

A woman with dark skin and curly hair is wearing a red IFRC uniform, including a red cap and a red t-shirt. She is smiling and looking off to the side. The background is a dark blue gradient with diagonal lines. The text 'GUIDE TO THE AUXILIARY ROLE OF RED CROSS AND RED CRESCENT NATIONAL SOCIETIES' is overlaid on the image in white, bold, sans-serif font.

# GUIDE TO THE AUXILIARY ROLE OF RED CROSS AND RED CRESCENT NATIONAL SOCIETIES

**AFRICA**

2nd Edition

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# GUIDE TO THE AUXILIARY ROLE OF RED CROSS AND RED CRESCENT NATIONAL SOCIETIES – AFRICA

## 2nd Edition

The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies is the world's largest volunteer-based humanitarian network. With our 192-member National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies worldwide, we are present in virtually every community. We reach 160.7 million people annually through long-term services and development programmes, as well as 110 million people through disaster response and early recovery programmes. We act before, during and after disasters and health emergencies to meet the needs and improve the lives of vulnerable people. We do so with impartiality as to nationality, race, gender, religious beliefs, class, and political opinions. Guided by Strategy 2030 – our collective plan of action to tackle the major humanitarian and development challenges of this decade – we are committed to saving lives and changing minds. Our strength lies in our volunteer network, our community-based expertise and our independence and neutrality. We work to improve humanitarian standards, as partners in development, and in response to disasters. We persuade decision-makers to act at all times in the interests of vulnerable people. The result is that we enable healthy and safe communities, reduce vulnerabilities, strengthen resilience, and foster a culture of peace around the world.

**Eswatini, 2020** Eswatini Red  
Cross Society cash transfer  
operation beneficiary Mavis  
Simelane and Volunteer  
Mlungisi Matsebula.  
© Ville Palonen /  
Finnish Red Cross



# FOREWORD

A healthy and robust auxiliary status ensures that a National Society can effectively contribute to national and global humanitarian response and sustainable development systems. A National Society's auxiliary role offers a fundamental point of engagement with its public authority counterparts. This *Guide to the Auxiliary Role* is designed to support African National Societies, as well as public authorities and stakeholders, to understand the foundational aspects of the auxiliary status.

African National Societies are often the key partner of choice to national governments in actioning their humanitarian and development commitments. This *Guide* offers simplified information on how the auxiliary role can support clarification of roles and responsibilities in the achievement of these national objectives. Further, the *Guide* enhances recognition of the important role the Fundamental Principles of the International Red Cross Red Crescent Movement play in determining the National Societies' partnerships with public authorities. The clarity offered is expected to foster a strong relationship between the national government and the National Society, thereby

making humanitarian and development action more effective and efficient.

Additionally, the *Guide* provides practical examples from this region of how different National Societies have harnessed their auxiliary status to improve not only service delivery to the most vulnerable but also their capacity to support their public authorities. Recognizing that what constitutes a successful auxiliary role is often contextual, the *Guide* offers an illustrative perspective of what the auxiliary role can encompass. The *Guide* may be used in conjunction with the IFRC [\*Guide to Parliamentarians\*](#), as well as the [\*Guide to Strengthening the Auxiliary Role through Law and Policy\*](#).

It is hoped that this updated *Guide* will serve to enhance the understanding of the crucial nature of the auxiliary role of African National Societies as well as bolster their engagements with their public authorities.

**Mohammed Omer MUKHIER**

*Regional Director, Africa Region*

*International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies*

# WHAT IS A RED CROSS OR RED CRESCENT NATIONAL SOCIETY?

Each National Society is an **independent, impartial**, and **neutral** humanitarian organisation with a special status and role among humanitarian agencies. National Societies' volunteers and staff provide a wide variety of services, ranging from disaster relief, development programmes/ activities and assistance for the victims of armed conflicts, to first-aid training and restoring family links.

National Societies are key actors in the domestic response to humanitarian and development challenges and can count upon the solidarity of the world's largest humanitarian network in situations where there are exceptional levels of need.

National Societies are one of the three components of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement which consists of:

1. the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC);
2. the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC); and
3. 192 National Societies.

National Societies have a unique status. On the one hand, they are **not non-governmental organisations (NGOs)** because they are partners to their public authorities in the humanitarian field. On the other hand, they are **not part of government**. Instead, they are independent of government and must be able to always deliver their humanitarian services to vulnerable people in conformity with the Fundamental Principles. The **auxiliary role**

is the expression of this legal status and provides an opportunity for each National Society to work closely with its public authority counterparts on humanitarian issues while maintaining its independence.

The **Joint Statutes Commission** is responsible for assessing applications by new National Societies for recognition by the ICRC and for admission to the IFRC. There are 10 conditions for recognition, which are established by article 4 of the **Statutes of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement** (Statutes of the Movement). One of the conditions is that a National Society must be *“duly recognised by the legal government of its country on the basis of the Geneva Conventions and of the national legislation as a voluntary aid society, auxiliary to the public authorities in the humanitarian field”*. This means that recognition of the auxiliary role is a condition for the establishment of a National Society.

**Kenya, 2019** Kenya Red Cross is helping improve communities' ability to respond before, during and after epidemics occur. They are working with national and local authorities collectively in health, agriculture, veterinary services and education to help change deeply-rooted behaviours and improve systems that detect and act on outbreaks early, preventing them from becoming epidemics.  
© Corrie Butler / IFRC



# WHAT IS THE AUXILIARY STATUS AND ROLE?

The **auxiliary status** is permanent and is part of the **legal foundation** of every National Society. Normally, it is reflected in the **domestic law** of the country and exists once a National Society has been recognised by the legal government of its country, based on the 1949 Geneva Conventions and the country's national legislation, as a voluntary aid society, auxiliary to the public authorities in the humanitarian field.

The **auxiliary role** is the embodiment of a National Society's auxiliary status. In a nutshell, the auxiliary role of a National Society is to support its public authorities by supplementing or substituting for public humanitarian services, while acting in conformity with the Fundamental Principles, in particular neutrality and independence. The auxiliary role therefore **defines the relationship** between a government and a National Society and provides opportunities for **regular contact** at all levels. It is important to note however that the *auxiliary role does not mean that National Societies are subordinate to government.*

The 30th **International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent** (2007), described the auxiliary role as a relationship where:

*“public authorities and National Societies as **auxiliaries enjoy a specific and distinctive partnership, entailing mutual responsibilities and benefits**, based on international and national laws, in which the national public authorities and the National Society agree on the areas in which the National Society supplements or substitutes public humanitarian services [...].”*

Due to their auxiliary status, National Societies have a duty to **consider seriously** any request from their public authorities to carry out humanitarian activities within their mandate. The public authorities should take full advantage of the services and activities of the National Society to complement public social services and disaster response mechanisms. Public authorities, recognizing the independence of National Societies, must refrain from requesting that National Societies perform activities

**which conflict with the Fundamental Principles or the Statutes of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement.** States, themselves, have affirmed the obligation of National Societies to abide by these principles.

The auxiliary status is most valuable when its **contents are clearly defined.** Therefore, the International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent has called upon National Societies and their respective public authorities at all levels to pursue and enhance balanced partnerships with clear and mutual responsibilities.



**Guinea** Community engagement officers talk to the community about how to prevent and recognise Ebola, and what to do in case of infection. © IFRC

# WHAT ARE THE FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES?

National Societies' work is based on the Movement's **Seven Fundamental Principles**, which were adopted at the 20th International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent in Vienna in 1965. National Societies are required to always abide by the Fundamental Principles.

The Fundamental Principles are an expression of the Movement's values and practices, serving as both a guide for action and the Movement's common identity and purpose. To modify the Fundamental Principles would require the approval of the International Conference, as the text of the Fundamental Principles is included in the Statutes of the Movement.

## The Fundamental principles are:

### HUMANITY

The principle of humanity provides that the *Red Cross, born of a desire to bring assistance without discrimination to the wounded on the battlefield, endeavours – in its international and national capacity – to prevent and alleviate human suffering wherever it may be found. Its purpose is to protect life and health and to ensure respect for the human being. It promotes mutual understanding, friendship, cooperation, and lasting peace amongst all peoples.*

The principle of Humanity is a reminder that one of the Movement's primary objectives is to act to prevent and alleviate human suffering.

## IMPARTIALITY

As the Movement endeavours to relieve suffering, giving priority to the most urgent cases of distress, all Movement actors should in this respect make no discrimination as to nationality, race, religious beliefs, class, political opinions, or any other related factors.

This principle calls on National Societies to put systems in place to ensure that the people benefitting from their services are those whose vulnerability is the highest. Additionally, this principle also aims at preventing situations of favouritism and thus staff and volunteers should be trained on what is appropriate within the context of this principle.

## NEUTRALITY

The principle of neutrality calls on Movement actors not to *take sides in hostilities or engage at any time in controversies of a political, racial, religious, or ideological nature, in order to enjoy the confidence of all.*

Neutrality defines the attitude of Movement actors towards combatants and ideologies. It does not determine their behaviour towards human beings suffering because a fundamental characteristic of the Movement is to act to alleviate human suffering and not remain passive.

If the actions of a National Society are, for example only of a medical nature, and do not facilitate the conduct of hostilities by any of the parties involved, then the assistance should be considered as acceptable within the context of neutrality. Under the Geneva Conventions, personnel caring for the wounded and sick are protected. In this respect Movement actors are placed above the conflict and must not act in favour of any of the combatants to any kind of conflict. Therefore, it is important that all parties in a conflict understand and respect the humanitarian role of a National Society.

## INDEPENDENCE

Independence means that National Societies, while auxiliaries in the humanitarian services of their public authorities and subject to the laws of their respective countries, *must always maintain their autonomy* to enable them to act in accordance with the principles of the Movement. Maintaining independence requires National Societies to resist any pressures or interference from the public authorities that would compromise adherence to the Fundamental Principles.

Independence is a valuable tool for any National Society's work, allowing the National Society to gain the trust and confidence of, and access to, vulnerable communities. Fostering the independence of the National Society helps the public authorities ensure that more effective humanitarian assistance can be delivered to the most vulnerable.

## VOLUNTARY SERVICE

*The Red Cross is a voluntary relief organisation not prompted in any manner by desire for gain.*

The term "volunteer" refers to someone who works of their own free will, without external compulsion, and not necessarily someone who is not paid. The principle of voluntary service does not mean that a National Society actor should not be paid for their work but rather implies that one serves not because of any constraint but because of a freely accepted commitment. Whether working with or without remuneration, the main element is that the work is not inspired by the desire for financial gain.

The voluntary character of the Red Cross is directly related to the principle of humanity, being in effect a means for putting that principle into action. The work of a National Society member, volunteer, or staff should be driven by the commitment and devotion to the humanitarian purpose; freely chosen or accepted as part of the service that the National Society renders to the community.

## UNITY

The principle of unity states that *there can be only one Red Cross Society in any one country. It must be open to all. It must carry on its humanitarian work throughout its territory.*

For practical reasons, the National Society must be the only one of its kind in each country as an essential requirement for the efficacy of its work. Unity of National Society leadership is also essential for similar reasons. As the only organisation of its kind in the country, strategic guidance of the organisation also needs to be centralised to ensure adherence to the Fundamental Principles.

## UNIVERSALITY

The principle of universality states that *the Red Cross is a world-wide institution in which all Societies have equal status and share equal responsibilities and duties in helping each other.*

This principle connotes one of the objectives of the Movement, which is to become universal, meaning it would have a National Society member in each country. This is slowly becoming a reality as more and more National Societies are constituted the world over. Additionally, the principle also calls to mind the fact that National Societies must be equal. This creates a great solidarity between National Societies, which is the basis for movement cooperation. Further, regarding decision-making, all National Societies carry one vote at the Federation's General Assembly, the Council of Delegates, and the International Conference, irrelevant of their size or financial resources.

A further detailed analysis of the Fundamental principles has been provided in the [Commentary on the Fundamental Principles of the Red Cross by Jean Pictet.](#)



## WHERE DOES THE AUXILIARY ROLE COME FROM?

The auxiliary role dates from the foundation of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement in the 19th century. National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies were created to provide medical assistance to those wounded in battle, in support of their countries' military medical services. Today, National Societies are recognised as auxiliaries to their public authorities in the humanitarian field **in times of both war and peace**. Subsequent resolutions of the International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent, which States help to develop, have described the auxiliary role of the National Society further, defined its characteristics and affirmed the role of the public authorities in supporting the National Society's auxiliary role.

**Sudan, 2020** A volunteer in the Sudanese Red Crescent Society carries a girl to safety during the floods, in the village of Almizela, in the state of River Nile, Sudan. © Haitham Ibrahim / Sudanese Red Crescent Society

# HOW CAN THE AUXILIARY ROLE SUPPORT THE FULFILMENT OF HUMANITARIAN GOALS AND OBLIGATIONS?

In accordance with the **United Nations General Assembly Resolution 46/182**, each State has the responsibility to take care of those affected by natural disasters and other emergencies occurring in its territory by initiating, organizing, coordinating, and implementing humanitarian assistance.

As auxiliaries to their public authorities in the humanitarian field, National Societies have the potential to be **valuable partners** to support the public authorities in meeting their humanitarian obligations and achieving their humanitarian and development goals. National Societies respond to the needs of vulnerable populations domestically and build community resilience through their decentralised network of branches, staff, and volunteer bases, therefore their goals are similar to those found in national disaster or development plans. National Societies may be invaluable in the development of such plans, providing opportunities for coordination and mutual support.

**National Societies can complement state humanitarian activities.** They have an important role in establishing community-based functions in core areas like public health, disaster risk management, and climate adaptation. Additionally, through the Movement network, they can support the facilitation of international humanitarian assistance. These actions can be of invaluable support to public authorities during emergencies which surpass normal coping mechanisms and when working towards sustainable development.

Through their expansive volunteer network, National Societies may have access to areas and resources that are less accessible to others. Also, as members of the Movement, they have access to the global expertise of other National Societies, the IFRC and ICRC.

# THE AUXILIARY ROLE UNPACKED

## WHAT IS THE AUXILIARY ROLE?

The auxiliary role is the embodiment of a National Society's auxiliary status.

**It is “a specific and distinctive partnership, entailing mutual responsibilities and benefits, based on international and national laws, in which the national public authorities and the National Society agree on the areas in which the National Society supplements or substitutes public humanitarian services[.]”**

*Resolution 2, 30th International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent (2007).*

## WHERE DOES THE AUXILIARY ROLE COME FROM?

From the foundation of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement in the 19th century: National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies were created to provide medical assistance to those wounded in battle. Today, National Societies are recognised as auxiliaries to their public authorities in the humanitarian field in times of both war and peace. Resolutions of the International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent have **described the auxiliary role of the National Society further and defined its characteristics.**

## WHERE CAN THE AUXILIARY ROLE BE FOUND?

The auxiliary role is a part of the **legal foundation** of every recognised National Society and is included in the domestic law of the country, often in a Red Cross or Red Crescent law or act.

In this respect, national societies **represent valuable partners** for providing crucial humanitarian services which complement state humanitarian activities and which can assist States in realizing their commitments under national and international law.

## WHY IS THE AUXILIARY ROLE SO SIGNIFICANT?

The auxiliary role describes a balanced relationship between a **National Society** and its **government**, with **mutually agreed upon roles** and responsibilities.

The auxiliary role of National Societies is a defining characteristic that distinguishes them from NGOs, the UN and other humanitarian actors.

The auxiliary role **explains** a National Society's role within its country and can help a National Society to **shape that role**.

## HOW DOES THE AUXILIARY ROLE WORK IN PRACTICE?

National Societies **support and supplement** the public authorities in their humanitarian tasks, including through close coordination, and **seriously consider any official requests** by the authorities to carry out humanitarian activities **within their mandate**.

Public authorities ensure that National Societies may operate **autonomously and in compliance with the Fundamental Principles**.

## HOW CAN GOVERNMENTS SUPPORT NATIONAL SOCIETIES?

Public authorities can support the National Society to ensure that it has the capacity to fulfil its auxiliary role by, for instance, investing in an **exchange of skills and knowledge-sharing**, and **ensuring coordination of activities and planning**. Public authorities can also make **direct contributions, indirect contributions and create an enabling environment** to facilitate the humanitarian work of the National Society.

**Ethiopia, 2021** Most of the population returned to its community after violence destroyed great parts of the houses and infrastructure. Swiss Red Cross will provide cash assistance.  
© Johannes Chinchilla / IFRC



# NATIONAL SOCIETIES WORKING WITH THE PUBLIC AUTHORITIES

National Societies engage in a wide variety of **humanitarian and development activities** and programmes depending on the specific needs and context in their countries. As auxiliaries to public authorities in the humanitarian field, they may carry out some of these activities in agreement or coordination with their public authorities while maintaining their independence. National Society activities are governed by the Principles and Rules for Red Cross and Red Crescent Humanitarian Assistance which while recognizing the importance of partnerships with public authorities, encourages National Societies to link relief, recovery, and development.

National Society activities may cover a broad range of sectors such as disaster prevention, mitigation and response, disaster risk reduction, health, and social services (including first aid, blood, and ambulance services),

food security, shelter, international humanitarian law (IHL) dissemination/promotion, support in youth development programmes, the development of effective disaster laws, tracing services and emblem protection, to name a few.

Born from and firmly anchored in the communities which they serve, National Societies and their volunteers support communities to prepare for both unforeseen and predictable emergencies that threaten life and safety, as well as, often, serving as the last resort for persons living at the edges of society: the marginalised and isolated.

Below are a few examples of how specific National Societies and their public authorities have agreed to work together, coordinate or support one another.

**Malawi, 2019** Malawi Red Cross volunteer Thom Konkia set up a tent in Mwalija camp, which housed approximately 900 people evacuated due to flooding in 2019.  
© Saara Mansikkamaki / Finnish Red Cross



# MALAWI

## DISASTER RISK MANAGEMENT BILL DEVELOPMENT

In 2014, the Malawi Red Cross Society (MRCS) advocated to its government for a legislative mapping process to analyse its national legal framework for responding to disasters requiring international support. This process was ultimately spearheaded by the National Society in partnership with the Department of Disaster Management Affairs (DoDMA).

The resulting report produced in 2015, *International Disaster Response Law (IDRL) in Malawi A study on legal preparedness for regulatory issues in international disaster response*, analysed the existing legal and policy frameworks for disaster management and vetting and accepting international humanitarian assistance. It also clearly outlined the role of the MRCS in disaster risk management.

MRCS, a national expert on disaster law, was entrusted by the government to revise the Disaster Preparedness Relief Act (DPR Act) of 1991 in light of the recommendations of the 2015 IDRL report. As part of the National taskforce, the MRCS supported the drafting of the DRM Bill and its Operational Guidelines. The MRCS also engaged with the DoDMA in advocacy efforts with Parliament to assure the adoption of the bill. Once the bill has been passed, the National Society has committed to supporting dissemination at both national and community level.

## **SOUTH SUDAN**

# **HARNESSING THE AUXILIARY ROLE**

Through its dedicated volunteers spread out across the country, the South Sudan Red Cross Society (SSRCS) has quickly become a leading humanitarian organisation and partner in disaster management to the government of South Sudan. To facilitate its support to the government, the SSRCS recognised the need to have a regulatory framework to support its activities and enhance its auxiliary role. Since 2012, the SSRCS has been championing through various platforms the need for a legislative framework to act as a guide in all facets of disaster management. Working closely with the Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs and Disaster Management (MHADM), SSRCS has worked to increase awareness on the importance of this framework.

In this respect, the SSRCS provided technical support to the MHADM in the development of the National Disaster Risk

Management Policy and Disaster Risk Reduction Strategy. Additionally, through continued and concerted efforts, the SSRCS also supported in advocacy to national and state level government officials on the key components of the policy and how best to ensure the policy encompasses the country's disaster management needs. The National Society also supported advocacy with parliamentarians on the contents of the Policy ahead of its presentation to Parliament. The Policy has been finalised and is before the Cabinet for approval.

The SSRCS remains a key partner for the MHADM in developing the South Sudan DRM frameworks and, in 2021, has been requested to support in the development of the country's first Disaster Management Bill.



**South Sudan, 2017**

*Volunteers help a women  
take her essential  
household kit from the  
Red Cross to her home.*

© IFRC

**DRC, 2021** Jean Charles,  
a volunteer with the  
Congolese Red Cross is  
building shelters for people  
who lost their homes in the  
recent volcanic eruption.  
© Anette Selmer-Andresen  
/ IFRC



# DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO

## PUBLIC HEALTH EMERGENCY SUPPORT IN COMMUNITIES

Over the years, the Red Cross of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC Red Cross) has built strong capacities in Ebola Virus Disease (EVD) preparedness and response, both through its institutional structures as well as training for both staff and volunteers. Additionally, as some areas of resurgence of cases have been within armed conflict zones, the DRC Red Cross is one of the few organisations with safe access to the area. The DRC Red Cross is therefore uniquely placed to play a critical role in the response to various public health emergencies.

During the 2020 EVD outbreak, the DRC Red Cross, as part of the larger Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, was one of the actors with a mandate to carry out Safe and Dignified Burials (SDB). Notably, during the 10th Outbreak in North Kivu, Ituri and South Kivu, the DRC Red Cross as part of the larger Red Cross SDB teams, supported in carrying out SDBs of 88% of the 29,357 SDB alerts received.

Additionally, through its volunteer network, the DRC Red Cross has built a reputation of being a trusted organisation within the community. During the EVD response, communities hesitated to engage with response activities due to past experiences as well as unfamiliarity with the disease and the response activities. The DRC Red Cross's reputation allowed to effectively support Community Engagement and Accountability (CEA) activities developed in support of the response.

As a result, 981 CEA volunteers were able to reach 3,993,291 of the target population with door-to-door and mass sensitisation activities. The volunteers' engagement with community members aimed to reduce anxiety and fear and address stigma, rumours, and different cultural perceptions. The involvement of volunteers ensured that the response was carried out with respect for local traditions, while also seeking to change entrenched unhealthy behaviours.

**Uganda, 2019** Uganda Red Cross has trained community-based volunteers to educate communities about Ebola.  
© Corrie Butler / IFRC



**How is Ebola spread?**  
Ebola is spread through direct contact with the following:

- Soiled clothing of an infected person
- Unsterilised equipment used by an infected person
- Handling wildlife whether alive or dead
- Body fluids such as blood, saliva, faeces, vomit, urine and sweat of an infected person
- Saliva
- Blood
- Vomit
- Faeces
- Sweat
- Urine

Report all suspected cases to the nearest health facility immediately.  
For further information visit [www.who.int/ebola](http://www.who.int/ebola) or [www.unicef.org/ebola](http://www.unicef.org/ebola) or call toll free on 0800 1000000

World Health Organization | UK aid | USAID | unicef

# UGANDA

## UGANDA RED CROSS ACT REVISION

The Uganda Red Cross Society (URCS) is the leading humanitarian organisation in Uganda, with a network of 51 branches, and over 400,000 volunteers. The URCS aims to continue to be the partner of choice in saving lives, supporting livelihoods, and promoting human dignity through delivery of quality and sustainable humanitarian assistance.

The URCS has been at the centre of national disaster preparedness and response for many years and therefore sought to revise the Red Cross Act, Cap 57 to reflect the present auxiliary role status of URCS. The National Society drafted 'The Uganda Red Cross Bill, 2019' (the Bill) with the aim to highlight the prevailing role of the URCS as a primary actor in the country's national disaster management governance structure as well in national preparedness and humanitarian response in situations of

armed conflict and other situations of violence, and public health emergencies.

The Bill, passed into law in 2021, provides for governmental financial support and tax exemptions to the URCS to undertake humanitarian activities, thereby reinforcing the capacities of the National Society to operate effectively and efficiently. It also secures the protective and indicative use of the Movement's emblems, thus securing the reputation of the Red Cross within the community. The new law further highlights the URCS's commitment to promoting and disseminating International Humanitarian Law, Disaster Law, and the Fundamental Principles of the Movement.

Again, the most appropriate way for a National Society and the public authorities to engage is highly dependent upon the particular **national context**.

# SUPPORTING NATIONAL SOCIETIES

The extent to which a National Society can support the national humanitarian and development goals of the public authorities is highly dependent upon its **capacity** as an organisation **to carry out programmes and activities**.

Therefore, an important part of the auxiliary relationship is the role of the public authorities to **promote and support the capacity building** of their National Societies to be effective and strong humanitarian organisations.

There are many ways for the public authorities to support their National Society. For instance, investing in an **exchange of skills and knowledge-sharing** can be of great mutual benefit. The same is true for ensuring **coordination**, both in activities and in planning. The public authorities and the National Society will be able to gain further experience and expertise to the benefit of the most vulnerable.

While the purpose of the auxiliary role is not principally one of fundraising, **resources** do have important consequences on the ability of a National Society to conduct humanitarian activities and to support the public authorities in reaching their humanitarian goals and obligations. States have, through resolutions of the International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent, confirmed their roles in supporting their National Red Cross or Red Crescent Societies, including through the provision of resources.

There are numerous ways that public authorities can contribute to the success of their National Societies. To name only a few, they may:

- **provide direct contributions, such as:**
  - annual direct contributions (subventions) (for programmatic or core operating costs);
  - fees for service provision;

- **provide indirect contributions, such as:**

- tax exemptions and fiscal concessions (including customs, income tax for National Society staff, and legacies);
- tax exemptions with respect to assets of the National Society, including real estate and revenue from its income-generating activities;
- tax exemptions with respect to importation of humanitarian goods and equipment;
- fiscal incentives for donors;
- in-kind contributions (office space, land);
- special benefits (preferable rates on telecommunications, taxes or fees levied for the National Societies);
- licences to run profit-making endeavours (charity shops, commercial first-aid courses, blood provision);

- **ensure an enabling environment, by providing:**

- legal guarantee of access and freedom of movement for National Society personnel at all times, including during disasters or emergencies;
- legal facilities that protect or incentivise National Society staff and volunteers (access to government funded medical care; insurance; limited legal liability for acts or omissions committed in good faith);
- legal rights to volunteer for a National Society;
- access to automatic or expedited recognition of professional qualifications working with the National Societies (such as for doctors, engineers) across national or sub-national borders.



## DEVELOPING HUMANITARIAN PLANS, POLICIES, AND LAWS

Each National Society can be a valuable resource not only during a time of disaster, but long before that. Several National Societies are included in **national planning groups or committees** for disaster preparedness, risk reduction and management, as well as development. This can help to ensure that relevant humanitarian needs are addressed and that community-level needs of vulnerable populations are reflected in national planning mechanisms.

Inclusion in committees/planning groups can be another way to ensure **regular and in-depth contact** between a National Society and relevant public authorities at the national or local level.

As agreed by States at the International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent, National Societies can also support governments with advice in the **assessment and strengthening of disaster-related laws, policies, and regulations**.

## ENABLING ENVIRONMENT

As a defining characteristic of National Societies, the auxiliary role requires regular dialogue between a National Society and its public authorities about responsibilities and roles. As such, the public authorities and the National Society will want to ensure that the auxiliary role reflects and is adapted to the needs and priorities of each side.

**Regular dialogue around humanitarian issues** is essential to ensure that the auxiliary role is serving its purpose and the needs of both the public authorities and the National Society in the best way.

Periodically reviewing the National Society's auxiliary role can provide opportunities to ensure regular and appropriate points of contact, opportunities for increased partnership, transparency, and accountability. The public authorities can aid in identifying fora where the National Society could add value. Also, the National Society can

Left: **Madagascar, 2020** *Raveloarisoa Fanoeline, a Malagasy Red Cross volunteer verifies that the person's name is on the list of those receiving financial from the Malagasy Red Cross. © Randrianarivelo iAko Manantsoa / IFRC*  
Right: **Chad, 2020** *Red Cross of Chad volunteers are raising awareness in communities on how to prevent the spread of COVID-19. © Red Cross of Chad*



invite the public authorities to be included in its board and strategy meetings.

The public authorities and the National Society can **refer to the resolutions, and any joint pledges**, to which both have agreed during the International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent (International Conference). The International Conference, which takes place every four years, brings together the States parties to the Geneva Conventions and the various components of the Movement to define humanitarian priorities and establish the next steps to address the most pressing humanitarian challenges. International Conference resolutions can be a useful entry point for discussions regarding how the National Society and its public authorities can each contribute to their implementation and how they relate to the humanitarian work already being undertaken by each, either jointly or individually.

Just as the National Society can assist its public authorities in responding to humanitarian needs, the public authorities can help to ensure an **enabling environment** for the work of the National Society and support the building of its capacity. Also, the public authorities may voice support for the National Society as a preferred partner for domestic

organisations and an operating partner for Movement actors, international humanitarian, and development organisations.

In this respect, National Societies should consider undertaking a review of the applicable laws and policies, as well as a review of internal preparedness and response systems. *Preparedness for Effective Response (PER)* is an approach designed by IFRC to support National Societies to assess their response system in order to continue contributing to the coordination of national response systems. The PER approach enables National Societies to fulfil their auxiliary role in disaster risk management by strengthening their ability to provide timely and effective assistance.

In 2011, the Council of Delegates Resolution 4, encouraged National Societies to pursue dialogue with their national authorities to strengthen their legal base in domestic law through high quality RC/RC Laws, [aimed at formalizing] their auxiliary role and ability to operate in accordance with the Fundamental Principles. This [was] reiterated in Resolution 4 of the 31<sup>st</sup> International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent.

# KEEPING THE AUXILIARY ROLE HEALTHY AND UP TO DATE

In keeping the auxiliary role up to date, it may be important to review national Red Cross/Red Crescent (RC/RC) Laws. RC/RC Laws differ from National Society statutes, developed by a National Society in respect to its leadership, membership, and organisational structure. It is important to note that a review of the National Society's auxiliary status could involve a review of sectoral laws, such as disaster management and public health laws.

The Movement has long recognised the importance of strong and modern RC/RC Laws. Notably, the Joint Statutes Commission (JSC) is tasked with supporting National Societies to strengthen their RC/RC Law. While the JSC assesses the compliance of draft or amended National Society Statutes with the standards in the Guidance for National Society Statutes, 2018; the JSC assesses the compliance of draft RC/RC Laws with the *Model Law on the Recognition of National Societies*.<sup>1</sup> The IFRC has also developed a 'Guide to Strengthening the Auxiliary Role

through Law and Policy,' that offers practical guidance to National Societies about how to strengthen their auxiliary role through domestic law, policies, plans and agreements.

Further, recognizing the need for National Societies to engage with the legislature in the development of RC/RC Laws, the IFRC developed A Guide for Parliamentarians to the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement. This guide aims to familiarise parliamentarians with the Movement and the auxiliary role of National Societies, as well to foster strong relationships between parliamentarians and the National Society.

A robust auxiliary role can benefit both public authorities and National Societies in their quest to support vulnerable communities both in times of crisis and in pursuing the development goals. Public authorities are encouraged to work closely with their National Societies through continued dialogue, to ensure that the best possible humanitarian assistance may be provided to those most in need.

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1 IFRC, 2021. *Guide to Strengthening the Auxiliary Role through Law and Policy*. Geneva: IFRC.

# THE FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES OF THE INTERNATIONAL RED CROSS AND RED CRESCENT MOVEMENT

## **Humanity**

The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, born of a desire to bring assistance without discrimination to the wounded on the battlefield, endeavours, in its international and national capacity, to prevent and alleviate human suffering wherever it may be found. Its purpose is to protect life and health and to ensure respect for the human being. It promotes mutual understanding, friendship, cooperation and lasting peace amongst all peoples.

## **Impartiality**

It makes no discrimination as to nationality, race, religious beliefs, class or political opinions. It endeavours to relieve the suffering of individuals, being guided solely by their needs, and to give priority to the most urgent cases of distress.

## **Neutrality**

In order to enjoy the confidence of all, the Movement may not take sides in hostilities or engage at any time in controversies of a political, racial, religious or ideological nature.

## **Independence**

The Movement is independent. The National Societies, while auxiliaries in the humanitarian services of their governments and subject to the laws of their respective countries, must always maintain their autonomy so that they may be able at all times to act in accordance with the principles of the Movement.

## **Voluntary service**

It is voluntary relief movement not prompted in any manner by desire for gain.

## **Unity**

There can be only one Red Cross or Red Crescent Society in any one country. It must be open to all. It must carry on its humanitarian work throughout its territory.

## **Universality**

The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, in which all societies have equal status and share equal responsibilities and duties in helping each other, is worldwide.



**The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC)** is the world's largest humanitarian network, with **192 National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies** and around **14 million volunteers**. Our volunteers are present in communities before, during and after a crisis or disaster. We work in the most hard to reach and complex settings in the world, saving lives and promoting human dignity. We support communities to become stronger and more resilient places where people can live safe and healthy lives, and have opportunities to thrive.

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