



NATIONAL SOCIETY DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK 2013



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National Society Development Framework 2013

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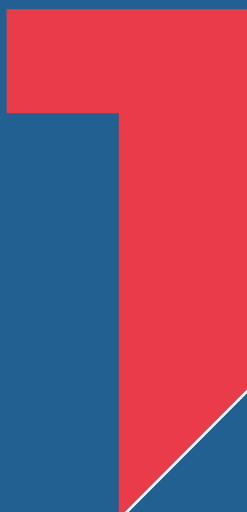


Mechanisms



Tools





EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



About this Framework

National Society development is, in the first instance, the responsibility of each sovereign National Society.

The purpose of this conceptual Framework is to capture some basic principles of National Society development. It is intended, in particular, to guide leaders in National Societies who must make decisions and take action that will affect the futures of their organizations. And it is relevant to National Societies operating in resource-rich as well as resource-poor environments.

Also, the Framework should allow Movement leaders to reflect on what is currently in place to support National Society development, and on what further understandings and approaches are needed to accelerate and improve a process critical to the long-term health, image and reputation of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement.

In trying to capture a complex subject in a few pages, this Framework inevitably ignores a wealth of technical detail and possibilities. It can map out only very broad understandings and dynamics of National Society development. However, the experience of the last 50 years suggests that, without these being systematically reflected upon, technical work to support National Society development is likely to be costly and ineffective.

Consultations on the Framework have been carried out with both the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and a number of National Societies with relevant experience of, and expertise on, National Society development from both global north and global south.

This Framework draws on collected experience from within and outside the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) on the development of National Societies and other non-profit organizations.



Current challenges facing Red Cross Red Crescent National Societies

Many National Societies are strong and stable and others have taken and continue to take significant steps forward. At the same time, a significant number of National Societies face serious problems, often in spite of ongoing political, technical and financial support from Movement actors and others.

The following issues have become increasingly apparent over the past years:

- The real threat of bankruptcy and hence either dormancy or dissolution faced by a considerable number of National Societies suggests that these have not been able to establish operating models adapted to their own domestic environments.
- While lack of finance, financial dependency and weak organizational capacities may be the most immediate symptoms of organizational challenges, these often reflect broader issues of a National Society's identity, relevance and image within its domestic environment.
- There are a number of National Societies largely or wholly dependent on the limited funding provided by Movement partners, with no realistic opportunity for significant organizational growth and significant risks to their own solvency should Movement funding reduce further. Furthermore, financial dependency seems to lead to a mental dependency which sees National Society identity determined by funding availability.¹
- There is a proportion of National Societies which are failing to meet basic standards required for Certification under the Organisational Capacity Assessment and Certification (OCAC) process, suggesting widespread systemic weaknesses across National Societies.

Such issues have serious implications for individual National Societies, and for the health and reputation of the Red Cross Red Crescent network itself but, above all, for the vulnerable people who have needs and expectations of the Movement's humanitarian services.

Key changes in approach reflected in this Framework

This Framework builds on a series of understandings which have not been emphasized in previous Frameworks:

- National Societies are, primarily, domestic organizations whose survival and strength is largely dependent on the extent to which they adapt to the opportunities and constraints of their specific environments.
- The first point of comparison for National Societies should be successful and sustained non-profit organizations operating in their own domestic environments.
- There is an ongoing and mutually reinforcing relationship between the services that a National Society delivers, how these are resourced, how it is organized and structured, and how it is perceived internally and externally. In a stable and sustainable organization, these relationships are in balance and develop in step with one another.

¹ As well as a risk to organizational sustainability, financial dependence on any one partner may undermine a National Society's capacity to act in line with the Fundamental Principle of Independence. This may be a particular risk for those National Societies receiving significant proportion of their incomes from their domestic public authorities, as well as any National Society reliant on one or a few sources of funding.

The aim of National Society development

In this Framework, National Society development is described as working to achieve and maintain:

“

an organization that consistently delivers, through volunteers and staff, relevant countrywide services² to vulnerable people sustained for as long as needed and that contributes to the strength of IFRC and the Movement.”

National Society development is, therefore, the work done to increase one or more of the relevance, quality, reach and sustainability of National Society services. It is these services which justify a National Society's existence and, as such, are likely to provide a National Society with the domestic importance and legitimacy to attract the resources to sustain itself, even in resource-poor environments.

Key messages from the Framework

1

Focus on diversified and sustainable domestic support

Each National Society must develop diversified and sustainable domestic support as the basis of its core operation and services.

Many Red Cross Red Crescent activities can be carried out sustainably with resources available in even the poorest communities, which themselves may be part of countries with fast-growing economies. Designing organizations and services which can be sustained with available resources is a critical aspect of National Society development.

Securing sufficiently diversified and sustainable sources of income is the best way for a National Society to ensure that its integrity and independence are not threatened by any actor, whether domestic or international.

2

Recognising the diversity of National Societies: one size does not fit all

Although National Societies are bound together by common Movement standards and undertakings, each functions in its own specific environment. It can never be a 'one size fits all' for National Societies; each must develop its own way of working that allows it to meet its commitments to the Movement while growing and thriving in its own environment.

² The word 'services' here is taken to mean both direct services to, and activities such as humanitarian diplomacy on behalf of, vulnerable people.

3

The primary responsibility of leadership

The primary responsibility for National Society development lies with the senior leadership of each individual National Society. That leadership must steer its organization towards becoming more effective in meeting its mandate and becoming more sustainable in doing so. Such change may be planned or may take advantage of sudden opportunities.

A particular challenge faced by National Society leaders is implementing development processes at the same time as managing the day-to-day business of the organization. This can be particularly difficult in situations of constrained resources and limited management capacity and expertise.

Effective National Society development work addresses practical problems based on thorough analysis of a National Society and its environment. It looks beyond immediate symptoms to identify and address deeper organizational issues coherently. Such work is based on the involvement of stakeholders from across the organization. Internal and external communications and credible coordination are central to mobilising and motivating these stakeholders.

4

Services to vulnerable people must be the key driver

Central to National Societies are the core humanitarian services that they deliver. These determine their internal and external identities, as well as the ways in which they should be structured and run. National Societies should be able to sustain these services, over time, through their own predictable resource bases.

Any National Society will, at times, be called upon to respond to exceptional situations, such as natural disaster, epidemic or conflict. National Societies should prepare on an ongoing basis for such eventualities.

5

Promoting effective external support for National Society development

External actors can support National Society development through political, technical and financial support. Poorly conceived support can lead to changes that are not sustained over time or, worse, become a drain on limited resources, ultimately risking the long-term sustainability of the National Society. To be effective, external support must be aligned with the analysis and direction of the National Society, fully owned by the National Society and designed to be sustainable in the environment in which it is operating.

Managing the influx of temporary programmatic or project resources poses a major challenge for National Society development, in particular in emergencies but also in longer-term work. The risk is that implementing time-bound activities creates unrealistic expectations of the National Society in local populations and draws limited resources from other areas of National Society work. There are, unfortunately, many examples where any benefits to the National Society cannot be sustained beyond the implementation period and so do not contribute to long-term National Society development.

Time-bound programmatic or project support can be helpful when it aligns with and reinforces a National Society's identity and core services, and when there is a likelihood that activities will be sustained for as long as needed and/or taken to scale.

In managing this tension, it is helpful to identify the following from the start:

- What aspects of the support are of a short-term nature; i.e.: will finish when external support ceases. It is important that such support does not burden or compromise the National Society in respect of its long-term goals.
- What aspects of the support will the National Society be willing and able to continue into the future; i.e.: will make a contribution to the long-term development of the National Society.

Support to National Societies by Movement and other actors should move away from short-term substitution for National Society service delivery capacity. The exception should remain situations where huge need outstrips the capacity of the National Society, and it has to access support from Movement and other partners. Where short-term substitution is unavoidable in humanitarian emergencies, this should be managed from the start so that it does not compromise long-term National Society development.

National Society development requires two types of resources. There is need for financial investment in order to allow organizational change work to take place, and there is then need for the resources to maintain the change once it has been made. External support can be helpful in financing activities to set change in motion; however, it is a National Society's responsibility to find the resources to maintain the change, and this must be planned for from the beginning.

Format of this Framework

The Framework has been written on the assumption that the concepts that it describes will be relevant for the coming decade. At the same time, it describes a number of tools and initiatives related to National Society development which may be revised or changed within this period. These are reflected as text boxes within the body of the document. The text boxes have been edited in 2020 to reflect changes and to reflect the latest tools and initiatives related to National Society development.





2

**WHAT IS A
NATIONAL
SOCIETY?**

While the statutes of the Movement describe the scope of National Society activities,³ in practice, National Societies take a broad range of organizational forms. Particularly influential in determining their forms are the domestic environments in which they operate, their ages, their main services, how they seek resources in order to deliver their main services, and how they are governed.

Different institutional environments

Most National Societies operate in an institutional space that is neither the corporate sector nor the state. This is often called the non-profit or civil society sector. The boundaries and traditions of this sector vary greatly between countries.

In some countries, this space is evolving with little or no regulation and few national non-profit organizations, although international NGOs may be present. At the other end of the spectrum are well-developed sectors, which are highly regulated and extremely competitive. National Societies must adapt themselves to these environments.

Different cultural values and norms

Each National Society reflects the cultures in which it is operating. For example, understandings of volunteering and membership differ enormously around the world. In some environments, volunteering is a concept strongly identified with community cultures of mutual aid and self-help; in others, it is highly managed with strong similarities to human resource management processes used in recruiting and managing paid staff. National Societies must align with and build on local cultures but, also, have the opportunity to enrich these through the Movement's global network.

Different humanitarian services

National Society services do not develop in vacuums. As auxiliaries to public authorities, National Society services should respond to identified gaps in public service delivery and be regularly updated based on National Societies' own assessments and discussions with the public authorities. Vulnerabilities differ between countries, and regions within countries. Each public authority takes different approaches to dealing with these vulnerabilities, whether at individual, family or community level. The services that a National Society delivers evolve from analysis of these needs, as well as the National Society's mandate, a continued analysis of activities of other actors within the state's humanitarian system, and the skills and resources available to the National Society.

Different resourcing needs

To deliver different services with impact and to maintain the overall organization, National Societies need access to different types of resource. Finance is an obvious resource but equally important is the ability to mobilize and inspire volunteers, members and leaders, earn public support and trust, earn the good will and critical engagement of public authorities, and earn and maintain access to vulnerable people. This requires consistent, planned and coordinated ways of working over time.

³ See article 3 of <https://www.icrc.org/en/doc/assets/files/other/statutes-en-a5.pdf>.

Different modes of governance

National Societies can be governed in different ways. Many are constituted as associations, with individual members electing governance committees at every level of the organizations. In other cases, regional branches make up the National Society's membership. Another reality is National Societies being governed as foundations with self-perpetuating boards. Sometimes, aspects of foundation and associational governance systems are present in the same National Society.

Depending on how the Auxiliary Role is understood in a given country, the state at various levels may have a more or less formal role in National Society governance structures. Where the state has such influence, it is important that the National Society retains sufficient autonomy of decision-making and action to meet the requirements of the Fundamental Principle of Independence.

Open organizations

In attracting volunteers and/or members from communities, National Societies develop as open organizations. This means that they have high levels of exchange with their environments as individuals come and go, contributing ideas and experiences.

Such openness is a strength; it means the National Society has the credibility and the legitimacy that come through involving large numbers of people. It also gives access to skills, relationships and geographical distribution that goes beyond what would be available to a smaller, closed organization. It should provide it with the capacity to adapt rapidly to changes in its domestic environment.

At the same time, such openness is usually maintained through transparency and involvement of members and volunteers in the workings of the organization. This can be time-consuming in terms of making decisions and requires special energy to ensure that people involved with the National Society understand the nature of the Red Cross Red Crescent and the Fundamental Principles of the organization in which they are involved.

Part of an international Movement with common standards

Recognition of National Societies

In order to be recognized as a Red Cross or Red Crescent National Society by the ICRC, a new National Society must satisfy 10 conditions.⁴ Each National Society is expected to continue to respect these conditions throughout its life cycle. Once recognized by ICRC, a National Society may apply for membership of IFRC. Alongside their peers, National Societies discuss and approve policies and procedures that determine how they and their sister societies act. A number of these policies set out common standards on organizational issues: how development cooperation should be provided, for example, or how National Societies should work with volunteers.

⁴ Set out in Article 4 of the Statutes of the Movement: <https://www.icrc.org/en/doc/assets/files/other/statutes-en-a5.pdf>.

Revision of National Society legal bases and statutes

As members of the Movement, National Societies are encouraged to review their legal bases and statutes on a regular basis (about every 10 years). A joint committee of ICRC and IFRC experts reviews these and provides feedback on them to ensure that minimum agreed standards are met.



Joint Statutes Commission

The objective of the Joint ICRC/International Federation Commission for National Society Statutes (Joint Statutes Commission (JSC)) is to help National Societies work efficiently and adhere at all times to the Fundamental Principles by strengthening their legal bases. To reach this objective, the Joint Statutes Commission is entrusted by the International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent with a twofold mandate:

- To make recommendations on the legal and statutory base of National Societies, i.e., their statutes and National Society laws/decrees. In particular, the Commission assesses the compliance of draft statutes with the standards set out in the Guidance for National Society Statutes, 2018 (Guidance document) and of draft laws/decrees with the minimum elements contained in the Model law on the recognition of National Societies (Model Law).
- To assess applications by new National Societies for recognition by the ICRC and for admission to the IFRC on the basis of the 10 conditions for National Society recognition and to make recommendations in this regard to the ICRC and IFRC.

Acknowledging that both Red Cross/Red Crescent law and its statutes can provide limits and opportunities to longer-term development, it is currently being discussed how better to link the work of the JSC with national society development matters.



Protecting National Society integrity

IFRC policy defines integrity as “the extent to which the National Societies and their International Federation possess the will and the ability to act in pursuit of their respective declared objectives, policies and standards in full accordance with the Fundamental Principles of the Movement”.⁵

The primary responsibility for resolving breaches of integrity lies with the National Society and national legal and accountability actors and systems. Should this not be possible, a number of mechanisms can be used, including joint advice provided by ICRC and IFRC, promoting and organizing peer-level support as well as the last resort of referral to the IFRC Compliance and Mediation Committee.



IFRC Compliance and Mediation Committee

The objective of the Compliance and Mediation Committee is to assist National Societies with the resolution of their allegation breaches of integrity as expeditiously as possible and with full respect for due process. The secretary general shall support the Committee in its work, in particular by making relevant information available.

(Taken from Article 32 of the IFRC Constitution – see reference above)



Capacity Building Fund – Urgent OD intervention modality

The Urgent Organizational Development (OD) intervention modality of the Capacity Building Fund can make small amounts of funding available to help support National Societies facing actual or imminent integrity crises.

⁵ The 2007 Policy on the protection of integrity of National Societies and bodies of the International Federation. The IFRC Constitution is available at: https://media.ifrc.org/ifrc/wp-content/uploads/sites/5/2020/02/01_IFRC-Constitution-2019-EN.pdf.

Complex, interrelated and changing over time

Several generic points can be made about National Societies and their organizational development:

- Each National Society develops within a unique external environment, with specific constraints and opportunities.
- Each National Society evolves over time and may be required to change drastically at short notice, for instance, in response to disaster or conflict.
- Strategy and policy agreed within Federation and Movement fora are sources of expectation and pressure for National Societies. As an example, Strategy 2020 describes “building strong National Societies” as the primary enabling action which will enable the International Federation to achieve its three strategic aims.
- National Societies may face tensions between the constraints and opportunities of their own environments and domestic constituencies, and the international standards and goals expected by the Movement.

This leads to a fundamental conclusion for National Society development: while there must be common minimum values and standards between National Societies, each National Society will put these into action in different ways based on the environment in which it is operating. There can, therefore, be no single model for what a National Society should look like and no single prescription for how National Society development should take place.





**WHAT IS THE AIM
OF NATIONAL
SOCIETY
DEVELOPMENT?**

Change in response to evolving conditions is a natural and necessary aspect of organizational life. Organizations which do not adapt to their environments become redundant and disappear over time, and National Societies are no exception to this rule.

While some organizational change takes place spontaneously, deliberate, planned efforts can be made to improve all organizations. In the context of Red Cross Red Crescent National Societies, such efforts are described as National Society development. This Framework proposes that the aim of National Society development is working to achieve and maintain:

“

an organization that consistently delivers, through volunteers and staff, relevant country-wide services to vulnerable people sustained for as long as needed and that contributes to the strength of IFRC and the Movement.”

National Society development is not a goal in and of itself; the primary impact of National Society development can be measured through the services that it offers. Nor does it have an end point – it is a moving goal. There is always scope for National Societies to improve service in the areas of:

- **relevance**
- **quality**
- **reach**
- **sustainability.**

If these qualities are present, a National Society can have lasting impact on the individuals and communities which it serves. Experience suggests that it is these qualities of National Society services which will be key drivers for a National Society's sustained domestic resource mobilization.





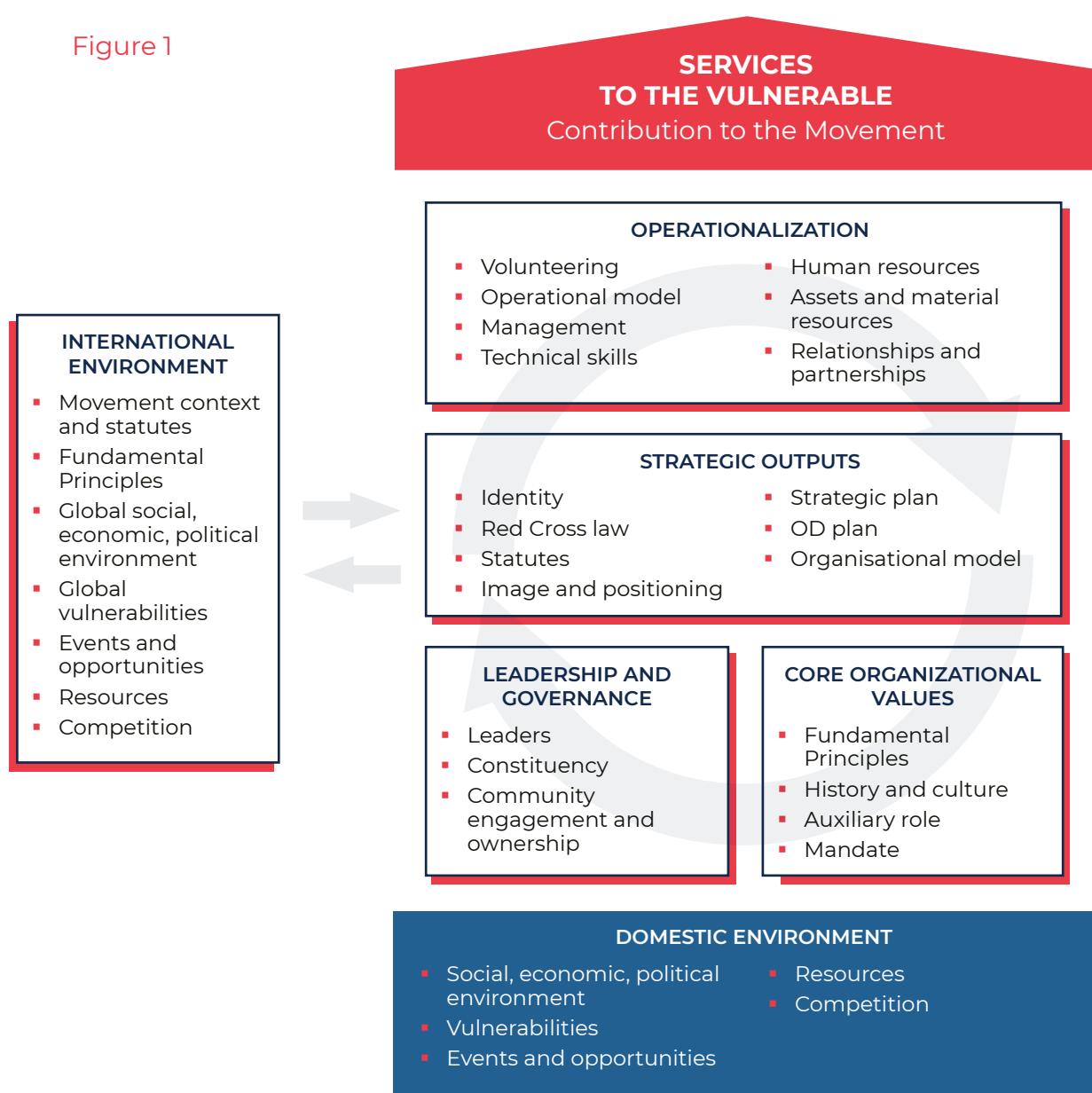
**HOW DOES A
NATIONAL SOCIETY
FUNCTION?**

Figure 1 places key organizational aspects of any National Society within a simple diagram. Its key point is that, behind the ultimate aim of National Society development (i.e., relevant, sustained services to vulnerable people at scale), lies a complex, interrelated series of capacities and choices.

One implication of this diagram is that National Society development can take place at multiple organizational levels and may need to take into account many interlinked factors if its ultimate aim is to be achieved.

A second is that responsibility for National Society development work cannot be limited to one organizational function – an OD department or similar. Instead, it must be seen as an organization-wide process led by leadership and governance with the potential to touch on every aspect of the organization and draw on a variety of external actors.

Figure 1



From identity to action: a core cycle within every National Society

The diagram suggests an ongoing cycle within a National Society which sees its services as the products of a series of interactions both inside the National Society and with its domestic and international environments. Strategic plans are developed and operationalized based on the values and internal political process of the National Society, influenced by domestic and international pressures.

As the National Society delivers its humanitarian services, these in turn reinforce its core identity and the way in which it is perceived both internally and in its domestic and international environments.

At points in this cycle, it may become necessary for a National Society to revise foundational texts such as its statutes or Red Cross law as these are no longer adequate to the needs of the evolving organization. If these are well designed, then this should not be a regular occurrence; cycles of strategic and operational planning will be much more regular.

Learning is central to a National Society adapting and evolving to meet changing conditions. In this context, learning is about the ability to share and analyse experience, and for leadership to convert this analysis systematically into useful contributions to National Society development.

Services as the basis for a balanced organization

National Society services with and for vulnerable people are central to its identity. Identifying services that can be sustained and grown over time is, therefore, a major strategic choice for a National Society. It involves focusing on one or a few areas of work rather than trying to respond to every potential vulnerability, and positioning the National Society in relation to government and other actors.

Above all, it involves identifying services that can be delivered at scale over time with the resources that the National Society can realistically attract and sustain. To do this, the services that are offered must be relevant and visible. Also, they must be in proportion to the resources available: i.e., not requiring expertise, equipment, travel or finance that the National Society cannot realistically access in the long term.

Without sustainable core services, a National Society risks creating structural instability that leaves it unable to carry out activities consistently.

There must, therefore, be an internal coherence in National Society planning and implementation. There is no point in a strategic plan containing a list of activities or infrastructure that is based on unrealistic resource mobilization premises. There is an ongoing process of balancing the organization: matching activities to what can be resourced and using performance to leverage new resources that allow for expansion and improvement over time.

One key function of National Society strategic leadership, therefore, is to ensure that balance between these organizational aspects is maintained over time.

Once a National Society has balanced core services, these can grow over time. Experience suggests that it is easier to start small and focused and grow sustainably than to expand rapidly in a manner that cannot be sustained and risks leading to cycles of boom and bust.



Short-term projects complementing core services

In addition to its core services, National Societies often carry out short-term projects, often on behalf of donors and within specific time-frames. Such projects can help National Societies to develop expertise, build new relationships and extend the scale and scope of their work.

It is important that a National Society can sustain project activities beyond funding periods for as long as they are needed and/or take activities to scale when required, and that such activities do not undermine or contradict existing core services. Accepting the responsibility for carrying out such projects should not be a default position within a National Society but, rather, a strategic choice that weighs the needs of vulnerable people with the opportunities and threats to the long-term development of the National Society. Experience shows that a constant cycle of unrelated projects cannot take the place of sustainable domestic services as the core for a National Society's identity and long-term development.



5

**HOW DOES
NATIONAL SOCIETY
DEVELOPMENT
TAKE PLACE?**

In the section above, National Society development was described as a deliberate, planned effort to develop National Societies, in contrast to the ongoing change that takes place in every organization.

While improvement is a constant process that has no end point, it is important to recognize that constant change can be as harmful to organizations as can little or no change. Leaders must balance pressures for change with the need for changes that have been made to 'consolidate', i.e., to have time to take effect and be evaluated.

Who is responsible for National Society development work?

While every individual in a National Society has a responsibility to improve the scope and impact of their work, the primary responsibility for National Society development lies with National Society leadership (governance and management) at all levels. National governance and management must oversee, plan, lead and implement system-wide change, and bear responsibility for its success and failure.

While serving leaderships engage with the current issues and future needs of the National Society, they also must recognize and plan for their own succession as part of safeguarding the long-term future of the National Society. Engaging younger generations in all aspects of National Society activity and decision-making ensures not only that skills and knowledge are shared, but also that the organization remains open and relevant to future generations.

What is National Society leadership?

Leadership can be defined as influencing and articulating direction for a group of people or an organization.

In the Red Cross Red Crescent context, leadership is about communicating the mission, vision and shared values of the organization, and creating and sustaining change in a National Society that allows it to better perform these in its environment. It is about taking the responsibility to bring the individuals that make up the National Society together to set and refine its vision and mission, enable these to be known and shared, and ensure that the organization's activities contribute to them.

Leadership takes different forms and can be more or less formal. It can be centralized and hierarchical within an individual or group of senior governance or executives, or be distributed throughout National Society branches, staff, members and volunteer teams.



Some key characteristics of good Red Cross Red Crescent leadership:

- Willingness to take personal responsibility for the functioning of the National Society
- Developed over time through learning and experience
- Deep understanding of the National Society's culture, organizational structure, business models and dynamics
- Constant monitoring and understanding of the National Society's local and global environment, to ensure maximum impact and sustainability
- Ability to face uncertainty and to anticipate crisis.

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Different triggers of National Society development processes

Every National Society should work consistently to extend and improve its services. Systematic and planned development work ensures that any organization stays relevant and effective.

At the same time, there are recurrent situations across the Movement which prompt significant change in National Societies; some are beyond their control. These include:

Formation of a new National Society

The process of starting or reinvigorating a National Society after crisis lays the foundation for its future development. This is the stage at which it is easiest to develop a sustainable organizational model: before commitments have been taken on and a public image has been created. It is particularly important that all aspects of the formation process, such as drafting Red Cross Red Crescent law or National Society statutes, are clearly aligned to the vision for the future organization and are designed to make the National Society as sustainable as possible from the start.

Humanitarian crisis requires significant National Society scale-up

A large crisis that attracts global attention places significant strain on a National Society that has to manage both the short-term influx of temporary resources and the long-term implications for the National Society once the resources are spent and global interest has moved on. In particular, there is a need for any National Society involved in a large-scale response to manage the process of scaling up and scaling down so that it does not compromise its long-term development.

Humanitarian crisis brings with it an increased need to safeguard long-term National Society development. It is key that all actors involved respect this need and find time to discuss how choices made in the crisis response align where possible, and at least do no harm, to the National Society's long-term development goals.

NSD in Emergencies (NSDiE)

NSD in Emergencies covers a common approach to strengthening National Society Development (NSD) in disaster response operations to be effective while protecting and promoting NS development, capacities and future sustainability. A Strategic Guidance for NSDiE document which includes an implementation guide and toolkit will support National Societies affected by a crisis not to be harmed and NS development not to be negatively affected by the international support they receive. The objective of the NSDiE approach will enhance capacity building during the response operation to the effect that the National Society become better prepared, more resilient and less at-risk for future disasters. NSDiE is led by the National Society itself and is integrated systematically into the response operation by:

- Better assessing the support a NS affected by a major disaster needs, based on their own existing capacity;
- Promoting the use of specific tools to protect longer-term development approaches;
- Aligning support on capacity strengthening from Movement partners and base it on the NS development plan;
- Extending and complementing the Preparedness for Effective Response (PER) approach to prepare better for major disaster events;
- Offering accompaniment to NS senior leadership and management through the stages of a major response operation;
- Deploying well prepared and sensitized rapid response staff from Movement partners on international surge missions.



Safer Access Framework

In order to contribute towards National Society preparedness and capacity to respond in sensitive and insecure contexts, including armed conflict and internal disturbances and tensions, the Safer Access Framework provides guidance to National Society leaderships on how to increase the acceptance, security and access to people and communities with humanitarian needs of their Society, staff and volunteers.

The Safer Access Framework illustrates the imperative of applying the Fundamental Principles to guide their thoughts and processes, communication, decisions and actions at all times. It also provides guidance on what short, mid or long-term preparedness and positioning actions – based on the specific gaps, barriers and challenges experienced or foreseen – can be taken to increase their acceptance, safety and access.

In addition to having to scale up its operations, a National Society faced by conflict may face developmental challenges relating to its domestic positioning, in particular the need to demonstrate that it is an independent and neutral humanitarian actor with countrywide access to vulnerable people. This may be particularly challenging if its public authority is one party to an internal conflict.

Major domestic political or socio-economic shift requires redefinition of the role and operation of a National Society

Significant domestic economic, political and social change – whether gradual or sudden – can make a National Society's previous positioning redundant. In this case, the National Society is required to redefine its role and responsibilities within society in order to remain relevant and continue to attract resources to be able to operate.

Unsustainable National Society

Changes in resourcing patterns may mean that the National Society's core services no longer attract the resources needed to sustain the organization. In this case, the organization must be repositioned and its core services redefined so that it can sustain itself again. Dependence on one or a few sources of funding and a lack of reserves leave National Societies particularly vulnerable to changing patterns of resourcing.

'Old' National Society

Over time, the National Society's core services may have become disconnected from needs in the country. A symptom of this is, often, a very diverse portfolio of activities, some of which may not have been brought up to date over many years. While the National Society may be respected and may continue to attract some resources, its relevance is not necessarily clear to outsiders and competitors may be delivering more relevant services. In short, it may be living on its reputation while, in reality, it is slowly dying.

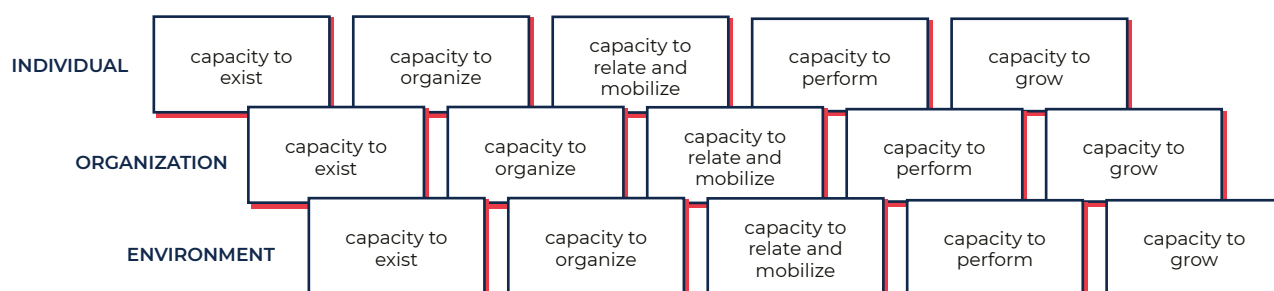
Internal crisis or lack of cohesion affects National Society image and relationships

Within the National Society, one or more events may significantly reduce organizational cohesion and/or decrease public and partner confidence. Not only do resources become scarce, leading to unsustainability and the need for a change in the organizational model, but significant effort must be put into winning public and partner confidence back in order for the National Society to be able to operate effectively again.

Analysing different levels and types of National Society development

Figure 1 above makes the distinction between a National Society at various levels and its environment. We can make a further distinction between the individuals that make up a National Society (as volunteers, members, staff) and the organizational structures that they form. Figure 2 below highlights that all three levels require the same basic capacities in order to function.

Figure 2



A key aspect of National Society development is understanding at which level – individual, organizational or environmental – work must be carried out in order to address an issue. Often, work may be required at two or even three levels in order for effective change to take place, and it is important that this is identified early and recognized.

For example, a National Society may identify the opportunity to gain a preferential tax status. In order to do this, it will need to engage with government (its environment) to negotiate this. If it is successful, there may well be significant organizational implications relating to its financial procedures. And, obviously, individuals will need training in how to operate the new systems.

A further implication of this analysis is that effective leadership of National Society development will engage always with the aspirations and fears of the individuals that make up the organization. Motivating, informing, persuading and encouraging individuals at all levels are all crucial to successful National Society development work. Similarly, some National Society development work may require strong engagement with domestic and international partners. In this respect, strategic internal and external communication plays a crucial role in National Society development processes.

Work to improve the National Society operating environment

As discussed above, external environments significantly influence National Society sustainability and growth. Their opportunities and constraints may apply just to the National Society itself or to a range of organizations operating in the same environment. In this Framework, we refer to planned work undertaken to influence and shape a National Society's external environment as institutional interventions.

In conducting such interventions, National Societies may draw on their own auxiliary relationships with public authorities, may work with other organizations with similar goals or may draw on

resolutions and agreements from the Movement such as those from the International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent.

Such institutional interventions may be carried out successfully by National Societies acting alone. Often it can be beneficial for an international element of the Movement to be part of supporting this work, adding the weight of the collective to the discussion or being able to draw on international norms and examples from other countries.

Work to develop the National Society internally

In IFRC, a distinction is made between two approaches to internal National Society development work.

The first, ongoing development work, focuses on improving what already exists – with the goal of making ongoing activities more effective, more widespread or better embedded in the organization. This is often focused on individuals or groups of people carrying out similar activities. This could involve building skills through training, developing better tools and improving communications: generally making things work better.



Red Cross Red Crescent Learning Platform

The Red Cross Red Crescent Learning Platform provides many self-directed online courses on themes relevant to Red Cross Red Crescent volunteers and staff.

These courses are designed to develop individuals' competencies at all levels and, increasingly, cover both global and local perspectives. National Societies can develop and share their own online training materials through the Learning Platform, benefiting both their own as well as the broader, global Red Cross Red Crescent learning communities. National Societies can adopt the Learning Platform and customize it, and then administer and report on their learners' activities and completions.

Within IFRC, this work is referred to as Capacity Building. Whether at individual or organizational level, this is a primary responsibility of paid and volunteer management and is an ongoing, never-ending process of improvement.

Since National Societies are complex, open organizations, improving what already exists through Capacity Building is sometimes not enough. Often, fundamental issues must be addressed that require high-level engagement with much deeper issues within the National Society: its identity, its long-term strategic direction, its basic organizational model and the relationships between different parts of the organization, or between the National Society and its environment.

Such significant, deep-rooted change, and the second approach to development work, is referred to as **Organizational Development**.

Typically, Organizational Development engages with the organization as a whole and recognizes the interconnectedness of its different functions and levels, and the capacity of change in one part of the organization to affect performance in another.

Organizational Development is inherently strategic and is about making and implementing choices that will shape the organization's medium and long-term future. To do this, power relationships within the National Society must be considered, recognizing that such change may bring winners and losers. As such, it is the responsibility of governance and senior management to steer and oversee.

Capacity Building and Organizational Development do not take place in isolation of one another. There is a limit to the improvements that can be achieved through Capacity Building alone and, often, these cannot be sustained without Organizational Development. Conversely, an Organizational Development process that does not recognize the new skills and tools that individuals will need in order to function risks failure. There is, therefore, an ongoing interplay between the two that is central to any National Society development process.

In summary, we can divide National Society development work as follows:

Level of work	Primary responsibility	Lead support role	Type of change work	Time-frame
Individual	NS individuals; managers at all levels	NS	Capacity Building; human resource management	Short
Organization	NS leadership	IFRC including in legal base work; and, together with ICRC, in NS recognition and admission	Capacity Building/OD	Medium to long
Environment	NS/Movement	IFRC/ICRC/ sister NSs	Institutional interventions	Medium to long

Reaching turning points in National Society development

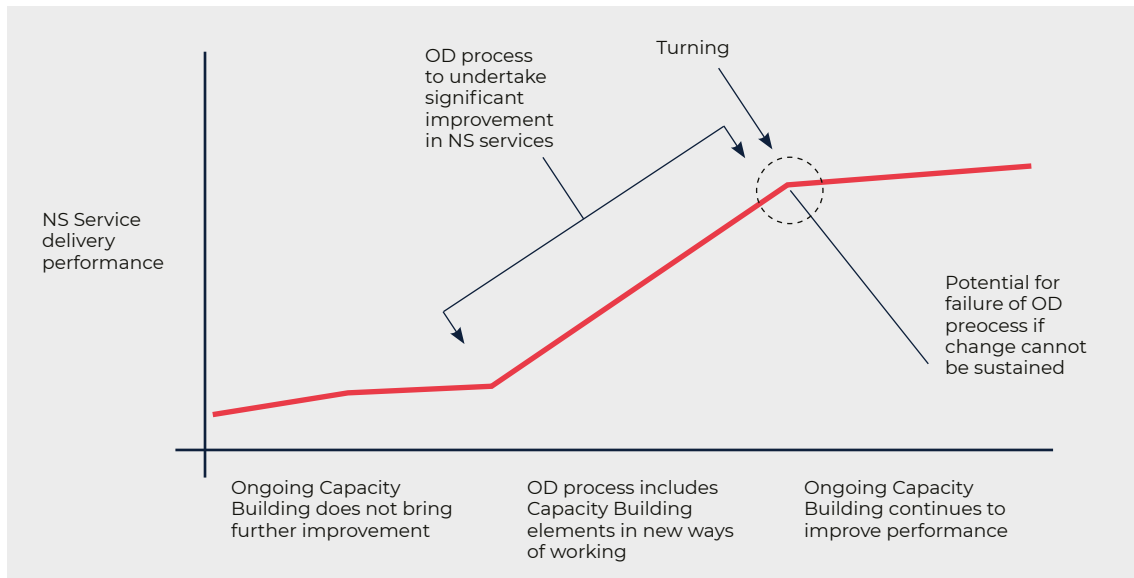
In analysing a National Society's long-term development, key turning points can usually be identified at which significant and sustained changes in the performance of the organization can be achieved.

In planning for and leading National Society development, National Society leaders should be able to articulate the turning point that they wish to achieve, and what this will mean for sustained quality and quantity of the National Society's services to vulnerable people.

Making use of these analytical concepts

Figure 3 below illustrates the idea of the interplay between Organizational Development and Capacity Building that is required to reach a turning point of sustained, improved organizational performance.

Figure 3



The point of introducing these concepts is to help National Society leaders and those working to support them to analyse their National Society development needs and priorities, and hence what type of National Society development work is likely to lead to change that can be sustained in the long term.

A criticism of much external support to National Societies over the years would be that it has focused largely on short-term Capacity Building and programme implementation, without encouraging and supporting engagement with deeper issues of organizational models and sustainability. Often, the result has been that gains in capacity have proved to be unsustainable in the long term, leaving the National Society with little or nothing to show from sometimes significant financial and technical support or, even worse, using scarce resources to maintain something that has little long-term value.

Generic stages in National Society development processes

While every change process is different, a number of generic steps can be identified. They do not necessarily take place in a linear manner and include the following:

- **Formation of a critical number of people agreeing to the need for and prepared to lead change within the National Society**
- **Analysis of the organization and its environment**
 - Review of the organization's mandate, vision, mission and positioning in its environment in relation to the needs of vulnerable people, and the gaps in service delivery by the National Society and other actors
 - Review of its internal organizational equilibrium and coherence
 - Review of relevance and quality of National Society partnerships, as well as opportunities for improved relationships
- **Strategic planning to define change goals and steps**
 - Identification of the level and type of change required and the key drivers that will push change through the system
 - Defining indicators for successful change
- **Implementation**
 - Identifying opportunities and momentum for change both internally and within the National Society's environment
 - Communication of change goals and creation of shared vision within the organization and outside
 - Using limited technical and financial resources effectively – from both inside and outside the National Society
- **Ongoing monitoring, evaluation and learning; reformulation of strategic plan if required.**



Organizational Capacity Assessment and Certification (OCAC) process

The objective of OCAC is to support the development of National Societies by providing them with a diagnostic tool to help them assess their overall strengths and weaknesses, and inform, prioritize and strengthen their development efforts. Based on a comprehensive set of organisational minimum standards approved by the IFRC Governing Board, National Societies are informed of the role and responsibilities of a modern organization is expected to fulfil, as well as expectations/ standards for organizations working in the humanitarian sector. The process is divided into two phases assessment phases: the first phase focuses on NS capacities (to exist, to organise, to relate and mobilise, to perform and to grow) while the second phase examines the impact the NS has in the country.



Branch Organisational Capacity Assessment (BOCA) process

Relevant and sustained services at community level are primarily delivered by a National Society's local structures. BOCA is a self-assessment tool developed for branches to identify and assess their strengths, limitations and challenges in relation to a wide range of organizational capacities that define its identity and capacity to deliver, supporting branches and National Societies in their development process.

Managing change alongside business as usual

A particular challenge that National Society leaders face is balancing long-term development needs with the short-term requirements of running an organization. This tension can be a major barrier to change, in particular in cases in which most available management capacity is required to make day-to-day operations function.

Any major change requires leadership focus, so change planning must recognize the need for dedicated change-management capacity at all levels and identify ways in which this can be assured: perhaps through halting some non-essential activities or bringing in temporary additional support either to manage change processes or to oversee ongoing activities.

Resources required for National Society development

The primary resource required for National Society development is leadership that can articulate a vision for the future National Society and inspire people inside and outside the organization to move in this direction. This leadership must take responsibility for debating and negotiating this vision with a National Society's stakeholders, as well as for the risks of embarking on significant change. Without cohesive support within the National Society, change is unlikely to be successful.

However, good will and vision are not enough. Technical skills are needed both in overall change management and for Organizational Development and Capacity Building. Change-management experience and skills should be included in the core competencies of any National Society secretary general; in particular, that person needs the ability to communicate effectively with internal and external stakeholders.

Finally, all forms of National Society development require two types of financial resource: investment finance, which is used to pay the one-off costs of the actual change process, and the resources to sustain the resulting changes into the future. While investment finance can (but does not have to) be provided from outside the National Society, the resources to maintain the change must be generated from within the National Society and its sustainable resource base. If this is not the case, then it is likely that any positive improvements will be lost quickly.



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Characteristics of effective National Society development

In summarising sections two, three, four and five, we can point to the following characteristics of effective National Society development:

- Improved relevance, quality, reach or sustainability of National Society services
- Finds real answers to real problems
- Based on a thorough analysis of the National Society and its environment, and adapted to the opportunities and constraints these present
- Seizing opportunities in the internal and external National Society environments to leverage change, in particular, crisis
- Treating National Societies as complex, interrelated systems, looking beyond immediate symptoms to identify deeper organizational issues
- Effectively planned, monitored and adapted depending on circumstances
- Built on teamwork across the organization: not individual efforts!



WHAT IS THE ROLE OF THE EXTERNAL ACTOR IN SUPPORTING NATIONAL SOCIETY DEVELOPMENT?

Many actors may be interested in the development of a National Society. These certainly include the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement – IFRC, ICRC and sister National Societies. In addition, other actors such as governments and other national agencies may have strong reasons to support National Society development. Indeed, it may be domestic actors, including government, which have the greatest external influence over National Society development processes.

It is the role of the International Federation to maintain a strategic overview of the health of its members and to coordinate efforts to improve the individual and collective health of National Societies.



Federation-wide Databank and Reporting System (FDRS)

The general objectives of the FDRS are to:

- promote greater self and partner awareness of the capacities, services and potential of National Societies so as to boost their self-development
- facilitate monitoring and reporting of performance in a consistent and transparent manner.

Just as the responsibility of the National Society leadership is to lead and coordinate change within the National Society, it is also its responsibility to decide which other actors can help support the particular change that the organization is going through. Experience shows that the way in which partners are chosen and the roles they play are critical factors in enabling/ accelerating, or blocking, National Society development.

Recognize the risks and limitations of external support

All National Societies providing and receiving external support for National Society development should recognize the limitations and risks of that approach.

There is always a serious danger that power and financial inequities create a relationship in which the National Society loses ownership of activities that are meant to contribute to its development and, ultimately, loses its identity. In such a situation, experience suggests that little or no progress is likely to be made, and other actors' resources are likely to be spent in an uncoordinated and ineffective way, slowing or stopping momentum for change within the National Society. While all actors legitimately have different interests in National Society development, and will express these as requested by the National Society, ownership of the development process must rest firmly with the National Society and its leadership. If this is undermined, then the legitimacy of any change is also undermined and the integrity of the National Society comes into question.

In particular, external support which is not rigorously geared to supporting a National Society in developing its own domestically sustainable core services is likely to have little or no positive long-term impact on National Society development, and may actually weaken the National Society in the long run. Such support often can be neither multiplied nor sustained over time, so has minimal impact on vulnerable people at comparatively large expense.

Finally, it is also important to recognize that complex change takes time, is risky and may take unexpected directions. Any actor wishing to support change within a National Society must be prepared to be patient, be flexible and make allowances for genuine learning processes and evolutions of thinking.

Support momentum for change: the critical friend

The Movement and other actors can provide critical support to promote development within National Societies. Support can take place both through institutional tools, such as globally agreed policies and strategies, and through peer dialogue, sharing and encouragement.

In particular, external actors provide a National Society with a mirror in which to observe its strengths and weaknesses. Peer leaders are particularly effective in this role and this is an area that the secretariat is seeking to explore further. An external viewpoint, including from consultants as well as delegates, can be helpful to National Society leaders in helping them to analyse their situations and consider their options, so long as this input is as impartial as possible and identifies with the long-term interests of the National Society.

Conversely, if momentum and vision for change cannot be observed within a National Society, encouraging this to develop should be the focus of external support.

The evolving role of the NSD delegate

One strategy for supporting National Society development has been to provide medium-term expatriate support to National Society leaders. What is required in each role will differ according to the needs of each National Society and its current development plans; success in such roles often seems to be linked to the capacity to act as a credible sounding board at senior management level, the ability to coach senior leaders and the ability to facilitate links and expertise. Learning from experience suggests that these roles – often fulfilled by the most senior IFRC representative to a National Society – are most effective if based on hands-on senior management experience and in-depth knowledge of managing organizational change processes.



National Society Certification

The process of National Society Certification is an incentive for National Society development; National Societies achieving objective external certification through the OCAC process (see above) will demonstrate the excellence and relevance of their humanitarian work as well as the organizational processes that enable this, through an externally validated process. Such validation allows National Societies to demonstrate their achievement and commitment to continuous development, both internally and externally.

The challenge within a global Movement is to provide appropriate support, i.e., advice and equipment that is tailored to the environment and resource constraints in which it must be sustained over time. As a rule, models should not be exported from one National Society to another but rather adapted and imported with care.

Technical support must be adapted to the environment in which it will be operated. Much north-south technical assistance within the Movement is based on standards and ways of operating in wealthy National Societies, and does not engage sufficiently with local cultures and ways of working, or with the realistic resources that will be available to sustain the changes into the future.

In providing financial support to National Society development, different types of funding are needed at different points in development processes.

While some initiatives can be reduced to fairly predictable inputs and outputs, many change initiatives need funding that can support experimentation and testing, as well as more intangible activities such as communicating with members and volunteers. There are inherent risks of failure as new ideas are tested and funders need to be comfortable with a level of risk.



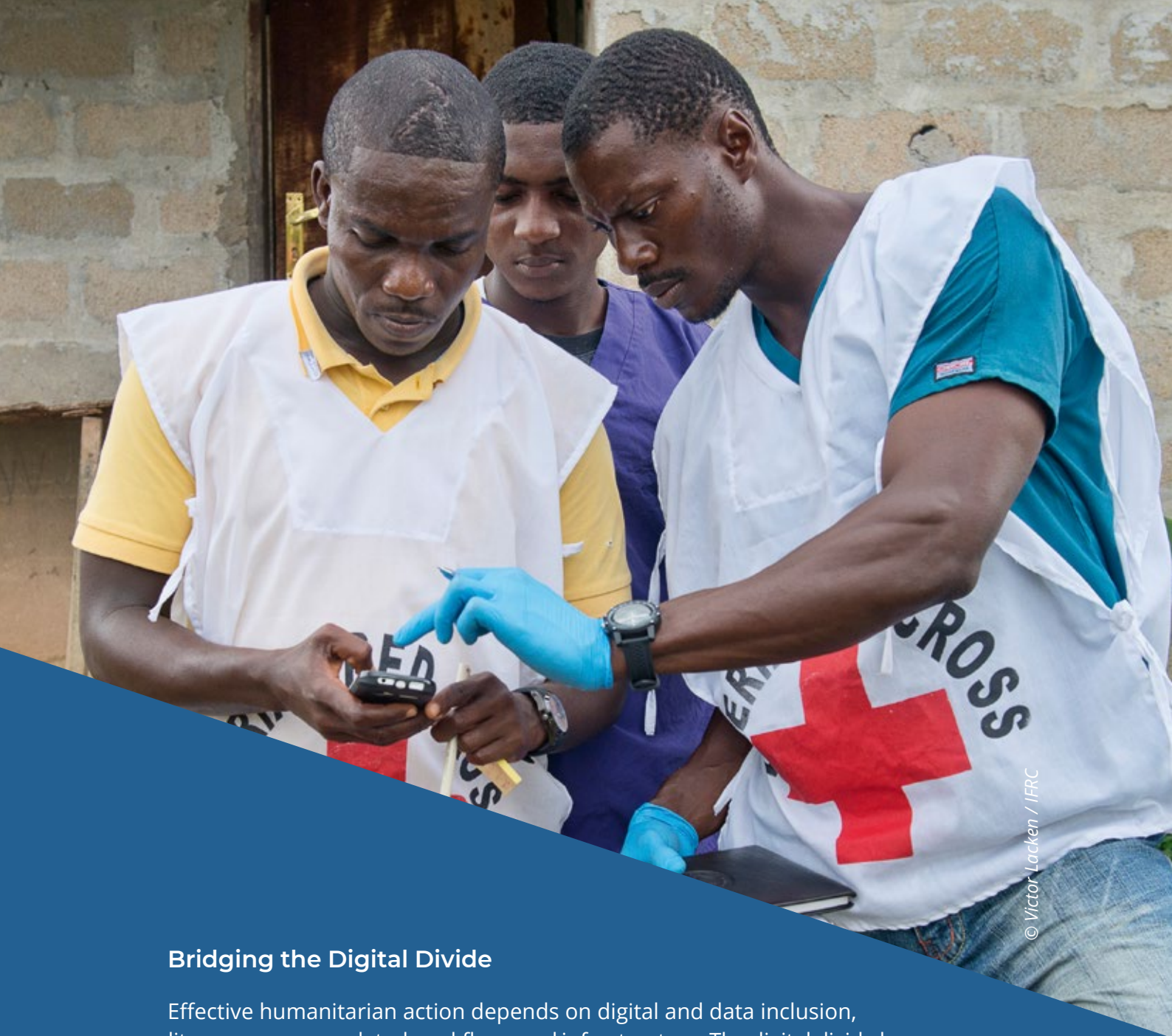
Capacity Building Fund (CBF)

The CBF responds to the complexity of change facing many National Societies, if they are to become more domestically sustainable. It works to identify National Societies in which there is strong momentum for significant change and provides technical support to such National Societies to develop change plans.



The National Society Investment Alliance (NSIA)

NSIA, jointly managed by the IFRC and ICRC, is a Movement funding mechanism focused on supporting the development of National Societies especially those in contexts with heightened humanitarian needs or risks. Recognising that successful NSD requires dedicated, long-term funding, and that the development pathway of each National Society will be different, the fund provides both multi-year support and short term 'bridge funds' to prepare for future investment. The NSIA is a demand-led fund, and National Societies apply for investment to help realise their NSD ambitions.



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Bridging the Digital Divide

Effective humanitarian action depends on digital and data inclusion, literacy, access, updated workflows and infrastructure. The digital divide has an impact on the RCRC's movement's ability to harness the collective intelligence of the RCRC while providing equitable access and peer-to-peer connectivity, engaging online communications, and exploring digital innovations. Digital and data transformations can be disproportionately expensive in developing countries, require skills which may be in short supply, and may be difficult or impossible to access in the most vulnerable communities. With digital opportunities also comes the extensive risk of leaving people behind or putting people in harm's way with a myriad of digital and data protection risks. Strategy 2030, the RFL Data Protection Resolution, and the Digital Pledge commits the IFRC to a digital transformation, accompanying each National Society to access and sustain the technology they need to manage themselves effectively, to participate fully as members of the Federation and to remain at the forefront in the provision of humanitarian and development assistance to vulnerable communities.

Add weight to National Society humanitarian diplomacy for institutional interventions

A particular role for IFRC and ICRC is to support National Societies when dealing with their public authorities in order to improve their operating environments. Events such as the International Conference provide the Movement with opportunities to engage strategically around common National Society development issues with governments individually and collectively.

Cooperate and coordinate

Coordinating support becomes much simpler for a National Society if its partners respect and align behind its self-development plans. In this case, technical and financial resources are used more effectively and National Societies themselves are not overwhelmed with well-meaning but random offers of support.

Conversely, there is a danger that multiple actors working at different levels within National Societies overwhelm a National Society's coordination capacity and risk creating a series of parallel systems within the same organization that proves to be inherently unstable over time, creating confused and conflicting lines of accountability.





CONCLUSION





This Framework for National Society development clarifies high-level understandings and dynamics and sets a common direction and language for this work.

What the Framework proposes is a focus within the Movement on every National Society developing diversified and sustainable domestic support as the basis of its core operation and services, complemented by Movement support that is sensitive to National Society long-term development needs when crisis demands this.

For the Framework to be implemented will require development and revision of further policies, texts and tools to turn the principles set out into more concrete actions. It is not, in itself, sufficient to lead these detailed changes. Also, will require reflection and negotiation within the Movement about how current attitudes and dynamics surrounding National Society development can evolve to be more effective.

What the Framework proposes is a gradual and careful transition over a number of years to a situation in which every National Society has sufficiently diversified and sustainable sources of income to ensure that its integrity and independence are not threatened by any actor, whether domestic or international. The purpose of the Framework is not to propose radical, short-term change, which in any case would not be possible to implement.

For further information on this IFRC publication, please contact:

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

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