

Grand Bargain Annual meeting 2020: ICRC statement

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) remains actively engaged in the Grand Bargain process which relevance and importance were further highlighted by the Covid-19 crisis and its unprecedented nature in recent history. More than ever, we believe in the critical need to deepen our mutual engagement and efforts for greater efficiency and effectiveness as per the Grand Bargain goals.

The current pandemic has in fact prompted us to advance further on our own commitments: ICRC has been working closely with its partners within the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement building on our collective capacities and expertise and complementing the broader international response of the United Nations. Red Cross and Red Crescent volunteers and staff are at the forefront of the response to this crisis, reaching out and assisting the communities most at risk. Together with IFRC, we have increased our investment in National Society development and continue to encourage our donors to channel funding to the National Society Investment Alliance (NSIA). ICRC has also scaled-up its support to National Societies in situations of armed conflict providing them with financial, technical, logistical and material assistance. Through enhanced supply chain and logistics coordination, within the Movement (in particular with the IFRC) and with other UN agencies and MSF, we have been reducing the risk of duplication while increasing joint planning and better use of collective assets. In this respect, different coordination initiatives such as joint tendering process; air transports of cargo and passengers, including COVID-19 affected patients, and elaboration of specifications for producing locally facial masks, have been promoted and successfully achieved. We have also further digitalized our working processes and the delivery of some services, contributing therefore to reducing management costs and increasing efficiency within ICRC and the Movement.

In the wake of the pandemic, the ICRC has developed guidance on inclusive programming, ensuring that our response and contingency planning address the needs of marginalized and at-risk people. We have also raised attention internally and externally to the risks of an increase of particular forms of sexual and gender-based violence and need to identify and respond to the diversity of needs, risks and capacities. Working closely with our Movement partners, we have been strengthening community engagement, which in turn has allowed us to better identify and therefore respond to the changing needs of affected populations. Finally, ICRC has increased cash and voucher assistance in relevant contexts to meet the needs of communities affected by COVID-19, including families of missing migrants, those with restricted movements due to quarantine measures, crisis hit small business owners and economically vulnerable families.

The COVID-19 pandemic puts to the test the resilience of communities, and the shock responsiveness of services, systems and institutions. In many ways, it is a “nexus” crisis: multidimensional and systemic. We are seeing the dividends of previous programmatic approaches through which we have sought to strengthen the capacity, preparedness and resilience of water systems and local health structures. We are also seeing the advantages of multidisciplinary approaches which look holistically at the public health, social, economic and protection dimensions of the pandemic. The effects of COVID-19 are highly disruptive for already marginalized groups, such as women exposed to increased incidence of sexual and gender-based violence; children out of school; workers in the informal sector; and migrants without access to health services. We are aiming to ensure an inclusive response that can prevent or mitigate new or deepening vulnerabilities and to continue prioritizing efforts to strengthen existing systems and services.

Among other things, the current pandemic has highlighted the critical importance of flexible funding for organisations such as the ICRC to enable a more agile and timely response. The ICRC is grateful for

its donors' continued support and the flexibility they have shown through their contributions to our appeal. In line with our commitments, we have increased visibility on the quality funding we receive and our allocation process; we have contributed to building evidence on the added value of flexible funding to our operations; and we have increased our data transparency through more frequent publication in the IATI platform. The ICRC will endeavor to build on the progress achieved thus far at the organizational level and within the Movement to further enhance accountability and transparency. While we recognize that donor's flexibility needs to be met with transparency, we believe that this should not generate additional reporting requirements.

As highlighted in the 2020 Annual Independent Report, the Grand Bargain is yet to achieve its full potential. Looking towards the 5-year mark of this important process, we believe it is time for all of us to take bold actions and achieve greater progress against the goals we have set for ourselves. We also believe that without a more in-depth conversation about risk and risk sharing, greater efficiencies cannot be fully achieved. That is why the ICRC is working closely with the Netherlands to foster such dialogue among humanitarian actors in the framework of the Grand Bargain.