

## Red Cross Red Crescent National Societies implementing Covid-19 response in volatile and insecure contexts: some success stories from the field

The operationalisation of the Safer Access Framework is a context-driven process, therefore meant to adapt and being unpacked depending on both contextual and operational developments in the field. This is why the examples in this section corroborate the relevance of SAF through at least three dimensions: (i) familiarity with SAF helped National Societies (NSs) to structure their response; (ii) Covid-19 response plans contributed to enhance ongoing SAF-related engagements within/with NSs; and (iii) NSs' role in responding to the pandemic opened possibilities to connect SAF with a longer-term NS Development discourse.

Overall, Acceptance of the Organisation and External Communication and Coordination emerge as key elements in securing Access during NSs' Covid-19 responses. These clearly hinge on prompt Context Analysis and Risk Assessment, whereby Operational Security Risk Management comes to the forefront regarding the deployment of volunteers, particularly in the most volatile communities and insecure contexts. The Legal Base related to NSs' auxiliary role has in most cases worked as booster for NSs' engagements in responding to the pandemic.

Furthermore, SAF complemented the array of Federation's tools and approaches for NSs' emergency preparedness and response, providing specific guidance to increase Acceptance, Security and Access during Covid-19 operations within conflict and volatile scenarios.

Here is some input from the different parts of the world:

**NAME (Near And Middle East)** – NSs experienced enhanced Access to the affected population. Such result capitalises on already increased Acceptance of the Organisation linked to the NSs' response during demonstrations/social turmoil in the region.

**AFRICA** – Overall, Movement Communication successes in the region can surely be seen through the lenses of Internal and External Communication and Coordination, which equally contributed to NSs achieving better positioning and increased coordination with their respective authorities and interlocutors. More in details:



(Uganda) – the integration of SAF into the different activities of the NS paved the way for successful operations during the Covid-19 response, yielding both informed decision-making and adapted planning. A prompt application of Context Analysis and a strict respect of Fundamental Principles allowed URCS (Ugandan Red Cross Society) to safely distribute food in highly polarised contexts, while access to communities for prevention and response activities (including freedom of movement even beyond curfew) was ensured by boosted Identification measures and consolidated Acceptance of the Organisation. Ultimately, SAF application contributed to prevent harm to NS' assets and personnel when performing their duties.



(Kenya) – enhanced Identification (e.g. Red Cross jackets and ID badges with photos) allowed NS' volunteers to Access communities even during curfew hours as authorities granted safe passage across the country and even at road blocks. From both a Legal Base (Policies – Duty of Care) and an Operational Security Risk Management perspectives, the NS took concrete steps in establishing a Solidarity Fund aimed at catering for medical expenses of volunteers affected during the response.



(South Sudan) – SAF elements were woven into the formulation of specific SOPs (Standard Operating Procedures) for RCCE (Risk Communication and Community Engagement) activities, namely: Context Analysis and Risk Assessment; Operational Security Risk Management (i.e. security incidents reported timely enabled prompt analysis and adoption of mitigation measures, relevant PPE -Personal Protection Equipment- were distributed, specific SOPs developed for Management of the Dead -MotD- activities, establishing of a Solidarity Fund to support Covid-symptomatic volunteers in testing and treatment); External Communication and Coordination (i.e. proactive engagement with the Ministry of Health to clarify NS’ tasks in MotD; and Identification (i.e. enhanced visibility through additional jackets and ID badges delivered to volunteers beforehand).



(Cameroon) – Covid-specific risks were included in Operational Security Risk Management discussions in targeted branches, while additional capacity building on how to identify and mitigate such risks is being considered. Moreover, volunteers’ Safety has been a key driver for the adoption of initiatives aimed at complementing insurance packages (e.g. Solidarity Fund and private national insurance). Equally, Internal Coordination and Communication have been enhanced by discussions related to insurance modalities.



(Niger) - as for other NSs, the success of the operational response to the pandemic builds on the blocks assembled through the application of the Safer Access Framework. Internal Communication and Coordination have enabled a coherent Movement response and maximised synergies among Movement components, whereas Context Analysis/Risk Assessment and Operational Security Risk Management permitted the implementation of activities across the country, even in the most sensitive and insecure areas. The consolidated trust established through the ground work previously done with both authorities and communities (i.e. External Communication and Acceptance of the Organisation) guaranteed Access to the NS, while also helped mitigating specific risks linked to the MotD (i.e. dignified burials in respect of Covid-imposed restrictions). Finally, the engagement in defining the Auxiliary Role (Legal Base) underpinned the portfolio of response activities the NS was tasked with by the authorities; and previous improvements in Internal Communication and Coordination enhanced good reflexes and solutions in the management of the Covid-19 response (e.g. whatsapp groups and focal points at branch level).

## AMERICAS



(Colombia) – increased Access (i.e. opening of road blocks and delivery of assistance) gained through virtually all elements: consolidated Acceptance of the Organisation and respect for its staff and volunteers (both by authorities and communities); targeted External Communication (and Coordination) to manage perceptions in Covid-affected communities, to mitigate Covid-19 impact and to ensure safe implementation of assistance activities (HCiD -Health Care in Danger- focus); continued Context Analysis and Risk Assessment which led to adapted procedures, including regarding Operational Security Risk Management (e.g. security rules, health check-points for the safety and security of volunteers); proactive Internal Communication and Coordination for the operational response and for managing the risks connected to potential emblem’s abuses (e.g. Movement Joint Statement on the use of the emblem); established Legal Base and understanding of NS’ auxiliary role, and socialised knowledge of NS’ identification.



(Mexico/Regional) – the SAF-embedded reflex of regular Context Analysis and Risk Assessment spearheaded the formulation of “risk scenarios” and the identification of measures for adapting existing tools and procedures and for further targeted Operational Security Risk Management. Operational lenses were therefore used to inform/influence decision-making, while highlighting some significant vulnerabilities (e.g. insurance for volunteers, stigma and HCiD related episodes). Beyond Contingency Planning and business continuity, a list of do’s/don’ts was developed with particular focus on communication tips aimed at defusing/mitigating stigma (e.g. specific terminology to use, fact checking, etc.).



(Canada) – good example on External Communication and Coordination for positioning with donors in support to Covid-related response activities.

## EURASIA



(Eastern Ukraine) – Branches with SAF literacy quickly adapted to the new reality created by Covid-19 while the response to the pandemic was a powerful enabler to extend SAF reasoning to other branches. Covid-specific recommendations along SAF elements were shared and NS managers proactively took SAF into consideration before implementing operations or taking decisions. A concrete link between SAF elements and operational activities was nurtured (i.e. operationalisation of the framework). On the other hand, targeted Context Analysis and Risk Assessment workshops were conducted at branch level, resulting in the identification and implementation of Covid-related mitigation measures.



(Greece) – Internal Communication and Coordination produced Movement infographics detailing Movement response, including vis-à-vis migrants in reception centres. Acceptance of the Organisation and optimising the Auxiliary Role with authorities further contributed to the NS response in such centres.

## ASIA PACIFIC



(Afghanistan) – the ongoing engagement on Context Analysis and Risk Assessment and on Operational Security Risk Management informed the NS’ Covid-19 response yielding specific SOPs for Safety and Security on infection prevention and access management at NS’ sites. The process was also an opportunity to further coach and train the NS’ security managers in passive security measures, as targeted technical support addressed NS’ Covid-19 hospitals which remain frontline facilities within a conflict setting. Additionally, the Acceptance of the Organisation among stakeholders and communities built through previous SAF-related initiatives allowed the NS enhanced Access, and hence to be specifically tasked by the Ministry of Health for Covid-19 response into hard-to-reach and insecure areas. Equally, the NS Disaster Management response plans integrated recommendations stemming from SAF reflections. Last but not least, the pandemic gave also the chance to adapt/upgrade both Internal and External Communication tools through the ongoing development of a virtual technical communication package (also intended to support business continuity).





(Myanmar) – Covid-19 response and operational considerations created the opportunity to address longstanding Identification, and ultimately Acceptance/perception, concerns regarding the type of uniforms for NS' volunteers. Practical operational needs hence capitalised on previous SAF conversations and opened the door for both an immediate (even if temporary) change of uniforms in the field and provisions for longer term modifications.



(Pakistan) - the Covid-19 response built on the achievements of consistent External Communication targeting reputational risks and fostering Acceptance to prevent misconceptions. Duty of Care responsibilities were also put to a (positive) test.



(Indonesia) – Responding to Covid-19 was enabled by the good Acceptance and trust developed in both authorities and communities. If on one hand SAF elements were woven into Covid-19 response guidelines and protocols, regular Environment Scanning and networking allowed the NS to detect and address an emblem abuse (e.g. use of NS' logo on supplies such as face masks not produced by the NS) through positive dialogue. SAF operationalisation will also underpin further discussions on perception vs collaboration with the Military for disinfection activities.



(Thailand) – A well-articulated auxiliary role rooted in a good Legal Base allowed the NS to co-lead the Covid-19 response, in particular addressing migrants (including developing specific IEC -Information, Education, Communication- material) and channelling PPE supplies. From an Internal Communication and Coordination point of view, an ad-hoc mobile app was adopted to ease communication sharing. Furthermore, regarding Operational Security Risk Management, specific attention was dedicated to keep more fragile volunteers safe (e.g. office tasks vs field deployment and use of PPE) while ensuring the availability of the right expertise at all times.



(Philippines) – The well-rounded auxiliary role enabled the NS to have easier Access to affected populations and to articulate localised responses. Being Philippines Red Cross the only organisation with official freedom of movement in country during the pandemic underlines SAF relevance, particularly the Acceptance – Access nexus. Equally, the continued efforts undertaken in the different SAF elements contributed to increase the NS' visibility within Covid-19 response plans and to integrate its role at the different decision-making levels.