

Activities of National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

In this column the Review intends to publish, as regularly as possible, information and reports on National Societies' programmes of activities which on account of their originality, diversity and effects may serve as examples to other National Societies.

In any case, these articles will aim to show interested readers the range of humanitarian activities undertaken by National Societies faced with various communities' new needs in a society that is constantly changing.

THE SPANISH RED CROSS AND THE PROBLEM OF SOCIAL DROPOUTS

In this issue, the *Review* turns its attention to a very serious social problem which is the concern of numerous National Societies—the issue of social dropouts. For this purpose, the *Review* consulted a report entitled “Deprived Areas—the Fourth World”, which was compiled by the Spanish Red Cross and published in the September 1986 issue of its publication “Cruz Roja”. With the authorization of the Spanish Red Cross, the *Review* publishes below extensive extracts from the “Cruz Roja” editorial which places the problem of dropouts in its social and humanitarian context:

THE DROPOUT PHENOMENON: A PROBLEM OF OUR TIME?

“Obviously not. Through the ages, there have been people who have rejected the rules and structure of conventional society. What is new is that nowadays the dropout phenomenon has changed into something more than a social, cultural and economic reality: it has become a form of consciousness. Perhaps this is the very first time that the rejection of conventional society, as a sociological fact, has actually aroused concern and stimulated efforts to solve the problem, and has ceased to appear as a “natural”, inevitable and insoluble phenomenon.

”This newly emerged awareness and guilty conscience with regard to the dropout phenomenon must clearly lead to the discovery of collective responses to the problem. The

matter should be dealt with first and foremost by public social welfare institutions. From the social welfare point of view, charity can always patch things up. For people with a strong sense of social commitment, however, the dropout phenomenon requires another type of approach: a study of its causes and sources, a clear perception of its consequences and the need to introduce a suitable therapy to eradicate the phenomenon. The purpose of any form of social policy is to bring about an integrated and egalitarian society, in which the various manifestations of this dropout phenomenon are simply no longer feasible.

"As part of its new line of action, the Spanish Red Cross wants to respond to the new social conscience, whose major concern is man himself"... "Step by step, we shall systematically and carefully examine the various aspects of the problems posed by the dropout phenomenon, and shall gradually discover how we can actually counter its expansion. The growth of shanty towns, drug consumption, prostitution and juvenile delinquency are realities which we do not have to get used to and accept as inevitable. On the contrary, we can combat them, even overcome them, by forging a well-organized chain of solidarity. This is not a hollow concept but a valid objective, provided that it is possible to activate the systems that can draw out of such human solidarity practical activities which will have an impact on and beyond the present reality.

"One of the Spanish Red Cross' current objectives is to achieve maximum mobilization of the creative forces of Spanish youth. A highly stimulating mobilization that calls upon the vital forces of young people, urging them to transform our society, with the initial challenge of tackling what we might call society's darker side, in other words the dropout phenomenon. In principle we do not believe that this phenomenon has anything to do with either "good" or "evil". We do believe, however, that society is unfair, in that it forces some of us to behave in one way and enables others to behave differently. One of our main tasks is to strive to resolve this dichotomy, to make the effort to understand and actually transform the quality of life within our society, and especially that of young people today.

"To eradicate the dropout phenomenon by overcoming its problems and making it impossible to happen again is our final goal. For the time being, let us try and move towards it by gaining the best possible insight into its causes and effects. Information, purely and simply, is the first step without which only muddled and limited action can be taken."

Through a series of reports made in the suburbs of Spain's large towns and in poor rural areas, *Cruz Roja* describes the evolution and the recent development of this phenomenon which is essentially due to the economic crisis and its social consequences: the drift from the land to the cities and the creation of a suburban proletariat looking for work, or rather for any prospect of work. These deprived areas have given rise to a way of life adopted by their inhabitants—the unemployed, migrants, ill-treated or exploited young people—as a means of survival; they also form a promiscuous environment which unfortunately produces its share of drug addicts, alcoholics and delinquents.

How should these problems be tackled? Mr. José Farré Moran, national director for social welfare of the Spanish Red Cross, feels that traditional forms of social work are no longer sufficient. The need is for principles like solidarity and creative imagination to motivate the work undertaken to help these persons, in co-operation with social workers at the national, provincial and local levels.

In this regard, the general assembly of the Spanish Red Cross adopted in April 1986 an experimental assistance programme (Servicio Asistencial y Social de Atención Básica de la Cruz Roja—SASAB) intended for communities in deprived suburban and rural areas.

In a way, this service acts as a “detector” in finding out the needs of communities living in specific districts and areas, in particular the needs of vulnerable groups (children, old people, physically or mentally handicapped people, drug addicts, alcoholics, the unemployed, delinquents, prostitutes, ethnic minorities and the destitute). Basic teams, consisting of a Spanish Red Cross official assisted by volunteers and specialists, followed by “multidisciplinary teams” (social workers, physicians, psychologists), assess priorities and set up programmes which the provincial and local services concerned (social services, volunteers, youth, first-aid and emergency units) will then be asked to put into effect.

By means of this campaign the Spanish Red Cross, in its capacity as auxiliary to the public authorities, aims to implement an effective social welfare policy by exposing serious social problems and endeavouring to solve them in conjunction with provincial and local authorities.

As Mr. Francisco Bernardo, director of the voluntary service department of the Spanish Red Cross, stresses, in this respect the role of volunteers is of vital importance. In suburban districts and poor rural areas alike, it is volunteers from those milieux who are best placed to know the needs and the problems of the communities in question. Independently of the technical and material assistance that volunteers bring to a deprived area, their conduct must be directed to getting the inhabitants to share, through specific activities, in solving their own problems.

Pilot projects have already been launched in some districts in several Spanish cities where volunteers and specialists work together to make social welfare programmes more effective and to stimulate the participation of all in the cause of social well-being.

Dissemination of international humanitarian law

SECOND ARAB SEMINAR ON INTERNATIONAL HUMANITARIAN LAW

The second Arab seminar on international humanitarian law took place from 15 to 24 November 1986 in Amman. It was organized by the Jordan National Red Crescent Society.

The first seminar of this type took place in Amman in April 1981. It was part of the 'first generation' of regional seminars on dissemination of international humanitarian law. It had been suggested by the ICRC and organized by that institution and the Jordanian National Society.

The opening session of the second seminar was attended by Professor Daniel Frei, a member of the International Committee, representing the President of the ICRC, and Mr. Enrique de la Mata, President of the League. Mr. Yves Sandoz, Deputy Director at the ICRC, and Mr. Fritz Wendl, a legal adviser at the League, took part in the closing session.

Mr. François Gillioz, head of the Middle East desk in the Co-operation/Dissemination Division, took part in all the proceedings, with the aid of Mr. A. Zemmoli, a Tunisian lawyer, who gave invaluable help as an interpreter.

The League was represented at the working sessions by Mrs. Yolande Camporini, Technical Adviser, Statutory Matters/Dissemination, and Miss F. Hamarneh, who works at the League's Middle East desk.