INCLUSIVE PROGRAMMING POLICY

BACKGROUND

This policy clarifies the position of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) on Inclusive Programming, as well as the organization’s commitments and how it intends to achieve them. While Inclusive Programming is central to the principles of impartiality and “do no harm”, a recent evaluation indicated that this area was a gap in the ICRC’s current operational practices. At the Directorate’s request, the ICRC commissioned an assessment of diversity and inclusion in operations, which was conducted by the Humanitarian Advisory Group in 2020. The report, entitled Final Assessment Report: Inclusive Programming in ICRC Operations, was submitted in January 2021. The management response called for the development of an Inclusive Programming Policy.

INCLUSIVE PROGRAMMING AND ACCOUNTABILITY TO AFFECTED PEOPLE

The Accountability to Affected People Institutional Framework is the ICRC’s normative framework on people-centric approaches. Inclusive Programming is one of its key components. The goal of Inclusive Programming is as follows: All ICRC programmes identify and include individuals and groups most in need, marginalized and at risk, in line with the ICRC’s mandate and the principle of impartiality.

With recent external reviews highlighting the gaps that still exist in this area, the ICRC decided to make deliberate and concerted efforts on Inclusive Programming as part of its work on Accountability to Affected People (AAP). This is reflected in the commitments set out in this policy, and in the dedicated resources the ICRC has assigned within the AAP unit to support their operationalization.

NORMATIVE FRAMEWORK FOR INCLUSIVE PROGRAMMING

The ICRC has a long-standing commitment to Inclusive Programming, derived from the Fundamental Principles of humanity and impartiality, and from the principle of non-discrimination inherent to these. Several doctrines highlight context analysis as a starting point for good programming and stress that a protection mandate must include an understanding of, and a response to, community and individual risks, vulnerabilities and capabilities, all of which are central to Inclusive Programming. Obligations of non-discrimination are also enshrined in international humanitarian law and international human rights law. Together, these comprise the normative framework for states and parties to conflict in the contexts where the ICRC operates.

The ICRC Strategy 2019–2024 draws attention to the importance of using a diversity lens when discussing participation, stating as follows: “Crucial reflections include determining who should be consulted. Who represents a legitimate expression of needs? How should the ICRC engage with those who are most vulnerable and manage local intermediaries?” The strategy also commits the ICRC to establishing mechanisms to disaggregate data “with a particular focus on ensuring that vulnerabilities specific to gender, age and disability can be identified, so that it can provide a more relevant humanitarian response”. In addition, it calls for people management policies and practices that enable the ICRC to value and leverage the diversity of its global workforce, highlighting the importance of connecting efforts related to staff diversity and Inclusive Programming.

Other, complementary frameworks, approaches and processes informed the development of this policy. These provide important entry points and channels for further building the ICRC’s capacity to operationalize Inclusive Programming and include:

- the Accountability to Affected People Institutional Framework, in which the Inclusive Programming approach is anchored
- the Planning for Results (PfR) process
- existing units’ (métiers’) standards, guidance and tools
- the ICRC’s Diversity and Inclusion Framework, which highlights the importance of staff diversity and inclusion in the workplace and how it connects with people and institutional culture (internal document)
- the ICRC Code of Conduct Policies on Prevention of and Response to Sexual Misconduct, Fraud and Corruption (internal document)
- specific, targeted approaches to advance the inclusion of particular groups, such as The ICRC’s Vision 2030 on Disability and the ICRC Strategy on Sexual Violence 2018–2022.

WHO IS THIS POLICY FOR?

This Inclusive Programming Policy is for all ICRC staff, partners (Movement and others), consultants and professionals engaged in ICRC operations, all of whom have a responsibility to familiarize themselves with its content and to account for the commitments it contains in their work. Specific roles and responsibilities are reflected at the end of the policy.

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4 The IFRC and National Societies adhere to the IFRC Protection, Gender and Inclusion Policy (2022), which complements the provisions of this policy.
**KEY DEFINITIONS**

**DIVERSITY** refers to all forms of differences based on social backgrounds and identities that make up a population, including but not limited to differences in sex, gender, age, disability, race, national, ethnic or social origin, religion or belief, political or other opinion, language, socio-economic status, sexual orientation or gender identity.

The ICRC distinguishes dimensions of diversity as **individual** (e.g. sex, gender, age, disability, sexual orientation and gender identity), **community** and or **conflict-related** (e.g. nationality, religion, ethnicity). These dimensions overlap and interact with each other to create diverse identities. Combined with prevailing social power dynamics, they influence individuals’ and groups’ inclusion or exclusion. This overlap of dimensions of diversity is referred to as “intersectionality”, and their consideration throughout the project cycle is referred to as an “intersectional approach”.

**SEX** refers to the biological and physiological characteristics of male, female or intersex individuals.

**GENDER** refers to an aspect of people’s socially determined identity that relates to masculinity and femininity – it is not binary. Social and structural expectations of gender influence the roles, power and resources available to women, men and people of other gender identities in any culture. Gender roles are learned and changeable over time based on economic, political, cultural, religious and other environmental factors. There are diverse legal definitions and/or understandings of gender depending on context.

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5 These definitions and explanations will be further detailed in the Inclusive Programming Terminologies Paper.
6 Individual dimensions of diversity (i.e. sex, age, disability, and sexual orientation, gender identity and expression) are common to every context and therefore also need to be considered in any activity or operation.
7 A community refers to a group of people sharing common characteristics, common needs and/or a common sense of identity.
8 The ICRC definition, derived from that used in the IFRC Gender and Diversity Policy (2020), reflects four common aspects that are considered essential, namely that gender: (1) is socially constructed; (2) is non-binary – it does not refer only to “man” or “woman”; (3) is complex, being influenced by cultural, religious, political and other factors; and (4) can change over time and place. This definition will be reflected in the ICRC’s Gender and Diversity Policy (forthcoming).
Gender is the most common form of diversity and is a prevalent basis for discrimination. As such, an intersectional approach recognizes that gender combines with other diversity factors to create individual identities. The ICRC uses gender as an analytical tool to understand gender dynamics and as an approach to ensure equitable access to assistance and protection for all. The ICRC strives to respond to changing gender dynamics and to create and support a protective, participatory and enabling environment. In this way, ICRC programmes can and do influence the socio-economic position of the women and men the organization assists, contributing to greater equality and empowerment. ICRC programmes also contribute to preventing, mitigating and responding to sexual and gender-based violence, and support the reporting of sexual exploitation and abuse by creating robust, effective and confidential feedback and complaints mechanisms.

**GENDER EQUALITY**

The ICRC recognizes gender equality as a human right and as a principle of international law. This informs its operational approach, in line with the Fundamental Principles of humanity and impartiality. In highly politicized contexts, the ICRC will take due account of the importance of neutrality with respect to specific programmatic issues, to ensure its continued ability to operate; however, impartiality and non-discrimination must be prioritized.

**SEXUAL ORIENTATION, GENDER IDENTITY, EXPRESSION AND SEX CHARACTERISTICS (SOGIESC)**

refers to the wide spectrum of sexual orientations, gender identities, gender expressions and sex characteristics. This includes but is not limited to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer/questioning (LGBTIQ+) people. Considering and accounting for how SOGIESC affects the situation of groups and individuals is part of the Inclusive Programming approach.

**AGE**

refers to the stages of physiological development, including infancy, childhood, adolescence, young adulthood, middle adulthood and late adulthood. However, the way age-based categories are defined can also vary significantly between contexts. For the ICRC, a child is any person under 18 years of age.

**DISABILITY**

refers to long-term physical, psychosocial, intellectual or sensory impairments that, in interaction with various barriers, may hinder individuals’ full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.

**INCLUSION**

refers to the meaningful participation of all individuals in their community and in all aspects of life, the promotion of their rights, and the consideration of their perspectives in the design, implementation, assessment and ongoing adaptation of humanitarian activities and services.

**FROM DIVERSITY TO INCLUSION**

**DIVERSITY** is the fact. It refers to the variety of similarities and differences that distinguish one person or a group from another. It is also a reality in all contexts where the ICRC operates: communities are formed by individuals whose identities are shaped by their gender, age, disability, socio-economic status and many other equally important factors. The combination of these factors can be a driver of inclusion or exclusion, with conflicts exacerbating existing power dynamics or creating new ones, influencing the vulnerability, marginalization and exclusion of individuals and groups.

**INCLUSION** is the act. It requires that, in line with the Fundamental Principle of impartiality, the ICRC understands and analyses these layers of diversity so that its actions systematically include those who would otherwise be marginalized or excluded. This will enable the organization to meet specific needs and help people affected by armed conflict and other violence feel that they are valued and have a sense of belonging.

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Inclusive Programming can be perceived as a dual-purpose approach: a way of “making the invisible visible” (ensuring that all people, including those who are most marginalized or at risk, are able to access services) and a way of ensuring “inclusion as an experience” (thus contributing to ICRC’s mission to uphold human dignity). This happens when crisis-affected people are recognized as active agents and the primary experts in their lives, ensuring that they are seen, heard and able to influence and contribute to decisions and actions that affect them.

THE ICRC’S COMMITMENTS ON INCLUSIVE PROGRAMMING

The ICRC commits to:

1. ensuring that its context and needs analysis considers the diversity of affected people and the social power dynamics that affect their lived experiences, including but not limited to an analysis of gender, age and disability, as part of its annual planning process and specific programme responses
2. designing programmes in a way that ensures the meaningful and dignified access of affected people, in all their diversity, to ICRC services, addressing barriers such as physical, economic and social/cultural accessibility, discrimination, and lack of information
3. ensuring the meaningful and dignified participation of affected people, in all their diversity, throughout the programme lifecycle
4. ensuring that data are disaggregated, at least by sex, age and disability, as well as by other contextually relevant and appropriate factors of diversity, and that these data are analysed and used to inform programmes
5. ensuring that programme monitoring and evaluation captures whether potentially vulnerable or marginalized groups have benefited from and are satisfied with the ICRC’s response
6. monitoring the implementation of the above commitments.

In order to achieve these commitments, the ICRC has adopted a theory of change to advance Inclusive Programming that is complementary to other frameworks, approaches and processes mentioned above and that, together, form its normative framework. This theory of change seeks to address both institutional and operational factors in order to advance commitments on Inclusive Programming. These factors are framed under three general headings, each relating to how a change in motivations, capabilities and opportunities can advance Inclusive Programming:

- Enhance staff understanding of the value of Inclusive Programming towards developing a response that is more appropriate, relevant, effective, timely, accessible, free of negative consequences and supportive of local capacities.
- Build staff capacities and means to incorporate Inclusive Programming in their work.
- Build a culture that values, promotes and creates opportunities for Inclusive Programming in operations.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

THE AAP UNIT, as part of its work on advancing AAP, has a key responsibility for increasing awareness of, and familiarity with, this policy, for developing an associated operationalization plan and for monitoring its implementation. AAP field staff support ICRC operational teams in implementing the commitments. While the AAP Unit works with operational teams to translate these commitments into concrete actions and results, responsibility for upholding the letter and the spirit of this policy is shared across the ICRC in line with the pre-existing normative framework outlined above.

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**THE DIRECTORATE** endorses this policy and commits to reflecting and promoting the commitments throughout its work and areas of influence.

**REGIONAL DIRECTORS** ensure that this policy is shared with delegations and reflect these commitments in regional strategies.

**HEADS OF UNITS** (e.g. métiers) ensure that this policy is shared with unit staff at headquarters and in delegations, integrating it into the programme design and métier approach (e.g. by integrating Inclusive Programming into the project cycle, policies, strategies, guidance and training).

**HEADS OF DELEGATIONS/SUBDELEGATIONS/SUB-STRUCTURES AND THEIR DEPUTIES** ensure that this policy is shared and engaged with in their delegation/subdelegation, reflect the commitments of this policy in the annual PfR process, ensure that adequate resources are allocated to implementing the commitments, and adjust priorities to create the space necessary for teams to meaningfully listen to crisis-affected people and create responses together.

**MÉTIER COORDINATORS** ensure that the commitments are adhered to in all ICRC responses and in programme design, coordinating as necessary with AAP field staff for support on meeting the commitments and supporting operational teams in translating them into concrete action.

**OPERATIONAL STAFF** have a responsibility to adhere to and promote the spirit of the Inclusive Programming Policy and associated commitments at their level, especially in terms of ensuring meaningful and dignified access and participation for the diversity of affected people.

**ALL ICRC STAFF** uphold the commitments of this policy when establishing agreements and working with Movement components and other partners, by sharing lessons learned, experiences and expertise related to Inclusive Programming. They work jointly towards developing and implementing programmes that meet the commitments set out in this policy and, where relevant, in complementarity with other policies and approaches (such as the Protection, Gender and Inclusion Policy and Operational Framework of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies).

**ENFORCEMENT AND REVIEW**

This Inclusive Programming Policy was endorsed by the Directorate on 21 June 2022. The Directorate is responsible for its enforcement. This policy will be reviewed within 24 months to account for progress made towards meeting the commitments and for other relevant changes in the ICRC’s policy or operational landscape.

The ICRC helps people around the world affected by armed conflict and other violence, doing everything it can to protect their lives and dignity and to relieve their suffering, often with its Red Cross and Red Crescent partners. The organization also seeks to prevent hardship by promoting and strengthening humanitarian law and championing universal humanitarian principles.