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Workshop 6

**Meeting the humanitarian challenges in Africa:
a global challenge for the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement**

Concept paper

Document prepared by

The Kenya Red Cross in consultation with the IFRC and ICRC

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WORKSHOP 6

Meeting the humanitarian challenges in Africa: a global challenge for the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement

Executive summary

Africa today continues to be a continent that continuously suffers and recovers from one disaster only to experience another. Natural as well as manmade disasters, including armed conflict and other situations of violence, have plagued the continent affecting millions of people and livelihoods every year. The humanitarian challenges are increasing and still threatening the communities in Africa.

The increased frequency and magnitude of these disasters has necessitated the involvement of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement in a wide variety of programs that aim at alleviating the suffering of the people and provide a much needed lifeline in these countries. The capacities of National Societies in the region remain far too weak to respond to the humanitarian challenges they face – a situation exacerbated today by a continued lack of support to National Societies by their national constituencies and a reduced donor base resulting from the current global financial crisis affecting national economies, particularly in Africa. The logical consequence is that the growing and increased efforts made by African National Societies (ANS) could fail to make a meaningful impact in the lives of people affected, even though the humanitarian needs will continue to raise. This conveys clearly the susceptibility of ANS to the current set of circumstances that the paradigm of operations portends.

In such a situation, the long-term development of ANS is overshadowed by programme implementation through donor funding which is often project-based and short-term, contributing greatly to a weakened financial base of ANS.

Through a special agenda item on Africa, the 2009 Council of Delegates provides an excellent opportunity to discuss and better comprehend these realities, while providing a forum to review concrete remedies and actions at a Movement level. Furthermore, as the first ever Council of Delegates taking place in Africa, it should also represent a valuable opportunity for ANS and the Movement at large to move from simple words, resolutions and commitments to concrete, specific and time-bound actions.

Rationale

Meeting today's humanitarian challenges in Africa is a tremendous task that requires a global attention and a coordinated response from the Movement as a whole and of its components, whether ANS of affected countries, supporting National Societies, the Federation and the ICRC in accordance with their respective mandates and responsibilities.

Meeting today's humanitarian challenges in Africa also demands the participation and involvement of all sectors of society and of affected communities. ANS appreciate that they cannot operate in isolation and that partnerships and coordination with all stakeholders not only within the Movement, but also with external actors within civil society, governments, UN Agencies and other

international or regional organisations or the private sector are keys to success. More importantly autonomy, independence and internal discipline in the management of the affairs of the NS remain paramount. This calls for greater accountability, investment in long-term income generation strategies and the creation of a critical pool of qualified and highly skilled staff.

This concern was highlighted at the 7th Pan African Conference held in Johannesburg in October 2008. The theme of the Conference, "Together for Action in Africa" expressed this concern by advocating for a renewed focus on capacity enhancement, particularly through infrastructural development to consolidate capacities to address the humanitarian challenges in Africa. This was further highlighted in the commitments to develop meaningful partnerships based on institutional development, promoting diversity and gender sensitivity. The ANS committed themselves to achieving and maintaining high standards of governance and management as an integral part of strengthening their role in the communities they serve. Noting these commitments, the resolution of the Pan African Conference suggested the inclusion of a special agenda item on Africa at the 2009 Council of Delegates in Nairobi.

Purpose and objectives of the Workshop

- To recall the humanitarian challenges affecting Africa on the ground and to identify those which should determine the agenda and actions of ANS's and the Movement's global and coordinated operational response.
- To identify the operational capacity challenges encountered by ANS in responding to the humanitarian needs of affected persons and communities in the event of natural or man-made disasters, armed conflicts and other situations of violence.
- To highlight the positive experiences and good practices of ANS in responding to humanitarian crises and the partnerships established within the Movement and with external actors, with a view to replicate them.
- To identify the required operational capacities and organisational development needs of NS in Africa with a view to proposing collective and coordinated Movement measures to meet those needs.
- To reaffirm the global commitment of the Movement and of its components to work together in order to support National Societies on the continent through strengthened and balanced partnerships.

Guiding questions:

1. What are the main three challenges faced by National Societies in Africa in realising their mandate to respond efficiently to humanitarian needs of affected persons and communities? What are the operational capacity needs of the National Societies in Africa? What concrete actions can the Movement take to ensure that ANS have an increased capacity to respond to natural disasters, armed conflict and other situations of violence?
2. What types of Movement partnerships are needed and produce the most impact in emergency response? What partnerships with external actors are required and what will be the added value of these? What needs to be done to enhance the impact of these different partnerships?

3. What are the institutional development needs of National Societies in Africa? How can the capacities of NS in Africa be further enhanced in order to achieve greater efficiency, a more robust financial status and better positioning with their national Governments to fulfil their auxiliary role?
4. What coordinated policy measures and actions should be undertaken and developed by the Movement to support ANS to address the most pressing humanitarian needs and contribute to their own long-term development?

Organizer: Kenyan Red Cross Society; **Co-sponsors:** International Federation, ICRC, other interested National Societies (to be decided)

Officers of the workshop (Chairs, *Rapporteurs*, Speakers): to be decided