

DEVELOPMENT AND CO-OPERATION WITHIN THE INTERNATIONAL RED CROSS AND RED CRESCENT MOVEMENT

Development of National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and co-operation

This year marks the 125th anniversary of the founding of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement. The theme for World Red Cross and Red Crescent Day on 8 May was “125 years at work ... and still developing”. This theme was chosen to underline the universalization of the Movement and the continuous growth in its activities on behalf of the victims of armed conflict and natural disaster. But development is also an expression of the solidarity between the Movement’s components as soon as it is necessary to bring immediate assistance to the victims of man-made or natural catastrophe and to put forward medium or long-term plans aimed, in accordance with the Movement’s Fundamental Principles, at preventing these calamities and ensuring the welfare of communities.

In order to contribute in its own way to the celebration of the World Red Cross and Red Crescent Day, the *International Review of the Red Cross* has decided to devote this issue to one of the basic aspects of the Movement’s development—the *development of National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and co-operation in this area between the Movement’s various components*.

Much discussion has taken place in recent years within the statutory bodies of the Movement about this concept of development of National Societies and the methods chosen to implement it; relevant studies have been devoted to it. Let us not forget, for example, the 1975 study on the re-appraisal of the role of the Red Cross in which its author, Mr. D. Tansley, after examining National Societies, appealed for a new development procedure to strengthen the capacity of National Societies

to carry out their mission. This process, which is the responsibility of the National Societies, was to be carried out with the help of the League, the ICRC and those National Societies able to provide staff, equipment, services and funds.

Let us also not forget that from 1980 onwards, the concept of developing National Societies, accepted by all, aims at making them self-sufficient and effective partners within the International Red Cross. To this end, a "Strategy for the Development of National Societies in the Eighties" was created and approved by the League General Assembly and the Twenty-fourth International Conference of the Red Cross, held in Manila in 1981.

An initial assessment of this Strategy showed that there were differences within the Movement about the interpretation of the term "development" as well as on the question of priorities and development methods. Because of these various factors, to which must be added increasingly weighty financial difficulties, the League General Assembly, at its Rio de Janeiro meeting in November 1987, after receiving the recommendation made by the Development Commission, judged necessary that the Strategy be re-orientated and "up-dated on a basis of new needs generated by National Societies, the commitment of the Movement in the world and the problems confronted by humanity". Motivated by its desire to be ever better in its service of the Movement, the *Review* is publishing this special issue on the development of National Societies and co-operation in order to prompt the Movement's components to engage in thorough celebration. To this end, it has invited National Societies from various regions throughout the world as well as the League Secretariat to express their opinions on the following:

- the concept of development within the Movement,
- the new Strategy for the Development of National Societies in the Nineties,
- the role of the various components of the Movement and their co-operation in the area of development.

This issue has also been contributed to by the ICRC whose role in the area of development was clearly defined in the "Strategy for the Development of National Societies in the Eighties". Also contributing is the Henry Dunant Institute which has recently been studying the relationship between relief work in the wake of natural disaster and development of National Societies.*

* The list of authors who have contributed to this issue is on page 286.

The broad range covered by the articles from six National Societies and the institutions in Geneva are rich in information on several accounts. All of them, to one extent or the other, consider promoting National-Society development to be one of the Movement's priorities if not an obligation. The authors clearly set out the specific role played by the Red Cross and Red Crescent in the area of development, pointing out that the Movement must, now more than ever, be able to rely on strong and independent National Societies capable of accomplishing their tasks as auxiliaries in the humanitarian services of their governments in time of war or other disaster, to promote community services and propagate their faith in the principles and ideals of the Movement.

This ongoing challenge, as one of the authors stresses, requires *co-ordinated* development of the structures and activities of the National Societies.

Drawing lessons from the Strategy for the Development of National Societies in the Eighties, some of the authors favour integrated, overall development over the traditional *ad hoc* approach. But the vast majority are concerned about the independence of the National Societies and wish them to create their own resources and learn to better use them. And while traditional activities should be adapted to reality, it is just as essential to avoid spreading oneself too thin and to guarantee the quality of the services provided.

When reading these various contributions, the reader will be better able to perceive the broad outline of what could be the Strategy for the Development of National Societies in the Nineties which would stress the training of leading officials, economic self-sufficiency, administrative efficiency and the creation of groups of volunteers as proposed by one of the authors.

Comments and suggestions are made on international development aid and co-operation in the light of recent national and regional experiences and of the analysis of the strong and weak points of multilateral and bilateral aid. But the authors are as one in their emphasis on the necessity of making each of the Movement's components more aware of its responsibility, and more precisely defining the role and respective competence of the participating National Societies, the operating National Societies, the League Secretariat and the ICRC. The more so since the success of the development strategy depends on more dialogue and co-ordination between the parties involved.

This issue does not pretend to be exhaustive. It is obviously not possible at this stage to cover all the aspects of developing National

Societies and co-operation. What it seeks to do above all is to understand, in the light of experiences within the Movement, new needs and the realities of the modern world, the problem of developing National Societies in 1988 in order to be better prepared to face the end-of-century payments.

The *Review* will be delighted to receive comments on this issue and will study with the greatest interest, for publication in its forthcoming issues, any other contribution which might add to the discussion in this area.

The Review
