

Reflections on the Red Cross, Red Crescent and development

by the Red Cross of Yugoslavia

1. The concept of development

The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement is the most outstanding expression of development. It was created 125 years ago and now covers the whole world. It has increased its membership many times over, substantially enlarged its functions and developed new methods and forms of action. By continually adapting to the changing world and to new requirements, the Movement has not only preserved the place that it had at the beginning of its existence, but has also acquired the high reputation and position it holds today. The Movement has thus shown its capacity for far-reaching development, and this must be taken into account in defining the Movement's concept of development today.

Following the general trends and changes in the world, the Movement has incorporated the contemporary concept of development in its doctrine. Development has become one of the predominant activities in the post-war world. As early as 1963 our Movement set up a programme for development in accordance with its Principles, and in 1981 it made an important step forward with the adoption of the "Strategy for the Development of National Societies in the Eighties". The First World Red Cross Conference on Peace in 1975 included development among the essential elements of peace. The considerable activity of all components of the Movement in furthering development since that time calls for a new definition of the concept of development within the Movement. The Sixth General Assembly of the League in 1987 paid special attention to the matter.

To determine the contemporary concept of development several elements must be taken into account: on the one hand the general trends and events in the world, and on the other the views, positions and customary practice within the Movement.

As development has become a global problem and a generally acknowledged orientation for work, it is already possible to speak about the right to development. The Declaration on the Right to Development, adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on 4 December 1986 (Res. 41/128), defines the right to development as an inalienable right of man, “a comprehensive economic, social, cultural and political process, which aims at the constant improvement of the well-being of the entire population and of all individuals on the basis of their active, free and meaningful participation in development and in the fair distribution of benefits resulting therefrom”.

In view of general efforts for development in the world and those of the Movement itself, it should be noted that development is a *dynamic, permanent process* and not a static predetermined goal. There must be a constant aspiration to enhance the well-being of people, as an ongoing purpose. The Movement contributes to this on the one hand with its endeavours to help victims of armed conflicts or natural disasters to recover their previous position, even to improve it, and on the other through its community services to promote public health and social welfare. These objectives are defined in the Movement’s mission, which cannot be fully accomplished without permanent development. Their purpose, namely to attain and ensure the well-being of people, simultaneously reflects contemporary aspirations to achieve respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms.

Another element for definition of the concept of development is constant adaptation to new requirements and possibilities of action, hence the continual change of tasks, which also contributes to the concept of development as a dynamic process.

This concept is referred to in many official documents, such as the “Development of National Societies as a contribution to national development”, prepared by the Secretariat of the League in co-operation with the ICRC and the Henry Dunant Institute for the Twenty-fifth International Conference of the Red Cross (Geneva, 1986), and more recently a Resolution of the Development Commission adopted by the General Assembly of the League at its Sixth Session (Rio de Janeiro, November 1987).

Furthermore, the Declaration on the Right to Development adopted by the United Nations General Assembly, the Programme of Action of the Red Cross as a Factor of Peace of 1975, documents of the Second World Red Cross and Red Crescent Conference on Peace of 1984, and other documents link development to peace, which is understood as being a dynamic process of co-operation based on certain generally accepted principles. In that way the circle is closed; the initial concept of development and the concept of peace are both characterized as a dynamic process consisting of certain activities.

There is today a generally accepted principle of relationship between States and between peoples, “a duty of co-operation”, defined already in 1970 in the Declaration on the principles of international law concerning friendly relations and co-operation between States, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations. That principle has long been one of the most important ones in the Movement, and is reconfirmed in the new Statutes of the Movement of 1986, in particular in the Preamble and in Articles 1, 3, 5, 6 and 7.

One of the distinctive features of development is the active participation of those for whom development is undertaken and who enjoy its results. This essential element presents no difficulties for the Movement, which has relied from the very beginning on the recruitment of large numbers of volunteers who actively help to improve the situation of war victims and other categories of people.

Relating development to its mission and objectives, and adapting it to its structure, the Movement has set out first of all to *promote the development of National Societies*. Based on sound foundations in all local and national communities, National Societies are capable of successfully implementing the concept of development. However, development should not be understood as meaning National Society development exclusively; but also as development of the Movement as a whole, that is, as promotion and advancement of mutual relations and as the basis of co-operation and joint undertakings. In that sense we consider that the adoption of the new Statutes of the Movement in 1986, and their adjustment to contemporary conditions, no doubt represent a contribution to development, as these new legal foundations and framework facilitate and encourage the attainment of our basic objective, namely the continual enhancement of the well-being of people the world over.

Both individuals and peoples have the right to development and the Movement contributes to that development:

- (a) through its organization of National Societies, in which people exercise their right to development;
- (b) by direct involvement of individuals in the creation and implementation of their programmes;
- (c) by the whole of its work, which enables people to benefit from their work and from the results of development.

In that way development should cover, and it increasingly covers, all the fields of activity of the various components of the Movement, i.e. services, relief, protection and also development of doctrine, objectives, tasks and working methods.

Development is a very broad concept; on one hand there is the general concept with far-reaching objectives of a lasting and long-term nature, which should be redefined, and on the other there are concrete plans and programmes, limited in time and serving to achieve those objectives. Both are necessary for successful development, but a clear distinction should be made between them.

On the basis of this brief summary of the elements we consider essential, it should be possible to redefine the concept of development for the coming years and make it more modern, complex, complete and suited to current requirements; in other words to work out a concept of development which would give new impetus to the Movement. The well-being of peoples and individuals is not yet satisfactory or well balanced, as in many cases we witness great suffering and aggravation of the already bad conditions in which some people and nations live. Therefore it is necessary to work continually for their well-being, and this basic objective will not be reached in the short term.

2. Strategy for the Nineties

It is impossible to reflect on a Strategy for Development in the Nineties without reviewing at least briefly what has been done so far in that respect within the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement.

Each of the components of the Movement has a specific role to play in its development. The National Societies, the League of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, through the work of its executive bodies, and the League Secretariat in Geneva must plan and implement development programmes; the ICRC also contributes to development as part of its mandate¹. The Development Programme adopted in 1963 moreover states the need for an overall plan for development within the Movement.

In the sixties and seventies the concept of development was in keeping with the level of social development of newly independent countries in which National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies were being formed at that time. Development projects were conceived for newly established societies and relatively short-term implementation.

During the seventies development projects were more specifically geared to the requirements of the National Societies for which they were intended and which began playing a more active role in this regard.

¹ Article 5 of the Statutes of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement states, *inter alia*, that the ICRC: "... shall maintain close contact with National Societies. In agreement with them, it shall co-operate in matters of common concern, such as their preparation for action in times of armed conflict, respect for and development and ratification of the Geneva Conventions, and the dissemination of the Fundamental Principles and international humanitarian law."

In the early eighties there were about 130 recognized National Societies, as compared to, 86 in 1960, and 114 in 1970. Therefore about 30 Societies established at the beginning of the sixties, and which in the early eighties were already 20 years old, had evolved beyond the initial phase of development and were ready for further progress. Individual projects and development programmes were no longer sufficient; there was a need to view development as a more comprehensive process and to define a longer-term strategy for the development of National Societies and their activities. Hence the International Conference of the Red Cross held in Manila in 1981 adopted the "Strategy for the Development of National Societies in the Eighties".

This Strategy was based on facts already generally accepted within the Movement, but which required updating and bringing into line with the general trends of contemporary social development.

In the nineties National Societies should develop so as to adapt to rapidly changing conditions in their respective countries and therefore become useful partners in international co-operation. In so doing they should, however, be able to carry out their basic services without modifying their structure and thus avoid dependence on outside assistance.

The next task that should be undertaken as part of a Strategy for the nineties is the development of the National Societies' operational capacity to initiate effective health and social welfare programmes. A great many National Societies are currently faced with major problems such as funding, structure, staff and the training of leaders. Satisfactory solutions to those problems would greatly enhance the Societies' self-reliance and efficiency.

The Strategy for the Development of National Societies in the Eighties was essentially geared to the needs of National Societies of the Third World, which at the time the Strategy was adopted included both Societies having reached a high level of efficiency and others that were still in the initial stages of development. At the end of the decade for which the Strategy was adopted it would be useful to take stock of the results achieved in order to determine guidelines for development over the next ten years. The sources of information would be those National Societies to which the Strategy was addressed, as well as the League Secretariat.

Pending the final analysis of the implementation of the Strategy, we must reflect on the future development of the Movement as a whole, and in particular on the development of National Societies. Just as the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement has Principles which are specific to it, and make it distinct from any other organization in the world, there are also activities devolving more particularly on these Societies and which are traditionally associated with the image of the Movement; it might be possible to change

their method of implementation, but their objectives must always remain the same.

The Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement pays special attention to the recruitment of *qualified personnel*. This requires a continual updating of programmes, propagation of the Fundamental Principles of the Movement and dissemination of international humanitarian law, to render these programmes more modern in both form and content. Particular attention should also be devoted to *volunteers*, since their numbers make them a driving force in the Movement. Equal attention should be paid to *professional staff*, as their skill and devotion to the National Society concerned will influence its activity. The efficiency and self-reliance of a National Society will depend on the *training* and competence of its personnel, who should be trained at seminars and courses, both general and specialized. Opportunities should be found for opening training centres for National Society staff. Youth programmes are also of vital importance in this regard.

Undoubtedly many elements of the Strategy for the Development of National Societies in the Eighties remain valid as regards the role of National Societies and of the League Secretariat. This also holds true for the ICRC's contribution to the development of National Societies, which includes technical and legal assistance in the creation or reorganization of National Societies, promoting and supporting National Society programmes for the dissemination of international humanitarian law and the Fundamental Principles of the Red Cross, assistance in implementing the Geneva Conventions and protecting the emblem, the preparation of National Societies for activities in the event of armed conflict, and assistance in training National Society leaders and delegates.

Most National Societies have established their own administrative structure, which will certainly be subject to change as their material position evolves and the number of staff gradually increases with the extension of their activities. Constant improvement of internal structures is certainly one of the major tasks devolving upon both National Societies and the League.

In the next decade the global Strategy for Development could also be elaborated in the form of a document to be adopted by the General Assembly of the League and the International Conference. It would be necessary, however, to find appropriate forms of action and a methodology for the implementation of this strategy at the National Society level. Experience gained so far leads us to believe that it would be most effective to draw up—on the basis and within the framework of a global and long-term strategy—a number of short-term programmes, perhaps even a list of individual projects with clearly defined objectives and financial resources, as was done up until 1981.

One problem that has still not been completely solved is the *financing of development*. Whatever the methods employed to promote development, Na-

tional Societies still have difficulty in securing adequate financial resources for such activities. Each in its own way, National Societies try and solve this problem by collecting membership fees, raising voluntary contributions from the public, gainful activities, State subsidies for tasks that States have an interest in promoting, etc. The funds thus gathered are generally adequate, particularly in developing countries, to cover existing activities and the most pressing requirements, but very rarely suffice for the expansion of those activities. Whether and to what extent the Red Cross should engage in arrangements with and apply methods of the so-called “business world” to secure resources for development is a debatable issue. “Business” methods could muster important financial means and could render activities more rational and efficient, but this should not be the only method applied. It is necessary to bear in mind the humanitarian principles and purposes of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, and its social role at both national and international levels. The purpose of development is to create self-reliant National Societies, which cannot be satisfied by permanent assistance from other Societies, but which must gradually learn to use existing means in the most efficient manner, or make efforts to discover new sources of financing.

3. Co-operation

In the contemporary world there is an ever-increasing number of organizations, both governmental and non-governmental, at the national or international levels, which in their work have objectives similar to those of the Red Cross and Red Crescent—the desire to help people and improve their health and living conditions. The National Societies must constantly co-operate with these organizations, while maintaining what is specific to them—voluntary service, impartiality, neutrality, independence and the other Fundamental Principles. By co-operating more closely with other organizations, as well as with the government authorities to which they are auxiliaries, National Societies will achieve better results and will maintain their reputation among the population they serve. Improved co-ordination of Red Cross work with the activity of other organizations will yield more satisfactory results for the beneficiaries, and duplication of tasks will be avoided. Through such co-operation National Societies will also be able to mobilize for their own purposes some of the resources of those organizations.

In implementing the Strategy all contributions that help to attain its objectives should be considered as contributions to development—those made at the national level, those planned and carried out by the international bodies of the Movement, as well as bilateral assistance, which is today undoubtedly an important factor in promoting development.

Regional co-operation is one of the levels of action which could certainly help achieve the objectives of the Strategy. Such co-operation is highly developed today in the Red Cross and Red Crescent world, but it has not been sufficiently used to promote development. In the next long-term plan more attention should be paid to this factor.

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In conclusion, one consideration which should have been mentioned at the beginning of this paper is whether a National Society can be considered as having reached a high level of development merely by virtue of its operating in an industrially developed country. Technological and economic development undoubtedly influence the development of a National Society, but even National Societies of industrially developed countries with good material resources should constantly seek further development. In considering ways and means of promoting development within the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, these National Societies should not be viewed only as participating Societies: they should be willing to co-operate with the National Societies of all the developing countries and be open to the public in their own countries. Their development must also be taken into consideration, and they must be urged to improve their structures and working methods and to expand activities aiming to satisfy new needs; development as a process is necessary and possible in all National Societies, regardless of the degree of development they have reached.

The experience we have acquired so far in the area of development has thus led us to highlight certain issues which we consider merit further reflection and discussion with a view to elaborating new concepts that could enhance development within the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement.

Red Cross of Yugoslavia
