

The need for a practical approach to development within the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement

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Introduction

At this stage of the discussion on development within the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, I shall limit my remarks to a number of general considerations and shall conclude with an attempt to define development, giving an interpretation of its principal aspects.

This general approach might arouse wider interest and thus provide a starting-point for the formulation of development strategies and the planning of programmes.

General considerations

There is growing interest within the major components of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement in embarking on comprehensive planning for development.

This interest in development reflects the need to tailor the Movement's work to today's requirements to ensure optimum organizational and operational results and to help reduce the striking disparity in levels of development that exists among its members.

It is significant that the attention paid for almost a decade to the question of development reflects genuine concern; it has lost momentum at times but has never died away.

The reasons for this new upsurge of interest in development may be attributed on the one hand to the attempt within the Movement to step up and

harmonize Red Cross and Red Crescent operations and, on the other, to an effort to respond to the vast pressure exerted by the international community to increase humanitarian involvement, promote solidarity, combat social and economic injustice, thus giving peace a chance and safeguarding the future of mankind.

Against this background, the Movement has a vital additional role to play. It has to find all possible ways and means of bringing its traditional long-term activities worldwide into line with present-day realities, by updating its skills, uniting its efforts, sharing responsibilities and caring more for those who most need our assistance and protection.

Notwithstanding the difficult circumstances prevailing in so many parts of the world today, a serious attempt must be made to work out strategies and make plans for the Movement's future activities.

In this respect I think it is important to point out the following:

- Development is a serious undertaking which must be backed by the conviction of its necessity and a clear understanding of its nature.
- People can create resources independently with minimum initial support and can learn how to make better use of them; whereas resources alone, if made available from outside, may be misused.
- Sufficient time should be devoted to deciding: what could be done?, who should do it?, how, when and where should it be done?

Making contributions towards development should not be regarded as a charitable activity performed at leisure, but as an obligation towards a Movement bound by deeply rooted fundamental principles.

It is very dangerous and harmful to embark on development plans without a common understanding of the essential obligations that have to be fulfilled at all levels.

The simpler, the more practical and pragmatic the methods of planning, the more successful the results. The more ground covered initially, the greater the skills and trust gained to favour further progress.

The approach to development today is increasingly complex. The majority of our National Societies, which appear to be waiting for miracles to happen, must first determine what can be achieved independently and/or collectively to achieve a higher level of development.

What is most needed at present is a concept of Red Cross and Red Crescent development based on responsibility, an understanding of the nature of the work of each National Society or group of Societies and the day-to-day experience they have gained at national and international level.

Definitions

Development

Development is dynamic functional involvement that generates productive momentum for community care delivery; it is geared to the prevailing circumstances, is flexible and represents an exemplary Red Cross/Red Crescent undertaking; moreover, it builds up a collective image of reliability on the international scene that is instrumental in promoting the Movement's humanitarian work at all times.

Functional involvement

Functional involvement, regardless of its scope and magnitude, defines a measurable burden that should produce satisfactory results and give an indication of structural viability.

Structural viability

Structural viability is a relative concept that can be judged only according to specific productive norms based on input/output ratios, to carry out a particular function at a given stage of development.

Example: The structural viability of an institution, whatever the age-group involved, is regarded as acceptable if the functions it fulfils satisfy the institution's particular stage of development.

In other words, it is neither fair to accept a heavier burden nor justifiable to stretch potentialities beyond optimum capacity.

In this sense, development is an on-going, staged growth process. Overall circumstantial factors will influence the approach to be adopted, the rate of progress and the criteria to be used to measure its achievements.

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