



International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
Fédération internationale des Sociétés de la Croix-Rouge et du Croissant-Rouge
Federación Internacional de Sociedades de la Cruz Roja y de la Media Luna Roja
الاتحاد الدولي لجمعيات الصليب الأحمر والهلال الأحمر

International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies intervention: Public health preparedness and response Agenda Item 2 (EB142)

Dialogue with the Director-General

Director General, Excellences and colleagues,

The WHO and the IFRC, through its 190 National Red Cross Red Crescent Societies, have a long history of working together to ensure everyone, everywhere has access to the necessary health care they need to live a healthy and productive life with dignity. On behalf of the Secretary General of the IFRC I would like to take this opportunity to state our continued commitment to working closely with WHO.

If we want to build a better, healthier future for people all over the world, we need to work together. Not only the organisations present here today, but also with local health actors.

At the IFRC, we believe local actors play a critical role in meeting health needs and in contributing to national health systems all over the world. We see this every day where we work.

We have also learnt that the impact of Red Cross Red Crescent volunteers and other local actors goes beyond simply their proximity. They bring an understanding of the context of unaddressed risks, of local cultures and practices, of vulnerabilities and inequalities that are critical if a community's physical, mental and social well-being is to improve.

We need to invest in the operational and institutional capacities of local actors and community health workers to maximise their potential.

We also need to do more to ensure the safety of local healthcare workers and volunteers to ensure they can carry out their work without harm. We need to continue to collectively speak out and stand firm on the fact that they are not, and should never be a target.

But there is another fundamental part to the health ecosystem that also needs increased attention and investment. Water, sanitation and hygiene – or WASH for short.

The SDG mapping of the 'Progress on Drinking Water, Sanitation and Hygiene' from the Joint Monitoring Programme (JMP) found that 844 million people still lack basic drinking water services and 2.3 billion people still lack basic sanitation services.

The lack of these most basic of services is the key reason why, in our supposed modern era, we still see so many deaths from cholera and diarrhoea.

At the IFRC we are therefore proud to be part of the joint initiative of the *Roadmap to End Cholera* seeking to ending predictable outbreaks of cholera by 2030 and focusing first on the hotspots and populations most in need. We are responding to the threat of cholera through our recently

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launched OneWASH approach, combining and integrating interventions in health, WASH, nutrition, livestock water and environmental sanitation.

We would like to propose, in the light of the clear impact of WASH on health status, that WASH receives adequate attention in all health-related discussions, including over the next days and at the upcoming WHA.

Finally, health emergencies. We are committed to early and anticipatory action to health emergencies in collaboration with WHO, governments and other stakeholders. Investing early saves lives.

But early action and rapid response, especially at a stage when case numbers are very small, requires all to be involved - including donors - being comfortable with, and fully supporting, a 'no regrets' approach.

So, what would success in the field of health emergencies look like this year? Ideally there would be little to see. We would have, jointly, anticipated the risks, invested early and prevented outbreak. We would have saved lives before they are even at risk. We would all have been a little less needed in crisis response and a lot busier instead in building sustainable health for all.

Whatever the future, our 190 National Societies and their volunteers will continue to be present before, during and after health emergencies.

Thank you.

