

AUXILIARY ROLE LEARNING REPORT

A component of the National Society
Development Learning Project

*Working
together in
partnership*



Acknowledgements

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The research was undertaken by two consultants, Aurélia Balpe and Ian Steed. Technical and editorial oversight and inputs were provided by the working group and subject matter experts of the three organisations commissioning the work.

This report primarily draws on the findings from three auxiliary role-case studies focused on Argentina, Georgia and Mongolia. The case study research was conducted by Aurélia Balpe and involved multiple discussions with, and extensive inputs from senior leadership and technical focal points of these three National Societies. The report also draws on three case studies from Afghanistan, Somalia and Ukraine, developed by John Gwynn in collaboration with the three National Societies.

We sincerely thank all our Movement colleagues who contributed to the research. A full list of key informants is provided in Annex 1

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Executive Summary

The Red Cross and Red Crescent National Societies (National Societies) occupy a singular space within the global humanitarian landscape. Recognised by their governments based on the Geneva Conventions, the Statutes¹ of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement (the Movement), the Resolutions of the International Conference² of the Red Cross and Red Crescent (the International Conference) and national legislation, they serve as voluntary aid societies and auxiliaries³ to the public authorities in the humanitarian field. This means that National Societies support their public authorities in their humanitarian tasks, helping in disaster and armed conflict situations, and contributing to various social and health services. This legally enshrined status fosters a relationship characterised by mutual responsibilities and benefits.

The auxiliary status is a legally derived, permanent designation. This status provides the legal foundation for the National Society to carry out its auxiliary role. **The auxiliary role, on the other hand, reflects a dynamic and situation-responsive approach** to a National Society's mandated activities. It refers to how a National Society adapts and responds to the changing humanitarian context and needs.

How a National Society describes and positions its auxiliary role with public authorities and the wider public are crucial to acceptance and trust building in situations of armed conflict or violence. By framing the auxiliary role as serving public authorities and not the government, National Societies operating in complex environments can engage with various governing entities in accordance with the Fundamental Principles. In conflict zones, the concept of public authorities is broadened to reflect complex governance structures that may include state and non-state actors. This flexibility ensures that National Societies can continue delivering vital humanitarian assistance across politically divided territories.



National Societies vigorously guard their independence. They operate as entities distinct from public authorities and cannot be compelled to undertake actions that violate the Fundamental Principles of the Movement.⁴ They employ several strategies to safeguard their independence. First, their legal status is meticulously defined through national laws, recognising them as **private independent organisations with public functions**. Secondly, they diversify their funding sources to include private donations and international support to avoid over-reliance on any single source. Finally, National Societies maintain distinct governance structures, ensuring decisions are made independently and always guided by humanitarian needs.

In fulfilling their auxiliary role, **National Societies supplement and substitute for the humanitarian services of public authorities**. At times, especially when authorities lack the necessary resources, National Societies may fully assume service delivery. In other instances, they operate under contract, receiving full reimbursement from public authorities. However, when public authorities are reluctant to address the humanitarian needs of certain groups,

National Societies still strive to meet their humanitarian mandate, even if it falls outside the auxiliary role as understood by the authorities.

The extent to which a National Society can deliver its auxiliary role and maintain its neutrality, impartiality, independence and unity depends on several factors. These include the strength of its legal framework, governance structures, principled leadership, operational capacity, and the robustness of its partnerships with public authorities and relationships with communities and other critical stakeholders.

National Societies serve as national and local actors, embodying the principles of localisation through their extensive network of branches and volunteers. At national level, they engage with various stakeholders and maintain a permanent auxiliary relationship with public authorities. Simultaneously, they operate at grassroots level, with community volunteers providing essential auxiliary services directly to those in need. Supported by the wider Movement, National Societies exemplify the integration of local action within national and global frameworks. This positioning enables them to provide local services while maintaining alignment with national policies and contributing to global conversations about needs and the efficiency of humanitarian efforts. Their experience providing auxiliary services grounds their contributions to these discussions, allowing them to offer unique perspectives and act as facilitators between people in need, and national and global response systems.

The Fundamental Principles – humanity, impartiality, neutrality, independence, unity, voluntary service and universality – underpin the auxiliary role. However, upholding these principles becomes increasingly difficult in the complex realities of conflict-affected environments. National Societies face daily challenges in these environments. They must often explain their neutrality, impartiality and unity to those who question their motives, for example, in response to, “Why are you helping the enemy?”.

Internal conflicts, which remain more prevalent than ever, often involve national armed forces against opposition groups or rival factions within a country (with or without the involvement or support of foreign entities). These conflicts, which may be fuelled by ethnic or religious identities, lead to widespread violence and displacement, and make building trust and upholding humanitarian principles even more challenging. In such situations, forging meaningful relationships requires patience and a consistent commitment to demonstrating the value of neutrality through actions. **Every day, bit by bit, National Societies operating in these environments strive to bridge the gap between the auxiliary role established in law and their actions on the ground.**



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Drawing on evidence from case studies in Argentina, Georgia, Mongolia, Afghanistan, Somalia and Ukraine, covering a span of 15 years, this report illustrates the benefits of investments in strengthening the auxiliary role of National Societies. It showcases how these efforts have contributed to localisation and enhanced the reach, relevance and sustainability of National Society services and humanitarian action in times of peace and war. The case studies show that investments that enhance the auxiliary role encompass a set of interdependent activities:

- **Legislative advocacy** aims to influence legislators to anchor the auxiliary role in the Red Cross and Red Crescent, and sectoral laws and regulations, to adopt legal facilities that provide humanitarian access and support for more effective and efficient National Society operations;
- **Humanitarian diplomacy** seeks to create an understanding of the auxiliary role and the Fundamental Principles to influence decision-makers and opinion leaders at local, national and international levels on issues impacting vulnerable groups. In both war and peacetime, sessions with parliamentarians, government ministries, armed groups and armed forces at all levels on the auxiliary role, the Fundamental Principles, the Emblem and international humanitarian law (IHL) contribute to strengthening the auxiliary role relationship with public authorities, securing humanitarian access and legal facilities for National Societies to operate effectively and deliver their humanitarian assistance, as well as promoting respect for IHL and reducing harm to civilians;
- **Public communications** designed to educate and sway the broader public on the nature of the auxiliary role, the Fundamental Principles, IHL and humanitarian issues through information and education campaigns;
- **Partnerships formed and nurtured** with public authorities and other actors at all levels promote coordination, complementarity, harmonisation, independence, acceptance and access;
- **Concurrent investments in other areas of National Society development** and strengthening of programmes and services ensure that the National Society has the governance structures, leadership, branch and volunteer networks, and organisational capacities, to supplement and substitute public services;
- **Movement collaboration supports National Societies** in understanding, strengthening and delivering on their auxiliary role in peacetime, in the aftermath of disasters, and in sensitive and insecure contexts such as armed conflict, internal disturbances and tension – or as part of their preparedness for these contexts.

The case studies demonstrate that strengthening the auxiliary role enhances local humanitarian action.

It leads to more efficient and effective operations as authorities provide unhindered principled humanitarian access, legal rights and exemptions related to employees and volunteers, taxes, domestic and international funding, access and freedom of movement, and disaster-related goods, equipment and personnel.

The relationship with public authorities becomes stronger and more balanced, allowing National Societies to operate swiftly and flexibly across the territory according to their mission and Fundamental Principles, safeguarding the trust of communities, supporters and donors.

A strong legal base and more robust governance structures, more extensive branch and volunteer networks, and generally enhanced organisational capacities enable National Societies to substitute for public services when authorities attempt to deny access to people in need because of political or security concerns, resourcing constraints, discriminatory practices or bureaucratic inefficiency.

National Societies maintain their operational independence while effectively coordinating with authorities and other humanitarian actors, improving the overall coherence of humanitarian efforts. In law and practice, National Societies strive for autonomy. They elect their officials and govern their structures without governmental interference.

National Societies gain access to influential decision-making platforms, enhancing their impact on humanitarian policy and practice. They establish robust and more strategic connections with public authorities, increasing their capacity for humanitarian diplomacy in the service of vulnerable groups.

Overall, strengthening the auxiliary role enables National Societies to fulfil their humanitarian mandate as specified in the Geneva Conventions, the Statutes of the Movement, the resolutions of the International Conference and domestic laws. Combined with wider National Society Development interventions and capacity-strengthening investments, a strengthened auxiliary role brings significant benefits for local action:

- The mandate, roles and responsibilities of the National Society are recognised and respected;
- The National Society is perceived as a neutral, impartial, independent, accountable and transparent humanitarian organisation;
- Optimal spread of well-prepared, active branches and diverse, skilled volunteers from disaster and/or conflict-affected communities;
- Employees and volunteers have a high degree of acceptance among stakeholders;
- Sufficient skills and resources to engage in new or expand existing auxiliary activities;
- Delivering humanitarian assistance to groups and locations where other actors do not have acceptance and access.

Collaborative support from the Movement for strengthening the auxiliary role

Localisation has been the core of the Movement's working model for over 100 years. The vision remains a network of strong local organisations, branches and volunteers that help each other be as effective as possible and stand together in the face of overwhelming disasters and crises. Together, the IFRC and ICRC provide a comprehensive framework that empowers National Societies to strengthen their auxiliary role. The IFRC is primarily responsible for coordinating National Society Development support and formulating policies, strategies, global standards and tools that guide and align the transformation and development of National Societies. The ICRC, drawing on its mandate and specialised knowledge, supports National Societies in preparing for and responding safely to situations of armed conflict and internal strife. Additionally, National Societies engage with each other as peers, leveraging IFRC coordination mechanisms to share lessons on strengthening the auxiliary role. However, strengthening the auxiliary role is not a traditional area of interest for donors. Key informants advised that the Movement has limited resources to support this work.

Other key collaboration themes are outlined below. Many of these lessons are not unique to the Movement's support for strengthening the auxiliary role:

- Backed by Movement resourcing and expertise, National Societies can more rapidly supplement or substitute for the services of public authorities in complex humanitarian settings;
- A countrywide focus and a single comprehensive plan incorporating all Movement support ensure that resources are allocated efficiently and equitably, preventing additional tensions that could arise from some branches and communities receiving more support than others;
- Activities supported by the Movement should always be promoted publicly as the National Society's programmes, helping to maintain the organisation's image as local, neutral, impartial and independent;
- Coordination mechanisms are essential for effective information and resource sharing, and positioning and messaging on humanitarian needs and the auxiliary role. They also ensure that Movement-supported activities are effectively linked to public services to reduce inefficiencies and promote coherence;
- Movement partners have collaborated to develop valuable resources for strengthening the auxiliary role, including: [Model RC Law](#); [Emblem Guidelines](#); [Guide to Strengthening the Auxiliary Role through Law and Policy](#); [Legislative Advocacy Toolkit](#); [Model Pre-disaster Agreement between the National Society, IFRC, and public authorities](#); and ICRC's [Safer Access Framework](#) targeting – or as preparedness for – sensitive and insecure contexts such as armed conflict, internal disturbances and tension;
- Applying common technical standards, whether for core activities that strengthen the auxiliary role or for associated activities such as community-based health or approaches to delivering programmes such as Community Engagement and Accountability, Protection, Gender and Inclusion, ultimately increases the quality and impact of auxiliary services;
- Sensitive accompaniment that adapts global standards to each context supports strengthening the auxiliary role in locally appropriate ways. Moreover, a standardised approach to capacity-building and consistency across territories facilitates efficiencies, acceptance and access;
- Peer-to-peer initiatives focused on research, sharing experiences, and providing access to strategic advice on the opportunities and constraints of the auxiliary role, are valued by National Societies. Establishing a community of practice specifically focused on strengthening the auxiliary role was highlighted as a means of enhancing these efforts.

Best practices for strengthening the auxiliary role

- ❑ Mapping existing organisational capacities to assess them against the auxiliary role and identifying areas for improvement is an important contributor to change. This process creates a virtuous cycle: a strategic decision to modernise the organisation across several case study contexts led to assessments of existing capacities and gaps. These assessments identified the need for an updated and stronger auxiliary role, and this awareness triggered further development initiatives.
- ❑ The case studies highlight the value of lobbying for a strong legal base and legal enhancements, mobilising all levels of the National Society in the process, positioning the National Society within the global Movement network, and referring to the international legal instruments that support the auxiliary role.
- ❑ The studies offer key legal insights, emphasising the importance of formalising the auxiliary role through law and sectoral instruments. The studies also highlight the value of mapping the auxiliary role within domestic legal frameworks to identify strengths and gaps, benchmarking against statutory requirements and other countries for potential legal improvements.
- ❑ They also highlight the importance of fully utilising existing legal facilities anchored in the auxiliary role to support humanitarian service delivery and operations.
- ❑ From a relationship perspective, the case studies highlight the importance of National Societies cultivating trust-based relationships with public authorities grounded in the auxiliary role and Fundamental Principles. Maintaining branches across divided countries in conflict-affected settings, developing relationships with governing authorities or groups and educating on the auxiliary role empower volunteers to work impartially across battle lines.
- ❑ From an operational standpoint, the case studies underline the significance of operational performance, ongoing investment in National Society Development, and adapting the auxiliary role to the changing humanitarian context.
- ❑ The studies also highlight the importance of operationalising the Fundamental Principles, particularly those of impartiality, neutrality, independence and unity during peacetime and war. Every National Society activity and collaboration should be considered through the lens of the auxiliary role, the Fundamental Principles, and the potential for the National Society to be called on to work with different governing authorities in normal times and in the case of violence or armed conflict.
- ❑ Positive, ethical and transformational leadership is a primary driver in strengthening the auxiliary role and initiating other systemic changes within National Societies. Ethical and transformational leaders foster a strong sense of purpose and teamwork, and act as role models for the operationalisation of the auxiliary role and the Fundamental Principles.
- ❑ Sustained investments in people, leadership, structures, processes and systems enable National Societies to supplement or substitute for public services as auxiliaries to authorities in the humanitarian field with neutral, impartial and independent humanitarian action.

Note: for a more detailed list of best practices, see Section 5.3 (Best practice in strengthening the auxiliary role) and Section 6 (Strengthening the auxiliary role in the context of armed conflict).



INTRODUCTION

The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement (hereafter referred to as “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 Movement’s mission is to prevent or alleviate human suffering wherever it is found.⁵ Guiding its efforts are seven Fundamental Principles. National Societies embody the work and principles of the Movement in 191 countries, and serve as auxiliaries to public authorities in the humanitarian field. They provide a range of services during peacetime and in armed conflict or other situations of violence, such as disaster and crisis preparedness and relief, health and social programmes, and education on international humanitarian law.

In 2024, 191 National Societies and their 15.2 million volunteers, youths, employees and elected governance members across more than 200,000 local units worldwide provide a permanent presence that engages their communities in locally led humanitarian action. Such positioning would not be possible without long-term and structured investments in developing National Societies to sustain their local humanitarian action. National Societies reached 188.3 million people with long-term development programmes and 208.9 million people with crisis response and early recovery activities in 2022.

This paper summarises the Movement’s learning in strengthening the auxiliary role of National Societies and how these efforts have contributed to localisation and enhancing the reach, relevance, coherence and sustainability of National Society services. It draws on evidence from detailed case studies in three contexts – Argentina, Georgia, and Mongolia – documented in 2023, covering a span of 15 years of evidence. It also draws on case studies developed from other learning initiatives undertaken by the Afghan, Somali and Ukraine Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies.

Background and Purpose

Following consultations with the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO), the IFRC, the ICRC and British Red Cross (BRC) developed the National Society Development (NSD) Learning Project in 2021.

The key objectives of the NSD Learning Project are:

- To demonstrate to the FCDO (and to other donors) that NSD has real impact on strengthening local action;
- To improve the delivery of NSD across the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement (the Movement) by sharing best practice;
- To demonstrate the importance of the Movement's collaborative support for effective NSD.

The thematic areas of Branch Development and the Auxiliary Role of National Societies were chosen for studies within the NSD Learning Project due to their potential for showcasing the connection between NSD and enhanced local action. This learning report focuses on the Auxiliary Role.

There is a growing conversation about the importance of local humanitarian action. It is more rapid, cost-effective, culturally appropriate and sustainable than international aid. The Movement builds its humanitarian model around groupings of local members and volunteers in communities ("branches"), organised within national Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies ("National Societies"), who are legally recognised by their government as auxiliaries in the humanitarian field, carrying out humanitarian services to benefit their local communities.

This report considers the impact of NSD efforts in strengthening the auxiliary role, the effectiveness of support provided by public authorities and Movement partners, and how these efforts have contributed to strengthening local action.

The learning questions underpinning this report are:

- Does NSD focused on strengthening the auxiliary role have an impact on strengthening local action?
- What do National Societies do to strengthen their auxiliary role?
- How do these actions improve services to vulnerable people and communities?
- How does collaborative support from the Movement contribute to strengthening the auxiliary role?

This Learning Report, developed by a team of two consultants with extensive experience in the Movement and National Society Development, will be shared with National Societies and donors. The report aims to contribute to broader discussions on effective investments in localisation.

What data does the report use?

The primary data for this learning report is derived from the analysis of three in-depth case studies focused on strengthening the auxiliary role, all developed as part of the same consultancy. The case studies can be accessed on the IFRC website via this link.

The case studies were compiled from in-depth interviews with representatives from National Society headquarters and branches in Argentina, Georgia and Mongolia, as well as IFRC and ICRC Geneva and field offices, and municipal government stakeholders. The list of key informants interviewed for these studies is provided in Annex 1. Additionally, the case studies draw on other sources, including Red Cross Red Crescent and Emblem Laws, decrees and regulations, internal and publicly available documents on the activities of the National Societies in the three case contexts, and Movement material pertinent to the auxiliary role. These sources are listed in Annex 2.

The report has been supplemented with evidence from other research initiatives focused on NSD and the application of the auxiliary role in three conflict-affected contexts: Afghanistan, Somalia and Ukraine.

How was the learning report developed?

The report is based on the requirements outlined in the Learning Project's terms of reference, utilising evidence from the three case studies. The *Impact of Auxiliary Role Strengthening Model* presented in Section 2 was developed to showcase the synergistic relationship between investments in the auxiliary role and concurrent investments in NSD, programmes and services, highlighting how these collectively enhance local action and impact. The model provided the author with a systematic approach for organising, categorising and analysing the data from the case studies, as well as facilitating comparisons between cases and the generalisation of findings.

Evidence-based research on the impacts of strengthening the auxiliary role is limited. The *Impact of Auxiliary Role Strengthening Model* and the wider report represent an initial step towards a more comprehensive understanding of the impact of interventions designed to strengthen the auxiliary role. As a burgeoning area of inquiry within the Movement, it requires further development, including additional perspectives from National Societies and Movement technical experts, and a wider body of evidence. While the model, especially in detailing outputs and intermediate outcomes, is not exhaustive, it aims to illustrate the causal chain between NSD investments and impact.

What are the limitations of the report?

In developing the learning report, the authors have articulated and mitigated, where possible, the following limitations.

The challenge of identifying causal links and measuring impact

A key challenge for the Movement is demonstrating how investments in NSD have tangibly improved lives. Establishing a direct link between these investments and their outcomes is challenging, partly because organisations are complex systems. Such systems comprise numerous elements – people, beliefs, norms, status, money and technology – all engaged in micro-interactions with positive and negative feedback loops. In a linear system, inputs lead to proportional outputs. For example, pressing a car's accelerator causes it to speed up. In contrast, complex systems feature feedback loops that create non-linear changes, amplifying or dampening changes based on the interactions of the system's elements.

Consider an initiative aimed at fostering inter-organisational collaboration. Such initiatives can trigger a variety of responses, from positive reactions that boost collaboration to negative ones that obstruct it. The complex mix of these micro-reactions over time can lead to organisational patterns that result in no change or various degrees of improved or deteriorated collaboration. The outcome depends on the nature of the intervention, individual responses within the system, and the subsequent impact of these reactions on others.

Tracing a causal link between a specific intervention, such as legislative advocacy to strengthen the auxiliary role and improved services, is challenging due to the numerous variables mediating and moderating this relationship. This is further complicated by the volatile, complex, and ambiguous environments many National Societies navigate. Furthermore, some interventions produce outputs that are difficult to quantify, like visionary leadership, or generate results that are intertwined with other simultaneous interventions, such as branch development. These factors underscore the inherent difficulties in tracking and quantifying organisational change.

Openness about the challenges in the auxiliary relationship

National Societies may not always fully account for the challenges or negative aspects of their auxiliary relationship with their local authorities. This cautious approach can be attributed to several factors, including a commitment to uphold the organisation's public image or apprehensions regarding the consequences of expressing criticism. National Societies, in their effort to foster positive and productive relationships, may naturally prioritise the portrayal of a harmonious partnership.

Temporal disconnect

Auxiliary role-strengthening initiatives typically extend over several years. As a result, some of the evidence in this report comes from individuals who were not present during certain events being analysed. This poses challenges for acquiring insights into the context, dynamics and impact of interventions.

Data on conflict situations

To address the limited data on strengthening the auxiliary role in conflict situations within the in-depth case studies, this report draws on research conducted as part of another NSD learning initiative that explored the experiences of Afghan, Somali and Ukraine Red Crescent and Red Cross Societies.

Access to quantitative and qualitative data

Quantitative and qualitative data are important for measuring, analysing and understanding the effectiveness of NSD initiatives, particularly their impact on service delivery and outcomes for vulnerable people. Without this data, it is a challenge to draw evidence-based conclusions. National Societies often do not systematically collect or have readily accessible longitudinal data on the variables necessary to research the impact of strengthening the auxiliary role. Interviewees frequently mentioned the legal, reputational, relational and financial impacts of interventions, but they were generally unable to provide rigorous quantitative and qualitative evidence at service and beneficiary levels. To facilitate future evidence gathering, the consultants have proposed a research tool to assist National Societies in collecting relevant longitudinal data to understand the impact of future NSD efforts.

Auxiliary role overview

What is the auxiliary role?

A National Society must fulfil ten conditions to be recognised as a member of the Movement.⁶ The recognition process is led by the ICRC and includes the condition that each National Society must be “duly recognized by the legal government of its country on the basis of the Geneva Conventions and of the national legislation as a voluntary aid society, auxiliary to the public authorities in the humanitarian field”.⁷ This status is typically embedded in the domestic Red Cross or Red Crescent law of the country and further articulated in sectoral laws, policies, plans and agreements.⁸ Consequently, auxiliary status is permanent and establishes the legal foundation for every National Society.

FIGURE 1: Auxiliary role and recognition of National Societies



The auxiliary role, on the other hand, reflects a dynamic and situation-responsive approach to a National Society’s mandated activities. It refers to how a National Society adapts and responds to the changing humanitarian context and needs. By framing the auxiliary role as serving public authorities and not the government, National Societies operating in complex environments can engage with various governing entities in accordance with the Fundamental Principles. In conflict zones, the concept of public authorities is broadened to reflect complex governance structures that may include state and non-state actors. This flexibility ensures that National Societies can continue delivering vital humanitarian assistance across politically divided territories.

The auxiliary role helps define the relationship between public authorities and a National Society, facilitating regular interaction at national, regional and local levels. Mutual responsibilities and

benefits characterise this relationship.⁹ Public authorities and the National Society agree on areas where the National Society supplements or substitutes public humanitarian services, typically in disaster risk management, health, migration and social welfare, in both times of peace and conflict, as well as other situations of violence.

This auxiliary arrangement grants National Societies a unique legal status as private organisations with certain recognised public functions. It enables them to deliver their humanitarian mission and mandate more efficiently and effectively, while assisting public authorities in achieving their humanitarian objectives. In emergency response, having clear roles and responsibilities is critical to avoid confusion and delay in providing life-saving assistance.

Because of their auxiliary status, National Societies must consider requests from public authorities to carry out humanitarian activities within their mandate. However, their independence means they can reject such requests if they violate the Fundamental Principles or are not aligned with the National Society's auxiliary role and conflict with humanitarian priorities. Conversely, public authorities should fully utilise the services and activities of the National Society to supplement and substitute public social services and emergency response mechanisms (see Figure 2).

Public authorities recognise the neutrality, impartiality and independence of National Societies and, accordingly, must refrain from requesting the National Society to undertake activities that conflict with the Fundamental Principles, the Statutes of the Movement or their mission. States have affirmed the obligation of National Societies to adhere to the Fundamental Principles.¹⁰

FIGURE 2: A unique relationship with mutual responsibilities



The National Society must also disseminate the operational meaning of the Fundamental Principles to its public authorities, aiming to avoid misinterpretation and to promote a deeper understanding of the humanitarian needs of the most vulnerable.

The extent to which a National Society can support the humanitarian objectives of its public authorities hinges on its organisational capacity. Therefore, a crucial aspect of the auxiliary relationship is the role of public authorities in fostering and supporting the development of National Societies to ensure they are effective humanitarian organisations. States may offer direct and/or indirect support to their National Society. This can include direct financial contributions, tax exemptions and fiscal concessions, fiscal incentives for donors to the National Society, and in-kind contributions.¹¹

Where does the auxiliary role come from?

This role has its roots in the foundation of the Movement in the 19th century when National Societies were established to provide medical assistance to those wounded in battle, thereby supporting their countries' military medical services. Resolutions of the International Conference, which states help to develop, have further defined the auxiliary role and affirmed the responsibility of public authorities to support National Societies.

How does the auxiliary role help to reach the humanitarian goals and obligations of public authorities?

Each state is responsible for preventing and reducing disaster risk and assisting those affected by natural disasters and other emergencies, and crises within its territory.¹² This responsibility entails initiating, organising, coordinating and implementing humanitarian assistance. In their auxiliary capacity, National Societies are ideally positioned to assist public authorities in fulfilling their humanitarian obligation.

As National Societies address the needs of vulnerable populations and work towards building community resilience through their community-based branches and volunteers, their objectives align with those outlined in national disaster and emergency laws, regulations, policies and plans. This alignment makes National Societies important contributors to formulating and implementing such domestic frameworks, providing avenues for enhanced coordination. Because of their community-based structures, National Societies often have access to areas that are less accessible to other actors. In conflict-affected environments, National Societies can reach civilian populations that some public authorities cannot, especially in territories held by other parties to a conflict.

Supplementing or substituting

Under the status of auxiliary, a National Society may supplement or substitute for the humanitarian services of its public authorities, but how this is organised differs from context to context. In some cases, National Societies supplement public services, especially when the authorities lack the necessary means. In other cases, National Societies are contracted to provide humanitarian services and receive full-cost reimbursement from public authorities.

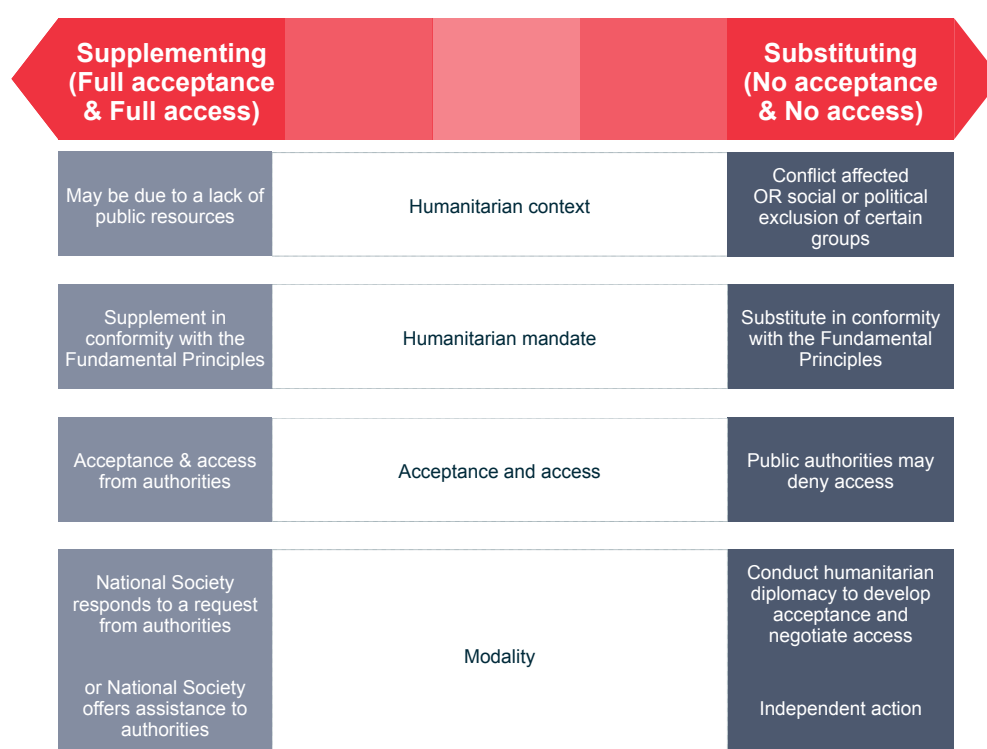
There may be situations where public authorities are reluctant to acknowledge the responsibility to meet the specific humanitarian needs of certain groups. This reluctance could also extend to recognising the rights of specific groups, such as migrants without formal status or other marginalised groups. In these circumstances, National Societies must still endeavour to meet humanitarian needs and act in accordance with the Fundamental Principles, even if such substitutive action falls outside the auxiliary role as understood by the authorities. Most Red Cross or Red Crescent laws state that the National Society, "shall at all times act in conformity with... the Fundamental Principles of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement...".¹³ In some instances, a National Society may need to engage in humanitarian

diplomacy with public authorities to highlight this point and clarify why the definition of auxiliary adopted by the International Conference grants it the humanitarian right of initiative to address all people's needs, substituting the services of public authorities, regardless of whether the public authorities recognise those people's rights or entitlements.¹⁴

The acceptance and access continuum in Figure 3 visualises the supplementing and substituting scenarios. This continuum illustrates the range of operational environments, from full cooperation with public authorities to situations requiring independent action. The left side of the continuum (Supplementing) represents scenarios where National Societies have acceptance and access from public authorities. It includes situations where there may be a lack of public resources hard-to-reach, vulnerable, underserved and high-risk communities in need, and where National Societies respond to authorities' requests to offer to supplement services.

The right side of the continuum (Substituting) represents scenarios where there may be no acceptance or access by public authorities. This includes scenarios where attempts by authorities are made to deny access to areas controlled by other parties or to politically or socially marginalised groups. Despite these constraints, National Societies must always act to support all those in need, engage in humanitarian diplomacy to develop acceptance and strive to provide assistance in conformity with the Fundamental Principles.

FIGURE 3: Supplementing or substituting for the services of public authorities



The need for investment in strengthening the auxiliary role

The varied understandings of the auxiliary role reflect diverse cultures, political and legal systems, and the unique history of each National Society. Many National Societies leverage their auxiliary status to deliver their humanitarian mission and mandate more effectively.

However, in some instances, the lack of understanding of the parameters of the auxiliary role and the Fundamental Principles can limit the reach and impact of National Societies. A Red Cross or Red Crescent Law may not provide legal facilities for effective and efficient humanitarian action. For example, a law might not recognise or facilitate volunteering, affecting volunteers' ability to take leave from work to support an emergency operation or exclude permission from mobilising resources. During the COVID-19 pandemic, some National Societies found that restrictions on freedom of movement, assembly and border closures unintentionally impeded their response activities. This was because targeted exemptions on movement, import or export of goods and equipment, and entry of international humanitarian personnel were not in place.

In contexts with a polarised political environment, the lack of understanding of the parameters of the auxiliary role can compromise the credibility and legitimacy of a National Society. This situation arises when a public authority fails to respect the National Society's neutrality and independence, possibly intervening in governance processes, requesting the National Society to undertake tasks that are not consistent with its principles (e.g., participation in security checks or military parades), or restricting service delivery to certain areas or groups.

Some agreements between a National Society and its public authorities, formulated in peacetime, may create issues when conflict breaks out because the agreement is written in a way that presents the National Society as partial. Therefore, even in times of peace, National Societies must diligently ensure that all laws, policies and agreements ensure their neutrality and independence.

In other situations, National Societies have been found to work for their public authorities in other countries without the consent of the local National Society. Such actions are against the Fundamental Principle of Unity, undermine the reputation of the National Society and the wider Movement, jeopardising public trust and damaging its ability to operate effectively, especially in sensitive or conflict-affected areas.

This lack of consistency in understanding the auxiliary role impacts the universality of the Movement and its capacity for a uniform image. The Movement and its members invest resources in clarifying and strengthening the auxiliary role to address these challenges. These efforts can be driven by the National Society or can involve peer-to-peer support, technical assistance from the IFRC, the ICRC, and sister National Societies, as well as support from the IFRC/ICRC Joint Statutes Commission. Representatives of public authorities, parliamentarians and legislators are essential contributors to these efforts.

National Society Development

Each National Society is responsible for how it develops its people, structures, systems, processes and services to meet increasing needs. Within the Movement, National Society Development refers to the continuous effort of each National Society to achieve and maintain an accountable and sustainable organisation that delivers – through volunteers and staff – relevant services to address needs, reduce vulnerabilities and build resilience in a changing environment. Supporting NSD, therefore, contributes to better local humanitarian action. That is why the Movement considers supporting NSD, including the strengthening of the auxiliary role, as central to the process of localisation.



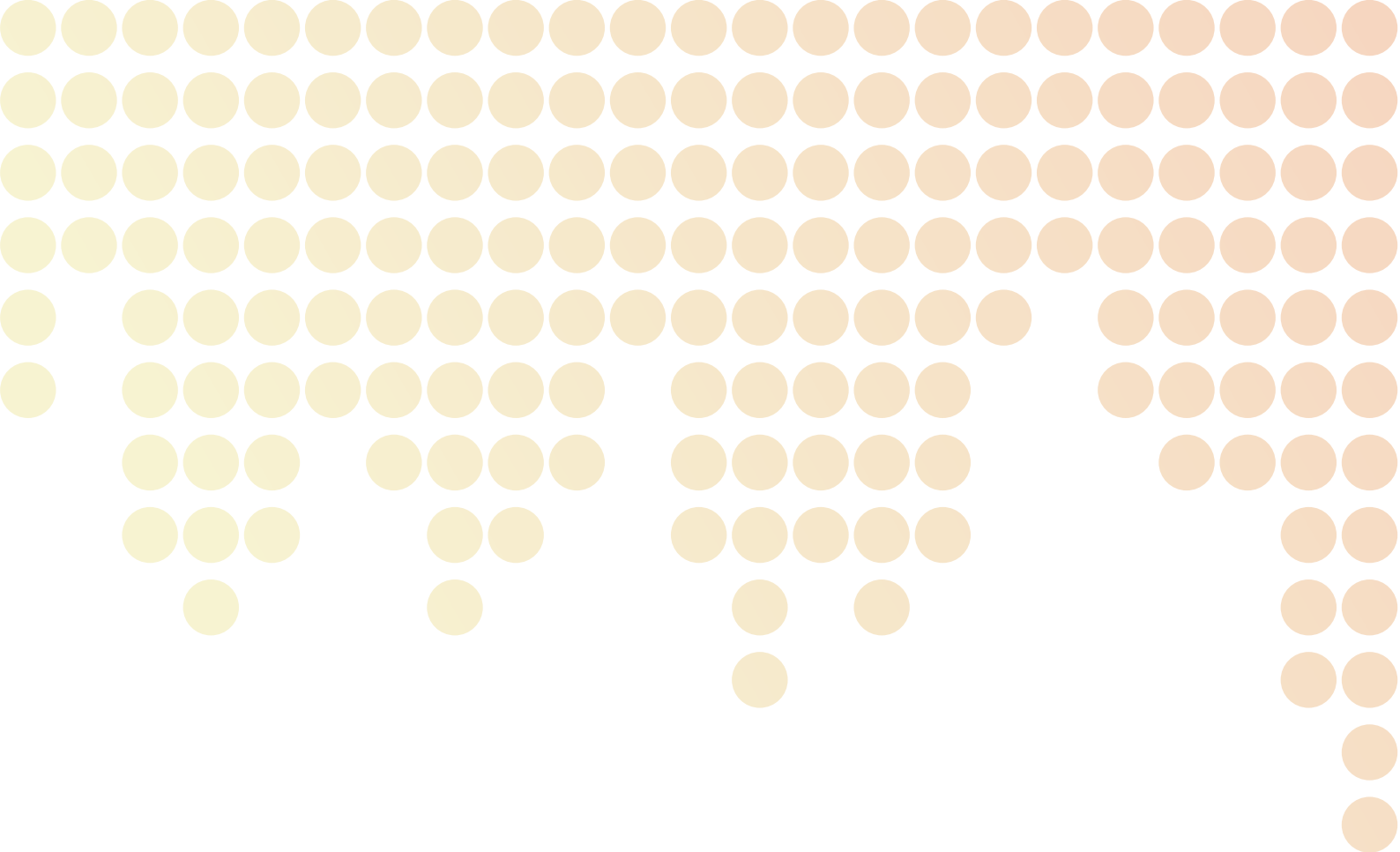
A MODEL STRENGTHENING THE AUXILIARY ROLE

Introduction

The evidence gathered from Argentina, Afghanistan, Georgia, Mongolia, Somalia and Ukraine has informed the creation of a model that visualises the chain of outputs, outcomes and impact arising from strengthening the auxiliary role (refer to [Figure 4](#)). This model illustrates the interplay between investments in strengthening the auxiliary role, concurrent investments in National Society Development, and programmes and services, and how these elements come together to strengthen local action. It outlines the enablers, investment streams and outputs that allow a National Society to strengthen and effectively utilise its auxiliary role (outcomes) to impact the resilience and well-being of vulnerable and at-risk individuals and communities (goals).

The model demonstrates that while strengthening the auxiliary role alone is insufficient to enhance local action, when combined with strong organisational capacities, it can contribute significantly to increased reach and more effective, efficient and sustainable services.

The model is not exhaustive, especially in detailing outputs and intermediate outcomes. Serving as a starting point, the model invites collaboration from various Movement experts and practitioners to enrich its depth and applicability. Integrating more extensive evidence will be crucial in evolving the model into a more robust and comprehensive tool for analysis and application in this emerging area of research.



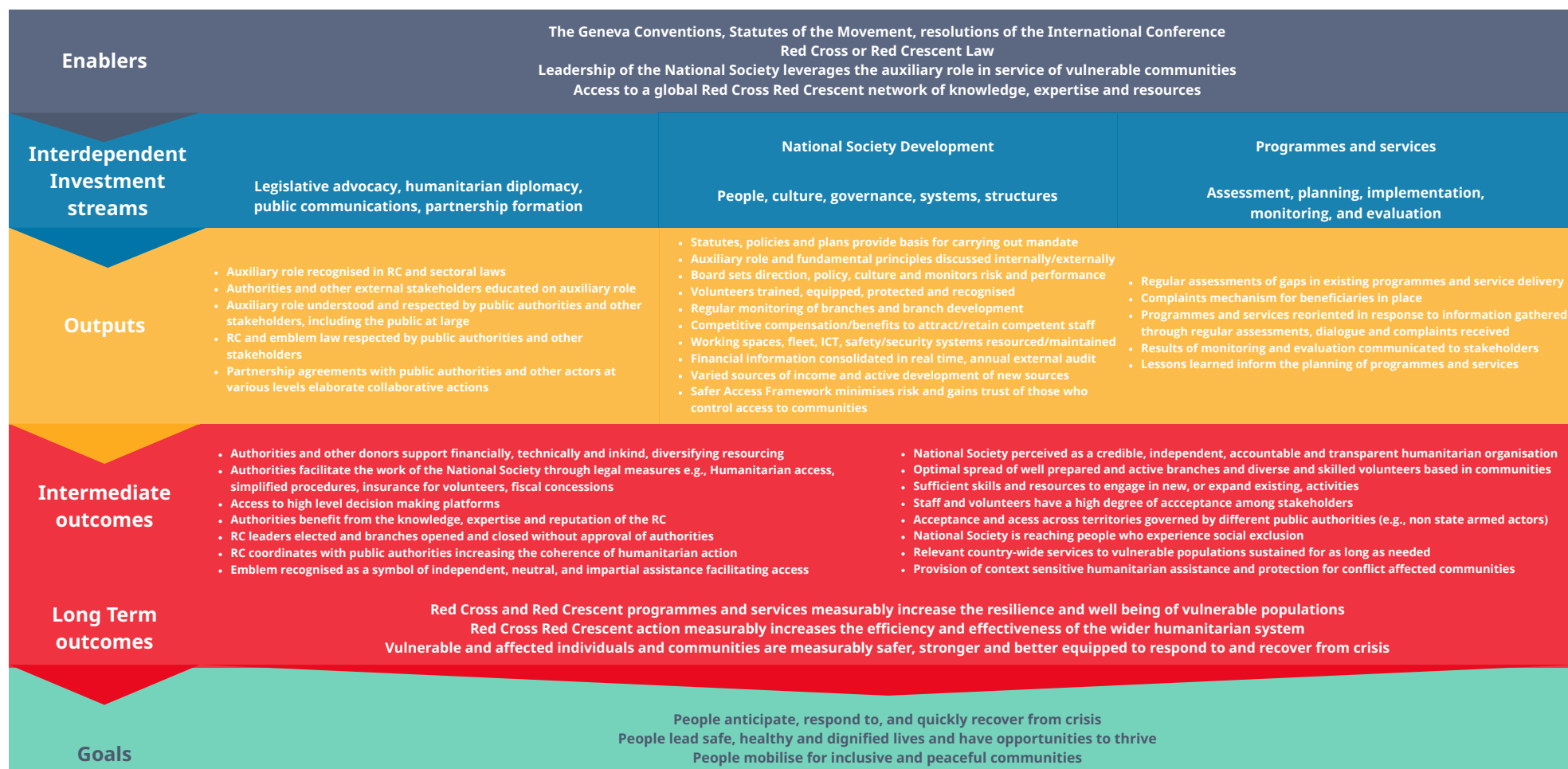
Components of the impact of strengthening the auxiliary role model

The model's logic is as follows: investment streams, facilitated by the enablers, produce specific outputs. These outputs lead to intermediate and longer-term outcomes (in red), contributing to the overarching goals (in green).

The investment streams, with their respective outputs, illustrate how a National Society works to strengthen its auxiliary role through its legal base and wider organisational capacities to bring about intermediate and long-term changes. These changes in understanding, skills, knowledge, attitudes and behaviour within the National Society and public authorities drive decisions and actions that improve individual and community resilience and well-being.

The model is dynamic, highlighting the interconnectedness of each investment stream and the emergence of synergies as laws are passed, public authorities are educated and engaged, partnerships are formed, capacities are strengthened, services are delivered, and lessons are learned. While each investment stream produces certain outputs, they contribute significantly to other outputs. Therefore, outcomes are collectively represented to demonstrate how all three investment streams contribute to each outcome. Each element in the model is described in more detail in Annex 8.4.

FIGURE 4: The impact of strengthening the auxiliary role model



Note: 1) While the model, especially in detailing outputs and intermediate outcomes, is not exhaustive, it aims to illustrate the potential causal chain between National Society investment and impact; 2) The model aims to offer initial insights into the dynamics of the strengthening of the auxiliary role and wider National Society Development, but it has inherent limitations (refer to Annex 3).



© Ukrainian Red Cross Society



CASE SUMMARIES

The background of the page features a solid blue gradient. Overlaid on this are three distinct patterns of dots of varying colors and densities. A light blue dot pattern is located in the top right corner. A green dot pattern covers the middle section, sloping downwards from left to right. An orange dot pattern is at the bottom left, also sloping upwards from left to right. The dots are arranged in a grid-like fashion within their respective colored regions.

Argentine Red Cross Society

The case study traces the Argentine Red Cross' (ARCS) near decade-long journey in strengthening its auxiliary status through its constitutive law, and examines the impact of this effort on services for vulnerable communities. The revised Red Cross Law was pivotal in clarifying, strengthening and safeguarding the National Society's auxiliary status and securing ARCS's position in supplementing and substituting the services of public authorities in all types of disasters and emergencies. The ability of the ARCS to fulfil its auxiliary role during the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond is credited to investment in leadership, management capacities, branch and volunteer development, and partnerships with public authorities and other actors at different levels.

The ARCS's journey underscores the significance of visionary leadership, an ambitious legislative advocacy campaign, cultural and structural changes, and a focus on transparency and accountability. These factors have collectively strengthened the organisation's auxiliary role and legal base, and enhanced its legitimacy, reach and sustainability. Capitalising on its reputation, legal base and expertise in community-based water and sanitation, the ARCS has assumed an important technical and social auditing role for projects funded by public authorities in vulnerable communities. This position provides a solid foundation for further enhancing its auxiliary reach.

The ARCS's strong and visible presence during emergencies has heightened public expectations for the organisation to consistently provide assistance alongside public authorities and take a public stand on a wide range of issues. Equipped with a strong Red Cross Law, the ARCS can remain focused on providing support and advocating when the action is aligned with its auxiliary role and Fundamental Principles.

Overall, the case study outlines the ARCS's success in strengthening its auxiliary role, emphasising the diverse elements that have played a part in this progression and its evolution into one of Argentina's most trusted and respected humanitarian organisations.



© Argentine Red Cross



CRUZ ROJA
ARGENTINA

Georgia Red Cross Society

This case study explores the GRCS's 15-year journey in enhancing its auxiliary status and assesses the impact of these efforts on services provided to vulnerable communities.

The Red Cross Law of 1997 established the GRCS's auxiliary status. The 2008 conflict between Russia and Georgia served as a catalyst for strengthening the auxiliary role. This emergency operation was the basis for important clarifications of the auxiliary role outlined in the Civil Safety National Plan. The National Society's engagement with public authorities enabled the inclusion of GRCS functions in the Plan – the only non-state actor to have a formal role. Moreover, the National Society's strong relationships with Movement partners allowed it to access international resources to undertake NSD and capacity-building initiatives, increasing its ability to deliver on its auxiliary functions.

Recent revisions to the Red Cross and Emblem Laws (2017) recognise volunteering, provide for the GRCS to receive funds from budgetary organisations, recognise the GRCS's role in promoting international humanitarian law, and make misuse of the Red Cross emblem a punishable offence.

To preserve its neutral, impartial and independent status, which is critical for humanitarian work in peace and conflict, the GRCS has prioritised the development of balanced relationships with public authorities at all levels. The National Society has strategically engaged with local authorities and other actors to secure long-term financial and operational partnerships for most of its 39 branches, increasing its local reach, sustainability and legitimacy. These factors have collectively contributed to strengthening the organisation's ability to play a proactive and substantial role in addressing the needs of those affected by crisis and disaster, most recently during the COVID-19 pandemic, major flooding and the impacts of the Russia-Ukraine conflict.

Conflict in Georgia has had devastating and long-lasting impacts on the families of the missing. The GRCS, drawing upon its experience in responding to the 2008 crisis, works with the ICRC in the missing persons programme, addressing disappearances from past conflicts. Recognising the potential for future conflict, the GRCS prioritises strengthening its branches located in sensitive areas along administrative borders and with large ethnic minority populations.

Overall, the case study underscores the significance of a crisis as an opportunity for transformation, the steps taken by the GRCS to strengthen and leverage its auxiliary role, and the multifaceted factors that have contributed to this work.



Mongolia Red Cross Society

This case demonstrates that strategic investments in the development of the MRCS have had a profound and far-reaching impact. Strengthening its Red Cross Law has significantly enhanced the organisation's legitimacy, paving the way for stronger and more balanced relationships with public authorities, increased resources and joint programming, bolstering its operational capacity to respond effectively to diverse needs nationwide.

The successful advocacy campaign for the 2016 Red Cross Law was a pivotal moment, elevating the MRCS from a non-governmental organisation to a legally recognised auxiliary to the government. This accomplishment, achieved through bipartisan support, laid the groundwork for a strong legal base that mandates government support and clearly outlines the MRCS's humanitarian mandate. The operationalisation of the auxiliary role has involved sensitising authorities, educating internal stakeholders and fostering robust relationships with public authorities at all levels. As a result of the new Law and investments in its operationalisation, MRCS branches have become vital players in health promotion, disaster-risk management and community-focused initiatives. Cooperation agreements, coordination structures, annual planning and review meetings provide the framework for MRCS collaboration with its public authorities.

The impact of the investments in MRCS's auxiliary role was particularly evident during the COVID-19 pandemic. The MRCS played a crucial role in the government's response, leveraging its established network of branches and volunteers, technical expertise and relationships with public authorities to assist thousands of households.

Despite Mongolia's current peace, the MRCS recognises the importance of preparedness for armed conflict and other violent situations. The organisation has taken proactive steps to ensure it is ready to respond effectively. This includes training its National Disaster Response Teams in crisis management specific to armed conflict. The teams are trained on the complexities of the relationship between the Red Cross and the defence forces. Additionally, they receive training on how to act according to the Fundamental Principles during armed conflict.



Mongolian Red Cross Society © IFRC

ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS



Mapping the case evidence onto the Model

In this section, the evidence from the three case studies is analysed and synthesised using the “Impact of strengthening the auxiliary role model” introduced on [page 22](#). The enablers for change in each context are presented. This is followed by a summary of the outcomes from investments in strengthening the auxiliary role, alongside concurrent investments in NSD, programmes and services.

Enablers of change

A change in leadership enabled significant investment in strengthening the auxiliary role in Mongolia and Argentina. In Georgia, increasing humanitarian needs highlighted gaps in the National Society’s capacities and expanded the leadership’s perspective. This served as the impetus for strengthening the auxiliary status and role. In the three countries, leaders drew on the expertise of the wider Movement to support the changes they sought.

A change in leadership in Mongolia preceded investment in strengthening its auxiliary status. In response to the National Society’s mediocre reputation, the new leadership team initiated a change programme focused on transforming the organisational culture, modernising the organisation, and expanding its reach and impact. Key elements of this strategy involved updating the statutes and Red Cross Law, enhancing corporate governance, developing and decentralising decision-making to branches, developing closer collaboration with public authorities and maintaining a steadfast focus on addressing vulnerability.

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**Bolormaa
Nordov, MRCS
Secretary General**

When I joined the MRCS, our legal base was weak, our auxiliary role was not clear, we were an NGO, the government was not supporting us, and we were not very active in disaster preparedness, and social programmes and public health promotion. The culture of the MRCS was a slow working speed...and governance and management were mixed. First, with the help of the IFRC and ICRC, we revised our statutes to protect the MRCS from different kinds of [political] challenges. Statutes were very important, they helped to create change. We separated governance from management, brought on more women and we meet more regularly...then we focused on making our auxiliary role and legal base stronger.

In Argentina, the results of the Organisational Capacity Assessment and Certification process (OCAC) informed the transformation agenda of ARCS's new leadership.¹⁵ Modernising Red Cross Law, growing the organisation, management, branch and volunteer development, accountability and transparency, and more active relationships with public authorities, were core components of this agenda.

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The goal was to position the organisation not just as another civil society organisation but as a local chapter of the world's largest organisation, highlighting the added value it brings to the country, especially in times of crisis.

Diego Tipping,
ARCS President

Responding to the needs of those affected by the 2008 war between Georgia and Russia was a turning point for the GRCS. While the conflict brought many challenges, it allowed the National Society to demonstrate its capacity as a humanitarian actor and its immense potential as an auxiliary to the response of public authorities. Since that operation, the GRCS has strategically invested in its auxiliary function and the development of its branch and volunteer network.

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Until 2008, the National Society was not as strong as today. There was a Red Cross Law, but many branches were not active. At national level, the GRCS did not fully make use of its auxiliary role and did not have a clear approach for relationships with government or a branch development strategy, so the branches did not have the right capacities or know about the auxiliary role and how it could support them to do more.

Natia Loladze,
GRCS President



© Red Cross Society of Georgia



Interdependent investment streams

Strengthening the auxiliary role

The three National Societies strengthened the auxiliary role through legislative advocacy, humanitarian diplomacy, public communications, and partnership formation and expansion with public authorities. In all three contexts, investments in strengthening the legal base and operationalising the auxiliary role were supported by concurrent investments in NSD, programmes and services.

Advocating for legal revisions and inclusions in Argentina

The success of the ARCS in updating its auxiliary role in law stems from its legislative advocacy, humanitarian diplomacy, communication and marketing competencies. Using social media, harnessing the voice of its leaders and volunteers, and engaging with all political parties and legislators to explain the mandate, Fundamental Principles and capacities of the National Society and the wider Movement, the ARCS secured unanimous support from 320 legislators for the legal revision.

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When the board started its mandate, we saw that we had the oldest law in the world, from 1893! Since then, the world has changed, both in terms of humanitarian risks and politically, so it was necessary to update the law to protect our auxiliary role, binding more securely the special relationship we have with our public authorities.

Diego Tipping,
ARCS President

The president and board members led the advocacy campaign, dedicating hundreds of hours to meeting with congressional representatives. They focused on developing relationships with legislators, defining winning messages that spoke to the different interests of their interlocutors, media coverage, liaising regularly with legislative staff and winning over constituents. At 400,000 signatures, the National Society met the threshold required by the Argentinian Constitution to present a bill proposal initiative to Parliament. An astounding one million signatures were ultimately presented.

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The political scene is very polarised in Argentina. It is important to engage with all actors, but this is not easy to do. The National Society managed to talk to all the political parties and all the legislators represented in the two chambers. This had never been done. The investment in advocacy was colossal! The National Society was successful in penetrating the circles of power. They did such a good job that when there was a change of government midway through its legislative campaign, it did not affect the outcome.

IFRC Representative

The revised law clarifies, strengthens and safeguards the auxiliary status of the ARCS. It outlines the scope and limitations of the auxiliary role, offers tax exemptions on imports and facilitates volunteering. Additionally, it recognises the National Society as a *Cooperating Entity*, allowing it to enter financial or technical cooperation with public agencies. These amendments increase the relational, financial and operational capacity of the ARCS to both supplement and substitute public services, amplifying the coherence, reach and sustainability of its humanitarian action.

Advocating for legal revisions and inclusions in Georgia

For the GRCS, a major milestone in its advocacy efforts was the inclusion of the Red Cross in the Civil Safety National Plan. The 1997 Georgia Red Cross Law established the organisation's auxiliary status. However, it was not until the 2008 conflict operation that the National Society realised the full potential of this unique status.

Since 2008, the GRCS has been the only non-state actor to be assigned specific functions in the Civil Safety National Plan. Under this plan, the GRCS contributes to search and rescue activities, organises and coordinates the activities of civil society actors involved in a response, organises field hospitals, and provides food and water to affected individuals.

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ICRC Representative
in Georgia

A lot of advocacy work was needed to get a role in the Civil Safety Plan. Back in 2008, the government was working on the national response plan, and the leadership of the National Society was pushing to have its role in that plan, and now the result is that the GRCS is the only humanitarian organisation to have a role in that plan.

Recent revisions to the Red Cross and Emblem Laws (2017) recognise volunteering, provide for the GRCS to receive funds from budgetary organisations, recognise the role of the GRCS in promoting IHL and make it a punishable offence to misuse the Red Cross emblem. The inclusion of the GRCS in the Civil Safety Plan and recent amendments to the laws clarify, strengthen and safeguard the auxiliary role and amplify the coherence, relevance, reach and sustainability of GRCS's services.

Advocating for legal revisions and inclusions in Mongolia

A working group of parliamentarians, in combination with an advocacy and humanitarian diplomacy campaign, delivered the 2016 Red Cross Law. Before this, the MRCS was operating under the status of a non-governmental organisation and, therefore, was not legally recognised as an auxiliary to its public authorities.

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Bolormaa
Nordov, MRCS
Secretary General

Between 1990 and 2000, the Red Cross was without any law; we were under the NGO Law. The first Red Cross Law was adopted in 2000, but the MRCS still had the legal status of an NGO. This was when few NGOs existed... But now, there are around 7,000 NGOs, and the definition of an NGO is unclear. Private [corporate] organisations register as NGOs. We worked with the government under the old law, but there was no financial support, and our cooperation was limited.

For 36 months, the MRCS invested leadership time and drew on support from the IFRC and ICRC for the legislative campaign. The two major parties co-proposed the Red Cross law, reflecting the MRCS's effort to achieve bipartisan support. In May 2016, the government adopted a resolution to enforce the new MRCS Law. The Law and Resolution create a strong legal base for MRCS's humanitarian activities, formalising and clarifying its auxiliary role. The law makes provisions for tax exemptions and funding, requiring public authorities to support the MRCS through annual budget allocations at national and local levels. The resolution requires the Deputy Prime Minister to delegate certain humanitarian functions to the MRCS.

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Dr. Tunglag,
MRCS Orkhon
Branch Manager

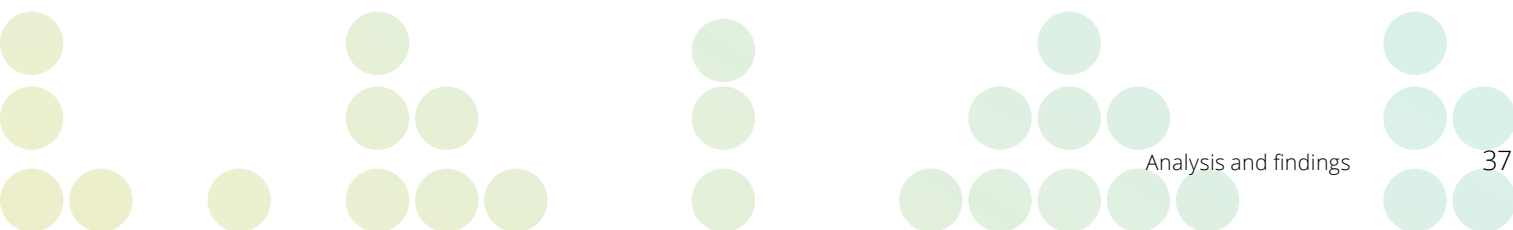
Before, we were considered an NGO, and it was difficult to cooperate with government organisations; they took a long time to respond. The collaboration was limited, but after this law, the Red Cross is considered an auxiliary to the government, and the responsiveness has increased. We are more credible. The law means that the Government recognises Red Cross activities. This law has increased funding for the branch. So now we are more financially sustainable.

The MRCS has also had success in revising sectoral laws. In 2017, the Law on Disaster Protection was passed, further clarifying and strengthening the MRCS's auxiliary role. The law acknowledges the MRCS's role in providing disaster protection training and coordinating international humanitarian assistance from the IFRC. This means that for certain disaster situations, the government can request international support through the MRCS without launching an international appeal with the United Nations. An appeal through the United Nations would likely attract more media attention and impact tourism.

Following the revision of the Red Cross Law in 2016 and the organisation's statutes, the National Society established the State-Red Cross Cooperation Council. With ministerial participation, this high-level council aims to support MRCS in effectively fulfilling its auxiliary role. The strong partnership between the National Society and public authorities has increased resourcing for local-level action. However, the MRCS maintains a strict policy: no branch receives more than 50 per cent of its funding from public authorities. This ensures continued independence. Parallel State-Red Cross coordination councils are now being established at provincial and district levels. Educating branches on the different aspects of the legal base of the National Society has been an important element in this process and in ensuring the local-level coordination councils are based on a strong understanding of the auxiliary role and the Fundamental Principles.

Investments in National Society Development, programmes and services

In each context, enhancing operational efficiency and effectiveness emerged as a crucial parallel investment for fulfilling the demands of the evolving auxiliary role recognised in the revised RC Law. All three National Societies invested in assessments to map their existing capacities against the auxiliary role, identifying areas for improvement. This suggests a virtuous cycle: a strategic decision to modernise the organisation leads to a need for an updated auxiliary role, and this awareness triggers further development. Alternatively, strong leadership might be the primary driver in initiating systemic changes. Both perspectives highlight the interconnectedness of organisational decisions and their impact on the entire National Society system, emphasising the role of leadership in fostering adaptation.





The case of Argentina

Before drafting the Red Cross law, the National Society conducted an organisational assessment – using the OCAC tool – to identify strengths and areas needing improvement.¹⁶ This assessment included analysing the potential evolution of its humanitarian mandate and pinpointing areas where it might be called on to complement or substitute public services. The National Society determined the legal provisions required to protect the organisation, its people, assets and operations from this analysis. The assessment also underlined the importance of updating the statutes, promoting workplace gender equality, improving internal and external communication, and further developing the branch and volunteer network. Moreover, the leadership recognised that an expanded auxiliary role recognised in law would subject the organisation to greater scrutiny. In response, and as part of its campaign for new legislation, the National Society prioritised improving the effectiveness and efficiency of its services. A key initiative was to bolster the organisation's accountability and transparency, including improving financial reporting capabilities, and community engagement and accountability.

The National Society applied for funding from the IFRC Capacity Building Fund (CBF) to support these efforts.



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The ARCS strategically drew on the CBF to develop the capacity of branches and branch coordinators to ensure they could meet the requirements of the updated auxiliary role. The role of these coordinators was to liaise and make ties with each of the governors and their teams. The government is channelling services and items through the National Society and branches, and it pays for this. So, it's important that branches can meet the expectations of the government at each level.

IFRC Representative

Another significant NSD initiative was the establishment of a humanitarian observatory. This unit serves as a space for research, knowledge and awareness to research humanitarian needs, design socially impactful projects, influence public policy and raise awareness about vulnerability.

The case of Georgia

"Investments in National Society Development are most important. The government must also invest in the National Society. If there are no investments in branches and volunteers, then the GRCS cannot fulfil its auxiliary responsibility, and services cannot improve in scale and quality."

Deputy Secretary General, GRCS

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In 2007, only six branches delivered regular services, and only ten were well positioned as auxiliaries to local authorities. In 2023, all branches delivered at least two regular volunteer-led services and were well positioned in their local area, fulfilling their roles as auxiliaries to the local authorities. This change was made possible through extensive investments in organisational culture, management systems, and branch and volunteering development.

"Before we had war and we were more focused on humanitarian assistance...but then we started the development process, so we started to teach branches not giving fish to communities, but showing communities how to get that fish, how to find those rivers where the fish come from. This was also relevant to branches themselves, we encouraged them to solve their own problems with our support and guidance, they could find better opportunities for themselves."

Branch Development Coordinator, GRCS

"The National Society played an immense role in responding to recent [2023] floods in the mountainous regions of Georgia. The task force was established at national level, and a lot was put on the shoulders of the National Society. Not all the branches are strong, but when it comes to response, the National Society becomes an army [team] of humanitarians. It has thousands of trained volunteers from its 39 branches ready in support."

ICRC Representative in Georgia

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In 2007, all branches were fully dependent on international funding. In 2023, following investments in educating and mentoring branch coordinators, and engaging with local authorities, most branches are receiving resources from municipal authorities and communities.

"At the beginning, branches did not believe that they could attract local resources. Relations with municipalities were like rocket science for them. They could not start raising funds locally. They said, 'We don't know how to do that!' Also, local municipal officials were surprised and curious. 'So, you are the Red Cross, and now you are requesting support from us?' Municipalities saw our role as relief but not long-term social and development activities. For them, it was also strange. We had to work hard to position ourselves through our auxiliary role. Now municipalities that do not have branches initiate discussion with us!"

Branch Development Coordinator, GRCS

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Recognising that it must ensure branches maintain balanced relationships with their public authorities, all branches are trained to communicate GRCS's neutral, impartial and independent status. They are also encouraged to raise resources from other donors so as not to be overly reliant on the resourcing of their local authorities.

A strong volunteer network facilitates the timely and effective delivery of services and plays a vital role in overcoming cultural barriers in remote or ethnic communities. During the pandemic, the Marneuli branch worked with community leaders to translate health promotion messages into local languages and deliver them orally, employing door-to-door outreach and loudspeaker broadcasting.

"We were better able to handle the pandemic thanks to the Red Cross – we were better informed and able to follow the guidelines. Every single child in our village knows what to do to protect themselves from COVID."

Marneuli community leader

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Community members who have consistent contact with GRCS services used the Red Cross as their primary source of information during the pandemic:

"Training sessions [organised by the Red Cross] helped us to distinguish real information or trustworthy information from disinformation."

Service user at Batumi day-care centre for older people

"The biggest enabler for us, especially in the Kvemo Kartli region, was the diabetes project... We have quite a close relationship with local medical staff and with community leaders, especially in Kvemo Kartli, because of the diabetes project, as it was implemented similarly. As I mentioned, this project was very similar to this one [mobile units for COVID], except it was on diabetes. There was a screening car, the same door-to-door approach for community mobilisations, and people had trust in us because of that project."

Headquarter staff member, GRCS

"Raising awareness on the topic of vaccination is not easy in small villages. It is not a one-time thing. It is a long-term process that needs to be addressed slowly and sensitively. We trained kindergarten and school staff on the importance of vaccination with the support of the Ministry of Education. Since we have a lot of volunteers, they go to their communities and raise this awareness."

Zugdidi branch member, GRCS

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Engagement was more challenging in communities unfamiliar with the Red Cross, demonstrating the importance of longer-term investments in building GRCS community foundations so that trusting relationships are already in place when crisis strikes.

"[In small and isolated communities], they would see the Red Cross for the first time, and they were not eager to cooperate. That's why it's crucially important to have inside every single village or community a volunteer or volunteers [from that community] who would spread the word and who would encourage the local population to cooperate with us or other NGOs."

Marneuli branch member, GRCS

The case of Mongolia

Updating the statutes, enhancing corporate governance and organisational realignment, developing and decentralising authority to branches, and maintaining a steadfast focus on addressing vulnerability, have been crucial investments ensuring the discharge of the auxiliary role in Mongolia.

New statutes eliminated government intervention in branch elections, allowing branch leaders to focus on the needs of the most vulnerable households. Since 2016, branch capacities have been regularly mapped through branch organisational capacity assessments (BOCA) and monitoring improvement plans. These initiatives have supported a more balanced relationship with public authorities and organisational alignment to the auxiliary role described in Red Cross Law.

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Significantly, investments directed towards recruiting and developing the skills of branch coordinators (also called secretaries) and their teams have enhanced the ability of branches to fulfil their auxiliary functions. Branch coordinators play a crucial role; their longer tenure ensures they retain valuable knowledge about the branch and community needs, foster relationships with local authorities, and facilitate recruiting new members and training new volunteers.

We have been investing in the skills of mid-level branch secretaries, good, active, hard-working branch secretaries who are transparent with the public. They have good support from the public and local government. But if they are lazy and not so active, community and government support are very limited. We have monitoring indicators for branches, we do an annual audit. If a branch is falling behind we discuss it with them. The change in our statutes means that the Secretary-General approves a mid-level branch secretary, and there is no longer any interference from local government as there was before. So, we can hold branch secretaries accountable. Recently, we let go of a branch secretary who was not acting independently of politics. We also encourage our branches to be financially sustainable, not just relying on government funds but trying to get 50/50 between governing support and public donations.

Secretary General, MRCS

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The capacity of the mid-level branch is assessed every two years and a special plan is developed to address the weaknesses. Special attention has been paid to human resource development, and specialised, step-by-step training and experience-sharing meetings have been organised for mid-level branch managers, staff, volunteers and board members. One of the key indicators for the development of the mid-level branch is transparency and accountability. The more transparent and accountable we are, the more we can gain the support and trust of the government, the public and the people.

PMER Team Leader, MRCS



Outcomes of legal-base strengthening and concurrent investments

Efforts to quantify increased humanitarian reach by the three National Societies were hampered by the lack of a baseline and inconsistencies in data collection and definitions over the past decade. This made it impossible to compare results and assess progress using federation-wide data bank platform data or annual reports. Consequently, this section relies solely on qualitative evidence. For each context, interviewee accounts are presented to portray perceptions of impact.

Outcomes from strengthening the auxiliary role in Argentina

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I've never seen such exponential growth in a National Society. Even if what they achieved is not applicable everywhere, it shows that if there is leadership will, so much is possible.

IFRC Representative

We have a welfare state that intervenes directly in people's lives, health, education and employment, and the civic space is small, and the state makes it small. Our public authorities like to be in the lead, to work with small civil society organisations that do not cast a shadow on the state and do not put into question its ability to protect citizens. So, in this kind of context, the adoption of Red Cross Law is significant. Now, the Red Cross is given a role alongside the government and invited to “mesa operativa” [decision-making tables]. No other non-governmental organisation sits on SINAGIR. Because of our special auxiliary status recognised by law, we now have an official role as interlocutors between the state and other civil society organisations.

ARCS Representative

The investments in developing our management capacities, including administration, human resource management and communication, at national headquarters, coupled with developing the capacities of our technical teams at national and branch levels, have significantly enhanced our ability to respond to government requests for collaboration. Strengthening these capacities has allowed us to respond to needs during emergencies swiftly and to intervene more effectively in longer-term social and health initiatives.

Alejandro Costa, Director Health and Education, ARCS

Our activities vary across different regions of the country, a variation closely linked to the level of public services available. In areas where public social and healthcare services are robust, the Red Cross tends to play a lesser role in service provision. Conversely, in regions with limited public service availability, the Red Cross assumes a more prominent role in meeting the needs of communities. This strategic approach enables the ARCS to cooperate effectively with public authorities, maximising its impact in the areas of the country with the greatest need. For instance, in the northern part of Salta province, home to many indigenous communities, access to public services is limited, particularly in water provision. There, the Red Cross is deeply involved. We set up a permanent camp three years ago and have provided and distributed water to communities, and combined this with health and hygiene promotion, primary care, and community and youth development initiatives.

Alejandro Costa, Director of Health and Education Programmes, ARCS

The private sector viewed the Red Cross as a trusted organisation. They were willing to give their money to the Red Cross. With these [COVID] funds, the Red Cross procured the equipment and supplies and, with the Ministry of Health, distributed them to hospitals. Basically, the Red Cross was a trusted intermediary. It was a virtuous cycle, first the new law, trust in the Red Cross both from the private sector and the government, collaboration and positive action throughout the pandemic, building more trust in the Red Cross.

ARCS representative

The role that the National Society played [during COVID] was incredible. After the planes [that delivered the supplies procured by the ARCS], it was always the Red Cross in the media and the auxiliary role was mentioned every time. The media message was, 'This is not the government; this is the Red Cross in its auxiliary role'.

ARCS representative

The AySA [water and sanitation] programme allows us to reach communities while raising revenue to support other programmes. We are playing the role of independent auditor [of the government]... but we are also changing the traditional role of auditor. We are not only focusing on technical engineering elements, but we are also taking care of social auditing as well, asking questions like, 'Is the programme reaching all the individuals it should? Has there been consultation with affected households? Has the community been engaged?'

ARCS representative

This new position [recognition of the auxiliary role] comes with great challenges. The first is to stay aligned with our Fundamental Principles. For example, first, an embassy asked to meet with us and requested that we speak out against a particular political issue. The ARCS said it could not speak on this issue, and the representatives were very angry with us, but we stood our ground. Secondly, respecting other humanitarian organisations and acknowledging the important role they play; and thirdly, ensuring that we stay focused.

ARCS representative

Sometimes, it can be tricky, but despite our good relationship with our government, it is our mission to highlight humanitarian needs when we discover them.

ARCS representative

We can do anything. In Argentina, where there are so many needs, what is our focus? The government asks us to do everything, but we cannot. A strong strategy is the key, along with the courage to say no. Recently, we were asked if we could design and manage a system for satellite detection of [distress calls from] sports boats. Of course, this would be a good revenue raiser, because the owners of the boats would pay for the service, but it is not aligned with our mission. We declined."

ARCS representative

The impact of our work is the result of our partnership over many years with the provincial authorities and with communities. The nursery was established by mothers from the Quinta Ferré community and families continue to be active participants in the ongoing development and maintenance of the centre. The community is very proud of their centre. Some of our past nursery students even now work at the centre! We make a point of connecting our different activities so as to augment our impact. For example, the women who have set up a sewing business as part of our livelihoods programme are contracted to sew uniforms for our Red Cross Institute students. And our Red Cross Institute students are required to volunteer their time each week to contribute to the community education programme.

President, Corrientes Branch

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Outcomes from strengthening the auxiliary role in Georgia

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Until 2008, the National Society was not as strong as today. There was Red Cross Law, but many branches were not active. At national level, the GRCS did not fully make use of its auxiliary role and did not have a clear approach for relationships with government or a branch development strategy, so the branches did not have the right capacities or know about the auxiliary role and how it could support them to do more.

President GRCS

We are the biggest humanitarian organisation in the country, and we have representation throughout the country. For the state agencies, it is important to have the GRCS on board. We have worked hard to reach this situation [legitimacy] in the country.

GRCS Secretary General

The Georgia Red Cross Society, as an auxiliary organisation to the public authorities of Georgia... actively carries out work and delivers services in the Kakheti region, to support the most vulnerable people in emergencies and beyond. They are our reliable partners, and all the municipalities of the Kakheti region must contribute to this noble cause. I consider it a personal obligation to help the Red Cross... in fulfilling their humanitarian mission. I believe in having a positive impact on the lives of the many people in need through joint efforts. The staff and volunteers, who are directly involved in the delivery of Red Cross services, deserve only praise as they set a good example of civic responsibility to others!

Irakli Shioshvili, First Deputy State Attorney, Governor in the Kakheti Region.

The auxiliary role is so important as it supports us in being a special organisation in Georgia to respond to the needs of those most in need.

GRCS headquarters representative

Waking up in a locked city was the most difficult...but once out on the street supporting the response, I realised that the red vests of the Georgia Red Cross volunteers dissipated the common fear [of the virus].

Volunteer Marneuli Branch

Immediately, the National Society formally advised the government that branches had the capacity to respond [to the pandemic]. The GRCS operated a 24-hour hotline for people stuck at home and asking for support. Phone operators were registering needs, and this information was transferred to the government authorities. I recall one government representative saying, "When we started to cooperate with the GRCS, we did not know what this organisation was about and whether they could support the authorities, and now I regret that I did not know so much about the Red Cross. They did not need to send volunteers from one place to another because they were already present all over the country!". The GRCS was identifying local needs immediately, and responding in the shortest period of time, and passing these on to local and national authorities. I was amazed by the well-coordinated support provided by the GRCS.

ICRC representative in Georgia"

We were better able to handle the pandemic thanks to the Red Cross – we were better informed and able to follow the guidelines. Every single child in our village knows what to do to protect themselves from COVID.

Marneuli community leader

They trust us; as many lost their jobs because of COVID-19 and lost their income, we would provide them with essential services, and we were very important for them to survive, and this would make us, our organisation, more reliable and trustworthy.

Batumi branch volunteer

All municipalities should have good relationships with their local Red Cross branch. When the municipality and Red Cross work together, they can achieve more. When everybody was home, and everybody was locked up during COVID, it was Red Cross volunteers and staff doing the main job.

Giorgi Aslamazishvili, Head, Sports, Youth and Social Activities, Dusheti Local Council

We have 147 volunteers. Since the Gori Branch lost access [to international funding], we have had support from local authorities and raised funds through first aid training. As you know, we have a special [auxiliary] role in emergency response, and this was visible during COVID-19, the Ukraine crisis and flooding disasters. We have responsibilities during disasters. Through our activities, the awareness and acceptance of our role was raised in our communities. They rely more on us than before. This is the main thing that has changed over several years. We have reached more people. In one year during the pandemic, we reached 3,000 people!

Gori Branch Coordinator

There were flash floods causing landslides in June and August, and people always hope that the Red Cross and not just the local government will help them. They know the GRCS will support them. This is good and challenging for the GRCS. Challenging because of the expectations of the public, and we must work hard to be with them [affected communities]. It is the job of the government to respond, but people often look to the Red Cross, perhaps because we are perceived as neutral.

GRCS headquarter staff member

We have a different reality compared to before COVID. Our role is now accepted by communities and authorities... we have a role in the National Council, which was visible during COVID and the Shovi disaster. We are responsible for the coordination of non-state actors, and we advocate on their behalf in the council.

GRCS Secretary General

The National Society played an immense role in responding to recent floods in the mountainous regions of Georgia. The task force was established at national level, and a lot was put on the shoulders of the National Society. Not all the branches are strong, but when it comes to response, the National Society becomes an army of humanitarians. It has thousands of trained volunteers from its 39 branches ready in support.

ICRC Representative in Georgia

A challenge for the National Society is to stay visible outside disaster operations. During peacetime it is less visible, but it does not mean that it is not working hard.

GRCS headquarter staff member

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Outcomes from strengthening the auxiliary role: People reached in Mongolia

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We have been in transition and change for ten years. A strong auxiliary role means good cooperation and understanding between the Red Cross and the government, and a good understanding of vulnerability. The Red Cross is a very professional organisation in disaster management, and we have good, rich experiences in volunteering and community engagement. Sometimes, the government is learning from the Red Cross in these areas.

MRCS Secretary General

A major difference from other organisations is our training for volunteers that strengthens our human resources, and we are able to receive the respect and trust of people and other organisations. Our uniforms also mean we are very visible in communities. During COVID, we disseminated information and delivered relief to vulnerable families.

Mr Ganbold, Dornod Branch Manager, Mongolia Red Cross

At the peak of the pandemic, approximately 100,000 people needed medical care, exceeding health-care capacity. The role of volunteers was crucial during this period. Without volunteers, not only would the hospital have failed to cope with the workload but it also would have faced a human resources shortage. There is no denying that such a shortage would have led to a crisis or human resources shortage that other nations had suffered from. Therefore, the MRCS's contribution was significant.

Representative of the State Emergency Commission

The daily number of confirmed cases of COVID-19 was very high. The fact that the MRCS volunteers provided cooperation during this period when healthcare, human resources and capacity were in a dire situation had been exceptionally positive and effective. It is believed that the human resources problem was resolved.

Representative of the National Centre for Communicable Diseases

The MRCS is well accepted and perceived. The organisation has access throughout the country and a vast network of volunteers. Their COVID-19 operation was proof that their auxiliary role is not only strong according to law, on paper, but is also strong in real operations. We all benefit from the strong auxiliary role and leadership of the National Society.

ICRC Representative

We provide humanitarian assistance to herders. We cooperate with local authorities to select the affected families. We receive lists from local authorities, but we also know the families, so through our herder groups, we consult them, and they help us to double-check who is in need. During summer, herder communities come back to their province, and this is when we can reach them and conduct meetings, discussions and awareness-raising activities. And, at this time, we collect the data from herder families.

Dr. Tungalag, Orkhon Branch Manager, MRCS

A few years back, we decided to improve our crisis management. We work closely with the IFRC and have strongly prepared disaster-management activities in the country. We also needed to learn crisis management during armed conflict. We invited the ICRC and organised many workshops and training sessions. If we face an election crisis, how can the Red Cross manage? We prepared National Disaster Response Teams, and they trained on first aid and psychosocial support. Every four years before the parliamentary election, I invite the ICRC to organise this crisis management training.

Secretary General, MRCS

We are trusted because we have been supporting the community for a long time. Our challenges are mostly financial and human resources. This is a common challenge for all branches. In July [2023], the average salary of the government increased by ten per cent, higher than that of the Red Cross, so it is difficult to be competitive. We try to increase salaries year by year, but this increases the social insurance tax. This increases personal income tax.

Mr Batzorig, Gobi Altai Branch Coordinator, MRCS

The Dornod Branch has been operating since 1967. We have 12,500 members. Every adult in the province knows about the Red Cross through their children because we have a very active youth group. Recently, our province was affected by dzuds, wildfires and sandstorms. We visited 31 families yesterday who were provided gher. We checked if received gher and cash assistance and resources for their cattle, and asked how this had supported them. We have reserves in case of disaster for 100 herder families. We provide quarterly and annual reports to the press and the government.

Mr Ganbold, Dornod Branch Manager, MRCS



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The Movement's collaborative support to strengthen the auxiliary role

At the heart of the Movement lies the powerful idea that collaboration increases humanitarian impact. One of the conditions for recognition of a National Society is that it “shares in the fellowship which unites the components of the Movement and cooperates with them.”¹⁷

A network of Red Cross Red Crescent organisations shares a common mission, legal base, principles, and agreed roles, leverages, shared risk, resources, knowledge, advocacy and innovation. However, working in such a network also presents challenges, such as reaching a consensus on the value of specific initiatives and how they should be managed, the loss of autonomy, navigating cultural differences and communication barriers, and managing power imbalances, to name just a few. Ultimately, the question is: do the tangible benefits of collaboration between Movement actors outweigh the inherent challenges of working in a complex network? This study also aims to contribute to this ongoing discussion.

Whenever needed, a National Society can reach out to the global Red Cross and Red Crescent network for knowledge, as well as financial and technical assistance to strengthen its auxiliary role. All case studies emphasised the importance of tapping into support from partners within the Movement. Moreover, the National Societies were not just recipients of support; they also actively contributed by aiding sister National Societies within their regions and beyond. This assistance included sharing insights on the auxiliary role and offering peer-to-peer capacity strengthening and in-kind support, enabling other National Societies to perform their auxiliary functions more effectively.

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Movement partners teach us, and we pass on that knowledge to branches. We always say we are open to learn. We are learning by doing. This is a true statement! I am learning together with you by doing and asking those with more experience to share their knowledge, then you have success.

Staff member,
headquarters, GRCS

Key informants reported no significant issues with coordinating support from the Movement to strengthen the auxiliary role as it pertains to legal base revisions, humanitarian diplomacy and public communications. This area of NSD is not a traditional one of interest for donors, leading to fewer competing efforts. The flip side of this situation is the limited resourcing available for auxiliary role-strengthening initiatives.

IFRC and ICRC legal experts support National Societies in strengthening their legal base, including statutes, also called constitutions, and Red Cross and Red Crescent laws and sectoral laws. The IFRC ICRC Joint Statutes Commission reviews and provides recommendations on strengthening Red Cross Red Crescent statutes and laws. Thus, together with ICRC's expertise in IHL, the Movement offers comprehensive support to National Societies seeking to enhance their auxiliary role and recognition by authorities. The clarity of roles between the IFRC and ICRC in this domain fosters complementarity and coherence.

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Secretary
General, MRCS

Now, Mongolia is very peaceful... But in 2008, after the parliamentary election, there were big demonstrations... five people died, and many people were injured... The Red Cross played no role in the response. A few years back, we decided to improve our crisis management. We work closely with the IFRC and have strongly prepared disaster-management activities in the country. We also needed to learn crisis management during armed conflict. We invited the ICRC and organised many workshops. If we face an election crisis, how can the Red Cross manage? We prepared National Disaster Response Teams, and they trained on first aid and psychosocial support. Every four years before the parliamentary election, I invite the ICRC to organise this crisis management training.

In the legal arena, the support provided to strengthen the auxiliary role, as evidenced across the case studies, both at the global and local level, encompassed:

- Facilitating exchanges between states, National Societies, the IFRC and ICRC at the International Conference to support understanding of the auxiliary role. This space also provided a structured environment for dialogue, learning and adopting resolutions on strengthening the auxiliary role;
- The IFRC and ICRC developing and disseminating policies, guidelines and standards on the auxiliary role and related issues (e.g. [the Model RC Law](#), [Emblem guidelines](#), [Guide to Strengthening the Auxiliary Role through Law and Policy](#), [Legislative Advocacy Toolkit](#), [Model Pre-disaster Agreement](#), [Safer Access Framework](#), [Humanitarian Diplomacy guide](#), [Guide for Parliamentarians](#));
- The Joint Statutes Commission (the ICRC and IFRC) delivering global guidance in culturally appropriate ways and adapted to local contexts;
- Tailored assistance from the IFRC in analysing and revising legal frameworks;
- Collaborative efforts between the IFRC, ICRC and sister National Societies to support legislative advocacy. This included instances where IFRC representatives addressed Parliament to explain the auxiliary role, the Secretary-General of the Fiji Red Cross travelling to Mongolia to share his experiences with legislative advocacy, and the ICRC and IFRC aiding all three organisations in gaining a deeper understanding of the opportunities and boundaries of their auxiliary roles.

In the realm of building and maintaining relationships, the support provided included assistance from:

- The ICRC in forming IHL committees and engaging in military exercises;
- The IFRC, ICRC, and Sister National Societies in carrying out humanitarian diplomacy;
- The IFRC, ICRC and sister National Societies advising on establishing and maintaining balanced relationships with public authorities at all levels.

Best practice in strengthening the auxiliary role

Generally, best practice begins with the National Society maximising the advantages stemming from its recognised auxiliary role and fulfilling its existing obligations, as defined by law or other formal instruments. To identify gaps between the current role and the needs of those they serve, National Societies can conduct organisational capacity assessments (OCAC and BOCA) that evaluate their capabilities in fulfilling the auxiliary role. Should these assessments reveal an insufficient or misaligned auxiliary role, it becomes imperative for the organisation to strengthen its auxiliary position. Typically, this entails a comprehensive approach involving legal amendments, the fostering of stronger and more balanced relationships with public authorities, and operational improvements.



© Mongolian Red Cross Society

Legislative advocacy

From a legislative advocacy perspective, the best practices derived from the case studies highlight the importance of:

- ❑ Developing an advocacy and diplomacy strategy that drives systematic engagement with decision-makers and other opinion leaders, including non-state authorities, and fosters an understanding of the Movement's role and priorities;¹⁸

- ❑ Lobbying for enhanced legal provisions. Actively advocating for the enactment or amendment of RC and Emblem Laws to introduce or reinforce legal facilities that support the National Society's work. This includes presenting the practical challenges faced during humanitarian work planning and implementation. Highlighting how legal and policy frameworks can address these challenges strengthens the advocacy message;¹⁹

- ❑ Engaging all sections of the National Societies. Advocacy and diplomacy efforts should mobilise all segments of the National Society, starting from the top leadership and extending to include staff and volunteers. This approach delivers a unified and more powerful advocacy message that leverages the organisation's national reach;

- ❑ Positioning the National Society as a key player in a worldwide humanitarian network and referring to the international instruments that support the auxiliary role, such as the Geneva Conventions and Resolutions from the International Conference;

- ❑ Broad legislative outreach. Effective advocacy entails reaching out to legislators from all political parties to communicate the National Society's mandate and services, thereby garnering support for the proposed legal reforms. Forming advisory working groups that involve legislators from various political parties can enhance the effectiveness of legislative advocacy efforts;

- ❑ Using strategic communications. Employing targeted communication strategies and engaging well-known 'ambassadors' from diverse backgrounds to inform and rally public support helps to shape public opinion and persuade legislators and policymakers to endorse the proposed legal changes;

- ❑ Engaging IFRC and ICRC. Capitalising on the established reputation and specialised knowledge of the IFRC and ICRC strengthens the advocacy campaign, lending it additional legitimacy and influence. Furthermore, drawing from the various policies and guidelines developed by Movement actors can also support legislative advocacy efforts;²⁰

- ❑ Drawing on the experiences and expertise of other National Societies – by exploring how they have undertaken legislative advocacy, understanding the challenges they faced and assimilating their lessons learned.

- ❑ Leadership perseverance. This ensures that the advocacy effort continues despite setbacks, opposition or slow progress, increasing the chances of achieving the desired outcome. Moreover, persistent leaders are better positioned to adapt their advocacy and diplomacy strategies to new circumstances, ensuring their advocacy remains relevant and effective.

Legal frameworks

From a legal perspective, the key lessons from the case studies emphasise:

- Formalising the auxiliary role through RC Law and in sectoral instruments. RC Law is the principal instrument where the auxiliary role and mandate of the National Society should be explicitly provided for. However, it is not the sole instrument. The auxiliary role can also be recognised in sectoral instruments, such as laws, regulations, policies and plans related to disaster-risk management, health, migration and social welfare. Occasionally, auxiliary benefits (e.g. fiscal concessions and faster visa processing for international emergency response personnel) are provided through letters from the authorities that National Societies must present each time they seek a concession. This practice highlights the need for a more consistent and legally recognised framework;

- Exploring the likely evolution of the humanitarian mandate: Analysing how the National Society's mandate may evolve and identifying potential areas where it could play a complementary or substitutive role in delivering public services. Given the significant resources and effort required to revise and update laws, legal modifications must be designed to address current needs, and anticipate and accommodate future requirements to protect the organisation's personnel, assets and operations;

- Mapping how a National Society's auxiliary role is reflected in domestic laws, policies, plans and agreements, identifying strengths, inconsistencies and gaps to inform the legal analysis and advocacy efforts;

- Benchmarking legal frameworks. Comparing RC laws and regulations in other countries with those currently governing the National Society. This benchmarking can reveal gaps and opportunities for legal improvements. The IFRC [Guide to Strengthening the Auxiliary Role through Law and Policy](#) provides practical guidance to National Societies about strengthening their auxiliary role through domestic law, policies, plans and agreements, and practical examples from a collection of 30 country-level auxiliary role mappings;

- Fully utilising existing legal facilities: Ensuring the National Society fully leverages all available legal mechanisms to maximise operational and financial benefits. This involves thoroughly assessing existing legal provisions and how they can be utilised to support the organisation's activities;

- Using IFRC and ICRC guidelines developed to support drafting and revising laws, policies and plans related to the auxiliary role;²¹

- A strong and well recognised auxiliary role opens the door to legislative advocacy for other key instruments, such as the implementation of IHL and strengthening legal frameworks for disaster-risk management.

Partnership practices

From a relationship perspective, the best practices derived from the case studies highlight the importance of:

- ❑ Establishing a cooperative, trust-based and balanced auxiliary relationship. Public authorities should see the National Society as a dependable partner that adheres to the Fundamental Principles and that the observance of these principles facilitates access to affected populations;

- ❑ Building trust with public authorities requires leadership commitment and continued humanitarian diplomacy. Developing, nurturing and maintaining the auxiliary relationship takes considerable expertise, time and resources. A coordinated approach between headquarters and branches ensures consistency and leverages synergies in maintaining strong and balanced auxiliary relationships at all levels;

- ❑ Keeping the auxiliary role dynamic and responsive to changing needs through ongoing dialogue with public authorities. This regular communication helps clarify misunderstandings and ensures the partnership meets the expected levels of accountability and transparency;

- ❑ Securing a place in government committees to facilitate consistent interaction with public authorities. Contributing to high-level decision-making and planning ensures that the needs at community level are considered in government decisions;

- ❑ Communicating and engaging during peacetime. National Societies play a critical role in resilience building and disaster-risk reduction. However, these programmes often receive less immediate attention than crisis operations. Enhancing recognition and financial backing for these essential yet less visible activities requires strong engagement with authorities and other potential donors;

- ❑ Employees and volunteers proficient in relationship management and diplomatic engagement and well-versed in the auxiliary role, the Fundamental Principles, and other National Society and wider Movement policies and advocacy positions. This necessitates sustained investment in people, systems and processes.

Operations

From an operational standpoint, the case studies underline the significance of:

- Legal facilities. The legal rights and exemptions provided to National Societies establish an enabling legal environment that allows them to implement their humanitarian operations effectively;

- Operational performance. Effectively supplementing or substituting development and emergency activities builds trust in the National Society's capacity to fulfil its auxiliary functions. This trust creates a positive feedback loop, increasing support for the National Society's auxiliary role;

- Ongoing investment in NSD. As the visibility of a National Society and its work increases, so will the expectations of authorities and the public for the organisation to respond promptly. Therefore, maintaining the organisation's ability to perform requires continuous investment in its people, structures, systems and processes;

- Managing expectations. Acknowledging that greater legitimacy and credibility may lead to higher expectations, including requests for support from public authorities to activities beyond the auxiliary role and taking a public stand on high-profile issues. Adherence to the Fundamental Principles and the protection offered by RC Law enables a National Society to stay focused and effective, offering support when this aligns with its auxiliary role, and commenting on humanitarian issues when it is needed and appropriate;

- Acting in accordance with the Fundamental Principles (Humanitarian right of initiative). There may be situations where public authorities are reluctant to acknowledge the responsibility to meet the specific humanitarian needs of certain groups. This reluctance could also extend to recognising the rights of specific groups. In these circumstances, National Societies must still endeavour to meet humanitarian needs and act in accordance with their humanitarian mandate, even if it falls outside the auxiliary role as understood by public authorities.



STRENGTHENING THE AUXILIARY ROLE **IN THE CONTEXT OF ARMED CONFLICT**

Securing and sustaining humanitarian access in armed conflict is a persistent challenge. While many organisations face significant hurdles in reaching those in need in conflict contexts, Red Cross and Red Crescent National Societies often successfully negotiate access due to their auxiliary status and their capacity to adapt their auxiliary role to the dynamics of conflict. This success stems from their strong and balanced partnership with public authorities, autonomy of action and decision-making, long-term community-based presence, and their neutral and impartial humanitarian services. As conflict dynamics evolve, adapting and strengthening the auxiliary role is critical to maintaining this vital access. This section will explore specific strategies three National Societies have employed to adapt, strengthen and operationalize their auxiliary role in conflict situations, showcasing their impact on affected populations. The data for this section of the report was sourced from studies undertaken as part of other research projects in Afghanistan, Somalia and Ukraine.²²



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Introduction to the Contexts and National Societies

Since the 1970s, Afghanistan has experienced severe civil war with various groups battling for control. Widespread conflict has devastated the lives of Afghans across all 34 provinces, with civilian casualties, internal displacement, and limited access to medical care and other essential services, leaving entire communities caught between warring parties. In this complex and challenging environment, the Afghan Red Crescent Society (ARCS) has established itself as a humanitarian actor with a strong grassroots presence. Two key strategies have allowed the organisation to strengthen and operationalise its auxiliary role across most areas of the country: regularly assessing the external environment and associated risks, and engaging in dialogue with leaders from all parties to the conflict and communities to communicate ARCS's mandate and activities, to ensure these are understood, accepted and supported. Between 2016 and 2021, ARCS reached more than 20 million people through its health programmes alone.

Somalia's history is also marked by conflict and instability. In 1991, Somalia descended into civil war. Numerous groups fought for control, leading to widespread violence. Amid these challenges, the Somali Red Crescent Society (SRCS) has emerged as the only remaining national institution and a highly valued humanitarian actor across the fractured territories.



Investments in strengthening and operationalising the auxiliary role have allowed the SRCS to continue serving vulnerable communities across territories governed by different authorities. In 2022, the SRCS reached more than six million people through healthcare, disaster response, restoring family links and Red Crescent messages.

Since February 2022, there has been a large-scale escalation in the conflict between Russia and Ukraine with grave humanitarian consequences. The Ukraine Red Cross Society (URCS) has faced many challenges throughout this period. The rapid escalation of hostilities, coupled with mass displacement, has stretched the organisation's resources and demanded significant adaptation. Despite these difficulties, the URCS has demonstrated remarkable resilience. The URCS has strived to maintain trust and credibility by strengthening its auxiliary role, including legal and internal reforms, and through a commitment to neutral impartial, and independent action. These investments have increased the organisation's proximity to communities, visibility, integrity and overall standing, giving the National Society unique access and acceptance to people in need. In 2023, the URCS reached more than six million people with food and non-food relief items, cash assistance, emergency services, restoring family links and sharing Red Cross messages.

Strategies for strengthening the auxiliary role in armed conflict settings

While core activities for strengthening the auxiliary role – humanitarian diplomacy, partnerships with public authorities, communications, promoting the Fundamental Principles and IHL, governance and leadership development, and investments in branches, volunteers and services – sound similar to peacetime efforts, their implementation in armed conflict settings differs dramatically. These settings are highly politicised environments where emotions run high, and anyone attempting to assist all sides of the conflict is met with suspicion or hostility.

The presence of gatekeepers, including armed actors, plays a significant role. Their motivations and methods of fighting heavily influence the overall operational environment. This, in turn, shapes who the most vulnerable populations are, their specific needs, and how a National Society can most effectively fulfil its auxiliary role. Thus, the sensitive and insecure nature of conflict environments demands significant adjustments to established National Society preparedness and operational procedures, leading to changes in how the auxiliary role is operationalised.

Strong and principled leadership

National Society leaders play a critical role in conflict-affected settings. The case studies demonstrate that leaders serve as a bridge between the auxiliary role established in law and the National Society's actions on the ground, between the needs of the people caught in the conflict and the resources available to provide relief. Ideally, RCRC leaders should receive training on conflict analysis, safe access, humanitarian diplomacy and negotiation skills before a conflict erupts. This training equips them to understand the context, potential risks and appropriate auxiliary responses.

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Yusuf Hassan,
President of the SRCS

We have managed to maintain an auxiliary role with political stakeholders. Our stance has always been that after dissemination, if you work with the SRCS you have to be free from partiality, and be neutral and independent in everything you do.

Situations may arise where no prior training has been provided. In such cases, National Society leaders require immediate support through accompaniment and mentoring from experienced elders within the National Society and/or the ICRC, IFRC and sister National Societies. When leaders join the National Society during a conflict, at any level, immediate accompaniment and mentoring from more experienced individuals enable new or unprepared leaders to develop the skills to navigate complex situations while maintaining neutrality and impartiality.

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Ms Liliia Bilous,
URCS Ex-Director
General 2017–2020

Using the Fundamental Principles of neutrality and impartiality in fragile and conflict-sensitive situations requires diplomatic skills of the highest order. We needed to... nurture new leaders and help them gain skills on 'How to behave impartially', not just on 'Being impartial'. We needed training across the whole leadership. Although we had created our first-ever induction for volunteers in 2015, it only included one slide to unpack 'Neutrality'. We needed a deeper way to have a positive influence on impartial behaviour in volunteers and staff.

Standardised training and protocols for all

Training on the fundamentals (the Movement, the Fundamental Principles, the Emblem, the auxiliary role, IHL and safe access) reinforces a consistent set of attitudes and behaviour, maintaining the trust and acceptance of the National Society among communities and various authorities. The case studies highlight the importance of all individuals connected to the National Society putting aside their political views and other personal beliefs to act neutrally and impartially, gain acceptance and access, and ensure their own safety. While such training is crucial during peacetime to build a foundation of trust and competence, it becomes even more critical during conflict to ensure the safety of those providing assistance and to navigate the increased complexities. A key area of training is in negotiations and how to remind parties of their obligations under IHL regarding the remains of those killed in the conflict, ensuring families have the right to know the fate of loved ones.

Following the significant escalation of violence in 2014, the URCS Branch Communications Kit was expanded to include materials that explained the organisation's auxiliary status and role, the Fundamental Principles and the correct use of the Emblem. The URCS found that this clarity was crucial for stronger public positioning and when negotiating with public authorities.

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Branch
Coordinator, URCS

While the country engaged in a hot political debate about the future, the country and which direction it had to go, branches had to remain very neutral. To convince the public and all stakeholders of our neutrality and impartiality we could not use the Ukrainian flag or make political comments on social media. This was because some branches were visiting many internally displaced persons (IDPs) who would not have trusted us if they saw Ukrainian symbols.



Ukrainian Red Cross Society
© Bernard van Dierendonck / Swiss Red Cross

Similarly, through standardised training and protocols, the SRCS and ARCS have built trust and working relationships with influential groups and carved out a reputation for neutrality, impartiality and independence.

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Director of SRCS
Rehabilitation Centre

We give impartial services and don't ask people to identify themselves. In our outreach work to improve accessibility in new areas, we train branch volunteers to teach them to describe the Fundamental Principles and rehabilitation services. They can then refer people from affected areas to rehabilitation centres, offering free transport to the poorest.

“

Branch Coordinator

One of our SRCS hospitals has been taken over many times by opposing armed groups, but it has never been looted. Each party to the conflict just changed the flags and the uniforms of the security guards, and sometimes even brought fuel to enable the hospital services to keep serving people. We have had no targeted incidents against the SRCS because of our investments in dissemination. We have given communities tangible assets which they can touch.

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ARCS HQ Manager

Since the change of government in August 2021 and the change in leadership levels across the ARCS, many new leaders didn't know of the Fundamental Principles or SAF. We launched an immediate orientation of the ARCS, its Fundamental Principles and mandates, followed by refresher courses of SAF training sessions at all levels. During the change of government in August 2021... all ARCS staff, volunteers and assets were saved and not affected. A very few ARCS clinics were found not to be displaying the ARCS logo and 'No weapons' signs prominently. We addressed these during the implementation of our refreshed checklists. The strengthened culture of security and safety among the staff and volunteers throughout the ARCS led to a dramatic decrease of incidents

In all three case contexts, prioritising training in the ICRC's Safer Access Framework has been pivotal. This comprehensive training, which encompasses safety and security, context and risk assessment, effective communication and maintaining visibility, has been instrumental in equipping National Societies with the skills and knowledge needed to navigate and operate effectively in armed conflict environments.

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SRCS branch leader

With SAF training we have been able to work in very difficult areas, even where our movement is very restricted. Whereas the other actors can only work in towns, we have contact with different ideological groups in other areas with different administrations, policies, rules and regulations, all of which we can navigate





Investing in strong and balanced partnerships and making context-sensitive adjustments

Long-term investment in developing partnerships with public authorities and non-state actors builds trust and enables robust discussions and greater humanitarian access. However, the studies highlight that the fast-paced nature of some conflicts can limit opportunities for long-term partnership building. Non-state actors may form short-term allegiances that can shift quickly, and leadership within these groups can be fluid. Therefore, National Societies must do both: work on longer-term partnerships where possible, and be able to establish communication and working relationships with new leaders quickly.

“

SRCS Deputy
Executive Director

We had pressure from government not to help in areas controlled by other non-state armed actors, but we explained IHL and that our primary mandate is to help mothers and children displaced by conflicts, or in situations affected by drought and floods. SRCS's senior leadership continued to hold meetings with senior government officials and other humanitarian actors to educate them on a 'do no harm' approach and respect for the community. Then they gave us permission. Even in a recent example of fighting which erupted in 2023, the SRCS still was able to provide ambulance services to both sides, and offer protection and the exchange of dead bodies.

In response to the escalation of the conflict in 2022, the URCS strengthened its partnership arrangements with public authorities to improve information sharing and coordination, and develop greater capacities to fulfil its auxiliary role in the face of large-scale needs. At the same time, the National Society sought to ensure its independence from public authorities.

“

National Committee
Senior Manager

We need to reassess our locations and choose the right place to support people affected by war. So, we are developing a map of stakeholder services and shared roles. The national authorities are looking to the URCS as a strong partner... They ask us for information, support and auxiliary role-partnering opportunities to find new innovative approaches to supporting the most vulnerable... We don't aim to duplicate government services, but instead choose the right place to help government find a model for sustainable services... we cannot be a service provider for everyone everywhere and that is where we help government to change its systems to take over where the general population is concerned, while the URCS targets the most vulnerable and those who are still to isolated to benefit from other services.

“

National Committee
Senior Manager, URCS

We realised that with changing government medical and social-care systems, it is better to be independent if we wanted to advocate for people who are denied access to different parts of the government system.

Through advocacy, the ARCS secured its independence from the government's financial structures, ensuring it remains a trusted humanitarian actor. Despite this financial independence, the ARCS collaborates with various ministries to deliver vital services in areas affected by deep conflict and other hard-to-reach areas. The ARCS also works with other actors to avoid duplicating existing services, and focuses on filling critical gaps and reaching underserved communities.

”

Our strong auxiliary role, further clarified in our revised ARCS Law of 2016, resulted in successive governments issuing instructions... to respect the ARCS mandate and expedite whatever official work and support it needed for customs, airports, Ministry of Interior permissions etc. Our foreign-funding sources have never been challenged by parties to the conflict either... On another occasion a past acting president was passing through an active battle between Taliban and government forces, and at the request of a local branch to the commanders of both parties, the conflict stopped to let him pass, and then carried on afterwards.

ARCS HQ
Senior Director

However, the National Society takes a strong stance when collaboration with others may be perceived as partial.

”

Some armed forces had their own humanitarian work, with units like the provincial reconstruction teams. They were mending and building roads, building bridges, building wells. They were refurbishing clinics, hospitals and schools, or even building them from scratch... But they possibly also engaged in military operations... Because of our volunteers, who come from every village, every province, every district, we could reach the remote areas. Often, the military took it for granted that we should help them distribute food, medicine or whatever they had. It was hard for them to understand that we cannot do so. We have to maintain our neutrality.

Ms Fatima Gailani,
President of the ARCS
2004–2016

Legal base updates, adapting structures and increasing capacity

To fulfil their auxiliary role when armed conflict escalates, National Societies often need to adapt and strengthen structures and expand activities. An up-to-date legal base and investments in new governance, public communications and operational capacities can facilitate this.

Although challenging, legal-base revisions in conflict settings are achievable; they require a sensitive approach due to the potentially volatile environment. Nonetheless, at the height of armed conflict and in certain contexts, advocating for changes to legislation and statutes often takes a backseat to immediate humanitarian needs. In such cases, National Societies rely on humanitarian diplomacy and negotiations to influence key actors who have the power to provide rights and exemptions, resources and safe access.

To effectively navigate conflict environments, National Societies must also adapt their internal structures and decision-making processes. This can mean centralising some processes, such as public communications, because disjointed messaging can lead to unfairness, partiality and compromised access and safety. It can simultaneously involve decentralisation, empowering branches and volunteers to adapt their work to the local dynamics of the conflict. Sometimes, modifying recruitment is important to ensure balanced community representation within governance and management bodies. This inclusivity embodies the Fundamental

Principle of Unity, fostering trust and strengthening the legitimacy of the National Society, especially in politically divided territories.

When the ARCS faced government interference, it reformed its membership system, focusing on neutrality, impartiality and diverse representation. This led to a complete overhaul of provincial governance. These changes increased local participation, accountability, independence and gender inclusion. An updated Red Crescent Law (2016) followed by revised internal statutes reflecting changes to the law, allowed the ARCS to deliver evolving services through decentralised and empowered structures.

Since 2022, the URCS has had to scale up all its systems, operations and the capacities of its branch network to fulfil its auxiliary role and respond to the loss of life, livelihoods, well-being and displacement of millions of people.

“

Head of a
regional branch

We scaled up our efforts massively... We developed home-based care services for... vulnerable elderly and disabled beneficiaries... Our local branches coordinate with local authorities to prioritise those needing the most assistance, and sending our Mobile Health Teams to areas with no other health services.

Establishing and developing a unitary governance system has nurtured SRCS's acceptance and access, enabling the organisation to operate under various public authorities, from federal government areas to autonomous regions like Somaliland and Puntland. A recent regulation restricting organisations from working in areas controlled by non-state armed groups was overcome due to SRCS's reputation. Having been an SRCS volunteer, the president of the government understood SRCS's neutrality and gave the SRCS permission to assist people in both government and non-state-controlled areas. Strategic investments in NSD have built a unified countrywide network of branches with balanced representation and relationships across political and confessional allegiances. Governance bodies set policies and strategies applicable to all branches, regardless of the local authority in control. Coordination offices in Mogadishu, Nairobi and Hargeisa support this unified approach.

Building trust, resilience, social inclusion and peace through locally led auxiliary services

The case studies highlight that supporting community-driven solutions reduces tension and promotes resilience, social inclusion and peace. Volunteers recruited and trained from conflict-affected communities, who are empowered to design and deliver auxiliary services, foster trust and acceptance.

SRCS exemplifies this approach. It has a territory-wide network of 5,000-plus registered, insured community-based volunteers. These volunteers act as ambassadors promoting SRCS's mandate and Fundamental Principles throughout the divided territories.

“

Branch coordinator

We are a community-based organisation. Before we implement a programme in a community we have volunteers based in that community. I don't know of any community without a volunteer. Volunteers therefore already know all the people and issues in their communities. We have also had health services in communities for over 30 years. I stopped for a cup of tea in a village, and seeing the vehicle and logo so many people came looking for medical help. The Red Crescent and health are seen as one in the community!



In Afghanistan, the ARCS established Grandmothers' Committees and Community Health Committees to serve a dual purpose: promoting health and disseminating information about the Fundamental Principles, the Emblem and ARCS's mandate while creating safe spaces for women's voices. With the help of these committees, ARCS's community-based first aid, health promotion and surveillance activities now reach 15,000 villages across all 302 districts in Afghanistan. Similarly, the URCS is evolving beyond disaster response, empowering communities to design and lead their own humanitarian services.

Beyond volunteers, capital investment is also vital for ensuring National Societies can supplement and sometimes substitute for health services. This is particularly critical in areas where public authorities struggle to reach those urgently needing medical assistance. With Movement support, the ARCS has constructed health clinics in remote and hard-to-reach areas. It has also trained mobile health and disaster response teams to reach people no other institutions can reach. The ARCS works collaboratively with the Ministry of Health, expanding and supplementing their immunisation and epidemic-control services. In Somalia, Community Health Committees and primary health clinics serve all territories, fostering access, acceptance and a platform for humanitarian diplomacy. SRCS's community health infrastructure, which substitutes for public services in remote and contested areas, has earned immense trust. Communities have donated buildings and provided security, while the SRCS contributes medicine and salaries for local staff.

”

Three months ago, our branch received information about the arrival of IDPs as a result of volunteer reports. The branch coordinator immediately sent a report to the Coordination Office who convened a Movement partner meeting the next day. Funds were provided to assist them, and SRCS's RFL Officer facilitated free phone calls for the IDPs. A plan of action was drafted and agreed within a week and assistance given, impressing other humanitarian actors in the area. Before we had strengthened our structures, previously this assessment, reporting, financial management and assistance process would have taken at least three months!

Branch leaders

”

URCS's conscious investments in strengthening its auxiliary services have increased trust and its proximity, visibility and reputation. In the first days of the war our Emblem was considered a sign of protection... We could build on our good relations in communities and on the capacities we had strengthened over the years. As a result, many people came to support us. In 2023 we could grow to have more than 200 branches, 1,500 staff and over 8,000 registered and trained volunteers, with many other spontaneous volunteers. In the first day of war, 50,000 people nationally asked for arms to protect the city, but in parallel lots of people came to us to offer humanitarian assistance as an alternative. They helped to distribute humanitarian assistance in railway stations, transport hubs, and collection and distribution sites. By the end of 2023, we had directly assisted more than 12 million people... We felt the unity of support everywhere as a result of the trust we had built in communities for many years before that.

Dr Mykola Polishchuk,
President of the URCS

Diversifying the revenue base

The case studies highlight that in conflict settings, National Societies also strive to diversify their revenue streams because it strengthens their capacity to fulfil their auxiliary role.²³ This diversification makes them less vulnerable to fluctuations or withdrawal of support from any single funding source and reduces the impact of imposed priorities or conditions. It also alleviates pressure to align activities and policies, which could potentially compromise the organisation's neutrality and impartiality. Demonstrating financial independence and a wide

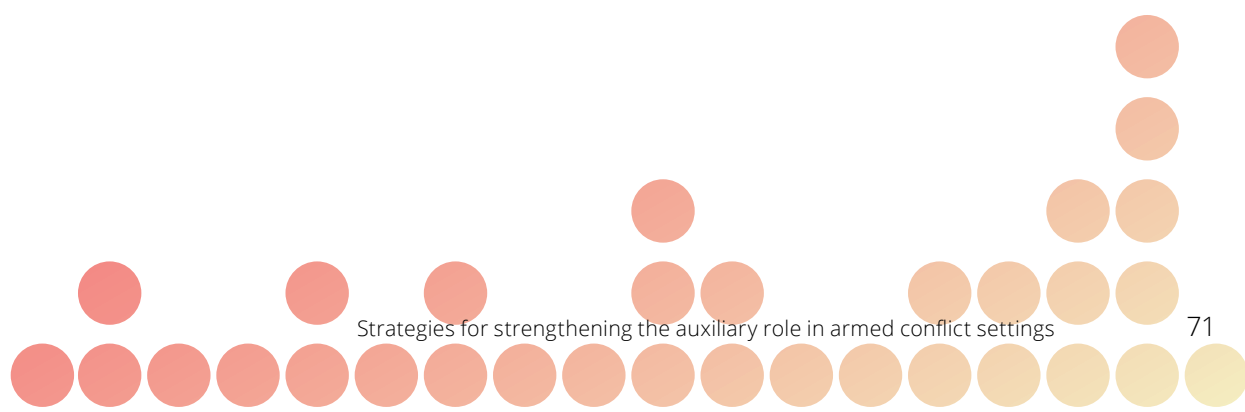


support base enhances National Societies' reputation and public support. With various funding sources, National Societies also have greater flexibility to innovate and adapt auxiliary services based on needs rather than funder restrictions.

Coordinated Movement support

Supported financially and technically by the ICRC, IFRC and sister National Societies, all three National Societies benefitted from the Movement's consistent and flexible long-term accompaniment, which increased their ability to fulfil their auxiliary role. Movement support to the National Societies included legal base revisions, legislative advocacy, humanitarian diplomacy, public communications, partnership development and leadership mentoring. The case studies highlight important lessons about coordinating and harmonising Movement input. These lessons are not unique to strengthening the auxiliary role or conflict settings:

- Backed by Movement resourcing and expertise, National Societies can supplement or substitute for the services of public authorities in complex humanitarian settings more rapidly;
- A countrywide focus and a single comprehensive plan incorporating all Movement support ensure that resources are allocated efficiently and equitably, preventing additional tension that could arise from some communities receiving more support than others;
- Activities should always be promoted publicly as the National Society's programmes, helping to maintain the organisation's image as local, neutral, impartial and independent;
- Coordination mechanisms are essential for effective information and resource sharing, and positioning and messaging on humanitarian needs and the auxiliary role. They also ensure that Movement-supported auxiliary activities are effectively linked to public services to reduce inefficiency and promote coherence;
- When Movement actors come to assist in a conflict operation, they should leverage the full capacity of the National Society before offering or imposing their own resources;
- Sensitive accompaniment that skilfully adapts global standards to each context supports the strengthening of the auxiliary role in locally appropriate ways;
- Streamlining processes, reducing redundancy and ensuring a standardised approach to capacity building and consistency across territories. For example, combining IFRC's Branch Organisational Capacity Assessment (BOCA) and ICRC's Safer Access Framework (SAF) into a single comprehensive tool to support branch development and enhance operational capacities to deliver auxiliary services;
- Applying common technical standards, whether for core activities that strengthen the auxiliary role or for associated activities such as community-based health or approaches to delivering programmes like Community Engagement and Accountability, Protection, Gender and Inclusion, ultimately increases the quality and impact of auxiliary services.





Lessons from conflict-affected contexts

The main lessons arising from efforts to strengthen the auxiliary role in the contexts of Afghanistan, Somalia and Ukraine can be presented as follows:

- ☐ A leadership team committed to neutrality, impartiality, independence and unity is essential for strengthening, adapting and operationalising the auxiliary role in conflict-affected environments;
- ☐ Training in the Fundamental Principles reinforces a consistent set of attitudes and behaviour, maintaining the trust and acceptance of the National Society among communities and various authorities;
- ☐ Long-term investment in developing partnerships with public authorities and non-state actors fosters greater humanitarian access. In fast-changing contexts, National Societies must also be able to establish working relationships with new leaders;
- ☐ Red Cross or Red Crescent Laws, even when they are dated, provide a basis for operations across divided territories;
- ☐ A centralised governance structure, with representatives from all territorial divisions and clans, supports a unified National Society in deeply divided contexts.
- ☐ Developing and sustaining branch and volunteer networks with similar capacities, and applying consistent protocols in delivering the auxiliary role across divided territories, strengthens acceptance and access;
- ☐ Maintaining contact with all groups through active dialogue and public communications is crucial. Trained local volunteers and national spokespersons can deliver important communication through locally relevant channels;
- ☐ Recruiting and training volunteers from conflict-affected communities, who are empowered to design and deliver auxiliary services, foster trust and acceptance;
- ☐ Diversifying revenue streams strengthens National Societies' capacity to fulfil their auxiliary role, reduces vulnerability to funding fluctuations, and allows for greater flexibility in adapting services to changing community needs;
- ☐ Movement resourcing and expertise enable National Societies to supplement or substitute for the services of public authorities in complex humanitarian settings more rapidly;
- ☐ A united approach to communicating the Movement's work in conflict-affected contexts, making the local National Society the face of the services delivered, supports acceptance and access, and mitigates the risk of negative perceptions associated with international support.



CONCLUSION

The auxiliary role is not simply a static legal designation, but rather a dynamic approach that reflects a National Society's ability to adapt and respond to the ever-evolving context and humanitarian landscape. The effectiveness of National Societies in fulfilling their auxiliary role hinges on a complex interplay of factors. A strong legal framework, responsive governance structures, capable and principled leadership, and well-developed operational capacities are all crucial. Equally important are the partnerships National Societies forge with public authorities, state and non-state actors, and communities. Localisation has been the core of the Movement's working model for over 100 years. The vision remains a network of strong local organisations, branches and volunteers that help each other be as effective as possible, and stand together in the face of overwhelming disasters and crises. Together, the IFRC and ICRC provide a comprehensive framework that empowers National Societies to strengthen their auxiliary role. The studies show that strengthening the auxiliary role enhances local humanitarian action in several ways:

- It leads to more efficient and effective operations as authorities provide unhindered principled humanitarian access, legal rights and exemptions related to employees and volunteers, taxes, domestic and international funding, access and freedom of movement, and disaster-related goods, equipment and personnel;
- The relationship with public authorities becomes stronger and more balanced, allowing National Societies to operate swiftly and flexibly across the territory according to their mission and Fundamental Principles, safeguarding the trust of communities, supporters and donors;
- A strong legal base and more robust governance structures, more extensive branch and volunteer networks, and generally enhanced organisational capacities enable National Societies to substitute for public services when authorities attempt to deny access to people in need because of political or security concerns, resourcing constraints, discriminatory practices, or bureaucratic inefficiency;
- National Societies maintain their operational independence while effectively coordinating with authorities and other humanitarian actors, improving the overall coherence of humanitarian efforts. In law and practice, National Societies strive for autonomy. They elect their officials and govern their structures without governmental interference;
- National Societies gain access to influential decision-making platforms, enhancing their impact on humanitarian policy and practice. They establish robust and more strategic connections with public authorities, increasing their capacity for humanitarian diplomacy in the service of vulnerable groups.

Overall, strengthening the auxiliary role enables National Societies to fulfil their humanitarian mandate as specified in the Geneva Conventions, the Statutes of the Movement, the resolutions of the International Conference and domestic laws. Combined with wider National Society Development interventions and capacity-strengthening investments, a strengthened auxiliary role brings significant benefits for local action:

- The mandate, roles and responsibilities of the National Society are recognised and respected;
- National Society is perceived as a neutral, impartial, independent, accountable and transparent humanitarian organisation;
- Optimal spread of well-prepared, active branches and diverse, skilled volunteers from disaster- and/or conflict-affected communities;
- Employees and volunteers have a high degree of acceptance among stakeholders;
- Sufficient skills and resources to engage in new or expand existing auxiliary activities;
- Delivering humanitarian assistance to groups and locations where other actors do not have acceptance and access.



Somali Red Crescent Society © Corrie Butler / IFRC

ANNEXES



Annex 1

List of National Society key informants

The authors are extremely grateful to the following key informants who generously gave their time to support the development of this learning report. Key informants

Organisation	Name	Role
Argentine Red Cross	Diego Tipping	President
	María Cecilia Villafañe	Secretary General
	Rodrigo Cuba	Sub Secretary General, Human Resources
	Mariela Contreras	President of the Filial Corrientes and National Treasurer
	Alejandro Costa	Secretary of Health and Education
Georgia Red Cross Society	Gvantsa Zhgenti	Deputy Secretary General
	Nino Nsamadalashvili	National Branch Coordinator
	Mariam Romelashvili	Legal Counsel
	Nino Chkhutiashvili	Branch Coordinator, Dusheti Branch
	Shotiko Undilashvili	Internal Team Communications, Dusheti Branch
	Nika Golikovi	Disaster Management, Dusheti Branch
	Gvantsa Kikaleishvili	Volunteer since 2016, Zugdidi Branch
	Sopho Kondjaria	Branch Coordinator, Zugdidi Branch
	Dimitri	Volunteer, Zugdidi Branch
	Tamar Sakhlkhutsishvili	Branch Coordinator, Gori Branch
	Aleksandre Okropirize	First Aid and Youth, Gori Branch
	Skoti Sergi Driaev	Volunteer, First Aid and Disaster Management, Gori Branch
	Ani Topchishvili	Volunteer, First Aid and Fundraising, Flea Market, Gori Branch
	Nini Janezashvili	New Volunteers' Training for First Aid and Immunisation Programme Volunteer, Gori Branch
	Ia Mchedlidze	Psychosocial Support and Volunteers, Gori Branch
	Giorgi Aslamazishvili	Sports, Youth, Social Director, Local Government Authority, Previously Chairman of the Red Cross Branch, Dusheti
Mongolia Red Cross Society	Bolormaa Nordov	Secretary General
	Undram Chinges	Administration and PMER Team Leader, RFL and Migration focal point
	Tungalag	Orkhon Branch Manager
	Batsorig	Govi Altai Branch Manager
	Ganbold	Dornod Branch Manager

Annex 2

List of Sources

Movement

Title	Year	Weblink (if applicable)
Resolution 3. 33rd International Conference Time to Act: Tackling epidemics and pandemics together	2019	Link
Resolution 4. 31st International Conference Furthering the auxiliary role: Partnership for stronger National Societies and volunteering development	2011	Link
Resolution 2. 30th International Conference. Specific nature of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement in action and partnerships and the role of National Societies as auxiliaries to the public authorities in the humanitarian field	2007	Link
30th International Conference. Report on the work of commission A. The specific nature of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement in action and partnerships, and the role of National Societies as auxiliaries to the public authorities in the humanitarian field	2007	Link
Council of Delegates. National Societies as auxiliaries to the public authorities in the humanitarian field: Summary of the study on situations of armed conflict	2005	Link

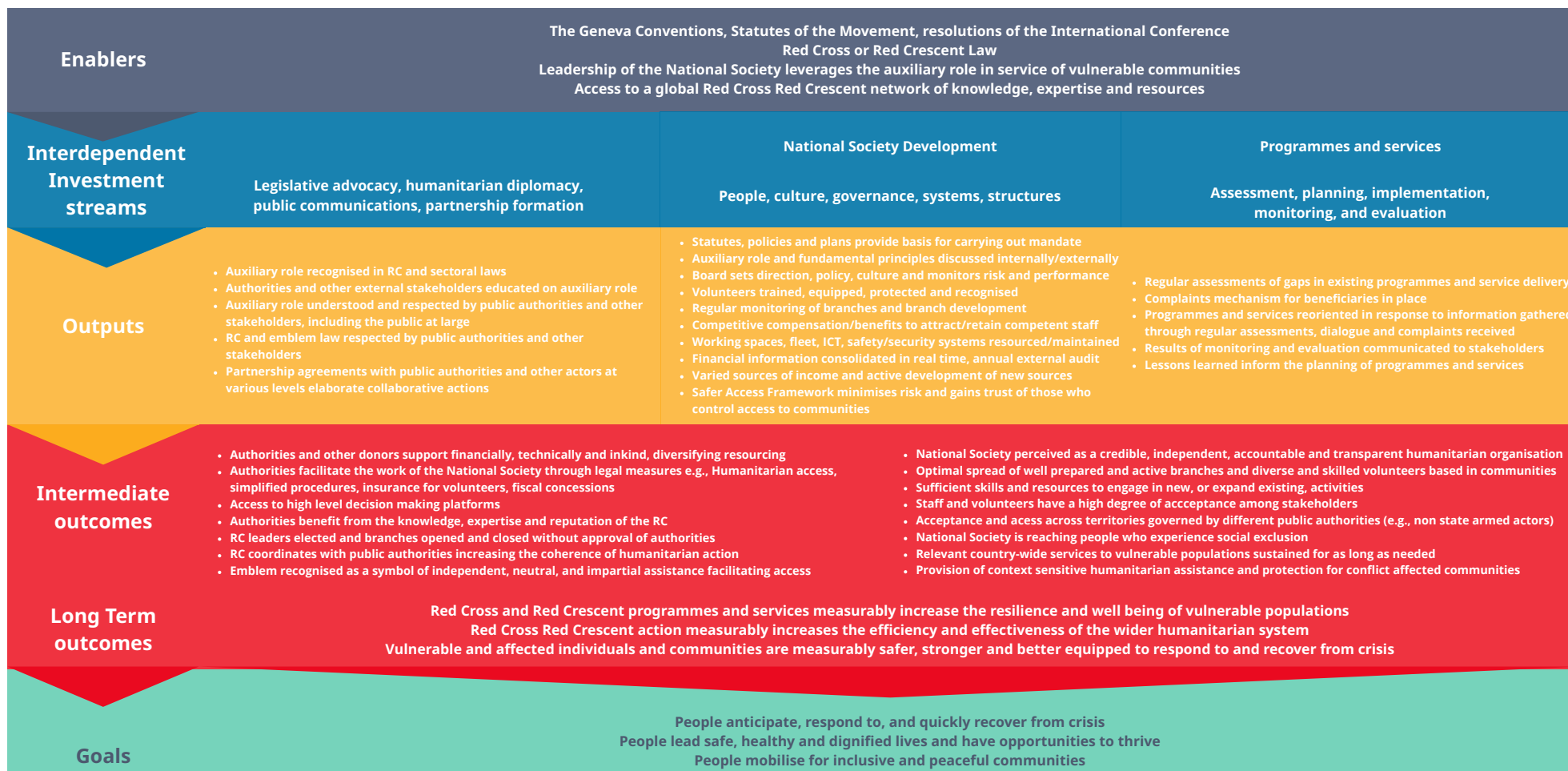
IFRC

Title	Year	Weblink (if applicable)
A Call For Change: A study of National Society Development in fragile, complex, protracted conflict and violence-affected contexts	2024	Link
A neutral, impartial and independent ARCS, reaching the people that others have no access to. Long-term National Society Development investments that strengthened the positioning, sustainability and impact of the Afghan Red Crescent Society in a complex and fragile environment	2024	Link
Impartiality in humanitarian action: Long-term National Society Development investments that strengthened the positioning, sustainability and impact of the Somali Red Crescent Society in a complex, fragile and conflict-affected environment	2024	Link
We are close to you: Long-term National Society Development investments that strengthened the positioning, sustainability and impact of the Ukraine Red Cross Society in a complex, fragile and conflict-affected environment	2024	Link
Advocacy for a new Argentine Red Cross Law. Case Study	2022	Link
The Guidance on Law and Public Health Emergency Preparedness and Response	2022	Link

Title	Year	Weblink (if applicable)
Localisation of humanitarian action in the Red Cross Red Crescent National Society Development building capacities for crisis management, resilience and peace A longitudinal study on the effectiveness of support for National Society Development and its relevance for localization in five National Societies.	2021	Link
Branch development in the Mongolia Red Cross Society	2021	Link
Branch development in the Georgia Red Cross Society	2021	Link
Guide to the Auxiliary Role through Law and Policy	2021	Link
Guidance for National Society Statutes	2019	Link
Legislative Advocacy Toolkit. Facilitator's Guide	2018	Link
National Society Development Framework	2013	Link
Principles in action in Somalia British Red Cross	2013	Link
Practicing humanitarian diplomacy: an introduction Humanitarian diplomacy guidance	2012	Link
The Guidelines for the Domestic Facilitation and Regulation of International Disaster Relief and Initial Recovery Assistance (the IDRL Guidelines)	2007	Link
Online Training Course on Auxiliary Roles. Available via the IFRC Learning Platform		Link
n.d. Minimum elements to be included in the legislation between Red Cross or Red Crescent societies and their public authorities		Link
n.d. Deepening the auxiliary role. Argentine Red Cross		

ICRC

Title	Year	Weblink (if applicable)
Somalia in Focus	2024	Link
Ukraine	2024	Link
Afghanistan	2024	Link
The Fundamental Principles of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement	2020	Link
Conditions for the recognition of National Societies.	2005	Link
Safer Access Framework	2002	Link
Advisory service on IHL. Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and the Implementation of International Humanitarian Law: Guiding Principles	2001	Link
Regulations on the use of the Emblem of the Red Cross or the Red Crescent by National Societies	1992	Link
n.d. Cooperating with National Societies		Link



Annex 3

A Model: Strengthening the auxiliary role

The evidence gathered from Argentina, Georgia, Mongolia, Afghanistan, Somalia and Ukraine has informed the creation of a model that visualises the chain of output, outcomes and impact arising from strengthening the auxiliary role.

This model illustrates the interplay between investments in strengthening the auxiliary role, concurrent investments in National Society Development, programmes and services, and how these elements come together to strengthen local action. It outlines the enablers, investment streams and output that allow a National Society to strengthen and effectively utilise its auxiliary role (outcomes) to impact the resilience and well-being of vulnerable, and at-risk individuals and communities (goals). The model demonstrates that while strengthening the auxiliary role alone is insufficient to enhance local action, when combined with strong organisational capacities, it can contribute significantly to increased reach and more effective, efficient and sustainable services.

Enablers

Legal recognition of National Societies as voluntary aid societies, which are auxiliary to public authorities in the humanitarian field, both affirms and enables their role in supplementing and substituting public services. Strategic leadership directs the National Society to invest in strengthening the auxiliary role through law, policies and partnerships, and in developing the other organisational capacities required to supplement or substitute for public services.

Additionally, each National Society has access to the knowledge, expertise and resources available within the global Red Cross Red Crescent network. This includes the expertise of the Joint Statutes Commission and the IFRC National Society Development Services Team, which support National Societies in strengthening RC Laws and statutes, as well as sharing the experiences of sister National Societies who have successfully strengthened their auxiliary role.

The resolutions of the International Conference facilitate meaningful domestic discussions between National Societies and their respective public authorities by offering a comprehensive framework and guidelines for collaboration and coordination during conflict and disaster situations. These resolutions consistently emphasise the importance of the auxiliary role and highlight best practices and approaches.

Interdependent investment streams

Investments aimed at enhancing both the auxiliary role and a National Society's capacity to effectively deliver on this role encompass a set of interdependent activities:

- Legislative advocacy, which aims to influence legislators to anchor the auxiliary role in the RC and sectoral laws and regulations, and the adoption of legal facilities that support more effective and efficient National Society operations;
- Humanitarian diplomacy, which seeks to create an understanding of the auxiliary role and influence of decision-makers and opinion leaders on issues impacting vulnerable groups at local, national and international levels;
- Public communication is designed to educate and sway the broader public on the nature of the auxiliary role and humanitarian issues through information and education campaigns;
- Formation of balanced partnerships with public authorities and other actors at all levels promotes complementarity, harmonisation, coordination and independence;
- Concurrent investments in National Society Development, programmes and services.

These interventions are instrumental in ensuring a strong auxiliary role, one that is not only enforced by law but also known and supported by public authorities, and society at large. Furthermore, they are crucial in equipping a National Society with the organisational capacities required to supplement or substitute for public services.

Output: Investment in strengthening the auxiliary role

Investment in the auxiliary role yields several key outputs essential for the functioning and recognition of a National Society. These outputs include:

- Auxiliary role recognised in RC and sectoral laws;
- Authorities and other external stakeholders are educated on the auxiliary role;
- Auxiliary role is understood and respected by public authorities and other stakeholders;
- Public authorities and other stakeholders respect RC and Emblem Laws;
- Partnership agreements with public authorities and other actors at various levels elaborate collaborative actions.

Output: Investment in National Society Development

Concurrent investments in governance, management, branches and volunteers yield outputs essential to equipping the organization to effectively deliver on its auxiliary role. These outputs include:

- Statutes, policies and plans provide the basis for carrying out the National Society's mandate;
- Auxiliary role and fundamental principles discussed internally/externally;
- The board sets direction, policy and culture, and monitors risk and performance;
- Volunteers are trained, equipped, protected and recognised;
- Regular monitoring of branches and branch development;
- Competitive compensation/benefits to attract/retain high-quality staff;
- Working spaces, fleet, ICT and safety/security systems resourced/maintained;
- Financial information consolidated in real time, annual external audit;
- Varied sources of income and active development of new sources.

Output: Investment in programmes and services

Simultaneous investments in designing, planning, implementing, monitoring, and evaluating programmes and services, generate outputs that effectively equip the organisation to fulfil its auxiliary role. These outputs encompass:

- Regular assessments of gaps in existing programmes and service delivery;
- Complaints mechanism for beneficiaries in place;
- Programmes and services reoriented in response to information gathered through regular assessments, dialogue and complaints received;
- Results of monitoring and evaluation communicated to stakeholders;
- Lessons learned inform the planning of programmes and services.

Outcomes and goals

The outputs from each investment stream converge to produce the intermediate outcomes. Context-sensitive humanitarian assistance is provided to vulnerable populations, including groups experiencing exclusion and communities affected by conflict. The National Society is a credible, independent and accountable organisation supported by a domestic network of well-prepared local branches and skilled volunteers. The RC and Emblem Laws and the auxiliary role enable and support humanitarian action through various pathways, including facilitating access to all parts of the territory, supporting volunteering, providing fiscal privileges, and enabling the National Society to participate in decision-making and coordination platforms, all while maintaining independence and respect for the Fundamental Principles.

These intermediate outcomes deliver two key longer-term outcomes: 1) Programmes and services measurably increase the resilience and well-being of vulnerable populations; and 2) Vulnerable and affected individuals and communities are measurably safer, stronger and better equipped to respond and recover from crisis. These outcomes contribute to the goals: people anticipate, respond to, and quickly recover from crisis; people lead safe, healthy and dignified lives and have opportunities to thrive; and people mobilise for inclusive and peaceful communities.

Limitations of the model

The model aims to offer initial insights into the dynamics of the strengthening of the auxiliary role and wider National Society Development, but it has inherent limitations:

- **Simplification of complexity:** National Societies operate in complex environments influenced by many internal and external factors, including human behaviour, operational conditions, changes in the socio-political and humanitarian environment, and technological change. A simple linear model cannot adequately account for these interactions;
- **Linear thinking:** which assumes that one cause leads to one effect. The model does not account for the non-linear, interconnected and often unpredictable nature of change in National Societies, where multiple causes can contribute to multiple outcomes, often with feedback loops that amplify or dampen the effects of development interventions;
- **Underestimation of emergent phenomena:** National Societies are complex adaptive systems in which emergent phenomena can arise from the interactions of individual parts. Simple models cannot anticipate these emergent properties, underestimating how small changes in one part of the National Society's system can lead to significant, unforeseen outcomes elsewhere.

Annex 4

Template: Assessing the impact of the auxiliary role

This document aims to support National Societies seeking to assess the impact of the organisation's auxiliary role.

Impact is defined as the extent to which the auxiliary role has generated significant positive or negative, intended or unintended, higher-level effects.

Benefits of measuring the impact of the auxiliary role

Assessing the impact of the auxiliary role can support:

- Demonstrating its continued relevance and value to public authorities, communities, partners, the media and other key stakeholders;
- Identifying elements of the auxiliary role that need to be strengthened;
- Advocacy efforts to further strengthen the auxiliary role in the country and in other contexts;
- Raising the required resources for strengthening and operationalizing the auxiliary role;
- Learning across the network.

How to measure the impact of the auxiliary role

Step 1: Identify the most relevant indicators (*see list of suggested indicators below*).

Step 2: Integrate these measures into the National Society's existing monitoring and evaluation system.

Step 3: Data collection and analysis using existing data collection tool.
Establish baseline data to measure changes over time.

Step 4: Collaborate with public authorities and other stakeholders to gather relevant data and insights.

Step 5: Use findings to strengthen the auxiliary role, inform stakeholders, and demonstrate accountability and transparency.

Step 6: Refine the indicators as required.

The auxiliary role model and its indicators

The model (*see page 80*) visualises the chain of outputs, outcomes and impact arising from strengthening the auxiliary role. This model illustrates the interplay between investments in strengthening the auxiliary role, concurrent investments in National Society Development, and programmes and services, and how these elements come together to strengthen local action. It outlines the enablers, investment streams and outputs that allow a National Society to strengthen and effectively utilise its auxiliary role (outcomes) to impact the resilience and well-being of vulnerable, and at-risk individuals and communities (goals).

The model can help the National Society pinpoint which elements of the auxiliary role it would like to assess.

The model's logic is as follows: investment streams (depicted in the diagram in blue), facilitated by the enablers (in grey), produce specific outputs (in brown). These outputs lead to intermediate and longer-term outcomes (in red), contributing to the overarching goals (in green).

The investment streams, with their respective outputs, illustrate how a National Society works to strengthen its auxiliary role through its legal base and wider organisational capacities to bring about intermediate and long-term changes. These changes in understanding, skills, knowledge, attitudes and behaviour within the National Society and public authorities drive decisions and actions that improve individual and community resilience and well-being.

The model highlights the interconnectedness of each investment stream and the emergence of synergies as laws are passed, public authorities are educated and engaged, partnerships are formed, capacities are strengthened, services are delivered and lessons are learned. While each investment stream produces certain outputs, they contribute significantly to others. Therefore, outcomes are collectively represented to demonstrate how all three investment streams contribute to each outcome.

The indicators arising from the model are outlined below.

Suggested indicators to measure the auxiliary role

Output level

Auxiliary role recognised in RC and sectoral laws

- # of new or amended laws and policies explicitly recognising the auxiliary role

Authorities and other external stakeholders educated on the auxiliary role

- # of sessions conducted for authorities and external stakeholders on the auxiliary role
- % of participants who demonstrate increased knowledge of the auxiliary role

Auxiliary role understood and respected by public authorities and other stakeholders, including the public at large

- % of surveyed public authorities and stakeholders who acknowledge the auxiliary role of the National Society
- Public perception index based on surveys measuring understanding and respect for the auxiliary role

RC and emblem law respected by public authorities and other stakeholders

- # of reported violations of RC and Emblem Laws

Partnership agreements with public authorities and other actors at various levels elaborate collaborative actions

- # of partnership agreements signed with public authorities
- # of collaborative actions initiated as a result of partnership agreements

Intermediate Outcome level

Authorities and other donors support financially, technically and in-kind, diversifying resourcing

- Amount of financial, technical, and in-kind support provided by authorities and other donors

Authorities facilitate the work of the National Society through legal measures

- # of legal measures implemented by authorities to facilitate the work of the National Society

Access to high-level decision-making platforms

- # of high-level decision-making platforms to which the National Society has access
- # of high-level decision-making platforms where the National Society holds a leadership or advisory role
- # of formal recommendations made by the National Society that were adopted in policy
- Quality of feedback from decision-making bodies on the contributions made by the National Society

Authorities benefit from the knowledge, expertise and reputation of the RC

- Level of satisfaction reported by authorities regarding the support and expertise provided by the National Society

RC leaders elected and branches opened and closed without approval of authorities

- Instances of interference by authorities in the election of RC leaders or the opening/closing of branches

RC coordinates with public authorities, increasing the coherence of humanitarian action

- # of coordination meetings held between the National Society and public authorities
- % increase in coordinated actions and joint initiatives between the National Society and public authorities

Emblem recognised as a symbol of independent, neutral and impartial assistance facilitating access

- Instances where the emblem facilitated access to areas or populations in need of humanitarian assistance.

Long-term Outcome level

Red Cross and Red Crescent programmes and services measurably increase the resilience and well-being of vulnerable populations

- Insert standard IFRC indicators

Red Cross Red Crescent action measurably increases the efficiency and effectiveness of the wider humanitarian system

- Insert standard IFRC indicators

Vulnerable and affected individuals and communities are measurably safer, stronger and better equipped to respond to and recover from crises

- Insert standard IFRC indicators

Endnotes

- 1 Adopted by the 25th International Conference of the Red Cross at Geneva in October 1986 and amended by the 26th International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent at Geneva in December 1995, and by the 29th International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent at Geneva in June 2006. <https://standcom.ch/statutes-and-rules-of-procedure/>
- 2 The supreme deliberative body of the Movement, where the High Contracting Parties to the Geneva Conventions come together with the components of the Movement to discuss key matters of humanitarian concern and to make joint commitments. It is a unique non-political forum in which the Movement components have the same voice as States. <https://rcrcconference.org/about/>
- 3 From the Latin auxiliārius (feminine auxilium), meaning help. Hoad, T. F. (1996). The Concise Oxford dictionary of English etymology. Oxford University Press.
- 4 The seven Fundamental Principles are Humanity, Impartiality, Neutrality, Independence, Voluntary Service, Unity and Universality.
- 5 The Statutory Texts of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), amended and adopted by the 22nd Session of the General Assembly, Geneva (Switzerland), 5–7 December 2019.
- 6 Conditions for the recognition of National Societies. Article 4 of the Statutes of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, adopted by the 25th International Conference in October 1986 and amended by the 26th International Conference in December 1995.
- 7 Ibid
- 8 A country's Red Cross or Red Crescent Law may also be titled a decree, order, regulation, charter or bill. IFRC Guide to Strengthening the Auxiliary Role Through Law and Policy. 2021.
- 9 30th International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, "Resolution 2: Specific Nature of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement in Action and Partnerships and the Role of National Societies as Auxiliaries to the Public Authorities in the Humanitarian Field" (Geneva, 26 to 30 November 2007) paragraph 3 (Resolution 2 of the 30th International Conference). Resolution 3 of 2007 COD Council of Delegates 2007: Resolution 3 - ICRC.
- 10 Ibid
- 11 Bernard. V. (n.d.) How government fiscal concessions can strengthen Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies. Commissioned by the IFRC. International Review of the Red Cross. No. 313. Accessed through <https://international-review.icrc.org/sites/default/files/S0020860400084874a.pdf>.
- 12 United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UNISDR). Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030. 2015 and United Nations General Assembly. Strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian emergency assistance of the United Nations. Resolution 46/182. 78th Plenary, 19 December 1991.
- 13 IFRC [Guide to Strengthening the Auxiliary Role through Law and Policy](#). Annex 1. Model Law.
- 14 Refer to [Resolution 2](#), 30th International Conference of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, Geneva, Switzerland, 23–24 November 2007.
- 15 IFRC's OCAC process supports National Societies to review their capacity and performance against pre-defined indicators.
- 16 IFRC's Organisational Capacity Assessment and Certification (OCAC) process
- 17 [Conditions for recognition of National Societies](#). Article 4 of the Statutes of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, adopted by the 25th International Conference in October 1986 and amended by the 26th International Conference in December 1995.
- 18 Refer to the 2012 IFRC resource: Practicing humanitarian diplomacy: an introduction Humanitarian diplomacy guidance and the 2018 Legislative Advocacy Toolkit
- 19 Refer to the 2012 IFRC resource: A guide for Parliamentarians to the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement.
- 20 Such as the IFRC Legislative Advocacy Toolkit, IFRC's Humanitarian Diplomacy Guide, Advocacy guidance on specific humanitarian issues and public awareness and education campaign materials developed by the ICRC, IFRC and National Societies.
- 21 Such as the Model RC Law, the Guidance on Law and Public Health Emergency Preparedness and Response, and the Guidelines for the Domestic Facilitation and Regulation of International Disaster Relief and Initial Recovery Assistance.
- 22 Afghanistan source: A neutral, impartial and independent ARCS, reaching the people that others have no access to. Long-term National Society Development investments that strengthened the positioning, sustainability and impact of Afghan Red Crescent Society in a complex and fragile environment (2024). Somalia source: Impartiality in humanitarian action: Long-term National Society Development investments that strengthened the positioning, sustainability and impact of Somali Red Crescent Society in a complex, fragile and conflict-affected environment (2024). Ukraine: We are close to you: Long-term National Society Development investments that strengthened the positioning, sustainability and impact of the Ukraine Red Cross Society in a complex, fragile and conflict-affected environment (2024).
- 23 Revenue streams include tax-free donations, rental income, product provision such as brick production by ARCS branches, and services such as first aid training, government and corporate funding, and funding from the Movement and other international donors.

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

Humanity

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

Impartiality

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

Neutrality

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

Independence

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

Voluntary service

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

Unity

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

Universality

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

