

Joint Statement of the Venezuelan Red Cross, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and the International Committee of the Red Cross on the International Red Cross Red Crescent Movement's response in Venezuela

The Venezuelan Red Cross (VRC) has been fulfilling its mission throughout the territory of Venezuela since 1895, providing humanitarian services to the most vulnerable people through its hospitals, its programs in health, disaster management, youth, dissemination and communication, tracing, volunteerism and its nursing school. These programs bring together an enthusiastic group of volunteers inspired by the Fundamental Principles.

Over the course of the present year, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) have supported the Venezuelan Red Cross to increase and strengthen its pre-hospital and first aid services. With ICRC support, the VRC has distributed emergency surgical material to 24 hospitals that had been prepositioned in 9 of its branches. Additionally, its 8 hospitals and 24 clinics located throughout the country provide health care in the communities where they are located. In this same period, the VRC has provided first aid courses to 2,765 people across 8 branches to increase its pool of first aiders, and strengthen basic first aid skills of VRC's volunteers and community members. With IFRC support, the headquarters of the VRC set up a situation room to coordinate its first aid teams.

In coordination with the ICRC, the VRC is also conducting public awareness campaigns, mainly through social media, to consistently provide information regarding the Fundamental Principles of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement (the Movement), and the respect for the Red Cross emblem and health services. The ICRC and the IFRC provide support to the VRC for its activities nation-wide.

The ICRC has been supporting the VRC with the development of national coordination mechanisms; with funding; and with technical expertise to provide first aid services and to transfer patients with critical injuries to hospitals. The ICRC has been helping the VRC to explain its role with regard to its first aid services and to help those in need to access them, in accordance to the Fundamental Principles. The ICRC continues its activities with the security forces regarding the international standards on the use of force and provides regular training for health personnel in treating people injured by firearms and explosives. It has also intervened on the use and respect of the Red Cross emblem in Venezuela. In addition, the ICRC supports the VRC's health brigades servicing the most remote communities along the Colombian border.

The IFRC action in Venezuela is framed within its ongoing support to the National Society's organizational development and initiatives in disaster risk reduction and disaster management; volunteering; community health; and social inclusion. In recent years, the IFRC has worked with the VRC to strengthen community resilience in disaster management.

At the present time, in coordination with the ICRC, a DREF operation was launched to assist the organizational preparedness of the VRC with a particular focus on the provision of first aid, community-based first aid training and psychosocial support.

Movement Coordination

Further to the resolution of December 2015 Council of Delegates on the strengthening of Movement coordination and cooperation and the IFRC's Principles and Rules for humanitarian assistance, the President of the VRC, the Regional Director of the IFRC for the Americas and the ICRC Regional Director for the Americas held a mini summit on 8 August to discuss and

set out the main operational strategies for the Movement in Venezuela. Given the environment in which the Movement is working, they decided to focus on the operational response, the management of external relations, security, communication and internal coordination of the Movement.

They also agreed that the combined and complementary efforts of Movement partners in Venezuela should contribute to the progressive scale up of the VRC's operational response to humanitarian needs. In order to do so, the roles and responsibilities of each Movement component will be agreed on and spelled out in a Movement Contingency Plan for Venezuela that outlines the division of responsibilities between Movement components. The plan will be complementary to both the ICRC's contingency plan and to that of the IFRC, whose concentric circles of support includes other strategic points and support structures in the region.

Specifically, the VRC will continue to provide first aid and assistance to people in need through the donation of medical and surgical supplies to health institutions to treat patients with serious injuries and to transport wounded patients to hospitals. With the aim of reaching more people, the VRC instructors will keep providing continuous training in first aid to medical professionals, security forces and students. Furthermore, the VRC will concurrently reinforce the capacities of its volunteers through peer-to-peer sessions enabling branches to learn from each other and to adapt their practice in order to work safely in a rapidly changing context.

The ICRC will financially support the mobilization of the VRC's first aid teams. By prepositioning surgical material in the VRC's branches, it will facilitate the VRC's support to hospital surgical units to treat the most seriously wounded patients. It will be developing security rules and an external communication strategy that promotes the work of the VRC and the Movement in Venezuela and the respect for the emblem and the fundamental principles. It will continue to provide surgeons with training to treat wounds caused by firearms, to train police and military on international standards of the use of force and to maintain confidential dialogue with State authorities regarding access to detainees.

The IFRC will be stepping up its support to the VRC in communities where the VRC has limited presence in order to provide first aid for minor injuries and psychosocial support. It will also enable the VRC to strengthen its capacity to efficiently manage the current operational upswing through volunteer insurance, peer-to-peer training and psychosocial support, as well as strengthening first aid management. The IFRC will continue to work on a long-term plan to support the National Society's basic health services, risk management, social inclusion and organizational development.

The IFRC has deployed two regional intervention team (RIT) members, specialized in psychosocial support and logistics, to temporarily support the National Society. Support and coordination with the National Society come from the country cluster support team for the Andean countries (Lima- Peru) and the Operations Unit at the Regional Office for the Americas (Panama).

Furthermore, the Movement Contingency plan anticipates the following coordination mechanism:

- (i) A weekly operational meeting, chaired by the Venezuelan Red Cross (National Relief Director), with the participation of the main technical departments involved (Risk Management, Communication, Health, etc.), the ICRC and the IFRC. Additionally, ad hoc technical meetings are held as necessary to facilitate coordination with partners.
- (ii) A monthly strategic meeting between the VRC President, ICRC Head of Delegation and IFRC Head of Country Cluster. Here, decisions are made regarding the

allocation of additional funding and external communication. These meetings will foster consensus and enable guidance for operational issues, as needed.

Contributions of other Movement partners

A tripartite coordination model will be established in order to ensure efficient and transparent coordination. The VRC requests that inquiries and proposals to support the VRC be sent to its President. These requests will be shared and discussed during Movement coordination meetings in Venezuela.

Additionally, all National Societies are invited to contribute to the budgets of the Venezuelan Red Cross, of the ICRC and of the IFRC (including the DREF operation to support the institutional preparedness of the VRC) through their usual headquarters channels.

Security rules are being developed for joint missions. All Movement components will be required to respect these rules.

The Venezuelan Red Cross, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and the International Committee of the Red Cross reaffirm their will to optimize the Movement's action according to its Principles and values in the humanitarian actions undertaken by the VRC's volunteers and staff for the benefit of the most vulnerable people in the country.

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