



## The case for complementarity

Working together within the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement in armed conflict and other situations of violence

Research commissioned by the British Red Cross and  
supported by the International Committee of Red Cross

November 2018

Authors: Lois Austin and Sebastien Chessex, consultants

<b>Contents</b>	<b>Page</b>
<b>Acronyms and Abbreviations</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Acknowledgements</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Executive summary</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	<b>6</b>
i. Background	6
ii. Purpose, objectives and scope of the research	9
iii. Research methodology	10
iv. Overview of the three case studies	10
<b>1. Comparative advantages</b>	<b>11</b>
i. Host national societies	11
ii. The ICRC	12
iii. The IFRC	13
iv. Participating national societies	14
v. Comparative advantages – key findings	15
<b>2. Complementarity in practice</b>	<b>16</b>
i. Access and networking	16
ii. Principled humanitarian action	18
iii. Protection and complementarity	20
iv. Scaling and adapting programmes to conflict needs	20
v. Adapting to diverse contextual realities	22
vi. Financial resources	23
vii. Capacity strengthening and common language	25
viii. Complementarity in action – key findings	26
<b>3. Contextual variations and challenges to complementarity</b>	<b>28</b>
i. Contextual variations and challenges to complementarity – key findings:	30
<b>4. Conclusions and recommendations</b>	<b>31</b>
Recommendations	33
Recommendation 1 – Build on comparative advantages	33
Recommendation 2 – Strategic scale up	33
Recommendation 3 – Planning and coordination	33
Recommendation 4 – Co-location	33
Recommendation 5 – Human resources	34
Recommendation 6 – Financial resources	34
<b>Annex 1 – Bibliography</b>	<b>35</b>
<b>Annex 2 – The seven Fundamental Principles of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement</b>	<b>37</b>
<b>Annex 3 – Overview of the Movement components</b>	<b>38</b>
<b>Annex 4 – Overview of the three case study countries</b>	<b>39</b>
<b>Annex 5 – Research Key Findings</b>	<b>41</b>

Lugansk province, Krymske, Ukraine. ICRC staff and Ukrainian Red Cross Society volunteers install a greenhouse for local residents in the framework of a joint project. Photo © Olena Navrotska/ICRC.



## Acronyms and abbreviations

<b>BRC</b>	British Red Cross
<b>CRCS</b>	Colombian Red Cross Society
<b>DBM</b>	Dead body management
<b>FARC</b>	Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia
<b>HNS</b>	Host National Society
<b>ICRC</b>	International Committee of the Red Cross
<b>IFRC</b>	International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
<b>IHL</b>	International Humanitarian Law
<b>NGO</b>	Non-governmental organisation
<b>NSAG</b>	Non-state armed groups
<b>OD</b>	Organisational development
<b>OSV</b>	Other situations of violence
<b>PNS</b>	Participating National Society
<b>SHF</b>	Somalia Humanitarian Fund
<b>SMCC</b>	Strengthening Movement Cooperation and Coordination
<b>SRCS</b>	Somali Red Crescent Society
<b>SSF</b>	Somalia Stability Fund
<b>The Movement</b>	International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement
<b>URCS</b>	Ukraine Red Cross Society
<b>WHS</b>	The World Humanitarian Summit

## Acknowledgements

This research was commissioned by the British Red Cross and conducted with the active support of the ICRC. The consultants would like to express their appreciation to both organisations as well as to all those who contributed their time to provide inputs into this paper. The open and frank discussions held with representatives of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, as well as those representing other humanitarian organisations were highly valued. In particular, thanks go to the staff of the Colombian Red Cross Society, the Somali Red Crescent Society and the Ukrainian Red Cross Society and to the ICRC Delegations in those countries. The research Management Committee – Kate Latimir and Silvia Colona from the British Red Cross and Jeremie Labbe from the ICRC – provided ongoing support and feedback throughout the research process.

# Executive summary

In the last five years, and particularly since the Grand Bargain commitments made at the World Humanitarian Summit (WHS) in 2016, discussions on the localisation of aid in the humanitarian sector have abounded. In its message to the WHS in December 2015, the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement (the Movement) sent a strong message of support for strengthening the role of local and national actors in responding to humanitarian need, while affirming the importance of complementarity with international actors, notably in situations of conflict<sup>1</sup>.

In order to better understand approaches to Movement complementarity and how they may inform the localisation agenda, the British Red Cross (BRC) and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) selected three contexts (Colombia, Somalia, and Ukraine) to study how the ICRC and different Movement components work amongst themselves in armed conflict and other situations of violence<sup>2</sup> that fall below the threshold of applicability of International Humanitarian Law, to enable principled humanitarian action.

In this research, the term “complementarity” refers to the interaction and comparative advantages<sup>3</sup> between local, national and international components of the Movement, taking into account their respective mandates, the Movement’s Fundamental Principles and the operational settings in which they are working. Complementarity can be defined as the combination of strengths that each component can bring in a complementary way that ensures the ability of each individual component, as well as the Movement as a whole, to respond to the humanitarian needs of those affected by conflict. The comparative advantages of each of the Movement’s components, linked to their distinct mandates and identities, form the basis for Movement complementarity. While there are some shared areas of expertise, each component also possesses very distinct attributes, which when combined can enable the Movement to meet the broad range of conflict-related needs of those affected.

The three contexts selected – Colombia, Somalia, and Ukraine – represent different operating environments covering active conflict; protracted conflict; and situations of violence below the threshold of armed conflict (e.g. urban violence). Visits were undertaken to each of the case study countries in order to hold discussions with different components of the Movement – the Host National Society (HNS); the ICRC; Red Cross and Red Crescent National Societies supporting the HNS (referred to as Participating National Societies or PNS); and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC). Discussions were held with other non-Movement stakeholders in each country and internal and external documentation was reviewed.

The findings from the three country case studies have been used to inform this synthesis study and form the basis for the study’s own key findings and recommendations. Due to the sensitive and confidential nature of the content of the studies themselves, they have not been made available for publication.

---

1 [http://rcrcconference.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/CD15-R3-message-to-WHS\\_EN.pdf](http://rcrcconference.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/CD15-R3-message-to-WHS_EN.pdf)

2 For ease of reading, from this point onwards the report will use the following short-hand: “in conflict and violence” to indicate “armed conflict and other situations of violence that fall below the threshold of applicability of International Humanitarian Law”.

3 This research uses the term “comparative advantage” to highlight the distinct advantages that one Movement component may have when compared to another and has no links to economic and trade models where the term is also utilised.

## Common approaches to complementarity

In spite of contextual variations, a number of common approaches to complementarity were found across the case studies drawn upon for this research. The research identified that in order to effectively address the broad range of needs faced by individuals and communities affected by conflict and violence it is necessary to adopt a variety of approaches that leverage the comparative advantages of both national and international humanitarian actors as well as their specific skills, expertise and experience. This can be seen in Colombia for example, where the combined complementary expertise, local knowledge and privileged dialogue with armed groups (brought by the ICRC, the Colombia Red Cross Society (CRCS) and PNS) enables the Movement to develop solutions that address protection issues at their source while also mitigating their long term impact on affected communities. Such approaches, that utilise the strengths of national and international components, also allow the Movement to devise solutions at the individual, community, and system level. It is often this holistic response to protection issues that sets the Movement apart from other humanitarian actors.

## Access

In all three case studies, complementarity was found to be essential to ensuring the Movement's access to conflict-affected communities. In Somalia for example, although the ICRC and the Somali Red Crescent Society (SRCS) have separate dialogue with relevant stakeholders, it is their combined approaches to networking which ensure that both organisations have ongoing access to populations in need in a way which other humanitarian organisations do not.

## Principled humanitarian action

Complementarity was also found to be critical to promoting and safeguarding principled humanitarian action across all the environments considered. Although the Movement's Fundamental Principles are equally important to all its components, there are some principles which it is easier for international components to display – or be more easily perceived to display – in situations of conflict (such as neutrality, impartiality and independence) and others which National Societies are best able to highlight, such as voluntary service. Furthermore, the application of the Fundamental Principles in times of conflict is often challenging for National Societies, particularly those with limited previous experience in such environments. This was experienced in Ukraine where the Ukraine Red Cross Society's (URCS) knowledge and understanding of the principles did not extend to their operationalisation in times of conflict – an issue which only became apparent during the 2014 crisis. With the support of the ICRC in terms of guidance and Movement tools which have been designed to ensure safe access for humanitarian staff in situations of conflict and violence, collaborative action between the ICRC and the URCS was able to redress this lack of experience which could have compromised principled humanitarian action.

## Alignment and variables that influence complementarity

**The research highlights that it is generally the alignment of international and national expertise that results in the most effective approaches to addressing humanitarian need.**

Such an alignment may however require different configurations depending on various factors such as conflict dynamics, the needs of conflict-affected populations, and the ability to harness the expertise and capacities of each Movement component in a given setting. At the same time, it is worth noting that, in some instances, it is more effective for international components and national components to work separately while aiming for the shared common goal of providing neutral and impartial protection and assistance to those affected by conflict and disaster.

For instance, in Ukraine the ICRC's positioning as a neutral international actor that is operational on both sides of the Line of Contact allows it to be a neutral intermediary between opposing sides of the conflict. This would be a very difficult role for a local actor to play. This allows the ICRC to facilitate the exchange of prisoners as well as play a unique role in potentially solving complex issues that arise as a result of the conflict. It also allows the ICRC to act as an umbrella organisation that helps maintain the unity of the URCS in a polarised environment that increasingly puts it at risk. The HNS on the other hand has a longstanding presence in the country, allowing it to take a more long-term view when addressing humanitarian issues. This includes addressing the protracted impact of conflict as well as structural issues that may be intertwined with, yet be distinct from, the impact of the conflict, such as poverty or the spread of contagious diseases.

Across the three case studies, a number of variables that influence complementarity have been identified. These include the:

- type of crisis
- stage of humanitarian response
- manner in which cooperation is conducted
- levels of capacity and expertise
- existence of different planning and coordination mechanisms
- provision of financial support

In emergency responses, cooperation and complementarity between different Movement components is often vertical with one component taking a definitive lead and adopting an assertive approach to decision-making due to the need for quicker, more directive action. With a shift from emergency to longer-running humanitarian responses or as access to increased numbers of those in need becomes possible, a more horizontal, participatory approach is often adopted, allowing for more focus on collaboration and enhanced complementarity.

Similarly, differences in the capacity of a National Society at branch (local) level was also found to influence the level of complementarity between Movement components.

The research observed that some of the past approaches to complementarity in conflict environments have seen an unequal partnership between the ICRC and National Societies with the ICRC providing funding and National Societies becoming akin to implementing partners. Noted in all three contexts studied, the historical approach of providing time-limited, often project-based capacity strengthening support frequently left HNS weaker overall as only certain branches or departments received financial and technical support from the international components of the Movement.

This weakness is being addressed in all countries studied with an approach to planning and coordination which systematises joint decision making at both the strategic and operational levels and often at a third, technical level as well. This approach is considered important as it contributes more clearly to the organisational development of a national society as a whole, often within longer-term timeframes, than the historical approach allowed for.



### Limited financial resources – a barrier to localisation

Access to financial resources has been reported as a major concern for National Societies across all three contexts as it does for many local actors. This includes concerns related not only to the amount of resources available but also their predictability. In this respect, the 2017 commitment by the Movement's Council of Delegates to create Movement-wide principles for resource mobilisation (amongst other resource mobilisation commitments) is a positive action in terms of supporting the national components of the Movement to have improved means to mobilise funding.

In some contexts – and frequently in fragile states which are often the setting of conflict and violence – international anti-terror legislation and stringent due diligence measures are standing in the way of the ability to meet the Grand Bargain commitment that by 2020, 25% of funding will go as directly as possible to local and national responders. While international actors are often able to carry the burden of due diligence obligations thereby supporting national and local actors who would otherwise not be able to access these funds, there remain limited options for national humanitarian organisations to directly access international funding.

### Relevance to the localisation agenda

This research has provided the opportunity to show that, within the realm of Movement complementarity, both local and international components of the Movement are able to make unique and essential contributions in situations of conflict and other situations of violence. Some of the broader elements of the localisation agenda such as promoting the empowerment of local actors through better financing partnerships and capacity building are confirmed through this research. This includes concerns related to the unequal power dynamics between local, national, and international humanitarian actors as well as the impact of inadequate funding mechanisms for their organisational development. The three case studies which have formed the basis for this study are able to highlight the contributions that international and local actors can make in situations of conflict and other situations of violence, particularly in relation to access to conflict-affected populations; dialogue

with armed actors; the challenges and possibilities of principled humanitarian action; undertaking sensitive protection activities; and opportunities for upscaling and adapting humanitarian responses.

The study's focus on situations of conflict and violence provides an insight into the complexities of operational complementarity between national and international Movement actors – complexities which are relevant to broader localisation discussions in general. The study underscores that international and national complementarity is key to ensuring that the needs of those affected by conflict and violence are met by drawing on and often combining the comparative advantages and strengths of local, national and international actors. The Movement's approach to complementarity provides an interesting model of the possibilities for engagement and response by international and national actors, even in some of the most complex operating environments. The research highlights the importance of combined and complimentary humanitarian action. While simultaneously recognising the role that can often only be played by international actors – such as the ability to have dialogue in relation to sensitive protection issues – and the unique ability of national actors to reach those in need through broad and deep coverage and access.

**In these respects, the Movement's approach to complementarity provides insights into the opportunities and challenges that lie ahead as the humanitarian sector pursues the localisation agenda, particularly in light of the commitments made at the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit.**

# Introduction

## i. Background

In the last five years, and particularly since the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit (WHS) that included the Grand Bargain commitments, discussions on the localisation of aid in the humanitarian sector have abounded. Early on, the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement (the Movement) sent a strong message of support for strengthening the role of local and national actors in responding to humanitarian needs, while affirming the importance of complementarity with international actors, notably in situations of conflict.

Given that by its very structure, the Movement has always been localised to some degree (see Box 1), the Movement's approach has rather been to identify the extent to which work of the national components of the Movement (National Societies) and the international components of the Movement (the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC)) are complementary.

As such, the Movement's focus is upon complementarity and the efforts that have and can be made to ensure that the wide range of needs of those affected by conflict and violence can be best addressed by its local, national and international components. Movement complementarity takes into account the respective mandates and missions of each component of the Movement, the Movement's Fundamental Principles,<sup>4</sup> and different operational settings. Figure 1 shows the different levels of Movement complementarity in situations of armed conflict and violence.

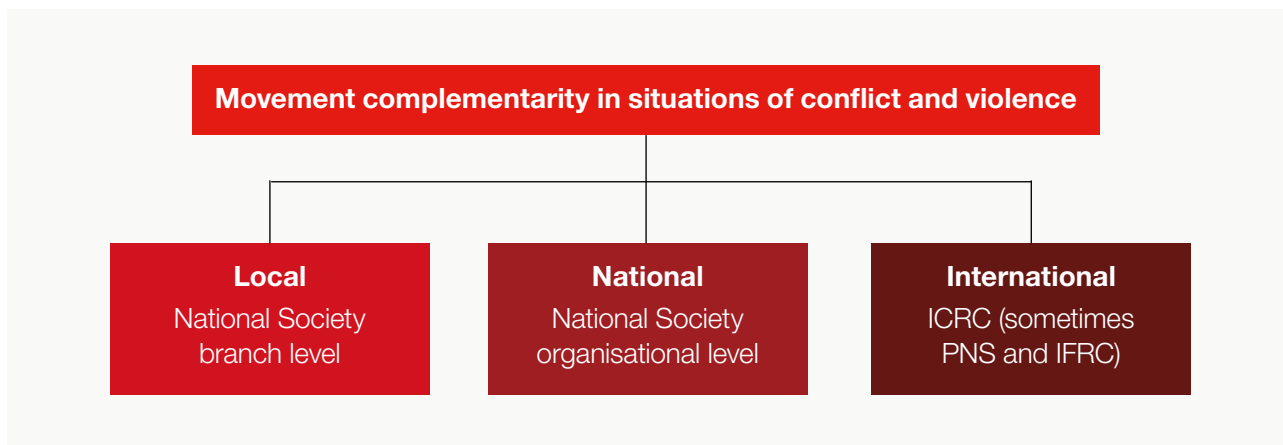


Figure 1: Levels of Movement complementarity

<sup>4</sup> <https://shop.icrc.org/les-principes-fondamentaux-de-la-croix-rouge-et-du-croissant-rouge-2588.html>

The Movement has clearly recognised the essential need for complementary local, national and international action as highlighted in its message to the WHS in 2015.<sup>5</sup> Some of the key points from this message in relation to complementary humanitarian action include:

- A recognition of the importance of a complementary balance between local, national and international actors, highlighting that the empowerment of government and local actors is central to the Movement in its relations with States and in its Code of Conduct.<sup>6</sup>
- Acknowledgment that local responders are often in the strongest position to deliver rapid, culturally appropriate and sustainable humanitarian assistance to their communities.
- A call to address the imbalance in relation to the limited funding for local actors in contrast to that available for international actors, seeking more sustained investment in national response systems and basic services in order to deliver stronger partnerships between local and international actors.
- Highlighting the need to improve and prioritise the capacity of principled humanitarian actors, such as Red Cross and Red Crescent volunteers who operate in dangerous conditions, and to ensure that they are protected and insured.
- A reminder that in armed conflict, international humanitarian law (IHL) recognises complementarity and entitles impartial humanitarian organisations such as the ICRC to offer their services, which must be authorised under certain circumstances.

With the emphasis of this research being upon Movement complementarity in situations of armed conflict and violence the focus is on the ICRC and National Societies working in their own countries – Host National Societies (HNS). The IFRC therefore does not feature strongly in this research but attention is given to the fundamental role it plays in guiding and supporting the development of National Societies, which is crucial in all environments.

Similarly, the role played by Participating National Societies (PNS) does not feature strongly with their primary focus in the three countries on which this synthesis report is based having been on the provision of financial and capacity building support.

It is however important to note the role of the IFRC in current localisation discussion and action. In the build-up to the WHS the IFRC worked closely with several governments and NGO groups such as the NEAR Network and Charter4Change to ensure that localisation was an outcome of the Summit. The IFRC is currently a co-sponsor of the Grand Bargain work-stream that is focusing on localisation – “More support and funding tools for local and national responders”.

Based on individual case studies on Movement complementarity in three conflict and violence-affected contexts this report sets out the comparative advantages of each Movement component in such situations. It then goes on to illustrate examples of Movement complementarity in action before noting the primary variables that influence complementarity and explain contextual variation. Finally, a set of conclusions and recommendations for future action are provided.

Complementarity refers to the interaction and comparative advantages between local, national and international components of the Movement, taking into account their respective mandates, the Movement’s Fundamental Principles and the operational settings in which they are working. Complementarity in situations of conflict and violence acknowledges the necessity for Movement components to adopt a variety of approaches that utilise the strengths of both national and international humanitarian actors. In essence, Movement complementarity can be defined as the combination of strengths that each component can bring in a complementary way that ensures the ability of each individual component, as well as the Movement as a whole, to respond to the humanitarian needs of those affected by conflict.

<sup>5</sup> Council of Delegates of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement – Message to the World Humanitarian Summit, Resolution 3 (CD/15/R3) (2015)

<sup>6</sup> The Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and NGOs in Disaster Relief (1994) and the Principles and Rules for Red Cross and Red Crescent Humanitarian Assistance (2013)

## Who's who within the Movement?

The Movement is made up of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC); National Societies; and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC).

The ICRC is the Movement's founding body. In addition to carrying out operational activities to protect and assist victims of armed conflict, as mandated by the States party to the 1949 Geneva Conventions, it is the promoter and custodian of international humanitarian law.

National Societies embody the work and principles of the Movement in more than 190 countries. National Societies act as auxiliaries to the public authorities of their own countries in the humanitarian field and provide a range of services including disaster relief and health and social programmes.

The IFRC works to inspire, facilitate and promote all humanitarian activities carried out by its member National Societies to improve the situation of the most vulnerable people. It promotes cooperation between National Societies and strengthens their capacity to prepare effectively for disasters and to carry out health and social programmes.

*Extracted from "Discover the ICRC" [www.icrc.org/eng/assets/files/other/icrc\\_002\\_0790.pdf](http://www.icrc.org/eng/assets/files/other/icrc_002_0790.pdf)*

## ii. Purpose, objectives and scope of the research

In order to better understand approaches to Movement complementarity in conflict environments, the British Red Cross (BRC) and the ICRC selected three contexts – Colombia, Somalia, and Ukraine – that represent different types of conflict and in which local, national and international Movement actors work together in emergencies.

The main research question for the study was as follows:

**“To ensure people affected by conflict are better served, how do the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement components cooperate and coordinate to achieve optimal complementarity in their response, in the range of contexts analysed?”**

Based on the findings of the three country case studies, the research aimed to provide a better understanding of the following topics:

- How the ICRC and the different Movement components work amongst themselves in armed conflict and violence, particularly in terms of enabling principled humanitarian action.
- The role of National Societies in situations of conflict and violence and the challenges and opportunities they face as national humanitarian actors in such contexts.
- The type of institutional support and technical assistance programmes required to build the capacity of National Societies, particularly in carrying out principled humanitarian action.

Although the research is focused on complementary action and not the localisation of humanitarian assistance per se, it also aims to inform reflections around the relevance and operationalisation of localisation in situations of conflict. The research highlights different examples of Movement complementarity in practice, underlining the comparative advantages of national and international Movement components in these situations.<sup>7</sup> This provides the basis for understanding if and how the combined action of the Movement’s national and international components ensure optimal humanitarian outcomes. The focus on conflict settings also allows for a different perspective as current discussions have tended to focus more on response to natural disasters.

It is important to note that the three contexts upon which this study is based were able to highlight positive examples of complementarity. This is not necessarily reflective of all contexts in which the Movement works and where complementary action can be harder to achieve.

This research report is based upon the findings and lessons learned of the case studies<sup>8</sup> which, while specific to the Movement, is hoped to be of value to the humanitarian sector as a whole.

<sup>7</sup> This research uses the term “comparative advantage” to highlight the distinct advantages that one Movement component may have when compared to another and has no links to economic and trade models where the term is also utilised.

<sup>8</sup> The three case studies are not publicly available due to the sensitive nature of their content. Being able to reassure stakeholders in each country covered that the studies would remain internal to the Movement ensured a greater freedom to discuss all topics in an open manner, including some of the less positive aspects of complementarity.

### iii. Research methodology

The research has been carried out by two independent consultants whose regular work with the Movement has ensured their in-depth understanding of Movement complementarity.

As noted above, this study is based upon the findings of the Colombia, Somalia, and Ukraine country case studies. The study aims to synthesise the findings from the case studies in this report in order to illustrate how the different Movement components cooperate and coordinate to achieve complementarity in their humanitarian responses. The same approaches to data collection and analysis were applied in the three case study countries including:

- A review of literature and internal documentation developed over the course of the crisis in each context.
- Semi-structured interviews with key informants from the relevant National Societies; ICRC HQ and country-based staff; other Movement partners supporting operations in the countries covered (other National Societies and the IFRC); local NGOs; the UN; and donors.<sup>9</sup>

Visits to Colombia, Ukraine and Nairobi (for Somalia) were undertaken in order to hold discussions in person with National Society representatives, ICRC staff, IFRC staff as well as with representatives from other organisations.

The research was managed by a joint British Red Cross and ICRC HQ management committee who provided support and guidance throughout the process.

### iv. Overview of the three case studies

In the three contexts researched, all three components of the Movement were active – National Societies, the ICRC and the IFRC.<sup>10</sup> The three case study countries illustrated conflict in different stages and of different types including:

- Protracted conflict
- Recent, ongoing conflict
- Conflict transitioning into peace and affected by urban violence that falls below the threshold of armed conflict under IHL, but still has a significant impact on populations.

The research covered different geographical locations – Latin America, Africa, and Eastern Europe – bringing an additional angle through which to view the different approaches and potential variables to Movement complementarity. A short overview of historical collaboration in each country is provided in Annex 3 purely in order to help orient the research.

As previously noted, the case studies are not publicly available due to the confidential and sensitive nature of some of their content. This confidentiality was critical in ensuring that discussions with stakeholders in each country were open and candid in nature. This is however noted as a limitation in relation to this study as readers do not have access to all the supporting evidence and findings upon which this synthesis is based.

<sup>9</sup> Discussions were held with a total of 91 key informants across the three contexts.

<sup>10</sup> National Societies here refers both to Host National Societies – the national Movement actor in the relevant country – and supporting National Societies from outside the country in question.

# 1. Comparative advantages

Before highlighting examples of complementarity in practice (see Section 3 below) it is important to understand the comparative advantages of each Movement component – Host National Societies (HNS), the ICRC, the IFRC and Participating (supporting) National Societies (PNS). While there are some shared areas of expertise, each component also possesses very distinct attributes.

## i. Host National Societies

National Societies working in their own countries (Host National Societies) distinguish themselves from other national and local organisations by their status of auxiliary to their public authorities in the humanitarian field.<sup>11</sup> The auxiliary role describes a relationship with mutual responsibilities and benefits, between a National Society and its public authorities. Together, they agree on the areas where the National Society supplements or substitutes public humanitarian services. When playing this role, NS maintain their independence but act as a valuable partner to support the public authorities in meeting their humanitarian obligations. This and the adoption of relevant national legislation gives them an official recognition which few other local and national actors have. In situations of conflict the auxiliary role is at times more complicated as it may require a delicate balance between supporting state structures while remaining independent. In other cases, where state structures are weak or non-existent there is no public authority for the HNS to be auxiliary to.

Through their longstanding work with and cultural understanding of the communities within which their branches, staff and volunteers are rooted, National Societies often develop several specific fields of expertise which are essential when responding to the needs of conflict-affected communities. These may include skills ranging from emergency response to psychosocial support and community engagement more broadly. National Societies are generally amongst the largest and most recognised civil society organisations in their country.

HNS tend to distinguish themselves from other national and local organisations as well as from other Movement components by the breadth and depth of their coverage. They are often present throughout the country with local branches and sub-branches.

HNS access to hard-to-reach locations tends to be driven by the acceptance and trust they establish within their own communities, due to this local anchoring and physical presence. Trust and acceptance has often been built due to the existence of large networks of community level staff and volunteers which gives HNS an intricate understanding of the needs of those affected by conflict and violence, positively impacting their ability to implement appropriate responses. As their staff and volunteers are often physically *in situ* (or at least not far away) when a crisis occurs they are also often involved in initial crisis response.

Their mandate and permanent presence in the country allow HNS to take a long-term view when addressing humanitarian issues. This includes addressing the protracted impact of conflicts such as the needs of families of missing persons but also focusing on structural issues that may be intertwined with, yet distinct from, the impact of the conflict, such as poverty or the spread of contagious diseases.

As acknowledged in research undertaken by the Overseas Development Institute, National Societies have comparative advantages that allow them to straddle the local-national-international spectrum.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>11</sup> "States and National Societies, the latter as auxiliaries to their public authorities in the humanitarian field, enjoy a specific and distinctive partnership at all levels, entailing mutual responsibilities and benefits, and based on international and national laws, in which the State and the National Society agree on the areas in which the latter supplements or substitutes

for public humanitarian services" (Resolution 4 of the 31st International Conference on "Furthering the Auxiliary Role")

<sup>12</sup> Zycik, S and Krebs, H – "Localising humanitarianism: improving effectiveness through inclusive action" – ODI HPG (2015)

## ii. The ICRC

The ICRC is a neutral, impartial and independent humanitarian organisation. Its mandate to protect and assist victims of armed conflict has been conferred on it by States under various instruments of IHL including the four Geneva Conventions of 1949 and their Additional Protocols. The ICRC's mandate and modes of action are what set it apart from other international actors. The ICRC privileges discretion and confidentiality and strives to establish and maintain dialogue with all parties to a conflict including non-state armed groups (NSAGs). Although its neutrality, impartiality and independence may be questioned in some contexts (for example due to the politicisation of humanitarian assistance by other actors or by the need to negotiate with armed groups in order to access those in need – negotiations which can be misconstrued), it constantly endeavours to uphold and be perceived to uphold these principles.

The ICRC's long-standing experience of operating in conflict environments around the world has enabled it to develop specific areas of expertise which it can transfer and adapt from location to location. This expertise includes (but is not limited to):

- the establishment of dialogue on conflict-related issues (e.g. humanitarian access, respect of IHL, assistance to victims of conflict) with weapon-bearers and global, regional, national and local powers;
- a series of activities in relation to those missing and separated as a result of conflict and violence including the restoration of family links, dead body management (DBM), forensics work, and psychosocial support;
- preventative work with a specific focus on the development, dissemination and respect of IHL;
- monitoring the treatment and detention conditions of detainees; and
- the provision of different forms of assistance (medical, economic security, water and shelter) in fragile and volatile conflict settings.

States' recognition of the ICRC's mandate and their ensuing commitment to support and facilitate the mission of the organisation also helps to explain the ICRC's privileged access to financial resources. This ensures financial independence, logistical capacity, and the potential to support and implement large-scale humanitarian responses. All of these features

in turn positively impact the ICRC's recognition, influence, access, and ability to operate.

Although the ICRC is often not the only actor (or Movement component) to have a dialogue with armed groups it is the fact that the ICRC can discuss protection issues (such as the fate of hostages and detainees, violations of IHL, the Missing) with potential perpetrators of violence that distinguishes the nature of its dialogue from other (often local/national) actors. This level of engagement also allows it, at times, to receive security guarantees for itself as well as other Movement components.

Its privileged dialogue combined with consistent effort aimed at trust-building with all parties (at local, regional and international levels where relevant) is also what allows ICRC at times to act as a neutral intermediary between opposing sides of a conflict. As a trusted neutral intermediary, a role established after years of continuous engagement, the ICRC play a critical part in the facilitation and actual exchange of detainees. This role of neutral intermediary would be difficult for a local actor to play.

This combination of access in the field and dialogue at the highest levels of government are also what distinguishes the ICRC from local/national organisations and reinforce its credibility at the field and political level.

By virtue of its mandate and its global level engagements with those involved in and with the ability to influence the behaviour and actions of parties to a conflict, the ICRC holds ongoing dialogue in the countries where it is operating but also with regional or global (state) powers. This engagement is important, particularly within the context of discussions on law and policy as well as specific operational issues. For National Societies to have such a dialogue beyond their borders is often not a priority; they tend not to have the capacity to engage in this way. However, these international level engagements can be extremely valuable in terms of enabling the ICRC to fulfil its mandate in relation to IHL and to help achieve its mission in terms of protecting the lives and dignity of those affected by armed conflict and violence.



### iii. The IFRC

The IFRC works to inspire, facilitate and promote all humanitarian activities carried out by its 191 member National Societies. It acts as the representative of its member societies in the international field and promotes cooperation between National Societies and strengthens their capacity to respond to disasters and implement health and social programmes.<sup>13</sup>

One of The IFRC's comparative advantages which is also relevant in situations of conflict relates to its ability to support the organisational development (OD) of National Societies. Its global experience in this field of work facilitates the sharing of experience

from one context to another. For example, the OD specialist that has been selected to support the Ukraine Red Cross Society (URCS) with its re-organisation is the former Secretary General of the Georgian Red Cross. He brings with him significant expertise in this area having overseen reforms in his own National Society under similar circumstances.

IFRC support to National Societies differs to that of the ICRC in that it is not limited to conflict-related needs. They can therefore focus on post-conflict responses and support the National Society in areas of transition.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid



The ICRC President pays a visit to the hospital during his maiden tour of Somalia. The Keysaney hospital marks its 23rd year this year and remains one of the key hospitals supported by the ICRC in Somalia. Photo © ICRC.

## iv. Participating National Societies

PNS contribute to ensuring complementarity in a number of ways including the sharing of technical expertise, the ability to often commit to longer-term, multi-annual financial support, and a focus on programmes that address conflict-related needs as well as structural needs. PNS are often able to share with HNS skills and experience from their own domestic settings.

The three case studies are able to highlight different ways in which PNS have supported complementarity. Examples include support from the Finnish Red Cross to enhance the logistical capacity of the Ukraine Red Cross Society and by the Danish Red Cross in the area of psychosocial services. In Colombia, the Spanish Red Cross has supported the Colombian Red Cross Society (CRCS) in developing its capacity to submit joint funding proposals while the Norwegian Red Cross has shared its expertise in urban violence, providing training on its methodology to facilitate intra-community negotiation. In Somalia, the Movement has taken the approach of making clear geographic distinctions for the provision of support to the Somali Red Crescent Society (SRCS). In geographic areas which have been relatively peaceful (such as parts of Somaliland and Puntland), different Partner National Societies and the IFRC have engaged in capacity building of the National Society in Somalia. The IFRC and Partner National Societies have also been increasingly operationally active in Somaliland, particularly in response to the 2017 drought and cholera outbreak. The Norwegian Red Cross is the only Partner National Society working directly with the National Society across Somalia. Although, with

the exception of the Norwegian Red Cross, Partner National Societies and the IFRC are only active in Somaliland, all components of the Movement are present in the working groups that have been established to support capacity strengthening of the SRCS at strategic and operational levels. The working groups focus on health, human resources, financial development and resource mobilisation, and safer access. This is a positive display of complementarity with the aim of trying to ensure cross-Movement understanding and common approaches to supporting the HNS.

In many conflict environments the IFRC and Partner National Societies do not have the ability to access different locations due to the security risks involved. However, their ability to support Host National Societies in non-conflict related activities is extremely important in terms of the continuity and sustainability of these activities in parts of the country not affected by conflict as well as with a view to the longer-term transition and post-conflict periods.

It should be noted that while most Partner National Societies are eager to engage in cross-Movement coordination mechanisms (as seen with the different working groups in Somalia), this is not always the case. At times, some Partner National Societies implement operations in conflict settings without coordinating with the Host National Societies and other Movement components and this can be problematic as it risks compromising, amongst other things, the neutrality and impartiality of the Host National Society (HNS) and the ICRC.

## v. Comparative advantages – key findings

---

- 1** HNS are embedded within their communities and have a sound understanding of conflict and violence-related needs. This proximity, which has contributed to a common understanding and establishment of relationships between National Societies and the communities they serve, combined with the ability to implement specifically-tailored support at community level, facilitates access which is not always possible for other local and national actors.

---

  - 2** The long term and sustained presence and engagement of National Societies, and often of the ICRC, in situations of armed conflict and violence are critical to their acceptance by power holders and their access to those in need.

---

  - 3** Having financial and technical support from international components of the Movement, including PNS and the IFRC, is also an important enabler in terms of ensuring HNS ability to appropriately address the humanitarian consequences of conflict and violence.

---

  - 4** By virtue of its international nature and importantly the role mandated to it by the States party to the 1949 Geneva Conventions, the ICRC often has the advantage of being perceived as neutral, impartial and disassociated with conflict. This often allows the ICRC to play the role of neutral intermediary – a role that it would be extremely difficult for a national actor to play. Combined with its financial capacity, specific technical skills, sustained engagement (including dialogue) and established understanding of conflict-related needs, the ICRC frequently has access to conflict-affected populations that other organisations do not.

---

  - 5** The IFRC and PNS are able to provide support to non-conflict related activities including essential organisational development support. Often their combined support facilitates the capacity strengthening of HNS over multi-year timeframes.
-

## 2. Complementarity in practice

In spite of contextual variations, a number of common manifestations of complementarity were found across the case studies. The research identified that in order to effectively address the broad range of needs faced by individuals and communities affected by conflict and violence it is necessary to adopt a variety of approaches that utilise the strengths of both national and international humanitarian actors.

Generally, it is the combined international and national expertise that results in the most effective approaches to addressing humanitarian needs. At the same time, it is worth noting that in some circumstances it is more effective for international components and national components to work separately while aiming for the shared common goal of providing neutral and impartial protection and assistance to those affected by conflict and disaster.

Using seven thematic examples identified in the Colombia, Somalia, and Ukraine case studies, it is possible to highlight some of the key areas of Movement complementarity in relation to conflict

and violence. The thematic areas highlighted address complementary action in relation to:

- Access and networking
- Principled humanitarian action
- Addressing protection issues
- Scaling and adapting existing programmes to conflict settings
- Adapting to diverse contextual realities
- Financial Resources
- Capacity strengthening

### i. Access and networking

All three case studies have highlighted that even in complex, sensitive and highly politicised conflicts and situations of violence, the Movement's ability to access locations where conflict and violence-related needs are high is frequently, if not always, as a result of strong complementary action. As highlighted in the Movement's message to the WHS, access, proximity and trust are essential features of effective humanitarian action.

In Somalia for example, although the ICRC and the SRCS have separate dialogue with relevant stakeholders, it is their combined approaches to stakeholder engagement which ensure that both organisations have ongoing access to populations in need in a way which other humanitarian organisations do not. While their engagement is separate, the two organisations do coordinate their action and devise approaches which ensure a shared agreement on who is best placed to do what. Their continued access is in part due to the

SRCS' significant geographical presence throughout the country combined with both organisations' sustained engagement over a number of decades and clear independence from other, perhaps more politically supported or motivated, humanitarian agencies who may be perceived to be associated in some way with the stabilisation process. Similarly, in Ukraine where access to conflict-affected populations is extremely complicated and requires registration and "accreditation" from different administrations, it is the joint effort of the ICRC and the National Society that has ensured widespread Movement access in both government and non-government-controlled areas. In some locations it is the ICRC that has facilitated the access of the local Red Cross and in other locations it is the opposite.

Often the nature and content of dialogue differs with both the ICRC and the National Society focusing on obtaining security guarantees but the ICRC having additional dialogue in relation to protection matters.

This latter form of discussion tends to be too sensitive for a local actor to hold as participation in protection activities frequently risks putting the staff of national organisations in danger. As such, it tends to be safer for non-nationals to carry out protection-related activities. In addition, as highlighted in Box 2, while national organisations can in reality act in a neutral, impartial and independent manner they are not always perceived to be able to act in this way, particularly by weapon-bearers in often highly sensitive environments. It is a combination of:

- The subject matter being discussed
- Perceived neutrality, impartiality and independence

- Nationality and distance from the reasons for conflict/violence that puts international components of the Movement in a stronger and safer position to engage in protection activities and dialogue than its national partners.

With National Society dialogue with weapon-bearers and relevant authorities focusing primarily on access and security guarantees this tends to take place at the local level. By contrast, the ICRC's protection and prevention-focused dialogue requires engagement at all levels – local, national and often regional and international, depending upon the nature of the conflict.

### Determinants of dialogue with armed groups

In Colombia, as in other contexts, the Movement's principled approach to humanitarian action that privileges trust and acceptance, is the basis for ensuring its unparalleled access to conflict-affected populations. Both the ICRC and CRCS have a privileged access to conflict-affected communities, including those under the control of NSAGs. However, the nature of the ICRC's dialogue with these groups, which includes discussion on protection issues, differs from that of the CRCS which is primarily focused on obtaining security guarantees. This is similar in Somalia.

**Distance from the causes of conflict:** Several variables appear to contribute to the different forms of dialogue. While in some countries it is perceived that the diplomatic status of the ICRC's international staff is a key reason for its privileged dialogue, in Colombia representatives from the National Society are also provided with immunities that allow them to establish a dialogue with representatives of armed groups. Here it is rather the fact that ICRC international staff are foreigners that facilitates their contact with NSAGs, with representatives of these groups preferring interaction with expatriates as they are more detached from the conflict. The ICRC is therefore also seen as presenting a lower risk of being infiltrated by state agents, and ICRC representatives are less likely to have family members who are victims of the conflict.

**Distance from community links:** Similarly, in some cases the fact that CRCS volunteers or their families live in the communities that are under the control of armed groups or gangs, limits their willingness to address sensitive issues with them for fear of threats or reprisals. ICRC staff who are not only more distant but who can also be posted to another location or country if needed, are less likely to be subject to threats.

In short, while both CRCS and ICRC are principled humanitarian actors, being an international organisation, foreign from the conflict, appears to reinforce the perception of neutrality (while not being sufficient), which facilitates trust and dialogue in relation to sensitive issues with parties to the conflict.

## ii. Principled humanitarian action<sup>14</sup>

Localised humanitarian action is embedded in the Movement's Fundamental Principles of voluntary service and unity. While it is acknowledged that undertaking humanitarian activities in a principled manner in polarised societies may be more challenging for local actors because they are more directly subject to the dynamics of the conflict, the three case studies have shown the ability of National Societies to operate in a principled way.<sup>15</sup> They also highlight the need for principled international humanitarian support in order to best address the needs of those affected by conflict and violence.

Ensuring that humanitarian activities are implemented in a neutral, impartial, and independent manner is often more challenging for local and national organisations than for international actors. While principled humanitarian action by the former is possible – with the SRCS in Somalia providing a good example as highlighted in Box 3 – it is often difficult for national actors not to be impacted by the politics of the country where they operate or to come under undue pressure to perform in a certain way or support specific populations based on religious, ethnic or clan lines<sup>16</sup>.

Although the Movement's Fundamental Principles are equally important to all its components, there are some principles which it is easier for international components to display (such as neutrality, impartiality and independence) and others which National Societies are best able to highlight such as voluntary service.

The application of the Fundamental Principles in times of conflict is often challenging particularly for those National Societies with little or no previous experience in such environments. For instance, URCS staff and volunteers were well aware of the Movement's Fundamental Principles when Ukraine was hit by crisis in 2014, but were not necessarily familiar with how to operationalise them in a conflict setting. In order to strengthen understanding here, the ICRC provided training as part of the Safer Access Framework.<sup>17</sup> This framework helps to provide guidance to National Societies to develop a systematic approach which is guided by the Fundamental Principles, aiming to ensure safe access for staff and volunteers in all crisis environments. This includes actions related strictly to security but also includes guidance on behaviour that is essential to reinforcing the Movement's neutrality, impartiality, and independence. For instance, at the early stages of the conflict in Ukraine some individuals wore military fatigues while volunteering for the URCS – an action which could have put them and other staff and volunteers of the National Society in danger.

14 The Movement's seven Fundamental Principles are: humanity, impartiality, neutrality, independence, voluntary service, unity and universality. Please see Annex 2 for further detail.

15 As noted in "The challenges of localised humanitarian aid in armed conflict, Emergency Gap Series 03", MSF 2016 [https://arhp.msf.es/sites/default/files/MSF\\_EGS03\\_The challenges of localised humanitarian aid in armed conflict\\_november 2016\\_0\\_0.pdf](https://arhp.msf.es/sites/default/files/MSF_EGS03_The%20challenges%20of%20localised%20humanitarian%20aid%20in%20armed%20conflict_november%202016_0_0.pdf) as a potential limitation of current localisation discussions.

16 "Principles in Action in Somalia", SRCS and BRCS, 2013

17 The Safer Access Framework – developed by the ICRC in consultation with several NS – has been designed to support National Societies in fulfilling

their humanitarian mandate and role, particularly when working in sensitive and insecure contexts including armed conflict, internal disturbances and tensions. It is intended primarily for National Society staff and volunteers in leadership and management positions. It highlights the importance of applying the Fundamental Principles and aims to help National Societies respond safely. The framework supports National Societies in their auxiliary role to the State which can be difficult when the State may be directly or indirectly involved in the violence and/or may no longer have access to some affected people and communities. In such cases it is essential that National Societies are able to act – and be perceived to be acting – in accordance with the Fundamental Principles and that they enjoy the trust and acceptance of all stakeholders. <http://saferaccess.icrc.org/>

Adherence to the principle of “unity” is at times threatened simply due to the political environment in which National Societies are operating.<sup>18</sup> This threat can be seen in both Somalia and Ukraine, countries which are divided (and in which cities are also sometimes divided). For example, in Somalia the principle of unity is challenged in a practical way due to the political situation. The National Society tries to ensure harmonised approaches throughout the country in spite of difficulties for some SRCS staff to travel from one area to another. In spite of this, the SRCS has continued to work in a unified manner, perhaps in part facilitated by the location of its headquarters in neighboring Kenya. In Ukraine, where the National Society struggles to operate on both sides of the Line of Control, the ICRC has played a critical role by acting as the umbrella organisation under which local Red Cross branches can operate in the areas where they have not been granted the necessary accreditation to do so on their own.

In some contexts, it has been important for all components of the Movement to distance themselves from other humanitarian organisations in order to avoid the risk of being perceived as non-neutral as this could then limit their potential access to those affected by conflict. This has been most relevant in those environments where there are integrated UN missions which see UN humanitarian agencies under the same control structure as the political and military components of peace and stabilisation operations.<sup>19</sup>

### **Keysaney Hospital – a beacon of complementarity and neutrality in times of war**

Inaugurated in 1992, Keysaney Hospital has been managed by SRCS since then with unbroken support from the ICRC in terms of provision of surgical equipment, training and medicines.

The existence of a functioning hospital in war-torn Mogadishu in the 1990s – a hospital specialising in the treatment of weapon-wounded – ensured the saving of thousands of lives, regardless of clan, religious or political background.

It is sometimes challenging for a National Society to show evidence of its ability to operate in line with the Movement’s Fundamental Principles in situations of armed conflict, with neutrality and impartiality often being put into question. However, with the continued technical and financial support of the ICRC, SRCS has managed to achieve this even during the hardest times. Continued discussion and negotiation by SRCS with whichever party has maintained control of Mogadishu, combined with the ability to practically demonstrate the need for the hospital to operate and treat weapon-wounded impartially, has resulted in the hospital remaining open to all at all times for nearly three decades.

<sup>18</sup> The principle of unity requires the existence of only one National Society in each country; that the National Society is open to all; and that it covers the entire territory.

<sup>19</sup> “UN integration and humanitarian space”, HPG Stimson, December 2011

### iii. Protection and complementarity

People going missing is a reality of conflict that causes untold distress and anxiety for their relatives. Today, the fate of hundreds of thousands of people, missing as a result of war and violence, is unknown. Parties to conflict are legally required to take all possible measures to ensure that the fate of missing persons is known and their families informed. As this does not always happen, the ICRC, often jointly with National Societies, undertakes every effort, frequently in dangerous situations, to fulfil the right of families to know what has happened to their loved ones.

Within this framework, the ICRC's work with National Societies in Colombia, Somalia, and potentially in the future in Ukraine, provide examples of complementarity in action with a broad range of stakeholders. In Colombia and Ukraine, the ICRC's privileged dialogue with weapon bearers in both contexts puts the organisation in a unique position in terms of following-up on the cases of those missing as a result of conflict. One area of speciality where this can be seen is the ICRC's technical expertise in relation to forensics work – an area in which National Societies tend not to have expertise. This expertise has allowed the organisation to play a critical role in both countries, strengthening national forensics systems. In both countries the ICRC has also been central in ensuring that relevant legal frameworks are in place to address the rights and needs of the Missing and their families. In Colombia, the CRCS plays a critically linked role in terms of provision of

essential psychosocial support to families and the collection of sensitive information. National Societies are also able to support the families through for example, assisting them with the administrative aspects of filing a missing persons case and following up with the authorities. Their proximity to the families, with many National Society volunteers coming from the same communities, allows them to provide this close and tailored support. It is this joint effort of the ICRC and National Societies which is often central in helping to address the needs and rights of families to know the fate of their relatives.

While complementary action in relation to protection activities focusing on the Missing is highly effective – linking international technical expertise with local cultural knowledge and understanding – **some areas of protection work are best undertaken by the ICRC alone.** This includes the ICRC's work in relation to detention and the collection of information on the conduct of hostilities.<sup>20</sup> Here, because of the sensitivity of the information collected, work is carried out only by ICRC international staff. For a national actor to participate in visits to places of detention, or even to be aware of their location in some situations, carries safety-related risks as well as the risk of compromising their real or perceived neutral, impartial and independent humanitarian action. As such, the ICRC's international character, recognised mandate and confidential mode of action gives it a comparative advantage.

### iv. Scaling and adapting programmes to conflict needs

In most contexts, the joint implementation of assistance programmes by the HNS and the ICRC ensures that many activities can be swiftly scaled up. This is notably the case with labour intensive programmes such as the distribution of food and hygiene kits or the monitoring of cash transfer programmes. The financial and technical resources of the ICRC coupled with the manpower and widespread presence of the National Society combine to ensure the ability for rapid scaling up of responses as required. This was recently seen in Somalia in 2017 when drought caused widespread suffering with the loss of large numbers of livestock

and high levels of food insecurity and malnutrition. With some 6.2 million people (half the country's population) facing acute food shortages, together, the ICRC, and the SRCS with its vast network of volunteers, implemented a large-scale multi-disciplinary humanitarian response. The devastating drought came at a time when the protracted conflict in Somalia had already destroyed and disrupted livelihoods and vital health and water services. The ICRC and SRCS focused their response in areas prone to conflict and/or locations which were difficult for others to access. Elsewhere (mainly Somaliland but also parts of Puntland), the IFRC and PNS

---

<sup>20</sup> The ICRC's detention work focuses on trying to secure humane treatment and conditions of detention for all detainees.



worked with the SRCS to respond to drought-related needs thereby covering non-conflict areas. As can be seen in Figure 2 below, the numbers of those assisted is testament to the benefits of complementarity even in some of the most difficult

operating environments. Between January and December 2017 the two organisations were able to provide multi-disciplinary vital life-saving support to some 2.3 million people.

### Number of people helped:

#### Relief and recovery

170,046

received livestock treatment

513,000

received food rations

110,142

received livestock treatment

574,524

received cash

#### Healthcare

436,282

received medical care in SRCS clinics and mobile clinics

7,251

received cholera treatment

43,962

received treatment in stabilisation centres

#### Water and sanitation

172,100

received access to water through construction and rehabilitation of boreholes

12,430

received help with construction and deepening of wells

538,403

helped with household water treatment, chlorination of water supplies and hygiene promotion

**Figure 2: ICRC and SRCS 2017 drought response**

Beyond simply scaling up programmes, Movement complementarity is also critical in ensuring that existing National Society programmes can be extended and adapted to meet the needs of conflict-affected populations. This is particularly salient when National Societies have limited conflict-related experience as has already been noted in relation to Ukraine. Here, the National Society was already managing mobile health units and delivering first aid courses prior to the start of the conflict. When conflict broke out, the ICRC helped the URCS to develop systems and procedures to ensure that its services could be provided in the areas where they were suddenly most needed, namely the most sensitive areas along the frontline. This included a

mapping and assessment of security constraints faced by each community along the frontline as well as improved movement notification and coordination procedures – all critical elements of the previously-mentioned Movement Safer Access Framework.

In addition to adapting procedures to take into account conflict-related security considerations, Movement complementarity has also ensured that programmes are adapted to additional needs emerging from the conflict. For instance, the ICRC supported the URCS in increasing its first aid capacities through a training of trainers course and by focusing the training on issues of importance for people living along the frontline, such as incidents related to weapon contamination.

## v. Adapting to diverse contextual realities

Complementarity between Movement components also allows the Movement to adapt its response as conflict dynamics evolve and change. Because each organisation's comparative advantages may differ depending on the nature of the conflict, Movement complementarity can manifest itself differently across space and time in a given context. For instance, in Colombia, some of the most innovative complementary approaches have emerged as part of the Movement's response to urban violence and juvenile detention. These often rely on a different distribution of responsibilities than traditional conflict-related emergency response programmes (see Box 4) but by combining each organisations' respective strengths it enables the Movement to maintain responses that have an impact at the individual, community, and system levels. Here, the Norwegian Red Cross has played an important role in sharing its expertise in relation to urban violence, providing an example of the importance of PNS inputs in such environments.

The above examples point to the complementarity of the Movement when it comes to jointly implemented programmes. It is also important to highlight how the Movement is able to display complementarity when it comes to certain activities that can only be carried out by one specific component. In Colombia this is notably the case with the ICRC's involvement in the support of the peace negotiation process. The ICRC, given its diplomatic status and the credibility it has established with the Government and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), was requested by both parties to act as a neutral intermediary in support of the peace negotiations. This has included ensuring the safe transport of FARC leadership to attend peace negotiations, which would have been difficult for any local or national organisation to undertake given the diplomatic sensitivities related to transporting the FARC across borders for negotiations in Cuba.

Whereas the ICRC is often in a unique position that allows it to play an essential intermediary role between parties to the conflict, its ability to address issues that are not always limited to conflict is often constrained by its narrow mandate, which is not the case for National Societies. For instance, whereas in

Colombia the ICRC supported the peace negotiation process in practical ways, its mandate, and the risk of compromising neutral, impartial, independent humanitarian action, limit its involvement in the peace transition process. Certain armed groups remain hostile to the peace transition and the ICRC has decided to keep some distance from a process which is ultimately political and could have an impact on its perceived neutrality. The CRCS on the other hand has a much broader mandate. One of its strategic objectives for the 2016-2020 period is precisely to contribute to the culture of peace and reconciliation, and it is therefore seeking to be actively involved in the transition process, with the support of the IFRC and PNSs.

In other words, given the complementary mandates, strengths and expertise of different Movement components, at times their actions may allow them to play distinct roles or provide unique types of support. This is illustrated in Colombia where the ICRC has provided essential support to the peace negotiations whereas other Movement components are playing an active role in supporting the transition from conflict to peace.

### Juvenile detention and urban violence

In juvenile detention centres, where many young people are detained because of their involvement in armed gangs, the ICRC and CRCS have divided responsibility on the basis of each organisation's area of expertise. The CRCS focuses on the provision of training and behavioural skills to young people inside the detention centres and assists their transition back into their communities. This includes supporting families with the development of alternative livelihood options in order to prevent former detainees from having to rely on illicit activities in order to provide for their families. In addition to addressing conditions of detention, the ICRC focuses on the penal system, working to inform key stakeholders of legal provisions with which they are often unfamiliar that allow them to show leniency towards juvenile detainees when appropriate.

## vi. Financial resources

The case studies have shown that at times of ongoing conflict the ability of a National Society to raise funds domestically and internationally is often severely limited. As such, the provision of significant levels of financial support from the ICRC, IFRC and other National Societies has been essential. This support has helped to ensure that National Societies working in their own countries are able to continue to operate and respond to needs as well as maintain their large-scale human resources (in the form of paid staff as well as volunteers) and infrastructure (in the form of branches, headquarters and supporting costs). Furthermore, improved complementarity between Movement components appears to be associated with increased funding provided by the ICRC to the HNS. In both Ukraine and Colombia adopting a more complementary approach has been accompanied by a more than two-fold increase in the ICRC's financial contributions to the HNS. This is primarily as a result of a greater investment in capacity building and an increased role of the National Society in programme implementation. This financial support takes the form of a donation in the spirit of partnership for the purpose of strengthening capacity in given areas.

However, the approach of providing financial support for organisational development at all levels, and not simply in relation to specific time-bound programmes and/or activity implementation, has not historically always taken place. In all three countries researched, this limitation and the risk that in the long term this might actually weaken as opposed to strengthen the National Society, has been acknowledged and is currently being addressed with ongoing support

---

### The Grand Bargain: Commitment 2.1

Increase and support multi-year investment in the institutional capacities of local and national responders, including preparedness, response and coordination capacities, especially in fragile contexts and where communities are vulnerable to armed conflict, disasters, recurrent outbreaks and the effect of climate change.

---

to the National Societies at all levels. The provision of project-focused support has wakened NS as it has often focused on short timeframes and the implementation of time-bound activities without sufficient consideration for the ongoing and long-term activities of the NS. The positive change in approach with a focus on more transversal organisational development has included the funding not only of technical posts but also the provision of financial support to cover the costs that are key to the organisational development of the National Society as a whole, including senior management positions. In Somalia the ICRC, SRCS, IFRC and other National Societies have prioritised the development of approaches to recruiting and maintaining human resources in an environment where competition for skilled personnel is high as well as strengthening its finance and resource mobilisation skills. This is seen as critical to facilitating the ability of the SRCS to continue to operate in the short and long term, both on its own and in collaboration with other components of the Movement.

For local actors such as National Societies, accessing funding for their activities from outside the Movement during times of conflict has proved extremely difficult. Drumming up financial support from the public and government authorities is almost impossible at such times. This can be seen in Somalia. With limited fundraising experience and a practical limit on potential options through which to generate its own funds, the SRCS is completely dependent upon the financial support of the ICRC and other Movement members. In spite of the Grand Bargain commitments (flagged above), the ability of the SRCS (and other Somali humanitarian organisations) to access funding from international donors remains hampered by current anti-terror legislation and due diligence measures. This situation is unlikely to change in the near future. The only current options open to Somali NGOs are the Somalia Humanitarian Fund (SHF)<sup>21</sup> which is also open to international organisations and the Somalia Stability Fund (SSF).<sup>22</sup> However, an additional barrier for the SRCS is the necessity for it to distance itself from the UN and the western-backed “stabilisation” agenda in order to guarantee its ability to operate throughout the country, as any real or perceived association with international actors (apart from the ICRC) could result in a threat to its security. As such, it is unable to access either the SHF or the SSF. In light of this, other Movement components, including PNS, are supporting the SRCS to develop its capacity in financial resources and resource mobilisation.

In Colombia, where there is a transition to peace, even though the CRCS is able to access revenue from a variety of sources including the country's national lottery and its own blood bank, it relies on the ICRC, IFRC and PNS for most of its programme funding. At the same time, the transition environment has seen a reduction in humanitarian funding and a move to new financing mechanisms with which the CRCS is not familiar. This has led to an uncertainty and unpredictability in relation to funding which impacts on its ability to develop long term operational plans.

The unpredictability of funding has also proved to be a significant constraint for the URCS. While support from Movement partners has been essential in sustaining and strengthening URCS's operational capacity, the lack of reliability of Movement partners' funding has proven to be a major challenge. Given that both the ICRC and the IFRC's contributions are renewed and adjusted on an annual basis, the URCS struggles to devise a reliable multi-year budget which in turn hinders its ability to invest strategically in organisational development and retain top talent<sup>23</sup>.

In some cases, financial sustainability was also found to have an impact on the performance of the HNS' local branches. In Colombia, financially sustainable branches were found to be more likely to produce innovative complementary programmes. Whereas in theory each branch is meant to design programmes based on its assessment of the priority needs in its region, in practice each branch's ability to do so is heavily contingent on its financial sustainability. Branches that are heavily dependent on project funding tend to develop a strategy that is guided by expected donor preferences rather than needs, which in turn hinders their ability to develop a coherent vision, let alone innovative programmes. As a result of this, most of the innovative joint programming between the ICRC and CRCS occurs in the stronger branches. This includes both the urban violence and juvenile detention programmes mentioned above.

21 Managed by UN OCHA, this is the only fund accessible for national NGOs for humanitarian response although it is also open to INGOs. The fund allows for finances to focus on organisational development. Of the \$45m programmed under the SHF in 2017, 38% was channelled directly to national NGOs.

22 The Somalia Stability Fund is a multi-donor fund (Denmark, EU, Netherlands, Norway, Sweden and the UK) which offers Somali stakeholders a source of multi-year funding to respond to local needs. A web search

shows that the Fund's 45-page accountability and compliance procedures are only available in English.

23 A recently adopted Movement Council of Delegates resolution on Resource Mobilization aims precisely to address many of these problems but has yet to be fully operationalised. See [http://rcrcconference.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/CD-17-R2\\_clean.pdf](http://rcrcconference.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/CD-17-R2_clean.pdf)

## vii. Capacity strengthening and common language

Capacity strengthening takes place within the Movement but is also an important activity with non-Movement organisations that work together with Movement components.

### Capacity strengthening within the Movement

While complementary action has been noted above as positive in terms of facilitating the Movement's ability to scale up its humanitarian responses in times of crisis, this does not come without a cost. Indeed, one of the main challenges for a HNS is to try to build its capacity and support organisational development. While simultaneously trying to ramp up its response programmes. In addition, in the past, the need to scale up has often seen the provision of project or activity focused support from the ICRC to the HNS. As opposed to strengthening the National Society this has instead often weakened it in some areas of activity as the approach adopted has been piecemeal and sometimes led by ICRC priorities.<sup>24</sup> This has been recognised in all three contexts covered by this research and as a result, efforts to strengthen the capacity of National Societies in a more holistic manner which takes on board National Society priorities and facilitates more equal partnerships have been put in place. The IFRC with its expertise in organisational development has a critical role to play here. Similarly, in all the contexts considered for this synthesis report, PNS have played a valuable role in the provision of multi-year capacity strengthening supporting HNS to be able to operate effectively in both conflict and non-conflict environments. This was particularly noteworthy in Ukraine where complementary support provided by IFRC, ICRC and the PNS has allowed URCS to undertake significant reforms and enhance its capacity to respond in situation of conflict.

The negative impact of conflict, whether prolonged or relatively short term in nature, on the capacity

---

**“Capacity development starts from the principle that people are best empowered to realize their full potential when the means of development are sustainable – home-grown, long-term, and generated and managed collectively by those who stand to benefit.”**

Capacity Development: A UNDP Primer

---

of National Societies was highlighted in all three case studies. As such, formal and structured coordinated support to jointly identified capacity strengthening has proven to be an essential element of complementarity.

Capacity strengthening tends to be provided from the international components of the Movement to its national and local partners but this is not always the case. For instance, in Colombia the CRCS has contributed to building ICRC's capacity to respond to urban violence, which ICRC now aims to apply in other contexts.

---

<sup>24</sup> It should be noted that although at times the ICRC's capacity strengthening support could historically have been more strategic, it has nonetheless worked closely with HNS for years, for example in Somalia supporting the running of SRCS health clinics throughout the country over many years.

## Capacity strengthening for non-Movement partners

In addition to strengthening the capacity of National Societies, the ICRC also works with non-Movement organisations in its humanitarian responses. Efforts are also focused upon strengthening their capacity to meet needs, particularly when the ICRC is no longer present. This can be seen in many areas of the ICRC's work in which National Societies are often not involved, including for example, the provision of training to healthcare personnel to ensure appropriate treatment of weapon-wounded; support to water authorities to maintain water infrastructure; and strengthening of associations focusing on issues such as animal health.

Already touched upon above, a key area in which the ICRC provides capacity strengthening support to non-Movement organisations is in relation to

missing persons. Here, as part of its forensics activities, the ICRC has a global expertise in dead body management (DBM). In Ukraine the ICRC provides advice and support to the authorities as well as national forensics personnel to ensure that they are in a position to recover, analyse and identify the dead while doing the same for those collecting information from relatives of missing persons.

Similarly, in Colombia the ICRC and the CRCS are contributing to building the capacity of centres aimed at registering and providing assistance to internally displaced persons arriving in urban areas. This has laid the foundation for much of the work currently being carried out by the government body now responsible for their registration and compensation.

## viii. Complementarity in action – key findings

---

- 1** At times it is the international nature of the ICRC and its disassociation with conflict-affected communities that is critical in facilitating dialogue with weapon bearers and access to those affected. In other situations, it is the proximity of the National Society to affected communities that is critical in ensuring dialogue and access. This varies from one conflict environment to another. With access, proximity and trust being essential features of effective humanitarian action, the Movement's ability to access hard-to-reach populations is frequently as a result of strong, often separate, dialogue with parties to the conflict, and sustained engagement and action.
  - 2** The goal of providing neutral and impartial protection and assistance to those affected by conflict and disaster is shared by the ICRC and National Societies. This goal is often best achieved by working together yet in some instances it requires each entity to work separately. However, at all times, the work of the two is complementary in nature with each component bringing their local, national and international strengths and expertise to respond effectively to the humanitarian consequences of conflict and violence.
  - 3** The complementary expertise, local-level knowledge, and a privileged dialogue with armed groups and weapon-bearers enables the Movement to develop solutions that address protection issues at their source while also mitigating their impact on affected communities. It also allows the Movement to devise solutions at the individual, community, and system level.
-

---

**4** Ensuring the application of the Movement's Fundamental Principles – or at least being perceived as such – can be particularly challenging for National Societies in times of conflict, particularly in their role as an auxiliary to the State. International components of the Movement can however support National Societies in their application of the Principles by acting as a buffer between them and public authorities if required and by absorbing political pressures that are harder for national actors to deflect.

---

**5** Complementary action between international and national components of the Movement is often critical in ensuring the ability to rapidly scale up and provide multi-disciplinary responses at times of crisis.

---

**6** The ability of national actors to raise funds from domestic and international sources during times of conflict is often severely limited. National Societies are often heavily dependent upon financial support from other components of the Movement in order to strengthen and develop their capacity and to allow them to operate. The Movement's 2017 Council of Delegates resolution on resource mobilisation is an initial step in addressing this.

---

**7** In some contexts, international anti-terror legislation and stringent due diligence measures are standing in the way of the ability to meet the Grand Bargain commitment that by 2020, 25% of funding will go as directly as possible to local and national responders. International actors are able to carry the burden of due diligence obligations here, thereby supporting national and local actors who would otherwise not be able to access these funds.

---

**8** Coordinated and holistic support to capacity strengthening and organisational development of national actors during times of conflict is essential. Fragmented activity-focused support with a focus only on response scale up has left local and national level structures weaker than before.

---

**9** In some contexts, international anti-terror legislation and stringent due diligence measures are standing in the way of the ability to meet the Grand Bargain commitment that by 2020, 25% of funding will go as directly as possible to local and national responders. International actors are able to carry the burden of due diligence obligations here, thereby supporting national and local actors who would otherwise not be able to access these funds.

---

### 3. Contextual variations and challenges to complementarity

A number of variables that influence complementarity have been found across the three case studies, including factors that hinder or even undermine complementarity. These include historical legacies; the strengths and weaknesses of different National Societies; contextual diversity; the mechanisms that have been established for planning and coordination; organisational will; and different approaches to co-location.

Historical legacies, particularly the fact that past approaches to complementarity in conflict environments have often seen an unequal partnership between the ICRC and National Societies, still have a bearing on the nature of the relationship between both Movement components in some contexts. This is particularly the case with weaker National Society branches that have been heavily dependent on ICRC funding and become accustomed to acting primarily as implementing partners. Although a genuine shift in approach has taken place, in some cases it has taken significant time for the ICRC and the HNS to adapt practices and redress the balance to build more equal partnerships.

The nature of conflict and conflict dynamics has also been found to influence how complementarity manifests itself. For instance, over the past few years in Colombia, the ICRC's programmes have progressively shifted away from responding to large-scale displacements towards addressing more chronic issues such as urban violence and access to employment. Such programmes distinguish themselves from emergency response programmes by their complexity but also by the fact that they are less subject to time pressure. Both of these features make them more amenable to consultative approaches. The greater sophistication of such programmes requires further thought and planning but the fact that programme implementation is not as urgent also allows more time for such consultation to take place. As such, when responding to an emergency, cooperation is perhaps more likely to be vertical as there is a need for faster and more directive action, whereas programmes addressing chronic problems are more amenable to horizontal cooperation.<sup>25</sup> In addition, in situations where different parties to a conflict hold different areas of territory this can open up the opportunity for the potentially important role for the ICRC as a neutral intermediary.

Planning and coordination mechanisms have also played a key role in enabling complementary programming. Across the conflict-affected countries drawn upon for this research, the ICRC and National Societies have established formal and structured coordination mechanisms at both strategic and management levels. These mechanisms have been critical to ensuring a regular flow of information and have resulted in jointly planned responses that enable better alignment and ownership of programmes by both organisations. However, the fact that these coordination mechanisms are generally designed and managed at the country office level may make them insufficient to properly account for more local variations in need and organisational capacity. In Colombia, the use of a third level of coordination at the branch level – a technical level – was therefore found to have facilitated implementation of programmes that were better tailored to regional specificities (see Box 5). Having three levels of coordination – strategic, management and technical – is seen as the optimal way to ensure collaborative and coordinated complementarity.

Beyond formal mechanisms, co-location has also been an important means of improving coordination and planning. In Somalia for example, the ICRC Delegation and the SRCS headquarters are co-located in the same compound in Nairobi. This has been critical in ensuring a regular, ongoing dialogue between the two organisations in terms of information-sharing and the establishment of strong relationships of trust. In Ukraine, co-location has taken a different form with an ICRC delegate being located in the URCS headquarters for three years. Over that period the staff member supported the capacity strengthening and reorganisation of the URCS. Having an ICRC staff member with a strong understanding of the URCS perspective has also been important in ensuring that the ICRC's programmes are designed in a manner that best support the capacity and long-term vision of the National Society.

---

<sup>25</sup> Vertical cooperation tends to take the form of one Movement component taking the lead in terms of response design with limited inputs from other components even though they may be involved in implementation. Horizontal cooperation is more consultative and participatory in nature.



Individual and organisational will and openness to work in a complementary manner is an important influencing factor in relation to complementarity. Co-creating innovative programmes that leverage each organisation's comparative advantages – and overcoming differences in organisational culture – requires certain behavioural skills in addition to technical know-how, which can vary significantly from one ICRC staff member or HNS branch to another.

At the same time, in some contexts, particularly those affected by decades of ongoing war and limited development, there is often a lack of qualified people available to implement humanitarian activities requiring some particular technical skills (e.g. engineers, agronomist, doctors) if higher education has been hampered by the conflict. This results in the need to employ foreigners to undertake certain elements of humanitarian work, simply on the basis of the expertise that they have to offer.

### Planning and coordinating activities related to weapon contamination

Weapon contamination will remain a very salient issue in Colombia for years to come, regardless of the evolution of the conflict. CRCS was one of the first organisations to work on mine awareness in Colombia, and the ICRC has been implementing weapon contamination programmes there (jointly with the CRCS) for over ten years. These programmes are generally focused on a combination of the following project lines: mine risk awareness, support and education to victims regarding their rights, and advocacy with authorities to promote best practices.

At the technical coordination meeting level both the ICRC and CRCS identified addressing weapon contamination as a priority theme for 2017, and agreed to work jointly on the programme.

Following this decision, CRCS surveyed its 32 branches to identify those most interested in implementing such programmes. In addition to branches' expression of interest, the final selection of 15 branches for the programme was done by

CRCS HQ, based on the needs in a given area, branch capacity, and the potential for branch capacity strengthening.

Once the programme and branches were agreed upon at the HQ and Delegation level, coordination and planning occurred at the field level with CRCS branches determining which of the different project lines they wished to implement.

In conjunction with the ICRC office in the region, plans of action were then developed for the implementation of the programme clarifying each organisations' responsibilities.

In practice, this means that the specific activities related to weapon contamination programmes may significantly differ from one region to another, as do the responsibilities of each organisation. Such an approach is meant to ensure that programmes are tailored to the different needs of each region, as well as to the varying capacities of different branches.

Furthermore, when large numbers of humanitarian organisations are present there is often competition for skilled human resources that have experience with humanitarian work. The loss of experienced, knowledgeable and trained staff and volunteers compromises the National Society's ability to maintain capacity even though it is often the national organisation with access to some of the most conflict-affected locations and populations. This is often compounded by the financial unpredictability that National Societies face, which prevents them from guaranteeing long term contracts to key staff members.

Lastly, in situations of armed conflict the reputation and perception of humanitarian organisations has a direct impact on their ability to operate and

access conflict-affected locations. This may vary significantly from one organisation or one region to another. At the same time, in contexts where there is limited access, particularly for international organisations and their staff, national and local organisations are generally relied upon to implement vital humanitarian programmes. With cultural, religious, ethnic, political and clan allegiances and pressure being brought to bear in terms of where and to whom aid should be directed, national and local organisations may struggle to operate in line with fundamental humanitarian principles and to maintain the autonomy to operate. The lack of strong accountability systems has in some contexts resulted in accusations of fraud, corruption and aid diversion with a lot of blame being put on local operators.

## **i. Contextual variations and challenges to complementarity – key findings**

---

- 1** Having three levels of coordination in place (strategic, management and technical) is seen to be most beneficial in order to ensure that priorities are jointly identified and that each Movement component has a strong awareness of what the other is doing. At times this can be complemented with a clear geographic division of which Movement actor is operational where. This is particularly pertinent in conflict settings where security risks are always present.
  - 2** Co-location of different forms – ranging from individual staff members of the ICRC and National Society being located in the same building to offices of both organisations being located in the same compound – has been a key facilitator in terms of ensuring complementarity and Movement alignment.
  - 3** Coordinating capacity strengthening support by the ICRC, IFRC and PNS has enabled the leveraging of different areas of expertise for the benefit of National Societies.
-

## 4. Conclusions and recommendations

The Movement provides a noteworthy model of a global humanitarian network that connects local, national and international levels in a complementary manner. In terms of coordination, capacity strengthening and operating in accordance with humanitarian principles, the Movement is able to provide a number of positive examples of complementarity in action in situations of conflict and violence. The Movement's acknowledgment of complementarity has been in place for decades, with key policies noting each component's "distinct but closely related and complementary roles"<sup>26</sup> and "clear commitment to work together"<sup>27</sup> for the benefit of those in need.

In situations of armed conflict the ICRC has a specific mandate as well as technical experience from years of operating in such situations. For the Movement, within the context of localisation discussions, it is rather the complementary combination of strengths that each component can bring that ensures the ability of each individual component, and the Movement as a whole, to respond to the humanitarian needs of those affected by conflict.

Each component of the Movement has different strengths and skills and at times these are used individually to address the needs of those affected by conflict and violence. It is the very combination of skills and strengths that allows the Movement to identify and implement solutions at individual, community and at system levels in a way which is often unique when compared to other humanitarian actors. This unique feature is key to ensuring that the mandates of the Movement components are fulfilled for the benefit of those affected by conflict and violence whatever the setting. Designing programmes that leverage the comparative advantages of its different components enables the Movement to address even sensitive protection-related issues at their source while also mitigating their immediate and long-term impact on conflict-affected populations.

In some situations of armed conflict, often in acute and protracted conflicts, local capacity has been so weakened or destroyed that National Societies and other local actors are unable to sufficiently respond to meet people's needs. At times as well, local capacity may be (or may be perceived to be) too politically aligned, at risk of corruption, or restricted, to respond impartially to the needs of those affected. This is particularly pertinent when considering sensitive protection-related needs. In these circumstances complementary action, bringing together the strengths of different international and national humanitarian actors, is critical to increase the ability to address the extensive range of needs faced by populations in crisis. In that respect, when working well, Movement complementarity provides an interesting model of what humanitarian assistance that is "as local as possible and as international as necessary"<sup>28</sup> may look like in practice.

The research has shown that different types of context do influence relationships particularly between the ICRC and the HNS, often creating different dynamics between the two. As has been noted, the contexts which were used as a basis for this study were all able to provide examples of positive complementarity but this does not necessarily reflect all contexts in which different Movement components work alongside each other. In all three countries considered, the ICRC's budget is significantly larger than that of the National Societies and with the ICRC providing financial support of different degrees in each context the risk of a donor/recipient relationship as opposed to a partnership of equals remains. This risk has however been reduced as result of the greater recognition within the ICRC and the Movement as a whole, of the importance to engage in more meaningful capacity strengthening and the need to establish formal coordination mechanisms in all contexts.

26 Seville Agreement on the Organization of the International Activities of the Components of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement

27 Policy on ICRC cooperation with National Societies  
28 Grand Bargain agreement, 2016

These coordination mechanisms allow for the essential participation of other components of the Movement – notably the IFRC and PNS. These components are less directly active in relation to responding to conflict-related needs yet their ability to share skills and provide essential capacity strengthening and financial support to Movement operations constitute an additional central feature of Movement complementarity, but one that is perhaps not yet used to its optimum level. Similarly, while more attention could be given to more meaningful capacity strengthening, the experience of the Movement also shows that, through long-term and sustained engagement, a common understanding of the respective components' added value and limitations is emerging.

For the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, even though some activities are most effectively implemented separately, collaborative complementary action is what enables it to have an impact that exceeds the sum of its individual components' capabilities – and ultimately distinguishes the Movement's response from that of other humanitarian actors.

The Movement provides a unique example of an international organisation with a globally-recognised mandate to provide protection and assistance in conflict, combined with a global network of national societies each of which has a unique relationship with its national authorities. This network of national societies is supported by an international federation which itself has a unique status and relationship with each of the other components. As discussed in the study, the distinctive nature of the Movement allows for opportunities for collaboration and complementarity that it may be difficult for other organisations and networks to benefit from.

However, elements of a number of the findings of this study should resonate with other humanitarian organisations, particularly those structured as a federation or built upon the basis of international and local networks. These include:

- The recognition that local actors and partners have a distinct understanding of community needs due to their proximity to those they are seeking to assist.
- Long term and sustained presence of both national and international humanitarian actors is key to ensuring acceptance and access in situations of armed conflict.
- Co-locating international and national staff in the same offices is a key facilitator in terms of ensuring complementarity, alignment and the ability to share expertise.
- Financial and technical support from international organisations to their local partners remains critical in order to enable them to address the humanitarian consequences of conflict and violence. This is particularly pertinent in light of the fact that national organisations still struggle to directly access international funding in a number of contexts due to strict due diligence requirements.

## Recommendations

Based on the research key findings, a set of six recommendations is provided. In order to contribute to the wider localisation agenda, it is hoped that also non-Movement national and international humanitarian organisations can identify relevant learnings to draw from.

### Recommendation 1: Build on comparative advantages

National and international Movement components each have distinct advantages which allow them to effectively respond to the humanitarian consequences of conflict and violence.

It is recommended that for each operating context, the distinct advantages of each Movement component are identified and mapped in order that contextually-appropriate responses can be tailored to best address the needs of those in need. This may require different responses within one country. The comparative advantages should be documented and included in formal Movement planning and coordination documents and express consideration should be given to the **essential nature of local leadership and decision-making**.

---

### Recommendation 2: Strategic scale up

The ability to increase the scale of multi-disciplinary humanitarian responses in conflict needs to be combined with appropriate approaches to capacity strengthening at local and national level. This requires a holistic approach to organisational development and capacity strengthening that better leverages the expertise of the different Movement components (including the IFRC and PNS) and a continued move away from activity-focused capacity building to ensure that National Societies are left stronger and not weaker as a result of collaboration and complementary action. Furthermore, where relevant, joint programmes should be designed in a manner that allows for the gradual transfer of responsibility to the HNS, again, acknowledging the importance of ultimate local leadership in humanitarian responses particularly during times of transition and post-conflict.

---

### Recommendation 3: Planning & coordination

As already promoted within the Movement, establishing at least three levels of coordination – strategic, management and technical – should be pursued in all conflict environments in order to strengthen collaborative coordination and planning processes. Where relevant, this should be combined with clear and documented division of geographical areas of responsibility as well as a planning and coordination mechanisms at the branch level to take into account branch level specificities.

---

### Recommendation 4: Co-Location

Co-locating an international staff member within the offices of the National Society/local partner is critical in order to strengthen capacity support and to facilitate deeper understanding between the two. It is recommended that where feasible, this approach is replicated in other contexts.

---

<sup>29</sup> It is worth noting that some of the points are already addressed in the recently launched National Society Investment Alliance and the Movement's 2017 Council of Delegates resolution on Resource Mobilization. They however have yet to be fully operationalised.

### Recommendation 5: Human resources

Jointly creating innovative programmes that leverage each organisation's comparative advantages requires a collaborative mindset and associated set of behavioural skills. Staff recruitment and training should be adapted to more systematically identify and further develop such skills and mainstream them across the Movement.

---

### Recommendation 6: Financial resources

The provision of financial support for the organisational development of National Societies and local organisations is essential in order to enable them to operate during times of conflict when opportunities for raising funds at a domestic level are often limited. Funding should be provided within the following framework<sup>29</sup>:

- Directed at organisational development throughout the National Society and not in relation to individual programme implementation.
  - Provided within a predictable multi-year timeframe in order to facilitate budgetary planning for the National Society.
  - Combined with support for resource mobilisation by the National Society itself in order to ensure that it has a diverse donor base and does not rely solely upon Movement partners for future funding.
  - Maintained following a reduction in conflict in order to ensure that the HNS' organisational development strategy can be fully implemented.
- 

Below: The ICRC and the Colombian Red Cross have put in place in several schools in town, 'education brigades', where pupils learn to live together without violence in this very uncertain environment. Image © Didier Revol/ICRC.



## Annex 1: Bibliography

- 1 Annual report – Colombia, ICRC, 2014
- 2 Annual report – Colombia, ICRC, 2015
- 3 Annual report – Colombia, ICRC, 2016
- 4 Annual report – Somalia, ICRC, 2015
- 5 Annual report – Somalia, ICRC, 2016
- 6 Babelet. V – Humanitarian Access and Local Organisations in Ukraine, ODI & HPG, 2017 [www.odi.org/sites/odi.org.uk/files/resource-documents/11746.pdf](http://www.odi.org/sites/odi.org.uk/files/resource-documents/11746.pdf)
- 7 Backhurst. J et al. – Pursuing the WHS agenda: Discussion Paper for DFID and NGO Humanitarian Directors meeting, 2017
- 8 Briefing Paper: Localisation of Aid – Realising commitments to local and national NGOs, NEAR Network for Empowered Aid Response, December 2017
- 9 Budget Extension Appeal – Somalia, ICRC, 2017
- 10 Capacity Building and Organisation Development of URCS – Concept Paper, URCS & IFRC, 2016
- 11 Carpenter. S. – Strengthening National and Local Response and Risk Management Capacity, 2015 [www.alnap.org/system/files/content/resource/files/main/%5Bcarpenter%5D-2014-05-26-whs-position-paper-nl-capacity-paper-for-gf.pdf](http://www.alnap.org/system/files/content/resource/files/main/%5Bcarpenter%5D-2014-05-26-whs-position-paper-nl-capacity-paper-for-gf.pdf)
- 12 Civil Society and the Crisis in Ukraine, OSCE, 2015
- 13 [www.osce.org/special-monitoring-mission-to-ukraine/141046](http://www.osce.org/special-monitoring-mission-to-ukraine/141046)
- 14 Colombian Red Cross Society OCAC Findings, IFRC, 2013
- 15 Dijkzeul. D and Moke. M, Public communication strategies of international humanitarian organisations, International Review of the Red Cross, 2005 [www.icrc.org/en/international-review/article/public-communication-strategies-international-humanitarian](http://www.icrc.org/en/international-review/article/public-communication-strategies-international-humanitarian)
- 16 Estrategia de Prevención y Mitigación de la Violencia, Inclusion Social y Fomento de una Cultura de Paz, CRCS Seccional Antioquia, 2016
- 17 ICRC Policy on Cooperation with National Societies [www.icrc.org/eng/assets/files/other/policy\\_cooperationicrc\\_ns\\_ang.pdf](http://www.icrc.org/eng/assets/files/other/policy_cooperationicrc_ns_ang.pdf)
- 18 Improving aid delivery through localisation in Somali, Rift Valley Institute Meeting, 2017 <http://riftvalley.net/publication/improving-aid-delivery-through-localisation-somalia-.Wx5zfy2ZORs>
- 19 Informe de Gestion, CRCS, 2016 [www.cruzrojacolombiana.org/sites/default/files/INFORME\\_GESTION\\_2016\\_EXTERNO\\_baja.pdf](http://www.cruzrojacolombiana.org/sites/default/files/INFORME_GESTION_2016_EXTERNO_baja.pdf)
- 20 International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement message to the World Humanitarian Summit (CD/15/R3), Council of Delegates of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, 2015 [http://rcrcconference.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/CD15-R3-message-to-WHS\\_EN.pdf](http://rcrcconference.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/CD15-R3-message-to-WHS_EN.pdf)
- 21 Investing in National Societies to Strengthen Local Action for a Global Response to Crisis, International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, November 2017 <http://media.ifrc.org/ifrc/wp-content/uploads/sites/5/2017/12/NSIA-Description.pdf>
- 22 Istanbul and Beyond, IFRC and ICRC, 2016 [www.icrc.org/en/download/file/23038/whs\\_movement\\_report.pdf](http://www.icrc.org/en/download/file/23038/whs_movement_report.pdf)
- 23 Lessons Learned from the Somalia Famine and the Greater Horn of Africa Crisis 2011-2012, Feinstein International Center, July 2014 <http://fic.tufts.edu/publication-item/lessons-learned-from-the-somalia-famine-and-the-greater-horn-of-africa-crisis-2011-2012/>
- 24 Línea de Iniciativas Locales, Guía para la formulación de proyectos, ICRC & CRCS, 2017
- 25 Localisation in Somalia: Delivering Better Through Local Actors, Garowe News, 2017 [www.garoweonline.com/en/news/press-releases/localisation-in-somalia-delivering-better-through-local-actors](http://www.garoweonline.com/en/news/press-releases/localisation-in-somalia-delivering-better-through-local-actors)
- 26 MEHMA Final Project Performance Review, ICRC & CRCS, 2016

- 27** Metcalfe. V, et al. – UN integration and humanitarian space, HPG Stimson, 2011 [www.odi.org/sites/odi.org.uk/files/odi-assets/publications-opinion-files/7526.pdf](http://www.odi.org/sites/odi.org.uk/files/odi-assets/publications-opinion-files/7526.pdf)
- 28** Narrative on Localisation, ICRC, 2017 (internal)
- 29** National Humanitarian Action in the Syria Crises: The Syrian Arab Red Crescent, BRCS, 2016 (internal)
- 30** Organisational Capacity Assessment and Certification report, URCS, 2012
- 31** Panel de Opinion, Cifras y Conceptos, 2017
- 32** Plan Estratégico 2016-2020, CRCS, 2016 [www.cruzrojacolombiana.org/conozca-la-cruz-roja/plan-estrategico-2016-2020](http://www.cruzrojacolombiana.org/conozca-la-cruz-roja/plan-estrategico-2016-2020)
- 33** Principles in Action in Somalia, SRCS and BRCS, 2013 [www.alnap.org/help-library/principles-in-action-in-somalia](http://www.alnap.org/help-library/principles-in-action-in-somalia)
- 34** Research of Charitable Organizations and participation of the population in charitable and volunteer projects, Cornerstone Group, 2018 [www.gfk.com/insights/news/charity-in-ukraine-2018/](http://www.gfk.com/insights/news/charity-in-ukraine-2018/)
- 35** Retos Humanitarios 2017 – Informe Colombia: Resultados y Perspectivas, ICRC, 2017 [www.icrc.org/es/document/retos-humanitarios-2017-informe-cicr-colombia](http://www.icrc.org/es/document/retos-humanitarios-2017-informe-cicr-colombia)
- 36** Seville Agreement on the Organization of the International Activities of the Components of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, Council of Delegates of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, 1997 [www.icrc.org/eng/resources/documents/article/other/57jp4y.htm](http://www.icrc.org/eng/resources/documents/article/other/57jp4y.htm)
- 37** Somalia: Response to Acute Water Diarrhoea/Cholera Outbreaks Emergency Plan of Action, IFRC, 2017 [adore.ifrc.org/Download.aspx?FileId=161918](http://adore.ifrc.org/Download.aspx?FileId=161918)
- 38** SRCS Annual Report, SRCS, 2016
- 39** Strategic Plan 2015 – 2019, SRCS, 2015
- 40** The challenges of localised humanitarian aid in armed conflict, Emergency Gap Series 03, MSF 2016 [https://arhp.msf.es/sites/default/files/MSF\\_EGS03\\_The\\_challenges\\_of\\_localised\\_humanitarian\\_aid\\_in\\_armed\\_conflict\\_november\\_2016\\_0\\_0.pdf](https://arhp.msf.es/sites/default/files/MSF_EGS03_The_challenges_of_localised_humanitarian_aid_in_armed_conflict_november_2016_0_0.pdf)
- 41** The Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and NGOs in Disaster Relief, International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, 1994 [www.icrc.org/eng/assets/files/publications/icrc-002-1067.pdf](http://www.icrc.org/eng/assets/files/publications/icrc-002-1067.pdf)
- 42** The Grand Bargain and IFRC Engagement in the Localization Agenda, IFRC, 2017 (internal)
- 43** The London Somalia Conference report (May 2017)
- 44** The Principles and Rules for Red Cross and Red Crescent Humanitarian Assistance, IFRC, 2013 [www.ifrc.org/Global/Documents/Secretariat/Accountability/Principles Rules for Red Cross Red Crescent Humanitarian Assistance.pdf](http://www.ifrc.org/Global/Documents/Secretariat/Accountability/Principles_Rules_for_Red_Cross_Red_Crescent_Humanitarian_Assistance.pdf)
- 45** Ukraine Humanitarian Response Plan, OCHA & Humanitarian Country Team and partners, 2018 [www.humanitarianresponse.info/en/operations/ukraine/document/ukraine-2018-humanitarian-response-plan-hrp](http://www.humanitarianresponse.info/en/operations/ukraine/document/ukraine-2018-humanitarian-response-plan-hrp)
- 46** Ukraine Protection Cluster Strategy, UNHCR and Protection Cluster, 2018 <https://reliefweb.int/report/ukraine/ukraine-protection-cluster-strategy-2017-2018>
- 47** Ukraine SMCC marketing document, IFRC and URCS, 2017
- 48** Ukraine: Complex Emergency, Emergency Appeal operations update, IFRC, 2016 [adore.ifrc.org/Download.aspx?FileId=155589](http://adore.ifrc.org/Download.aspx?FileId=155589)
- 49** URCS Annual Report, URCS, 2016
- 50** URCS SAF Assessment Planning Workshop Report, ICRC 2014 & 2015
- 51** URCS Strategy 2018-2020, URCS, 2018
- 52** Zyck. S and Krebs. H, Localising humanitarianism: improving effectiveness through inclusive action, ODI HPG, 2015



## Annex 2: The seven Fundamental Principles of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement

### 1 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.

### 2 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.

### 3 INDEPENDENCE

In order to continue 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.

### 4 NEUTRALITY

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.

### 5 VOLUNTARY SERVICE

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

### 6 UNITY

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

### 7 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.

## Annex 3: Overview of the Movement components

**National Societies** working in their own countries (Host National Societies (HNS)) distinguish themselves from other organisations by their status of auxiliary to their public authorities in the humanitarian field, which provides them with official recognition (often through relevant law). National Societies tend to be present throughout the country with local branches and sub-branches generally making them the Movement component with the broadest national coverage. Beyond their coverage, HNS' access to hard-to-reach locations is driven by the acceptance and trust they have established within their own communities, often due to their long-term presence and engagement. This is characterised through their work with networks of community level staff and volunteers who have a proximity to and an intricate understanding of the needs of those affected by conflict and violence. National Societies often develop several specific fields of expertise which are essential when responding to the needs of conflict-affected communities. For instance, in Colombia this includes (but is not limited to) technical skills related to psychosocial support; in Ukraine skills related to home visiting programmes for vulnerable households, and in Somalia the provision of primary health care throughout the country.

**The ICRC's** mandate to protect and assist victims of armed conflict has been conferred on it by States through the four Geneva Conventions 1949 and their Additional Protocols. It is this mandate and its *modus operandi* which sets it apart from other international actors. The ICRC adopts the practice of discretion and confidentiality, striving to establish and maintain dialogue with all parties to a conflict, including non-state armed groups, constantly endeavouring to remain neutral, independent and impartial. Its long-standing experience of operating in conflict environments around the world has enabled it to develop specific areas of expertise which it can transfer and adapt from location to location. This expertise includes (but is not limited to) the establishment of dialogue on protection and other conflict-related issues with weapon-bearers and power holders at global, national and local levels; monitoring the treatment of detainees and their conditions of detention; preventative work with a specific focus on the development, dissemination and respect for international humanitarian law (IHL); and the provision of different forms of assistance in fragile and volatile conflict settings.

A key comparative advantage of the ICRC is also the fact that, through its internationally recognised mandate, States have committed to support and facilitate the mission of the organisation. This has facilitated the ICRC's privileged access to financial resources which in turn ensures financial independence, logistical capacity, and the potential to support and implement large-scale humanitarian responses in a way which is different to that of most local and national actors. All of these features in turn positively impact the ICRC's recognition, influence, access, and ability to operate. Beyond the fact that at times the ICRC is the only actor (or Movement component) to have a dialogue with all parties to a conflict, it is the nature of this dialogue that also distinguishes it from other actors. More specifically, the ICRC is often the only actor to discuss protection issues (such as the fate of hostages and detainees, violations of IHL, the fate of missing people) with potential perpetrators of violence. This privileged dialogue also allows the organisation at times, to receive security guarantees for itself as well as for other Movement components.

**The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC)**'s role is to inspire, encourage, facilitate and promote all forms of humanitarian activity by its 190-member Red Cross and Red Crescent National Societies. The IFRC acts as a liaison and coordination body between National Societies, providing them with assistance as required. A key area of support is in organisational development (OD) with a focus on response to natural disasters; recovery; development; and promoting social inclusion. With its focus on natural disasters and development, the work of the IFRC does not feature prominently in this study. However, the IFRC has a global comparative advantage in its ability to support National Societies in relation to their OD, allowing it to draw on OD experts with relevant expertise. IFRC support to National Societies also differs to that of the ICRC in that it is not limited to conflict or violence-related needs. They can therefore focus on post-conflict responses and support the National Society in areas of transition. This is also the case for National Societies from other countries (Participating National Societies – PNS) who also bring technical expertise and relevant experience from their home country to support the HNS.

## Annex 4: Overview of the three case study countries

### Colombia

The Colombian Red Cross Society (CRCS) was established in 1915 and is one of the country's highest-regarded civil society organisations. It has branches throughout the country and an unmatched access to conflict-affected communities nationwide. CRCS is accepted and trusted within communities with its work being undertaken by over 27,000 volunteers at community level. This extensive network has helped to ensure outreach and acceptance, as well as the development technical expertise in areas such as psychosocial support and addressing the consequences of urban violence.

The ICRC opened its offices in Colombia in 1969 and has worked with the CRCS since then. The ICRC has benefitted from the CRCS volunteers' understanding of community level needs and through the provision of ongoing financial and technical support the ICRC over time has bolstered the CRCS' ability to be active in new areas.

In Colombia the ICRC has established a privileged dialogue with the state authorities, non-state armed groups (NSAGs) and other weapon bearers, primarily as a result of its neutrality, independence and impartiality. In addition, it plays the role of neutral intermediary between different sides to the ongoing conflicts. It has also been able to carry out sensitive forensics work in relation to those killed as a result of conflict and violence in the country, a key part of its efforts to address the needs and rights of families of the Missing.

While not always easy to maintain, the strong relationship that is seen between the ICRC and CRCS today has enabled the development of innovative programmes that leverage each organisation's comparative advantages.

Other National Societies work with the CRCS since the mid-2000s and the IFRC opened an office in Bogota in 2017 in order to support the development of the National Society.

### Somalia

Having been established in 1963, the Somali Red Crescent Society (SRCS) operates throughout Somalia through a network of 19 branches. It has more than 900 staff and 8,000 active volunteers as well as an additional 20,000 community volunteers who can be called upon in times of disaster. The ICRC has worked together with the SRCS since 1977 during the Ogaden War. Their collaboration was reinforced with the onset of the 1991 – 1993 civil war where the two organisations implemented vast assistance operations for the benefit of more than one million Somalis in the midst of a conflict that tore the country apart and had devastating and widespread humanitarian consequence. The Norwegian Red Cross is also a long-term Movement actor in Somalia having been present for more than 30 years and currently active in supporting the SRCS healthcare activities as well as capacity strengthening. Other Movement components have become more active since the early 1990s and most recently have worked together with the SRCS to respond to the 2017 drought.

As with other humanitarian organisations, all Movement components active in Somalia and supporting the SRCS have their bases in Nairobi, having experienced the kidnap and killing of their staff during the many years of conflict in Somalia. For the SRCS, locating its headquarters in Nairobi has been critical in order to emphasise the absence of any political allegiance to a particular province, city or region in Somalia. It has continued to provide countrywide health services and having withdrawn from other humanitarian activity in the mid-1990s, with the support of the ICRC and other Movement members is recently returning to the provision of relief and economic security support across the country.

The ICRC has had varying degrees of access in Somalia and has relied upon its Somali staff and at times on other national organisations to support implementation. However, in a country which has been characterised by reports of the abuse of aid, in the last five years the ICRC has focused on strengthening its presence in the country in order to ensure that it is fully accountable for the assistance being provided in its name.

While the ICRC and SRCS work closely together primarily in health, restoration of family links and economic security, the ICRC undertakes some areas of work alone. This includes detention visits and the promotion and monitoring of IHL.

The complex and protracted nature of the conflict in Somalia have highlighted many of the challenges of complementarity where access to those in need requires different forms of engagement from national and international components of the Movement and where the provision of aid in an accountable manner has been put under question.

## Ukraine

Established in 1918, the Ukraine Red Cross Society (URCS) has historically focused primarily on the provision of health services and the distribution of humanitarian aid. When unrest, followed by military action, erupted in 2014 the URCS worked hard to meet the needs of IDPs. However, its limited capacity and lack of experience operating in a conflict environment limited its ability to respond. As such it sought assistance from the ICRC, the IFRC and other National Societies to support its response to the situation.

The ICRC and IFRC were not operational in Ukraine in 2014 but both rapidly established structures with the ICRC then expanding its presence in the eastern part of the country as the conflict flared up.

Although coordination of Movement activities is jointly done by Movement components at the national level, the ICRC, given its expertise, has the responsibility for establishing and managing the security framework for Movement components in conflict affected areas.

As the conflict continues, ties between government and non-government controlled areas (GCA and NGCA) have become increasingly weak. In NGCA, in order to provide critical assistance to conflict-affected populations with unimpeded access, the ICRC and local branches of the URCS have had to adopt a fluid approach to partnership. For instance, in some parts of NGCA, local branches have a privileged access to conflict-affected communities and thereby spearhead the Movement's activities whereas in other parts they are less accepted and have therefore had to rely on the ICRC acting as umbrella organisation in order to operate.

Below: Ukraine, Donetsk region, Mariupol, Mariupol School 5. The ICRC holds a Mine risk education session for the students.  
Photo © Yevgen Osenko/ICRC.



## Annex 5: Research key findings

The research has identified the following key findings in relation to Movement complementarity in situations of armed conflict and violence.

### Comparative advantages

- HNS are embedded within their communities and have a sound understanding of conflict and violence-related needs. This proximity, which has contributed to a common understanding and establishment of relationships between National Societies and the communities they serve, combined with the ability to implement specifically-tailored support at community level, facilitates access which is not always possible for other local and national actors.
- The long term and sustained presence and engagement of National Societies, and often of the ICRC, in situations of armed conflict and violence are critical to their acceptance by power holders and their access to those in need.
- Having financial and technical support from international components of the Movement is also an important enabler in terms of ensuring HNS ability to appropriately address the humanitarian consequences of conflict and violence.
- By virtue of its international nature and importantly the role mandated to it by the States party to the 1949 Geneva Conventions, the ICRC often has the advantage of being perceived as neutral, impartial and disassociated with conflict. This often allows the ICRC to play the role of neutral intermediary – a role that it would be extremely difficult for a national actor to play. Combined with its financial capacity, specific technical skills, sustained engagement (including dialogue) and established understanding of conflict-related needs, the ICRC frequently has access to conflict-affected populations that other organisations do not.
- The IFRC and PNS are able to provide support to non-conflict related activities including essential organisational development support. Often their combined support facilitates the capacity strengthening of HNS over multi-year timeframes.

### Complementarity in action

- At times it is the international nature of the ICRC and its disassociation with conflict-affected communities that is critical in facilitating dialogue with weapon bearers and access to those affected. In other situations it is the proximity of the National Society to affected communities that is critical in ensuring dialogue and access. This varies from one conflict environment to another. With access, proximity and trust being essential features of effective humanitarian action, the Movement's ability to access hard-to-reach populations is frequently as a result of strong complementary dialogue with parties to the conflict, and sustained engagement and action.
- The goal of providing neutral and impartial protection and assistance to those affected by conflict and disaster is shared by the ICRC and National Societies. This goal is often best achieved by working together yet in some instances it requires each entity to work separately. However, at all times, the work of the two is complementary in nature with each component bringing their local, national and international strengths and expertise to respond effectively to the humanitarian consequences of conflict and violence.
- The complementary expertise, local-level knowledge, and a privileged dialogue with armed groups and weapon-bearers enables the Movement to develop solutions that address protection issues at their source while also mitigating their impact on affected communities. It also allows the Movement to devise solutions at the individual, community, and system level.
- Ensuring the application of the Movement's Fundamental Principles can be particularly challenging for National Societies in times of conflict, particularly in their role as an auxiliary to the State. International components of the Movement can however support National Societies in their application of the Principles by acting as a buffer between them and public authorities if required and by absorbing political pressures that are harder for national actors to deflect.

- Complementary action between international and national components of the Movement is often critical in ensuring the ability to rapidly scale up and provide multi-disciplinary responses at times of crisis.
- The ability of national actors to raise funds from domestic and international sources during times of conflict is often severely limited. National Societies are often heavily dependent upon financial support from other components of the Movement in order to strengthen and develop their capacity and to allow them to operate. The Movement's 2017 Council of Delegates resolution on resource mobilisation is an initial step in addressing this.
- In some contexts, international anti-terror legislation and stringent due diligence measures are standing in the way of the ability to meet the Grand Bargain commitment that by 2020, 25% of funding will go as directly as possible to local and national responders. International actors are able to carry the burden of due diligence obligations here, thereby supporting national and local actors who would otherwise not be able to access these funds.
- Coordinated and holistic support to capacity strengthening and organisational development of national actors during times of conflict is essential. Fragmented activity-focused support with a focus only on response scale up has left local and national level structures weaker than before.
- The Movement's Safer Access Framework, structured around the Fundamental Principles, and aimed at developing appropriate behavioural skills is seen as particularly beneficial for local and national actors in times of conflict.

### Contextual Variations and challenges to complementarity

- Having three levels of coordination in place is seen to be most beneficial in order to ensure that priorities are jointly identified and that each Movement component has a strong awareness of what the other is doing. At times this can be complemented with a clear geographic division of which Movement actor is operational where. This is particularly pertinent in conflict settings where security risks are always present.
- Co-location of different forms – ranging from individual staff members of the ICRC and National Society being located in the same building to offices of both organisations being located in the same compound – has been a key facilitator in terms of ensuring complementarity and Movement alignment.
- Coordinating capacity strengthening support by the ICRC, IFRC and PNS has enabled the leveraging of different areas of expertise for the benefit of National Societies.



## **Where we are**

44 Moorfields  
London  
EC2Y 9AL

**[redcross.org.uk](https://www.redcross.org.uk)**

Published 2018

On the cover: North of Santander, Catatumbo, Columbia. The ICRC and the Colombian Red Cross deliver humanitarian aid for over 2000 people. Between March and April 2018, thousands of people were confined and suffered economic security problems because of armed groups conflicts. Photo © Margareth Figueroa/ICRC.

The British Red Cross Society, incorporated by Royal Charter 1908, is a charity registered in England and Wales (220949), Scotland (SC037738) and Isle of Man (0752). BRC18-359.