



# ENGAGEMENT SESSIONS

National Societies outlining the challenges of tomorrow

## ABSTRACT

In 2017 six engagement sessions were conducted for 78 National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies from five different regions. Their task was to identify new trends and emerging issues which will affect the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement in the future. The main topics of concern – increasing social fragmentation, rise of extremism, demographic shifts and funding challenges – will be explored in more depth during the RC<sup>2</sup> Forum in Antalya on 9 November 2017. This report draws together the outcomes of this field-based consultation.

The environment we are operating in is evolving at breakneck pace. Changes are more unpredictable than before. How will the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement be affected by those changes? Which trends and emerging issues will shape our tomorrow in a tangible way? What are the opportunities the Movement should not miss and the challenges it will need to address?

### Introduction: Why run engagement sessions?

The engagement sessions were the first step of the RC<sup>2</sup> Forum initiative, whose aim is to contribute to a **more relevant and impactful International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent** by influencing its agenda and fostering greater National Society ownership. It also promotes **forward-thinking** by identifying and discussing **trends and emerging humanitarian issues**.

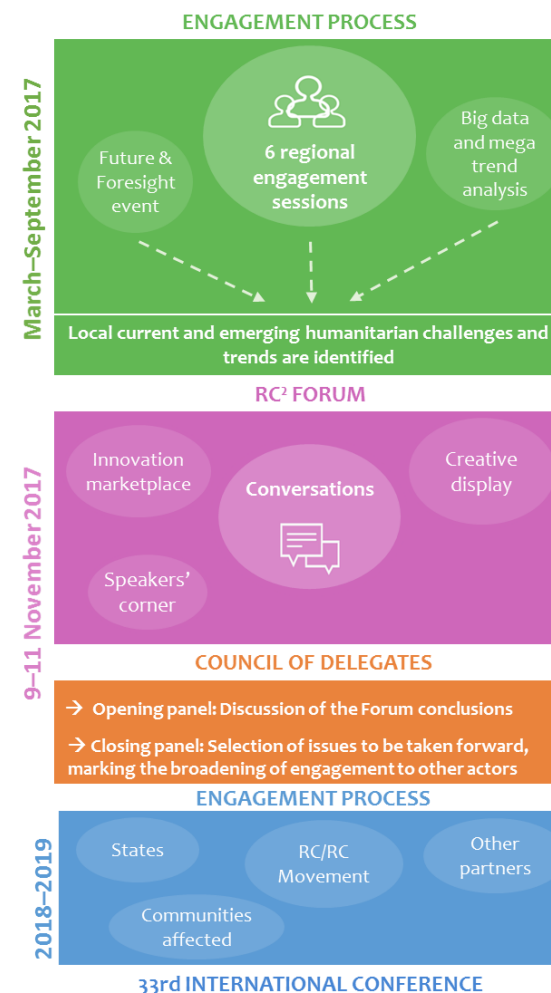
Between March and September 2017 six regional engagement sessions were conducted, putting to work 78 National Societies from five different regions, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). Together they brainstormed on which **local and regional emerging issues and trends could profoundly impact the Movement in the near future** and which related challenges and opportunities we should be anticipating. The outcomes of these sessions served as the basis to develop the RC<sup>2</sup> Forum agenda.

### How did the engagement sessions contribute to meeting the RC<sup>2</sup> Forum objectives?

#### The methodology:

Jointly curated by the ICRC and the IFRC and facilitated by an external expert on futures and foresight, the engagement sessions followed a methodology that allowed participants to think strategically about the issues that may arise in the future by projecting and building scenarios. This approach implies that the world is shifting, pluralistic, ambiguous and novel, which requires us to develop the ability to anticipate. It involves broadening the realm of what is possible and identifying the new phenomena and realities that may appear.

Participants in the engagement sessions worked on outlining probable futures and scenarios through group and individual exercises. Participatory and interactive discussions drawing on “out-of-the-box” thinking encouraged participants to reflect on trends and emerging humanitarian issues.



The engagement sessions took place at regional level and involved 78 National Societies represented by leadership, youth representatives and programme managers. The sessions were mostly hosted by the National Societies of the countries where the meetings took place:

1. **Panama City**, Panama, 15 March (Spanish): 13 Central and Latin American National Societies: Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, Panama and Peru.
2. **Rome**, Italy, 7–8 June (English): 14 Central Asian and European National Societies: Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Denmark, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Montenegro, Norway, Spain, Sweden, Turkey and Turkmenistan. A representative from the Standing Commission of the Red Cross and Red Crescent attended.
3. **Cairo**, Egypt, 3–4 July (Arabic): 7 Middle Eastern and North African National Societies: Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Libya, Palestine and Yemen.
4. **Vienna**, Austria, 20–21 July (English): 17 Central Asian and European National Societies: Albania, Austria, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Estonia, Finland, France, Iceland, Italy, Latvia, Monaco, Romania, Russia, Slovakia, Sweden, Tajikistan and United Kingdom.
5. **Tehran**, Iran, 28–29 August (English): 9 South and South-East Asian National Societies: Bangladesh, India, Iran, Malaysia, Maldives, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Viet Nam.
6. **Dakar**, Senegal, 12–13 September (French): 17 National Societies of French-speaking Africa: Benin, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cabo Verde, Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Madagascar, Mauritius, Niger, Republic of the Congo, Rwanda, Sao Tome and Principe, Senegal, Seychelles, Chad and Togo.

The sessions were not designed to produce representative results, but rather to get a snapshot of the challenges and opportunities that the Movement will need to address in the coming years. This was a milestone in the RC<sup>2</sup> Forum initiative. There will be several other opportunities until the next International Conference, including during the RC<sup>2</sup> Forum day, for more National Societies to provide their input.

### What are the issues of tomorrow?

The participants of the six engagement sessions identified several issues they believe will have an increasing impact on the way the Movement operates. Here are some of the key issues identified:

**Shrinking volunteer base:** Employment patterns and economic needs are changing. The Movement may no longer be in a position to continue the recruitment practices that it has implemented until now, or to retain volunteers based on its reputation alone. The question of whether it is business as usual was raised as participants wondered about the feasibility of a Movement without volunteers.

**Demographic shifts:** While demographic patterns vary dramatically between countries, population ageing, lower birth rates and higher life expectancy will have profound effects on certain countries and populations. Others may see a possible population boom, with a growing young population. Both scenarios present opportunities and challenges, but there will certainly be increased pressure on countries' economies and their capacity to provide comprehensive social services. In addition, these changes may increase population movements.

**Ecological challenges:** Water and food scarcity and climate change are interrelated environmental factors with the potential to severely affect and/or exacerbate ongoing challenges.

**Fragmentation of society:** New/different sets of values, migration policies, populism, extremism and terrorism are reshaping the way people relate to and support each other. Societies seem to be more divided than ever before, while at the same time individuals are more isolated. These changes may have a profound impact on how the Movement works and supports the communities it serves.

**Lack of humanitarian funding:** A decline in funding from traditional donors and the increasing number and diversity of actors involved in aid will drive further competition for resources and access, necessitating the use of more creative and innovative funding mechanisms. Humanitarian actors, including the Movement, will need to broaden their engagement with these new actors and explore innovative financing and new models for resource mobilization.

**Lack of trust in institutions:** In an increasingly media-exposed world, information and disinformation can rapidly shift people's perceptions of their social and political institutions and the services they provide. The diminishing trust in political institutions was highlighted as one of the issues that may have an indirect impact on the Movement.

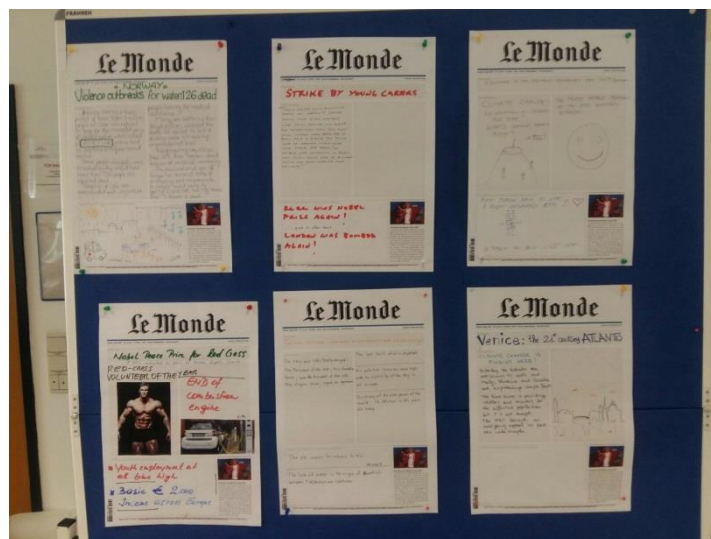
<p><b>Panama</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- unemployment</li> <li>- violence</li> <li>- ecological challenges</li> <li>- migration (deportees)</li> <li>- shrinking volunteer base</li> <li>- lack of humanitarian funding</li> <li>- non-transmissible chronic diseases</li> <li>- effects of new media</li> <li>- fragmentation of family unit and community</li> </ul>	<p><b>Rome</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- migration (unemployment)</li> <li>- demographic shifts</li> <li>- water and food insecurity</li> <li>- lack of trust in institutions</li> <li>- lack of humanitarian funding</li> <li>- new identities</li> <li>- shift in value systems</li> </ul>	<p><b>Cairo</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- fragmentation of society</li> <li>- water and food insecurity</li> <li>- demographic shifts</li> <li>- lack of humanitarian funding</li> <li>- migration (lack of education)</li> <li>- urbanization</li> <li>- Fundamental Principles in armed conflict</li> <li>- RCRC auxiliary role</li> </ul>
<p><b>Vienna</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- demographic ageing</li> <li>- violence and extremism</li> <li>- shift in value systems</li> <li>- water and food insecurity</li> <li>- unemployment</li> <li>- fragmentation of society</li> <li>- pandemics</li> <li>- new poverty</li> <li>- migration (internal)</li> <li>- lack of trust in institutions</li> <li>- cyber warfare</li> </ul>	<p><b>Tehran</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- natural disasters</li> <li>- ecological challenges</li> <li>- migration (climate change)</li> <li>- cyber warfare and CBRN proliferation</li> <li>- urbanization</li> <li>- pandemics</li> <li>- non-transmissible chronic diseases</li> <li>- fragmentation of society</li> <li>- political and institutional breakdowns</li> </ul>	<p><b>Dakar</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- pandemics</li> <li>- migration (returnees)</li> <li>- ecological challenges (disappearance of coastal islands)</li> <li>- unemployment violence and insecurity</li> <li>- water and food insecurity</li> <li>- urbanization</li> </ul>

**Population movements:** In addition to conflict, unemployment and ecological challenges are increasingly important factors that could prompt people to leave their countries of origin. Shifts in migration policies, as seen currently in many parts of the world, may create a new category of people – deportees – who will need support.

**The Movement’s Fundamental Principles and auxiliary role:** The Fundamental Principles and auxiliary role vis-à-vis governments define the Movement. A changing political and social environment may increasingly challenge these important tenets. What happens when people’s trust in institutions decline and the Movement is perceived as another arm of the political establishment? When actors increasingly disregard the principles and values the organization relies on? Faced with a more fragile and unstable political environment, how can the Movement ensure that it remains neutral, impartial and independent?

**Unemployment:** Five million jobs will disappear because of automation, according to forecasts. The shift towards hyper-specialization and mechanization will have an impact not only on the economy, but also on social set-ups and on the ability of governments to provide welfare.

**Urbanization:** Estimates say that by 2025, 66 per cent of the population is expected to live in cities. This will create significant social, economic, environmental and security challenges which may intensify existing crises.



While each of the issues had distinct regional undertones, they also had clear global dimensions. In fact, the difference between regional and global narrowed when it came to prioritizing the most pressing challenges. This shows that as a community of human beings we have similar values and face similar challenges, and that increasing interconnectedness increases expectations of what we ought to become as a Movement.

### Conclusion

A quick analysis of the issues that were identified led to their arrangement into two broad categories: societal shifts and the way we work. In both categories there are issues believed to require more in-depth and sustained discussion, and matters that are already being discussed but require further exploration because of the evolving environment. This categorization will also serve to provide some coherence and structure for the Forum agenda and complement other issues addressed during the statutory meetings in November.

The morning of the Forum, which will be dedicated to societal shifts, will look at dynamics affecting society as a result of economic, political or technological changes. This segment aims at understanding the context and inspiring participants to ask questions about the future and how they relate to the

Movement. The afternoon session, entitled “WWW: The Way We Work”, will focus on how the Movement operates. Through panels/round-tables and simulations, the aim is to explore new operating models and come up with tools and examples of practices that may help the Movement deal better with future challenges. Participants will come away with useful ideas and knowledge to apply back home.

The Forum’s key findings will be presented on the following day, at the Council of Delegates. Eventually, the results of this work will feed into the agenda of the 33rd International Conference in 2019. This one-day jump into the future is an extraordinary opportunity to shape the Movement’s strategy and help ensure it is ready for the challenges of tomorrow.

We look forward to seeing all National Society, ICRC and IFRC representatives at the RC<sup>2</sup> Forum.

### Thanks

The ICRC and the IFRC would like to thank the 78 National Societies for their lively participation in the engagement sessions. Those discussions led to the identification of core emerging issues, which the Movement may have to address swiftly to remain effective.

Special thanks to the National Societies that volunteered to host the engagement sessions: the Italian Red Cross, the Egyptian Red Crescent, the Austrian Red Cross, the Iranian Red Crescent and the Senegalese Red Cross, as well as the ICRC field delegations and IFRC regional offices that provided invaluable support.