The OP could call on the Movement to work with technology partners, including universities and the private sector, to ensure they understand humanitarian responsibilities towards communities and to set the expectation that those responsibilities will be translated into requirements that reflect humanitarian imperatives and priorities in order to improve technology outputs.

OP 3: This OP could encourage the Movement, when relevant, to leverage its relationships with ICT providers and other relevant stakeholders to engage in dialogue with them and influence their practices, policies and standards to better take into account humanitarian considerations, the protection of people at risk, and the specific risks and opportunities attached to the deployment of ICTs in humanitarian settings.

OP 4: The OP could call for the Movement to invest in awareness-raising, training and capacity development programmes to ensure that its staff and operating partners are supported and equipped to understand the importance of taking an ethical and responsible approach to the use of ICTs in support of humanitarian action and to actually do so. This could include the involvement of academic partners to educate new technologists.

OP 5: The OP could endorse the creation of an advisory group and monitoring mechanism across the Movement to discuss and address this issue, to continue to do so actively following the adoption of the resolution and to report back to the Council of Delegates.

OP 6: This OP could call for the establishment of mechanisms for both showcasing good practice/examples of where successful implementation of technology in humanitarian work has improved outcomes/experiences and exploring how these models could be scaled up. It could also seek to establish a framework for capturing the lessons identified and monitoring any shifts that result from lessons learned.

OP 7: This OP could recommend that the Movement upholds the highest possible levels of responsibility and accountability in its use and management of ICT solutions, through continuous monitoring, assessment and reporting on the procurement, use, management and review of ICT solutions – including through publicly accessible reporting, when relevant.

OP 8: This OP could emphasize the need for and benefits of taking a collective and collaborative approach across the Movement to improve procurement and investment in ICTs.

Rationale:

The Fundamental Principles guide this resolution in order to encapsulate the key elements and aspirations driving the Movement's management of the ethical and practical challenges related to its use and choice of ICT solutions and providers. The Fundamental Principles allow the Movement's values and culture of integrity to be projected onto its ICT choices, policies and practices, with a view to leading by example and ensuring that a flexible, coherent and responsible approach is taken that strengthens its credibility and reputation. The Movement will promote awareness and respect for these principles among its staff and in its interactions and relationships with ICT providers, donors and partners.

Humanity, impartiality, neutrality and independence

- The Movement's approach to ICTs is driven by purely humanitarian objectives and a commitment to improving the quality, efficiency and impact of its activities. It makes respect for humanitarian law and principles, human rights, safety, security and dignity central to its ICT choices and strategies. It focuses on ICT solutions that can help alleviate the suffering of affected populations, enhance their agency and resilience, and complement its face-to-face interactions and proximity with them. In line with the "do no harm" approach, the Movement systematically assesses the potential negative secondary impact that ICTs may have on affected people and takes all possible measures to avoid and mitigate them through its engagement with relevant stakeholders.
- The Movement uses ICT solutions that strengthen its ability to identify and respond to humanitarian needs in an impartial manner. It makes all possible efforts to consult affected people, users and other stakeholders to ensure that the ICT solutions and tools it uses are safe and inclusive by design and through impact, and that they enable fair, non-discriminatory, equal and equitable delivery of assistance and services to all affected people and users, taking into account their varying degrees of needs and capacity.
- The Movement takes all feasible measures to ensure that its choices of ICT tools and providers cannot be instrumentalized to challenge its neutrality and independence due to possible perceived association or alignment with companies, groups or individuals that (i) are directly engaged in activities contributing to armed conflict or closely associated with parties to conflict, or (ii) promote corporate or political practices, interests or initiatives that are contradictory to its humanitarian mandate and ethical values.
- The Movement promotes data protection as a principle of accountability, ensuring that the deployment of new technologies is guided by the principles of necessity, proportionality and respect for human dignity. Building on existing policies and legal frameworks, as well as lessons learned from past data breaches, the Movement seeks to strengthen its collective capacity to protect personal data.

A holistic, balanced and pragmatic approach

- In assessing its ICT options, the Movement's focuses on acquiring and developing functional, impactful and effective tools and systems aligned with operational needs and integration capabilities. It carefully balances the pros and cons of each potential solution, taking into account their impact on the effectiveness of the organization's activities and processes throughout their lifecycle, with a focus on safety and security requirements, sustainability and interoperability, cost-effectiveness and practical added value for affected people, end-users and Movement staff.

- In evaluating potential ICT providers, the Movement continuously analyses the reliability and reputation of the companies considered, with a focus on their corporate record, environmental, sustainability and governance (ESG) policies and practices, their public posture and level of involvement in political or conflict-related controversies and debates.
- In its procurement of ICT, the Movement focuses on simplifying its digital ecosystem, enhancing interoperability, and strengthening resilience. Where appropriate, it makes specific efforts to diversify its ICT stack, improve its digital resilience, and reduce its dependency on a small number of providers. Where relevant and feasible, it leverages resources from local ICT ecosystems.

Adaptability, scalability and sustainability

- When evaluating potential ICT solutions, the Movement uses a multidimensional analysis that integrates (i) their organizational criticality and risk level for users and the Movement; (ii) their interconnectedness, compatibility and alignment with the organizations' objectives, values, systems and processes; (iii) their potential for scalability and adaptation to specific use cases, requirements and contexts; and (iv) considerations of sustainability in terms of acquisition, deployment and maintenance costs and environmental footprint.
- Where relevant and appropriate depending on the criticality and risk-level of the solutions considered, the Movement strives to explore available, safe and suitable free and/or open-source ICT solutions that can help reduce dependency on commercial proprietary tools and systems that can jeopardize its operational resilience, independence and autonomy or restrict its ability to opt for alternatives without disproportionate costs.

As the issues with technology are pervasive and systemic, and unlikely to correct themselves, the Movement must take responsibility for its own accountable use of technology and continue to work with states, standards bodies and others, with the agency and interests of communities at the forefront.

In order to guide and provide structure to the objectives of this resolution, an advisory group and monitoring mechanism across the Movement could be created to discuss and address this issue, to continue to actively address the issue following the adoption of this resolution and to report back to the Council of Delegates. The mandate could include gathering community insights and lived experiences to inform future ICT developments, discussions, decisions and frameworks.