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Council of Delegates of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement

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International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement Policy on Addressing Mental Health and Psychosocial Needs

Progress report

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In December 2019, the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement (the Movement) adopted a **set of commitments** addressing mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) needs. These commitments are set out in [Resolution 2](#) of the 33rd International Conference and [Resolution 5](#) of the 2019 Council of Delegates, which includes the Movement policy.

This **progress report** for the 2022 Council of Delegates takes stock of the progress made in fulfilling the commitments and ambitions adopted. It highlights the key challenges identified for achieving the expected outcomes by 2023 and provides recommendations in addressing them. It is a midterm report covering activities and achievements in 2020 and 2021 and looking forward to the Council of Delegates and 34th International Conference in 2023.

The policy and resolutions have been operationalized into a **Roadmap for implementation** which identifies six Priority Action Areas and outlines the outputs and outcomes expected by 2023. Five working groups (WGs) were established and continue to implement activities focusing on specific areas of MHPSS. Priority Action Areas 5 and 6 were merged into one due to their interconnectedness. Following the adoption of the policy and resolutions in 2019, the focus in 2020 was on simultaneously **disseminating and creating awareness** around them internally and externally and on defining and developing the Roadmap for implementation. The year 2020 also saw the start of the **COVID-19 pandemic**, which delayed the development of the Roadmap as Movement components were focused on responding to the increasingly negative psychological consequences of this crisis. MHPSS in emergencies remains a priority.

The five WGs started their activities in 2021, with around 30 National Societies and other Movement components participating in one or more of them. The WGs enable the Movement to **share knowledge, lessons learned and experience** gained from MHPSS activities across the world, and their members have highlighted how this has led to improved collaboration, alignment and additional focus on MHPSS internally.

The WGs also started work on developing a **range of tools, resources and training materials**, which involved defining the components of a mandatory training course on basic psychosocial support, a validated menu of tools and resources to support National Societies, including assessments, monitoring and evaluation (M&E) and research, and training content for managers and leaders on the mental health and psychosocial well-being of staff and volunteers. The focus for the following years will be on the **roll-out and dissemination** of the tools, resources and training, with special emphasis on ensuring the **integration** of MHPSS into the working procedures of other technical sectors and Movement systems and processes.

There is a critical need to fund a **sustainable coordination and management structure**. The focus in 2022 will also be on involving **more National Societies and other Movement components** in the coordination and management bodies and in the WGs.

1) INTRODUCTION

Mental health and psychosocial well-being are **critical to the survival, recovery and daily functioning** of people affected by armed conflicts, natural disasters and other emergencies. There is **clear evidence** that unmet mental health and psychosocial needs have far-reaching and long-term negative human, social and economic impacts, which affect individuals, communities and society as a whole, and that meeting these needs is critical to achieving universal health coverage and the Sustainable Development Goals.







In December 2019, the Movement adopted a **set of commitments** addressing MHPSS needs. These

commitments are set out in Resolution 2 of the 33rd International Conference and Resolution 5 of the 2019 Council of Delegates, which includes the Movement policy. The policy applies to all three components of the Movement – National Societies, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC).

The commitments have been operationalized into a **Roadmap for implementation**, with a view to strengthening the Movement’s collective response to MHPSS needs in line with the policy and resolutions. The Roadmap supports a **strategic and coordinated approach** to implementation and identifies **six Priority Action Areas**. It sets out key activities for National Societies, the IFRC and the ICRC and for the Movement as a whole and outlines the outputs and outcomes expected by 2023. Five WGs were established by a number of National Societies and other Movement components to support overall Movement commitment to Roadmap implementation. Priority Action Areas 5 and 6 were merged due to their interconnectedness.

The illustration below provides an overview of the Priority Action Areas and the expected outcomes for National Societies, the ICRC, the IFRC and the Movement as a whole by 2023.

Priority Action Areas

- 1  Guarantee a **basic level of psychosocial support** and integrate mental health and psychosocial support across sectors
- 2  Develop a **holistic MHPSS approach** between Movement components and in collaboration with other actors
- 3  **Protect and promote** the mental health and psychosocial well-being of **staff and volunteers**
- 4  **Demonstrate** the **impact** of MHPSS interventions through research, evidence, monitoring and evaluation
- 5  Strengthen **resource mobilization** for MHPSS in humanitarian response
- 6  **Mobilize political support** for MHPSS in emergencies at global, regional and national levels

Outcomes by 2023

- A basic level of psychosocial support is **established** in National Societies, the IFRC and the ICRC, and MHPSS considerations are **integrated** into other key humanitarian services
- Access** to quality MHPSS services across the Movement’s MHPSS framework **has increased** in selected operational contexts
- A **supportive and caring working environment** is achieved and sustained across the Movement
- The **impact** of MHPSS interventions and innovative approaches is **documented** more **widely**
- The **financial resources** for MHPSS have **increased** and
- The **commitments** set out in resolution 2 are **reflected** in national and international policy and legal frameworks

2) BACKGROUND

The idea of developing a joint plan to support implementation of the outcomes of the 2019 Movement Statutory Meetings was introduced early in the project, but no previous format or process for approval existed. The Roadmap was developed jointly by National Societies through the MOMENT project’s Movement Reference Group, the IFRC and the ICRC under the coordination of the MOMENT project. It was approved by the MOMENT project’s steering committee. Although the Roadmap is not formally binding on National Societies, it has been positively received. Many have committed to supporting its implementation, with more than 120 National Society representatives from across all regions participating in the five WGs. The MOMENT project, however, came to an

end in 2020, and an interim steering committee and coordination body were established, along with the WGs which were established in April 2021 to oversee and coordinate the Roadmap implementation. The steering committee consists of the Danish, Swedish and Lebanese National Red Cross Societies, the ICRC, the IFRC and the IFRC Reference Centre for Psychosocial Support (PS Centre). The interim coordination body has members from the IFRC, the ICRC and the IFRC PS Centre. Both bodies will continue their work at least until the end of 2022.

This is a **midterm report** covering activities and achievements in 2020 and 2021 and looking forward to the Council of Delegates and 34th International Conference in 2023. It is informed by **five individual progress reports** from the WGs, the MOMENT Project Evaluation Report, [the joint IFRC/ICRC COVID-19 Report](#) and the [2019](#) and [2021](#) Movement-wide MHPSS survey reports.

3) ANALYSIS / PROGRESS

A) Progress in 2020

Dissemination of the policy (Council of Delegates resolution) and the International Conference resolution

A dissemination package including short animated videos and a standard presentation introducing the policy, the MHPSS framework, the resolution and the Roadmap has been developed in Arabic, English, French and Spanish. Two webinars with more than 120 participants were successfully carried out with the aim of increasing awareness and knowledge of the resolution and policy and supporting the roll-out of the Roadmap in the years to come. Webinars in Arabic, French and Spanish were also conducted in 2021, building on the same format and content. All dissemination materials, including recordings of the webinars, are available on the IFRC PS Centre's [website](#).

COVID-19 pandemic response and high-level advocacy initiatives

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a strong negative impact on the mental health and psychosocial well-being of communities across the world, raising worries and fears about losing loved ones, becoming sick and overburdened health and social welfare systems. These are still key concerns today. As a consequence, much of 2020 was devoted to the immediate response to the pandemic by Movement components, which delayed the development of the Roadmap but also paved the way for a strengthened focus on MHPSS. During the autumn of 2020, the leadership of the ICRC and the IFRC participated in several high-level events and published the [joint report](#) "*The greatest need was to be listened to*": *The importance of mental health and psychosocial support during COVID-19*.

B) Progress in 2021

The most profound achievement since the adoption of the resolution and policy in 2019 has been the wide-scale mobilization of Movement components across the world to collaborate, share knowledge and insights and take action to strengthen mental health and psychosocial support in emergencies.

By the end of 2021, 47 National Societies and other Movement components had been involved in supporting the activities of one or more of the five WGs, ensuring that the impact of the activities reached organizations and communities across the world. While the COVID-19 pandemic has continued to disrupt the activities of the WGs, it has also clearly shown the need for a sustained and strengthened focus on MHPSS in emergencies, enabling members to push for more dedicated resources for MHPSS and for more Movement-wide emergency responses to include a specific focus on MHPSS.

Priority Action Area 1: Guarantee a basic level of psychosocial support and integrating MHPSS across sectors

The Working Group for Priority Action Area 1 aims to guarantee that a basic level of psychosocial support is provided by all Movement components. This includes ensuring that National Societies/Movement components are able to assess needs, refer and advocate across the full

spectrum of the Movement's MHPSS framework. Additionally, the WG works to ensure that MHPSS is integrated into other sectors.

The WG has succeeded in defining the minimum criteria and components of basic psychosocial support training with a duration of 30 to 60 minutes. The core components are awareness of active listening skills, supportive communication and self-care. A menu of existing resources for basic training was compiled and shared, with a focus in 2022 on advocating for the inclusion of mandatory basic MHPSS training for all Movement components.

Additionally, the WG collated and validated existing MHPSS assessments, M&E tools and preparedness plans from both Movement partners and other international agencies. The menu of tools and resources was subsequently shared with MHPSS network partners, with a focus in 2022 on integrating the menu options into existing tools.

Priority Action Area 2: Develop a holistic MHPSS approach between Movement components and in collaboration with other actors in six priority contexts

The Working Group for Priority Action Area 2 seeks to strengthen collaboration and coordination among Movement components in six priority contexts. This includes ensuring collaboration between National Societies, the IFRC and the ICRC on assessing needs, undertaking MHPSS activities and referring and advocating in relation to the full spectrum of the Movement's [MHPSS framework](#).

The WG has identified six priority contexts. Four are country-based – Yemen, Syria, Iraq and Ukraine – and two are theme-based – COVID-19 Colombia and COVID-19 peer-to-peer support. Actors in each context have developed and presented their activities across the layers of the Movement's MHPSS framework, showing the activities in each layer of the pyramid. In 2020 and through to November 2021, lessons learned and challenges related to joint Movement collaboration on the priority contexts were shared in presentations, followed by discussions. Technical meetings are planned for each context in 2022, where thematic topics (to be determined) will be examined.

Priority Action Area 3: Protect and promote the mental health and psychosocial well-being of staff and volunteers

The Working Group for Priority Action Area 3 works to ensure that the mental health and psychosocial well-being of staff and volunteers is recognized as a priority across the Movement, that the necessary systems are in place to achieve this and that management and leaders have the necessary knowledge and skills to support such efforts.

The WG has started its work to identify, select and agree on the training methods, content and resources needed to conduct training for managers and leaders and develop training content. Key messages have been drafted to help secure commitment from Movement leadership and management to promoting the mental health and psychosocial well-being of staff and volunteers. In 2022, the focus will be on disseminating the key messages, adopting and developing training/resource tools for management and leaders from National Societies, the IFRC and the ICRC and advocating for the recognition of staff and volunteer well-being as a priority across the Movement.

Priority Action Area 4: Demonstrate the impact of MHPSS interventions through research, evidence, monitoring and evaluation

The overall expected outcome of the Working Group for Priority Action Area 4 is to have the impact of MHPSS activities and promising approaches documented and disseminated more widely both within and outside the Movement. The WG focuses on supporting the Movement in documenting examples of M&E and research.

It started identifying existing guidance to support practitioners in engaging in operational research which will contribute to ensuring that actors are documenting the impact of their MHPSS activities. Simultaneously, the WG began collecting examples of high-quality M&E initiatives within the

Movement, a task which will continue in 2022 and 2023 alongside efforts to disseminate M&E initiatives more widely.

Connections have been established with existing research coordination groups (e.g. the Red Cross and Red Crescent Research Consortium (RC3) and the RCRC Research Network on MHPSS) which will be actively used in collecting and disseminating information on M&E initiatives.

Priority Action Areas 5 and 6: Strengthen resource mobilization for MHPSS in humanitarian response and mobilize political support for MHPSS

The Working Groups for Priority Action Areas 5 and 6 were merged due to the interconnectedness of these two areas. The WG aims to increase the resources allocated to addressing MHPSS needs and advocate for mental health and psychosocial well-being as a global, regional and national humanitarian and health priority.

A key priority in 2021 was identifying the Movement's baseline and formulating the strategic direction for the required growth in resources, advocacy positioning and engagement in strategic norm- and policy-shaping forums. This has included developing a resource mobilization strategy and a humanitarian diplomacy plan outlining key priorities and the steps required to achieve the expected outcomes. It has also included developing three sets of key messages to be used by the ICRC, the IFRC and National Societies in internal and/or external stakeholder engagement.

A significant platform for global advocacy in 2021 was the 3rd Global Ministerial Mental Health Summit, which was hosted by France in October 2021. The Movement was represented at the event and contributed to highlighting key messages advocating for MHPSS. The WG will continue to coordinate participation, promote resource mobilization and undertake MHPSS advocacy at Movement-related events and with various stakeholders throughout 2022.

C) Challenges and opportunities

A key challenge identified in 2021 is the **lack of a sustainable leadership and coordination structure**; an interim coordination body has been in place since the end of 2020. The absence of a sustainable structure has a negative impact on the ability to make strategic decisions in relation to the Roadmap and on providing coordination and support for the WGs. At the end of 2021, the ICRC, the IFRC, the IFRC PS Centre, the Danish Red Cross and the Swedish Red Cross expressed their full commitment to another year of advancing the leadership and coordination structure. They further undertook to develop a sustainable and long-term leadership and coordination commitment to strengthening MHPSS across the Movement beyond 2023.

A lack of **funding and resourcing** was highlighted by several WGs in 2021. This applies both to the overall Roadmap coordination structure and the WGs who find themselves struggling to gain momentum as no (human) resources are available apart from the time the WG members devote to this work on a voluntary basis. Several WGs experienced fluctuating participation by their members. At the end of 2021, the Danish Red Cross, the Swedish Red Cross, the ICRC, the IFRC and the IFRC PS Centre committed to funding the interim coordination body and the WG activity budgets for 2022 and to pursuing new funding opportunities.

The challenge most commonly reported by the WGs is difficulties associated with engaging a wide range of National Societies and Movement components **across the different regions, time zones and languages**. Some WGs have opted to organize identical meetings in different time zones to enable broad participation, but the lack of translation support remains a challenge, with WGs often relying on the availability of co-leads or other WG members to provide translation.

The lack of an **online platform for sharing and disseminating** the resources and tools means that much of the work is currently not readily available to actors within and outside the Movement. This has further hindered the development of strong synergies among the WGs themselves, leading to gaps in information and collaboration. The launch of an online platform is a priority for 2022.

D) Next steps

The main Movement components involved have committed dedicated human resources and funds to the interim coordination body and the WG activity budgets for 2022. Furthermore, the 2021 WG co-leads committed to another year of supporting and coordinating the engagement of National Societies and other Movement components in implementing the six Priority Action Areas. Following the identification and development of tools and resources within each of the workstreams under the Roadmap for implementation, the WGs will **roll out and disseminate** the tools and resources across the Movement, integrating them into other technical areas over the coming years.

Despite the momentum resulting from the adoption of the milestone commitments to MHPSS, substantial challenges and risks have been identified in relation to the current interim set-up that affect their implementation. These challenges and risks range from weak leadership and coordination to insufficient funding and representation. The realization of the Movement's MHPSS commitments is dependent on a Movement-wide representative and sustainable leadership and coordination model that can ensure implementation. A shared leadership and coordination model is therefore proposed to govern and coordinate implementation of the Roadmap. It comprises a **Leadership Group, an Implementation Group and a RCRC Movement MHPSS Hub**. In a phased approach implemented over 2022, the MHPSS Leadership Group and Implementation Group will be set up, and a parallel process will be carried out to reform the current IFRC PS Centre into a joint RCRC Movement MHPSS Hub.

4) IMPLEMENTATION AND MONITORING

Monitoring of the implementation of activities under the Roadmap to meet the commitments stipulated in the policy and resolutions is conducted by the WG members and the interim coordination body. This is a midterm report, and a final report will be produced for the 2023 Council of Delegates. Movement-wide surveys on MHPSS were carried out in 2019 and 2021 and will be supplemented by a final survey in 2023 to document progress made across the Movement.

The interim coordination body organized a **State of Play Movement Workshop** in December 2021, with support from the British, Danish and Swedish National Societies, in order to take stock of and discuss progress in realizing the Movement's commitments on MHPSS since the Statutory Meetings in 2019 and with a focus on the Roadmap implementation. Due to COVID-19, only a handful of people (20) met in person in Malmö, Sweden, but more than 60 others from across the Movement joined the sessions virtually.

As part of the workshop, an online high-level roundtable for managers and leaders in the Movement was organized to discuss how they can support and promote implementation of the MHPSS Roadmap. The roundtable discussion provided leaders and senior managers with an opportunity to identify gaps, assess progress and outline priority actions for Roadmap implementation in these areas. The focus was on two main Roadmap Priority Action Areas where managers and leaders have an important role to play:

- 1) ensuring that a basic level of MHPSS is integrated across sectors;
- 2) protecting and promoting the mental health and psychosocial well-being of staff and volunteers.

Movement-wide survey on MHPSS in 2021

The first Movement-wide MHPSS survey was conducted in 2019 and provided a critical baseline against which to measure and track progress in operationalizing and implementing the policy and resolutions. In 2021, a midline survey was conducted providing information on progress and areas for improvement for MHPSS across the Movement.

Status 2021**88,000**
trained in PFA in 2021**40,000**
trained in basic psychosocial
support in 2021**~90%**
of the Movement provide MHPSS
services in emergencies**76%**
of the Movement identify limited
funds as a challenge**Change****+100%****+100%****+0%****-10%**

The results show a positive trend, indicating that Movement components are increasingly providing MHPSS services in emergencies and are able to refer people to more specialized mental health services and that the majority of Movement components intend to expand their MHPSS activities. However, both in 2019 and 2021, a lack of funding is highlighted as the most significant challenge. The survey data also shows a marked increase in the number of Movement psychologists and social workers and a doubling in the number of staff and volunteers trained in psychological first aid (PFA).

The figure illustrates some of the findings from the 2021 Movement-wide survey on MHPSS.

Conclusion and recommendations

In December 2019, the Movement adopted a set of commitments to address mental health and psychosocial needs. These commitments have been operationalized into a Roadmap for implementation, with five WGs working towards strengthening MHPSS in the Movement by 2023.

This report shows that **significant progress** has been achieved since the adoption of the policy and resolutions to strengthen the Movement's work on MHPSS in emergencies. The operationalization of the commitments into the Roadmap for implementation and the establishment of the five WGs have provided a solid foundation for driving enhanced focus on MHPSS in emergencies across the entire Movement.

The Roadmap for implementation is ambitious in its attempt to strengthen focus on MHPSS across a wide range of workstreams, often requiring engagement with key actors and organizations outside the Movement's MHPSS sphere, an area that needs continuous support from all Movement components.

A total of 47 National Societies and several other Movement components have contributed to the WG activities, and there is a strong ambition to include **even more Movement components** in the coming years. The WGs have developed and collated a range of tools, resources and definitions to support Movement MHPSS activities and facilitated the exchange of lessons learned and experiences between Movement components across the world.

In the coming years, the WGs will continue to ensure **enhanced collaboration** and knowledge sharing across the Movement and will be **rolling out and disseminating** the tools, training materials and resources that have already been developed.

The report identifies a need to develop and fund a **sustainable leadership and communication platform and implementation structure** to support and coordinate activities under the Roadmap for implementation. The first steps have been taken towards achieving this, and it will be a key focus in 2022.

Finally, it is recommended to include the resolutions and policy on MHPSS as an **agenda item at the Council of Delegates and International Conference in 2023**.