

Guide to the auxiliary role of Red Cross and Red Crescent National Societies

Key messages

- The auxiliary role describes a relationship with **mutual responsibilities and benefits**, between a National Society and its public authorities. Together, they agree on the areas where the National Society supplements or substitutes public humanitarian services.
- National Societies are **not NGOs**, as they have a specific and distinctive partnership with their public authorities. At the same time they are **not part of the government** and, maintaining their independence, must be able to deliver their humanitarian services to vulnerable people at all times in conformity with their Fundamental Principles. The auxiliary role is derived from a unique legal status, conferred through international conventions and domestic law.
- National Societies have the potential to be **valuable partners** to support the public authorities in meeting their humanitarian obligations and achieving their humanitarian and development goals.
- National Societies are able to **complement** the humanitarian activities of the public authorities. They have an important role in establishing community based functions in core areas like health, disaster management, etc. which can be of invaluable support to the public authorities during emergencies which surpass normal coping mechanisms and towards sustainable development.
- The auxiliary role is **not an automatic guarantee** that a National Society will be able to support the humanitarian and development goals of the public authorities at all levels. To be efficient and successful, a National Society must have the **capacity** to carry out programmes and activities.
- An important part of the auxiliary role, is the role of the public authorities in promoting and supporting the **capacity building** of their National Society to be effective and strong humanitarian organizations.
- **Support** to National Societies, consistent with the auxiliary role, may include **direct** regular financial support or a variety of types of **indirect support** such as provision of land or office space, preferential tariffs on telephone rates, tax incentives for donations, to name but a few.
- National Societies may be invaluable in the **development of national disaster or development plans**, or other plans to augment national capacity to prevent and alleviate human suffering, ensuring community engagement and providing opportunities for coordination and mutual support.
- National Societies can provide **insight and analysis** to governments developing **policy or legislation** that concern vulnerable populations or has humanitarian consequences. **Inclusion in committees/planning groups** can be a way to ensure regular and in-depth contact between a National Society and relevant public authorities at the national or local level.
- **Regular dialogue** around humanitarian issues is essential to ensure that the auxiliary role is best serving its purpose and the needs of both the public authorities and the National Society.