

## Concept Note - 4<sup>th</sup> Asia Pacific Communication Forum, 2015

# “Communicating in the Digital Space”

### Introduction

In recent years, increased internet connectivity combined with the penetration of mobile technology and the growth of digital and social media has created huge changes in the way that people communicate and interact across the globe. The speed at which these changes are taking place requires organisations to be agile and forward-looking if they are to adapt and capitalize on the huge opportunities offered by these advances.

Digital media is changing the humanitarian landscape. Compared with a decade ago, the non-profit sector is now using very different approaches, tools and platforms to engage more rapidly and directly with their target audiences online. In particular the sector is taking advantage of social media. By effectively utilizing popular platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and Instagram, organisations are deepening their engagement with their existing stakeholders and connecting with new and untapped audiences. They are doing so in a highly visual, immediate and cost-effective way.

The versatility of social media and other digital platforms enables humanitarians to communicate more effectively with vulnerable communities, grow brand awareness, influence key stakeholders and mobilize resources. Across the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement the use of social media is becoming increasingly mainstreamed and is not limited to people working in communications. The use of different media, tactics, and technologies is being adopted across sectors, including disaster management and health, for diverse purposes such as crowdsourcing, real time disaster information gathering and the dissemination of knowledge around first aid.

In the ‘Beijing Call for Innovation’- the outcome document of the 9th Asia Pacific Conference held in 2014 - National Society leaders from the region agreed that -*“Only by embracing new ways of thinking and acting, harnessing the power of innovative technologies and developing sustainable partnerships with existing and non-traditional partners can we move to shaping the future and ensuring our relevance”*. A specific commitment under the Beijing Call for Innovation is to *“Optimise the coverage of our services and to better manage and share knowledge by championing the innovative use of all forms of media and communications technology.”* In parallel delegates of the 2nd Asia Pacific Youth Summit committed to, *“Championing the innovative use of social media and communications technologies to increase the effectiveness of our services and how we manage and share knowledge.”*

In early 2015, the IFRC and American Red Cross hosted a global Social media summit in Washington D.C. to build collaboration, knowledge sharing and mutual support within the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement in the use of social media. In 2016, the IFRC’s Asia Pacific regional office in collaboration with the ICRC, aims to build on the outcomes of the global social media summit by hosting a communications forum for National Societies in Asia Pacific.

### The 4<sup>th</sup> Asia Pacific Communications Forum

In Asia Pacific, both the IFRC and ICRC are committed to working together to build and develop National Societies capacity in the field of communications. The Asia Pacific Forum, traditionally held every two years, brings together Red Cross and Red Crescent communicators from the region to share experience and best practise and work together more closely on common communications priorities. The Forum provides an opportunity for learning in a variety of communications related disciplines. In 2016, the theme for the 4th Asia Pacific Communications Forum is ‘Communicating in

the Digital Space'. The Forum will be hosted by the Korean Red Cross and will be held in Seoul from March 14-16, 2016.

### **Objectives**

The primary focus of the Forum will be on promoting innovation, learning and collaboration amongst Red Cross and Red Crescent partners around the effective use of social media platforms and broadening the scope and impact of our communications work in the digital space. Specific objectives include;

- Learning from each other through networking and sharing of experiences and good practices in the use of social media
- Furthering understanding of trends and developments in social media by learning from external organisations who are leading innovators in the digital space
- Building an innovative and multi-disciplinary approach to social media engagement amongst Red Cross Red Crescent partners in Asia Pacific, encompassing community engagement and accountability
- Building cooperation and exploring opportunities for Movement-wide partnerships and mutual support that enhance understanding and effective utilisation of social media approaches and platforms.
- Understanding and capitalizing on opportunities presented by digital media to improve our visibility and public positioning

### **Target Audiences**

Participation at the Forum is expected from senior communications and social media experts from National Societies in Asia Pacific. Given the cross-sectoral objectives of the Forum, the intention is also to attract participation from National Society health and disaster management teams as well as Youth leaders. There will also be participation from selected field and headquarters staff from IFRC and ICRC communications and community engagement and accountability teams.

### **Scope and Content**

The Forum will run over the course of three days and will comprise a mixture of plenary sessions combined with 'Ignite' presentations on best practise, group work and specific skills training workshops. Some of the thematic areas that will be covered include;

- Building trust - Positioning and promoting our brand
- Developing digital fundraising and public communication campaigns
- Recruitment and engagement of volunteers, members and supporters
- Advocating with decision makers and opinion formers
- Emergency communications – Building our visibility, managing reputational risk and listening to people's needs to adapt & improve service delivery

### **Roles and Responsibilities**

The Forum will be hosted by the Korean Red Cross who will provide admin and logistical support to the organisational aspects of the event. The IFRC's Asia Pacific office will take the lead role in the planning and resource mobilization for the event in collaboration with the ICRC. The programme and agenda will be developed by a steering group comprised of selected individuals from the IFRC, ICRC, Korean Red Cross and other National Societies in the region who will convene virtually through regular teleconferences. The steering group will also be tasked with a range of other responsibilities including identifying external speakers and outreach with potential sponsors for the event.