

Progress report on the Women and Leadership Resolution adopted at the 33rd International Conference



GLOW Red Secretariat 2022



The Global Network for Women leaders in the Red Cross Red Crescent Movement

Executive Summary

Throughout the years, GLOW Red (The Global Network of Women Leaders in the Red Cross Red Crescent Movement) has hosted a variety of events. From webinars to governance trainings and panel discussions, the events have had the same goal at their core: to increase women's leadership throughout the RCRC Movement. With titles like "Walking the Talk" and "From Words to Action", GLOW Red has always been focused on measurable and sustainable changes. Following the implementation of [Resolution 5 - Women and Leadership in the humanitarian action of the International Red Cross Red Crescent Movement](#), GLOW Red began to take steps to ensure that proper reporting and implementation of the Resolution was taken. This report is a cumulation of those efforts undertaken by both GLOW Red and the Women and Leadership Resolution Working Group.

The purpose of this report is both to share and celebrate the progress that has been made towards the implementation of the Women and Leadership Resolution and inspire RCRC Movement components to follow suit, as well as to identify barriers and lessons learned to understand what works best to advance women's leadership across the RCRC Movement and instigate a culture of peer learning and support.

The report summarizes the 39 replies that GLOW received from 26 different RCRC Movement components, which represents a total of 13.4% of Movement Components who have reported. Examples of best practices are shared in each region, with 92% of the respondents of the survey indicating that they have taken steps to advance the implementation of the Resolution. Many Movement Components are undertaking similar processes to advance women's leadership, these include: leadership training and mentoring programs, changing Statutes and organisational policies, and changing recruitment targeting and focus. Case studies around the globe are explored throughout this document, highlighting the changes made as well as the lessons learnt.

The limitations and the successes highlighted in this document are important considerations going forward on the path of achieving gender parity within all Movement components by 2030. We must take the issues seriously and find way to address them to break the barriers that still exist towards this goal.



The RCRC Movement Components who responded to the Resolution Reporting Mechanism are the following: American Red Cross, Australian Red Cross, Austrian Red Cross, Baphalali Eswatini Red Cross, Benin Red Cross, Canadian Red Cross, Colombian Red Cross, Ecuadorian Red Cross, Grenada Red Cross, Hungarian Red Cross, ICRC Head Quarters, IFRC Country Cluster: Dutch and English Speaking Caribbean, IFRC Head Quarters, Irish Red Cross, Jordan Red Crescent, Kazakh Red Crescent, Kenya Red Cross, Kiribati Red Cross, Kuwait Red Crescent, Maldivian Red Crescent, New Zealand Red Cross, Romanian Red Cross, Spanish Red Cross, Swedish Red Cross, Tajikistan Red Crescent, Uganda Red Cross.

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Introduction



Photo taken in December 2019 in Geneva, RCRC Movement leaders sign the Women and Leadership Pledge

The idea for GLOW came about during the 2017 Statutory Meetings in Antalya, Turkey. Women from across the RCRC Movement collectively noted the lack of both women elected to the newly formed IFRC Governing Board as well as the lack of female candidates stepping up to even be considered for election. The Council of Delegates resolution on Women and Leadership was quickly created, and an informal network started to take place.

GLOW Red (The Global Network of Women Leaders in the Red Cross Red Crescent Movement) was formally founded in 2018 at a meeting in Stockholm for women leaders from across the Movement.

- Change the electoral face of the International Governance of the Movement by 2022;
- Increase and strengthen the pipeline of future women leaders, enabling and supporting high potential women from staff and volunteers for leadership positions beyond 2022.

In December 2019, at the 33rd International Conference, the Red Cross Red Crescent Movement took an important step towards gender parity. Recognizing the importance of having diverse women leaders represented throughout all levels of decision making in the RCRC Movement, Movement partners and states unanimously agreed to adopt [Resolution 5 - Women and Leadership in the humanitarian action of the International Red Cross Red Crescent Movement](#).

The resolution urges RCRC Movement components to increase the representation of women from different backgrounds at all decision-making levels. It also calls for Movement components to actively identify women leaders and invest in them through mentorship and leadership development. Additionally, the Resolution calls for Movement components to reach gender parity by 2030 and collect sex segregated data to ensure that we can monitor progress. The Resolution also has a research component and encourages Movement components and states to invest in research and to provide an evidence base on the value of women's leadership.

In the beginning of 2021, GLOW Red initiated the Women and Leadership Resolution Working Group to ensure actions were taken to fulfil the commitments made in the Resolution. The working group has 25 members from all statutory regions and representatives from both National Societies, the IFRC and ICRC. Its members are all committed to increasing women's leadership in the RCRC Movement, and they act as ambassadors for the resolution; they

ensure there is knowledge about its existence and encourage Movement components and States to act and live up to their commitments.

One of the first actions of the working group was to put together a reporting mechanism (an online form) to gather information on what is being done and have been done across the RCRC Movement to support women in leadership positions, to future women leaders, and increase women's leadership in general. The reporting mechanism was launched at the webinar From Words to Action: Updates on the resolution Women and leadership in the humanitarian action of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement in October 2021. During the webinar, which was attended by over 100 participants, members of the Resolution Working Group also presented examples of activities and actions that they had implemented within their Movement components.

With this report we want to capture in-depth information about the initiatives undertaken across the RCRC Movement to advance women's leadership. We want to gather examples of best practice and shed light on the common barriers encountered across the Movement when trying to advance women in leadership. By capturing this information, we hope to facilitate a process of peer learning across the Movement.

The first reporting period was between October 21st and November 21st, 2021. During this time, GLOW Red received 39 replies from 26 different Movement components. Duplication occurred as multiple individuals were reporting for the same RCRC Movement component. Note that this was the first time that the Reporting Mechanism was utilized, and a total of 13.4% of RCRC Movement Components reported. This report summarizes those answers and highlights some of the efforts being done across the RCRC Movement to advance women's leadership.

The purpose of this report is to share and celebrate the progress being made and inspire RCRC Movement components to follow suit, but also to identify barriers and lessons learned to understand what works best to advance women's leadership across the RCRC Movement and instigate a culture of peer learning and support.

The Reporting Mechanism stays open until six months before the 34th International Conference and we plan to have an updated report, with additional information, ready to be presented at the conference. To ensure the actions of your National Society, ICRC or IFRC office are highlighted in the report, please fill out the Reporting Mechanism on GLOW Red's website: www.glowred.org/report-on-the-resolution.

It should be noted that this is an informal Reporting Mechanism, specifically developed by GLOW Red and the Women and Leadership Resolution Working Group, for the Resolution on Women and leadership in the humanitarian action of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement (33IC/19/R5). Formal reporting to the 34th International Conference is done here:

<https://rcrcconference.org/about/reporting/33ic-resolution-5-women-and-leadership/>

Working definitions

- **Respondents:** In this report we use the word respondents to refer to the individuals affiliated to either a National Society, the IFRC or the ICRC, who took the time to answer the questions in the Reporting Mechanism.
- **Movement Components:** We use this term to refer to National Societies (NS), the IFRC and the ICRC as the components of the Red Cross Red Crescent Movement.
- **Reporting Mechanism:** The Reporting Mechanism is an online form put together by the GLOW Red Secretariat and launched in October 2021, to gather information on what has been done across the Movement to advance the implementation of the Resolution on Women and Leadership from 2019. In other words, to support women in leadership positions, future women leaders, and increase women's leadership in general.
- **Women and Leadership Resolution:** When we use this term in this report, we are referring to the IC33 Resolution 5 - Women and Leadership in the humanitarian action of the International Red Cross Red Crescent Movement.

Implementation at a glance

Out of the 39 Respondents...

- 97% of the respondents reporting on behalf of their RCRC Movement component on this mechanism were women.
- 92% of these respondents reported that their RCRC Movement component has taken steps to advance the implementation of the women and leadership resolution since 2019.
- 59% of the RCRC Movement components who reported to have increased the representation of women across several decision-making levels. Including governing bodies and management positions.
- 49% of the respondents reported their RCRC Movement component (or team) has reached gender parity at some relevant level (middle or top management).
- 41% of the respondents reported that their RCRC Movement component supported and strengthened the pipeline of future women leaders
- Only 18% of the respondents did NOT face any obstacles when working in the implementation of the Women and Leadership Resolution

Let's take a closer look at the actions reported by different RCRC Movement components who have successfully worked with the implementation of the Women and Leadership Resolution and towards achieving gender parity in leadership across the RCRC Movement.

What worked?

Leadership development programs for staff and volunteers

In accordance with the Women and Leadership Resolution's request to strengthen the pipeline for future women leaders, several RCRC Movement components have undertaken leadership development programs for women staff and volunteers. These programs, such as career path development, have been reported by: American RC, Australian RC, Canadian RC, the IFRC, the IFRC Dutch and English-Speaking Caribbean, and the Jordan R.

Throughout 2021, the Australian Red Cross carried out the Accelerate Program, a program dedicated to developing high potential female leaders by supporting them to create a career development plan, accessing identified training and scholarship opportunities for career development and providing them with a pathway for career progression within the organisation after completing such trainings. Read more about this on page X.

For several years the Kenyan Red Cross has implemented leadership development programs for women staff members and volunteers, through its Human Resources (HR) team. Based on a co-developed training plan, the HR team identifies training opportunities for the participants to enhance their capacity and to grow professionally within the organisation. The Kenyan Red Cross' Procurement Manager is one of the success stories from such initiatives. She was one of the women in middle management positions selected to attend an international master's program for managers in the UK funded by the Kenyan RC. After completing her studies, she applied for and obtained the role of National Procurement Manager.

Under the Readiness for Global Emergency Response Project, the Canadian Red Cross (CRC) developed a strategy to support women leaders' career development and progression. CRC is currently providing coaching for those women identified to have leadership potential on the delegate rosters. This process included an initial self-assessment on competencies of Operations Managers, which provided insight on where support for female managers was most impactful. Formal and informal learning, as well as networking opportunities are being explored and will feed into the greater career development strategy drawn for each of these women leaders' participants in the program.

Similarly, the ICRC has been encouraging staff to continue developing professionally by offering coaching, training programs and scholarships to women staff members. For this purpose, ICRC has set up a Humanitarian Leadership and Management school. The IFRC in turn, has sponsored four of its female staff members with demonstrated leadership potential to attend an external nine-month leadership program.

Revising and updating Organisational Statutes and Policies to include gender quotas at the Governing Board levels

Several National Societies, such as the Baphalali Eswatini RCS, Benin RC, French RC, Grenada RC, Maldives RC, as well as the IFRC and ICRC, reported to have changed their organisational statutes and policies in support of advancing the implementation of the Women and Leadership Resolution and their commitment to reaching gender parity at all levels in governing and management bodies by 2030.

In 2018, after having conducted a study on gender parity levels in the organisation, the Costa Rican Red Cross' Gender Committee, supported by the Governing Board, decided to propose a statutory change before the National General Assembly for the Modification of Statutes. The Costa Rican RC needed to keep up with the changes already made in the National Legislation for Associations, Law 218, and make explicit the need for having gender parity in all the organisation's governing bodies. Hence, the new statutes established the organisational responsibility to have gender parity across the organisation's governing boards, ensuring that all efforts are made to get as many women as men elected to these leadership positions. Currently, the Costa Rican National Society Governing Board has achieved gender parity with 4 women and 5 men members holding the 9 seats and in 2021 the organisation elected its very first female President.

Like the Costa Rican Red Cross, the Argentinian Red Cross made several changes in its regulatory framework in 2021. Among other changes, they included gender parity in all governing, control and consultative bodies. Establishing in their new National Society Statutes that "Gender equity must be considered in the composition of the Argentinean Red Cross Governing Boards and in no case may the proportion of either sex exceed 60%".



#HagamosEquipoCRC
#SomosCruzRojaCostarricense

Photo: Costa Rica Red Cross

Connected to these major organisational statutory changes, the ICRC and IFRC have taken steps to making their policies more gender equitable. To retain new mothers working as delegates and to increase the number of women in leadership roles, the ICRC has changed and improved their Maternity Leave Policy. It now includes working at 80 per cent with full pay until the child is 1 year old. The IFRC is currently undertaking a similar process by drafting new policies for its workforce on Parental Leave and Flexible Working Arrangements as well as a Strategy for Inclusion and Diversity.

Targeted recruitment of women for leadership positions

Several National Societies, like the Australian Red Cross, Canadian Red Cross, Ecuador Red Cross, Grenada Red Cross, and the Kiribati Red Cross Society, report successful results from undertaking targeted recruitment campaigns to identify and encourage women to apply for leadership positions, which has increased the gender parity in leadership.

In 2020 the Canadian Red Cross, developed a recruitment strategy targeting women leaders between the Senior Manager, Rapid Response Managers and Talent Acquisition teams. So far, the RRM (Rapid Response Manager) roles have reached gender parity as this strategy continues to be applied.

The Kiribati Red Cross, reported to actively run recruitment campaigns targeting women candidates to bring gender balance in both their National and Branch Governing Boards.

Appointing women to executive teams

The Women and Leadership resolution urges National Societies, the IFRC and the ICRC to increase gender parity at all decision-making levels, including in governing bodies and management positions; specifically increasing the representation of women from different backgrounds. Appointing women from diverse backgrounds to executive teams has been a strategy undertaken by several Movement partners to fulfil this commitment.

At the IFRC, between the end of 2019 and June 2021, there was an increase in representation of women within the Senior Leadership (grade levels G and H), which includes Directors and Under-Secretary Generals.

Similarly, during 2021, the Australian Red Cross reported an increase in the representation of women from different backgrounds at decision-making levels. Firstly, by appointing two additional women to the Executive team, one as Head of Inclusion & Diversity and the other as Head of International Humanitarian Law. Secondly, by appointing more First Nations staff members to the leadership team, which according to the respondents in the reporting mechanism, has already brought an invaluable perspective to the work of the organisation.

Mentoring programs for future women leaders

The Women and Leadership Resolution requests National Societies as well as the IFRC and ICRC to actively invest in the pipeline of future women leaders. Several RCRC Movement components have started implementing mentoring programs in their organisations and teams, with the aim to strengthen both the personal and professional development of women who want to advance their leadership careers. The Australian Red Cross and the ICRC are two examples of such initiatives.

Throughout 2021, the Australian Red Cross set up a mentoring program in parallel to the women's leadership training program Accelerate. Mentoring partnerships were offered to women who participated in Accelerate after completing the program, where participants were paired up with women on the Executive team. As mentors the women in the executive team were responsible of providing the mentees with guidance and support as they crafted their career development plans within the organisation.

The ICRC has taken a similar approach and will start implementing the pilot of their mentoring program in the beginning of 2022.

Case studies

Spanish Red Cross – The importance of male allyship

Achievements to date:

At the provincial level, the Spanish Red Cross has been able to significantly increase the number of women in leadership positions. Currently, 18 of the 51 provincial presidents are women and all provisional Governing Board teams are formed by a woman and a man, for example a female secretary and a male coordinator, or vice versa. At the national level, the Spanish Red Cross has elected a female vice-president, and internationally the Spanish Red Cross presented a female candidate as the Chair of the Standing Commission in 2019, where the candidate works in the interest of the entire RCRC Movement.

There is a strong commitment from the Spanish Red Cross to continue working to get more women in leadership positions.

Enabling factors to create change

According to the respondent from the Spanish Red Cross, there are three significant factors that enabled the increase in women in leadership roles across provisional governing boards, they are:

- **Commitment from leadership and male allies**
Starting with the male national president of the Spanish Red Cross who took it as a personal mission to change the composition of the provincial and regional presidencies

of the Governing Boards. This commitment was shared by the male president of the autonomous region of Castilla and Leon. From his leadership position, he has been supporting the female President of the Avila Province with the initiatives she has proposed to help increase the number of women running for leadership positions and the number of women elected across this National Society.

- **Women supporting women**

Mercedes Martinez is the Red Cross President for the province of Avila and was one of the women who stepped forward to increase the numbers of female presidents across provinces. She has taken on as her mission to advance women's leadership in her province and region. Mercedes is a strong believer in the power of collaboration and solidarity among women. She has actively been participating in the Women leaders network (Red de Lideresas), a space for women leaders to take action to advance gender quality and diversity within the Spanish Red Cross. She has been recruiting women with key profiles and leadership potential, to join the network and to take active part in activities to advance the 2018 Gender Strategy within the Spanish Red Cross. This network is currently advising the National Gender Commission.

- **Awareness raising**

Having spaces to showcase women's leadership skills is important in raising awareness on the crucial role women have across the Spanish Red Cross and the RCRC Movement in general. These forums and trainings are a good opportunity for women to showcase their skills. From public speaking to problem solving and decision making, these forums show their colleagues they have what it takes to be in a leadership position.

Obstacles

The progress made over the last years has not come without limitations. For the Spanish Red Cross one of the main challenges, they have had to overcome in this journey is the backlash from male colleagues. Especially at the smaller county and provincial offices, there has been resistance towards the work to increase the number of women in leadership roles. Some men have expressed that the women in leadership positions have been granted their roles because they are women, and the organisation is pushing for more gender parity and not because of their skills and capabilities.

French Red Cross - The Importance of changing Organisational Statutes

In September 2021 the French Red Cross approved a statutory reform, stating that the proportion of members of each gender in the Board of Directors cannot be less than 40%. The statutory changes were effective immediately and in the new board that was elected at the same National Assembly 12 out of 25 members are women, representing 48%.



French Red Cross Governing Board Photo: French Red Cross 2021

An Impact of Statutory Changes

- In the new Governing Board: 12 out of 25 members are women, making up 48% of the board. Prior to 2021, women made up only 25% of all board members.
- Gender parity must also be respected in the following committees: Ethics Committee, the Prospective Steering Committee and the National Appeals and Arbitration Commission.

Measures taken to accompany the transformation

The French Red Cross took several measures before the elections to support the implementation of these new provisions in their Statutes. An effort was made to distribute the new statutes to their entire network of volunteers and to send out a reminder of the new parity composition of the Governing Board to the members of the General Assembly in the official call for applications. Awareness about the new parity statutes was also raised when the candidates to the Board of Directors were notified.

Difficulties and challenges

The journey to achieving parity at the National Governing Board and to adopt the new statutes faced several challenges. To start with, despite the fact that French Red Cross has highly competent and involved women within its volunteers, it was not easy to find women candidates for such positions. Indeed, as in many National Societies, women are very present at local level but less so at the national level.

There was an active effort to find women leaders who will be interested in running for these positions and to support them in their candidacy. Particularly when trying to get young women to put forward their candidacy.

Gender parity at the territorial level

For the boards of territorial branches, parity has not been imposed through the new statutes. However, it is important to note that membership parity is respected at the local levels without it being imposed, as out of the 1,899 elected members for these branches, 59.4% are women.

In terms of women in leadership positions within the governing bodies at localities, the French Red Cross is quite close to parity with 47% of the Presidents being women. At the territorial

level, the percentage of women Presidents drops to 30%. Overall, they are fewer women in senior positions at the territorial level.

The French Red Cross would like to achieve gender parity in the next few years at the locality and territorial levels, but currently it seems difficult to include such amendment to the existing statutes. It is already difficult for some regions to set up an office and implementing gender quotas would risk slowing down this process even further.

The Maldives Red Crescent – The importance of early organisational commitment to gender parity

Since the Maldivian Red Crescent was created back in 2009, there was a noteworthy effort to incorporate women's leadership and meaningful participation across the organisation. From 2010 to 2012 the Maldivian Red Crescent, with support from the Swiss Embassy in Sri Lanka, carried out a women's empowerment program to train women members in leadership and to encourage them to stand for elections at all levels. In fact, three out of four previous Secretary Generals of the Maldivian Red Crescent have been women and have always promoted women's leadership both in the management and governance teams during each of their tenures. With its very first Secretary General, the Maldivian Red Crescent established organisational policies to ensure equal participation of women and men in every operational deployment and volunteer mission. This laid a foundation for the organisational culture that is present to this date. In the words of the sitting First Vice President of the Maldivian Red Crescent, "this created an enabling environment to give women the equal opportunity to go for the same positions as men"¹.

This early commitment to advance women's leadership was emphasized by the close involvement of the MRC in the development of and co-sponsorship of the Women and Leadership Resolution. In 2019 the MRC Subcommittee of the Governing board, responsible for revision of the organisational statutes, suggested making a change to better align with the resolution. In accordance with MRC's strong commitment to achieve gender parity a proposal of allocating specific seats for women was made.



Aisha Niyaz, Vice President Maldivian Red Crescent Governing Board, Photo: Maldivian Red Crescent

Making this change involved a consultation process across the whole of the organisation. Although, such development did not face major pushbacks by the MRC members and volunteers, opinions were varied as to what was the best way to ensure gender parity at the Governing Board. After several internal debates, the majority of MRC members voted for having a reserved seat for women for the positions that had two representatives. This gender specific allocation meant that, as of April 2021, three seats are allocated to women. One member out of the two Vice Presidents, two North Region Members and two South Region Members, should be a woman.

¹ Quote from the Maldivian Red Crescent's first Vice President during an interview

Impact of Statutory Changes

- Three out of twelve seats in the National Governing Board are now reserved for women.
- One additional seat created to represent marginalized persons such as migrants and people with disabilities.
- Though the changes will come into effect from the next General Assembly to be held in 2023, a young woman leader with a disability was elected in the General Assembly of 2021, as one of the North Region representatives at the Governing Board.
- For the first time, gender parity has been achieved in the National Governing Board.
- A female migrant leader was elected for the Complaints Committee, and now represents as the Chair of the Committee.

Australian Red Cross – the importance of building an inclusive and diverse workforce

Throughout 2021, the Australian Red Cross actively invested in strengthening the pipeline of future women leaders by implementing a range of leadership programs. The Australian Red Cross already had a leadership framework in place, consisting of an entry level, mid- and senior leadership development programs. They also had a strong representation of women across the workforce. These factors presented the opportunity for them to consider putting together a program that was not just focused on leadership development, but rather on building an inclusive and diverse workforce.

A project group was established to look at this topic more broadly resulting in two actions; to develop a new role for a Director of Inclusion and Diversity to take part in the Executive Team, and to develop a women in leadership program. Taking inspiration from issues which were within the Australian community and political environment, and looking at trends across the world, they set out to build a program that was more about impact rather than a hierarchical progression. The Accelerate Talented Women's Development program was the result.

“We felt it was more important to provide our female team members with skills to build their impact in their chosen field, whether that be with Australian Red Cross, or more broadly within the community. This was not about building the next CEO, it was about enabling our female team members to be the next community leader, political representative or game changer in their chosen field of expertise and passion”.

Melinda Godber, Head of Organizational Development at the Australian RC and the designer of all their leadership programs.

The program was launched in June 2021 and 16 team members completed the program in December 2021. So far, three participants have taken on new or more senior roles, and another one has gained a scholarship to commence her PhD studies. The Australian RC has developed a dashboard to track progress of each participant and have scheduled post program development conversations with each participant. These post program conversations and skill assessment will be conducted again at the 6-month post program mark to check progress and impact.

Setting up the Accelerate Talented Women's Development program, the Australian Red Cross partnered with an external organisation called The Remarkable Woman. Through this partnership, all 16 participants were provided with a one-year professional development, networking and mentoring. Participants had the possibility to connect with several different mentors based on their needs and wants as their progress through the program. Through the program participants were also formed into peer learning groups and connected with a female member of the Australian RC executive team. This was called the "CoEntor process" – a combination of coaching and mentoring. The peer groups connected with the members of the executive to talk about what the program was about, what they were learning, and sharing experiences and support.

GLOW Red - The importance of being a network

Following the General Assembly decision and Council of Delegates resolution on Women and Leadership from 2017, GLOW Red was formally founded in 2018 at a meeting in Stockholm for women leaders from across the Red Cross Red Crescent Movement. Find below an overview of actions that GLOW Red has taken to advance women's leadership. GLOW Red was created as a women's network to foster the implementation of the newly passed resolution, and to advance their two overarching objectives (to change the electoral face of the International Governance of the Movement by 2022; and to increase and strengthen the pipeline of future women leaders, enabling and supporting high potential women from staff and volunteers for leadership positions beyond 2022).



Women leaders from the RCRC Movement gathered at the Statutory meetings in 2017. Photo: GLOW Red

Being organized as a network, GLOW Red has been able to participate in and advocate for change at several regional meetings across the RCRC Movement over the last years. Years of activities and advocacy work, which is further outlined below, was undertaken by GLOW. Prior to the adaptation of the Women and leadership resolution in 2019, the active advocacy work from GLOW Red members at regional statutory meetings resulted in the following commitments:

- **In Europe:** as result of GLOW Red's Advocacy efforts in [the Almaty Commitments](#), leaders of Red Cross Red Crescent National Societies in Europe expressed their

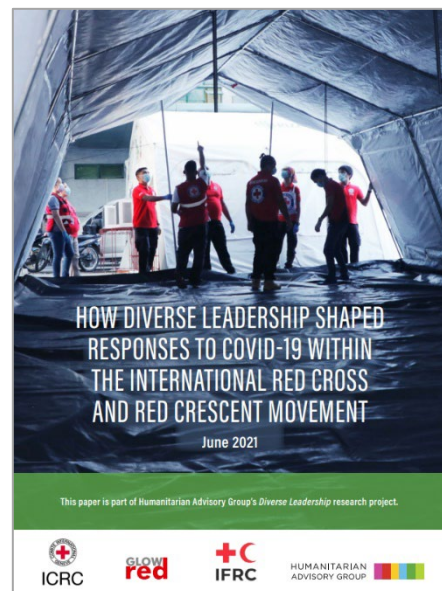
determination to “increase diversity at all levels of National Societies as to be representative of the communities we serve”.

- **In Asia- Pacific:** One of the targets in the conference outcome document, [the Manila Declaration](#), is to reach: At least 50 per cent of the elected and appointed leadership of the National Societies and IFRC governance are women.
- **In Americas:** During the Inter-Americas Conference in Argentina in 2019, [the Buenos Aires Commitment](#) was signed by all Americas National Societies. A section specific to Women and Leadership was put forward, to advocate for the leadership role of women by promoting equity at all levels, within and outside the Movement.

Leading up to the International Conference in 2019, GLOW Red played an important role in advocating and rallying support for the Women and Leadership resolution. In addition, the 100 voices platform was launched to highlight the contributions of women to the RCRC Movement since its' inception, and a training for women candidates to international governance positions was organized, from which 25% of the participants were elected.

One important commitment in the Women and Leadership resolution is that states and Movement components should “invest in research, involving women to identify good practices and how to remove the barriers to women’s participation, in particular in leadership and decision-making in humanitarian responses”.

In 2021 GLOW Red realized the research report [How Diverse Leadership Shaped Responses to COVID-19 within the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement](#). This research was initiated by GLOW Red, and became a Movement wide initiative in collaboration between the Humanitarian Advisory Group (HAG), IFRC, ICRC and GLOW Red.



GLOW Red has also worked for the implementation of the women and leadership resolution by organizing trainings and other initiatives to support women’s leadership:

- **Humanitarian Coaching Network:** Through a collaboration with the Humanitarian Coaching Network (the HCN) GLOW Red has been able to offer online professional coaching to over 30 women, between 2019 and 2021.
- **Women’s Leadership Workshops:** In 2020 GLOW Red took the 2019 Women’s leadership workshop online. A total of 42 women from all around the world, have now taken the training online to develop their leadership skills, strengthen their capacities in personal presence, learn how to run an effective campaign, and deepen their understanding of the politics and policies of the RCRC Movement.

- **Women and Leadership working group:** In 2021, GLOW Red formed a working group made up of representatives from throughout the RCRC Movement to make sure the Resolution on Women and Leadership from 2019 is implemented. This group is committed to track and collect data on the implementation of this Resolution across the Movement.



Margareta Wahlström, Jill de Bourg and Petra Nyberg, GLOW Red Network meeting, Ottawa, 2019. Photo: Canadian Red Cross

- **EmpowerED:** Is the latest of GLOW Red's initiatives, which is organised together with the IFRC and ICRC. It's a peer-support leadership initiative where RCRC women leaders get to grow and enhance their leadership by connecting with other women and discuss topics that women leaders often find challenging or they want to learn more about.

Barriers for implementation

Through the reporting mechanism, respondents reported several successful achievements when it comes to the implementation of activities aimed at advancing women's leadership and representation. However, as part of this work, several obstacles were identified to advancing this cause.

Patriarchal beliefs

Several RCRC Movement components referred to the remaining existence of patriarchal beliefs both in the societies they serve but also in the RCRC Movement component organisations they work for as the biggest challenge in advancing gender parity and increasing women's leadership. Patriarchal beliefs created backlash for some of the successful initiatives mentioned above. Respondents who refer to this obstacle said that male colleagues in the sector believe that women are being selected for leadership positions because of gender specific policy compliance; not necessarily because women have the skills and capacities needed to be in such roles. In their own words:

“

The main obstacle that we are facing when trying to advance women's leadership, is culture. Due to the predominance of machismo”.

Anonymous respondent

”

“Men do not trust our abilities... there is a lot of patriarchal beliefs”.

Anonymous respondent

Need for more dedicated resources to undertake women's leadership and career development programs

Although the Resolution mentions the importance of designating resources for implementation, it does not stipulate any concrete guidance on how resources should be allocated or provide any resources for the Resolution's implementation. This was found by respondents to be a major limiting factor for the implementation of the Resolution. Respondents called for clarity on how the implementation of the Resolution commitments are to be funded. Overall, respondents reflected on the fact that leadership across the RCRC Movement components needs to start prioritizing the implementation of this Resolution. Respondents recommended channels for funding be established and firm commitments made on the allocation of resourcing.

“Resolutions need to come with resources and a shift in priorities so that leadership, donors and staff are clear and aligned on priorities”.

Anonymous respondent

The Resolution lacks binding powers

The Resolution urges and requests National Societies, as well as the IFRC and the ICRC, to undertake initiatives to increase the representation of women at all decision-making levels (including governing bodies and management positions). It also encourages investment in the pipeline of future women leaders through means such as career-path development and leadership programmes targeting women. However, the resolution does not include guidance on how the resolution can be enacted and the implementation could benefit from a clear Plan of Action and regular advocacy efforts by the IFRC. As the resolution does not have binding power for implementation the enactment and follow up of it relies purely on the goodwill and commitment of the Movement components. Their capacity for implementation may be significantly restricted by varying levels of funding and leadership capacity.

“There is nothing strongly binding in the resolution to begin with. As it stands, it is a call for action urging NSs and states to support the highlighted objectives. The resolution merely draws attention to the issue but does not adequately outline methods to develop the existing efforts further”.

Anonymous respondent

Assuming that the work is done!

It is an obstacle to think and assume that because there are one or two women in some of the Executive teams of a few of the RCRC Movement components or because the larger part of the staff and volunteer force are women, gender equality and parity already exists in our organisations. Even if this is the case in some of the RCRC Movement components, it is crucial

to challenge these assumptions and take a deeper look. Women make up 53% of the RCRC Movement staff and volunteer force. However, women make up few of the RCRC Movement's senior leadership, and the percentage of women decreases as the seniority level increases. Currently, across all regions, only 23 per cent of National Societies² Presidents are women and 29 per cent of Secretary Generals². While individual RCRC Movement components are making great strides, globally the RCRC Movement has a long way to go.

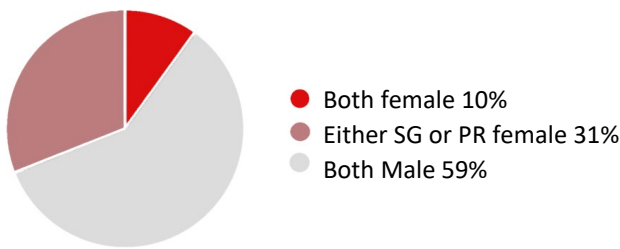


“Targeting women for special things (such as trainings, coaching opportunities etc) is not thought of, as it is considered already done by the fact that the President of my National Society is a woman, and a large portion of the employees are women. Thus, the work on gender equality is considered already done”.

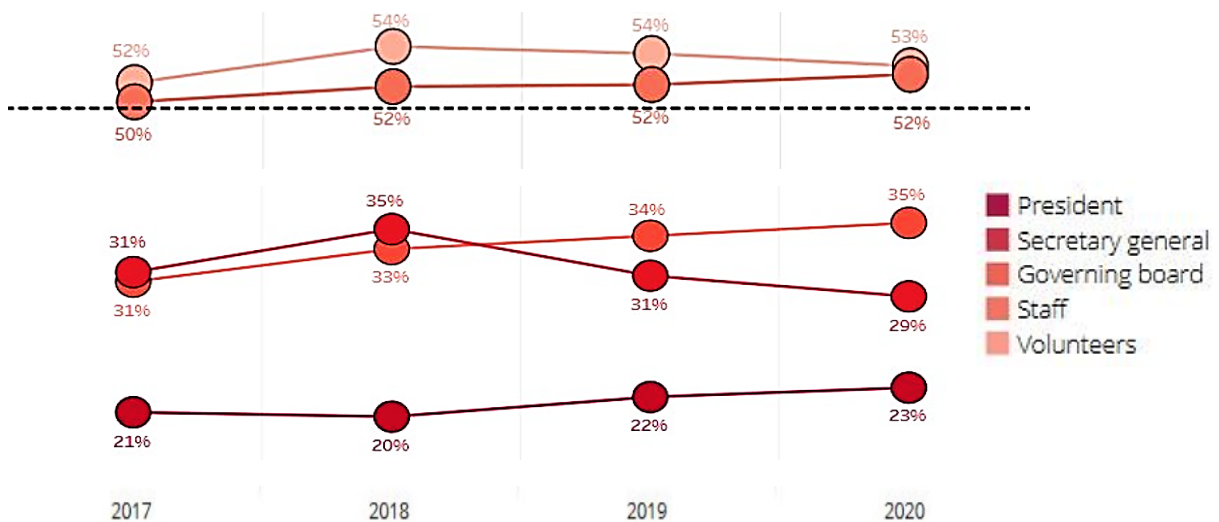


Anonymous respondent

Percentage of female and male holding President and Secretary General position in National Societies 2020:



Gender distribution in National Society roles – yearly averages:



Source: Everyone Counts Report 2022

² IFRC Everyone Counts Report, 2020.

Lack of knowledge of the Resolution across the RCRC Movement

Another limitation identified by several respondents is the lack of knowledge on the Women and Leadership Resolution across some of the RCRC Movement components. According to these respondents, there is a significant need to raise awareness across the RCRC Movement on the existence and content of the Resolution as a primary step towards advancing its implementation. Some of the respondents highlighted the need for the IFRC to carry out regular trainings on the content of the Resolution and its range of actions to highlight its importance and help enforce and spread its execution. Suggestions include: organizing online webinars and forums focused on explaining the content of the resolution as means to address this gap of knowledge, facilitating the development of a platform to foster discussion, either on an individual or organisational level, to allow for sharing of best practices and barriers or challenges encountered.

The Importance of an Intersectional Lens

The Women and Leadership Resolution calls especially for the representation of women of diverse backgrounds, in leadership positions. In this instance, “diverse” refers to the importance of having women from a variety of different backgrounds in leadership positions, this includes but is not limited to women of different: ethnicities, ages, abilities, educational backgrounds, class, caste, sexual orientation and/or migrant status.

Respondents highlighted that some of the current processes of talent recruitment are in fact based on standards that are not reachable for all women. There are inherent limitations in the way position descriptions and selection criteria are currently drafted when it comes to qualification standards, working rights and permits, and even citizenships and mobility requirements, that are creating unnecessary obstacles for women. Respondents noted that it is especially difficult for youth to access the talent pools.

It is key that an intersectional analysis is undertaken to understand the barriers that prevent all women from accessing leadership positions. We must remember that women from across the RCRC Movement come from a variety of backgrounds and all have individual needs. Respondents highlighted that young women in the Global South often encounter significant barriers to access tertiary education, and often have lesser mobility options. The requirements for entry level jobs are often too high, with applicants needing extensive educational and work experience. Respondents highlighted the need to revise recruitment standards and policies to focus on identifying the competence and skills needed for the job instead of taking a “one size fits all” approach.

What's Next? - Plans Moving Forward

We encourage all RCRC Movement members to report on progress that they have made in the implementation of the Women and Leadership Resolution. Formal reporting to the 34th International Conference is done here: <https://rcrcconference.org/about/reporting/33ic-resolution-5-women-and-leadership/>.

In addition, the Women and Leadership Resolution Working Group reporting mechanism stays open until six months before the 34th International Conference and we plan to have an updated report, with additional information, ready to be presented at the conference. To ensure the actions of your National Society, ICRC or IFRC office are highlighted in the report, please fill out the Reporting Mechanism on GLOW Red's website, www.glowred.org/report-on-the-resolution. We acknowledge the limitations of this report, as only 13.4% of RCRC Movement Components reported. The Women and Leadership Resolution Working Group will explore ways to streamline and facilitate reporting in the future in the hopes of increasing engagement.

The Women and Leadership Resolution Working Group as well as GLOW Red would like to formally thank everyone who took the time to complete the Reporting Mechanism, as well as those who contributed to other elements of this report. The leadership that you have demonstrated has helped up to break down silos, ensuring that best practices to advance women's leadership are shared throughout the entire RCRC Movement.

If you are interested in joining the working group or would like to be put in contact with any RCRC Movement partner mentioned in this report, please reach out to GLOW Red (glowred@redcross.se).

We look forward to the work that will be done by RCRC Movement Components in the future as well as further learning from each other.