

A photograph of a white IFRC van with red stripes and a red cross on its side, driving through a debris-strewn urban area. In the background, there are destroyed cars and piles of rubble under a clear sky.

# Strengthening the Resilience of Urban Communities: Our Way Forward

## Background

In 2022, the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement Council of Delegates adopted a Resolution on “Strengthening the Resilience of Urban Communities: Our Way Forward.” **This Resolution calls for investing more into building the resilience of urban communities by strengthening the auxiliary role at the municipal level to provide a durable legal base for urban work.**

The Movement Urban Resilience Working Group (MURWG) on “Advocacy and strengthening the auxiliary role at municipal level” supported the development of a globally applicable set of Principles of Action that will be presented to the Council of Delegates for adoption in 2026 and furthermore presented at the International Conference in 2028.

A series of case studies looking at four National Societies, a global level survey, two global level consultation sessions, and the results of the May 2022 General Assembly workshop were taken into account and subsequently informed the deliberations of the MURWG and the development of the Principles of Action.

## The Rationale

City managers, municipal authorities, and service providers oversee crisis preparedness, disaster risk management, climate adaptation as well as public health, housing, provision of basic amenities (like water, electricity etc.) and delivery of social services in urban settings. Leveraging the auxiliary role at the municipal level could unlock new opportunities to serve communities more effectively.

## Challenges faced at municipal-level

- Lack of awareness** by municipal officials (or National Society staff) of what the auxiliary role means, leading to missed opportunities and misplaced engagement.
- Resource disparity** that prevents municipal authorities and National Society branches from investing in preventative work and sustained relationship-building.
- Weak or absent legislation** creates unclear frameworks that leave partnerships vulnerable to political changes.

## Factors for success

- Strong legal and policy frameworks** between National Societies and municipal authorities
- Visible operational presence** in urban communities before, during, and after crises, while being clear about the scope of Red Cross and Red Crescent activities, creates trust that opens doors to municipal partnerships.
- Consistent engagement** through regular meetings, briefings or official visits is needed to ensure knowledge of the auxiliary role remains strong.
- Roots in community trust** strengthen the auxiliary role and create legitimacy through volunteers embedded in neighbourhoods and co-designed resilience projects.

## Principles of Action (PoA)

The PoA emphasize strengthening preparedness, trust, and partnerships to address multi-hazard risks in diverse urban settings. They call for inclusive, community-driven approaches that build social cohesion and engage a wide range of stakeholders. NSs are encouraged to adapt mechanisms to anticipate and reduce vulnerabilities.

## How National Societies can secure a stronger role within municipal systems

- Leverage both formal and informal mechanisms, balancing MoUs and legal frameworks with trust-based relationships and community partnerships.
- Invest in operational excellence at branch level with targeted technical capacity building, and clear internal education on the meaning and value of the auxiliary role, to ensure consistent service delivery that demonstrates value to municipalities.
- Develop structured engagement plans with municipal authorities, including regular briefings, joint exercises, and mechanisms to re-introduce the auxiliary role to new officials after elections.
- Embed community participation in all municipal engagement to ensure interventions are legitimate, sustainable, and inclusive.

## IFRC can support National Society efforts by:

Supporting legislative advocacy for legal frameworks that embed and clarify the auxiliary role at municipal level to enable durable local partnerships and protect National Societies' humanitarian space.

Providing advocacy materials that National Societies can use to explain the auxiliary role in simple and accessible terms to municipal officials.

Supporting technical capacity-building at branch level, including training modules, peer-to-peer exchanges, and guidance on municipal engagement.

Facilitating resource mobilization by helping National Societies explore joint funding models, co-financing with municipalities, or donor support targeted at municipal collaboration.

Promoting knowledge-sharing through case studies, regional forums, and repositories of good practice that highlight how auxiliary roles are being implemented in diverse contexts.

**Champion the Principles of Action to promote urban engagement across the Movement.**

