

## Humanitarian Diplomacy Policy

### Introduction

#### What objectives will effective humanitarian diplomacy achieve?

- More frequent consideration by decision makers and opinion leaders of the interests of vulnerable people;
- Greater access to and influence with decision makers;
- Greater humanitarian access and space for National Societies and the International Federation<sup>1</sup>;
- Strong visibility for and public understanding of Red Cross and Red Crescent activities;
- Stronger capacity to mobilise all relevant resources; and
- The facilitation of effective partnerships when responding to the needs of the vulnerable.

It is only through the establishment of humanitarian diplomacy as an integral part of the day to day work of National Societies and the International Federation, with the necessary capacities in place, that the humanitarian objectives referred to above can be effectively realised. The fundamental aim of this policy is to establish humanitarian diplomacy as a permanent mindset across all National Societies and the International Federation. Humanitarian diplomacy includes advocacy, negotiation, communication, formal agreements and other measures.

The decision to engage in humanitarian diplomacy is not a choice, but a responsibility. It is a responsibility that flows from the privileged access enjoyed by National Societies as auxiliaries to the public authorities in the humanitarian field. It flows from the independence of the Red Cross Red Crescent Movement, from the breadth of its humanitarian activities across the globe, its community base with tens of millions of volunteers and the observer status at the United Nations General Assembly enjoyed by the International Federation and the ICRC.

The responsibility is a logical extension of the commitment of National Societies and the International Federation to the fundamental principle of humanity - a commitment that is accepted worldwide as prevailing above all others because of its linkage to international humanitarian law, the Statutes of the Movement and the International Federation Constitution. An organisation of this kind, with its unique potential to exert considerable influence on decision makers across the world, has a manifest responsibility to do so.

As the essential characteristic of the Red Cross Red Crescent is to act, and not to remain passive,<sup>2</sup> this policy urges actions on the part of the International Federation and National Societies that measure up to that responsibility.

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<sup>1</sup> References to the International Federation in this policy refer to the President, the Governing Board, the Secretary-General and the Secretariat.

<sup>2</sup> The Fundamental Principles of the Red Cross – Commentary by Jean Pictet, Henry Dunant Institute, p.52.

## **What is Humanitarian Diplomacy?**

*Humanitarian diplomacy is persuading decision makers and opinion leaders to act, at all times, in the interests of vulnerable people, and with full respect for fundamental humanitarian principles.*

The framework of the policy is built around the above definition and includes appropriate safeguards that protect the fundamental principles and humanitarian space. An explanatory memorandum is attached which describes the background behind the definition's key words and the ideas that inspired their inclusion. The explanatory memorandum should be read in conjunction with this policy, and used to support its dissemination.

The definition should be seen as a sequence of terms that act as signposts for action by National Societies and the International Federation. Understanding the definition as a whole requires an appreciation of the significance of the individual words and key terms that collectively make up the whole. Once understood in this way, the definition provides a clear framework for the practical application of humanitarian diplomacy. The importance of each key term from the definition is set out in the explanatory memorandum. These key terms are the basis for concrete steps that National Societies and the International Federation should take in order to effectively apply humanitarian diplomacy.

The policy refers to these steps as the four signposts for action. They are:

- 1. The responsibility to persuade;**
- 2. Persuading with the appropriate diplomatic tools and actions;**
- 3. Focusing on areas of knowledge and expertise; and**
- 4. Engaging at appropriate times with partners outside the Movement.**

The first signpost for action is the most important. It is designed to impress upon the consciousness of every National Society and the International Federation their fundamental responsibility to persuade decision makers to act in the interests of vulnerable people. The remaining signposts give that new mindset a defined structure, a framework that sets out the way that responsibility should be exercised.

### **Statement**

**Each individual National Society and the International Federation has a responsibility to:**

1. Persuade decision makers and other opinion leaders to act in the interests of vulnerable people, and with full respect for fundamental humanitarian principles. It shall do this by:
  - Recognising that the collective forces of National Societies and the International Federation are an important voice in relation to many of the world's humanitarian challenges, and that it is important that voice (in a public or private context) be heard as much as possible.
  - Recalling at all times the centrality of the Fundamental Principles of the Movement. They must remember that our Fundamental Principles (including the Fundamental Principle of Neutrality) are an important

protector of humanitarian space. They must not, however, use neutrality as an automatic trigger for diplomatic disengagement. Neutrality is the means by which humanitarian values can be protected, but neutrality does not mean inactivity.

2. Persuade decision makers and other opinion leaders by making use of the appropriate diplomatic tools and actions. The deployment of these tools and actions will be assisted by:
  - Identifying the relevant decision makers and other opinion leaders in the specific culture and context in which they are operating.
  - Understanding the decision making process in the specific culture and context in which they are operating.
  - Utilising the Protocol Handbook as an everyday guide.
  - Instilling a mindset of ‘humanitarian diplomacy’ into the culture of the National Society by encouraging people with skills in advocacy, negotiation, communication and other diplomatic experience or knowledge to bring their skills to National Societies, including their volunteers and staff.
  - Following up on key strategic objectives and continually cultivating relationships with decision makers and other opinion leaders, while exercising caution not to compromise independence. It is important to recognise that persistence over many years is often required in order to achieve diplomatic objectives.
3. Focus on areas of knowledge and expertise. It shall do this by:
  - Recognising that the responsibility to persuade is centrally connected to the knowledge, experience and mission of National Societies and the International Federation and hence is not a requirement to act on every subject of vulnerability.
  - Fostering a system of institutional memory. It is imperative that the best practices, strategies and knowledge gained by National Societies and the International Federation be reported and shared across all National Societies and the International Federation.
  - Adhering to an evidence based approach, thus enabling National Societies and the International Federation to build their humanitarian diplomacy base from a position of strength.
  - Demonstrating the integrity and delivery capacity of National Societies, at all levels, and the International Federation.
  - Utilising International Federation policies, Points of View papers, official speeches and other reports and documents.
4. Engage at appropriate times with partners outside the Movement, including Governments as well as NGOs. It shall do this by:
  - Recalling that the scale of modern humanitarian challenges frequently exceeds the coping capacity of individual States or humanitarian organizations.
  - Exercising responsibility when entering into partnerships, in particular by ensuring that the expectations of potential partners are transparent and the

obligations of each party, including with respect to resource mobilisation, are clearly expressed.

## **Scope**

The policy on humanitarian diplomacy has been established to provide National Societies and the International Federation with a more effective framework for advancing their core objectives. It is therefore an overarching policy, different from others in that it is designed to support the key messages of National Societies and the International Federation with greater visibility and influence, but not to change the substance of those messages. The establishment of this humanitarian diplomacy policy is therefore complementary and supportive of all existing policies, programs and strategies of the International Federation.

## **Responsibilities**

National Societies and the International Federation have a responsibility to ensure that all policies, programmes and initiatives are supported by this policy; that all staff and volunteers participating in such programmes are aware of the rationale and content of the policy; and that all relevant governmental, intergovernmental and non-governmental partners are adequately informed about this policy.

National Societies and the International Federation have a responsibility for ensuring that all relevant governance, volunteers and staff, at all levels, are equipped with the necessary skills and training to implement this policy. The International Federation will support National Societies' needs in this area.

## **Performance evaluation of the policy**

National Societies and the International Federation will develop indicators appropriate to their contexts, based on the Statement above and the impact their humanitarian diplomacy has had in expanding humanitarian space and support for the most vulnerable.