



# How to write good reports – basic advice



# Good reporting

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## Process

- **Cross-check consistency (eg Plan with budget)**
- **Refer to objectives and outcomes in updates – explain progress and failings**
- **Leave summary section to the last**

## Style

- **Think about your reader**
- **Be clear:**
  - **Summarise the facts**
  - **Organise information**
  - **Structure your response**
- **Short sentences, clear simple English**
- **Be concise and to the point (don't ramble on!)**
- **No jargon, no assumptions or prejudices**



# Good reporting

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## Content

- **Correct, up-to-date and relevant information, consolidated facts and findings; highlight big numbers to date;**
- **Add photos, maps and tables where relevant;**
- **Use reliable sources and quote them;**

## Sensitivities

- **Be careful about sensitive information – reports are not internal documents. Be neutral and apolitical**
- **Keep in mind that we are not alone on the ground – PNS, government and other agencies**
- **Profile the RC comparative advantages (keep HNS in mind)**
- **Recognition of contributions: multilateral vs bilateral**



# The four elements

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- **Progress/Achievements**

- What activities were carried out in line with the plan objectives?

- **Impact**

- What impact are activities having on the people we reach and/or the implementation of your programme?

- **Constraints**

- What problems have you encountered and, most importantly, what are you doing to solve them?

- **Coordination**

- What other organizations/groups/governments are you working with? How is this helping your programme?



## The five **W**s of reporting

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- **Who**
  - Who organized the activity? Who participated?
- **What**
  - What happened?
- **Where**
  - Where did it take place?
- **When**
  - What was the date? How long was the activity?
- **Why**
  - Why are we doing this activity? What is the outcome?
  - This is the most important question of all!



## And the “how” - analysis

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- **Red Cross Red Crescent reports are not simply a list of activities**
- **We must look at each activity critically—Why did we do it? What are the results? What difference is it making in the lives of the people we reach? What could be improved upon next time?**



# How to handle programmatic problems

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## ■ **Be honest!**

- If a project is not moving forward, say so and explain **WHY**
- If it is because of lack of funds or personnel, say so. Maybe a donor will take an interest
- If it is because of a political/social/environmental change, say so. The donors will understand
- Always try to be positive. What are you doing about the problem?
- Internal problems can be more complicated....



## Internal information

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- **Has it affected my programme?**
  - If it has, include it. If not, leave it out
- **Not sure if you should include it?**
  - Ask your reporting focal point.
- **Some details are important**
  - Where was the activity carried out? When did it take place? Who paid for it? How many participants? What is the impact?
- **Some details are not**
  - The results are more important than the process
  - In the Federation, something happens everyday, but we can't include everything because we want the donors to focus on what's really important





## Ask yourself...

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- Often the key points get left out – the main points that are most obvious.
- Focus less on phrasing, being “politically correct”
- Focus more on the type of information you share with your colleagues
- **Ask yourself:**
  - How would I describe my programme to someone I met in an café or airport?
  - If I only had ten minutes to tell a donor about my programme, what would I say?
- **Note this down however you can. If your writing skills are weak, reporting people can help. But they need the raw information and analysis**



# What makes a good report?

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- C**oncise (short)
- L**ogical (makes sense)
- E**ffective (to the point)
- A**ccurate/ap  
(the right information for the right topic  
and audience)
- R**eadable (easy for the reader)



In conclusion, good reporting helps...

- **You would be better at your job**
- **Make your job easier**
- **Make us more accountable**
- **The RCRC to provide assistance through NS to vulnerable people**



## Further guidance on report writing

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- **On DMIS ([www.ifrc.org/dmis](http://www.ifrc.org/dmis) - toolbox)**
  - **The Federation Style Guide (guide to English writing)**
  - **“Donor reporting in a nutshell-  
<https://fednet.ifrc.org/sw153059.asp>**
    - ✓ **Annual programme, emergency operations, and pledge based reporting tools and guidance.**
    - ✓ **Covers budgeting and finance.**
  - **Templates for all types of standard Federation reporting**
  - **Specific templates for types of emergencies**
    - ✓ **Earthquake, Floods, cyclones & hurricanes, Drought, Epidemics, Population movements**
- **Oxford better writing guide**  
**[www.askoxford.com/betterwriting](http://www.askoxford.com/betterwriting)**