

## THE ROLE OF THE RED CROSS IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

*The documentary material prepared by the League of Red Cross Societies for World Red Cross Day in 1966, includes an interesting study by Mr. Kai J. Warras, Executive Chairman of the League Development Programme Advisory Panel and Secretary-General of the Finnish Red Cross. In this monograph the author examines one of the most important problems facing the Red Cross today, at a time when this movement is expanding considerably and when newly created Societies are carrying out their tasks under conditions which are often difficult. We believe the publication of Mr. Warras' study is a useful means of drawing attention to problems which can only be solved by schemes such as the large scale development programme to be carried out under our universal emblem.*

The growth of communities—from families into kinship groups, from kinship groups into tribes, from tribes into larger communities, and from these communities into nations—has been accompanied by a broadening of outlook and an increasing awareness of responsibility. The same feeling of solidarity and joint responsibility that had previously united only the family and the tribe has gradually extended to unite more and more people, a whole nation. People have learnt to settle by means of laws the controversies which they formerly thought could be settled only by means of war and bloodshed.

The relations between nations have not, however, reached such an advanced stage everywhere. Bloodshed with its untold suffering continues. Yet the numbers of enlightened people who already see that coming generations will some day look wonderingly at the wars of our time and at their causes, as we now regard tribal wars or mediaeval religious wars, are fast increasing all over the world.

The consciousness that we all belong to the human race, and that the goal of human progress is the unity of mankind and its joint responsibility for all its members, is growing stronger day by day.

The Red Cross has been working for this goal for more than a hundred years. This is one of the reasons why it gives special attention to young nations and states today. In the transition period of their newly won independence, in the balancing of power groups, it is still often difficult for them to conceive that even enemies need each other, that a general interdependence unites all people. The Red Cross is striving to see further ahead, to tomorrow, to shorten the time of unnecessary suffering.

One of the most important tasks of the Red Cross is to create new mutual confidence and understanding, a joint responsibility between free nations, between their free men and women.

This ideology is supported on the most realistic grounds. The world, so wide in former times, has become small for the first time in the history of mankind. Whether we want it or not, hard reality compels us to deal jointly with the problems of all mankind.

A community where two thirds of the population suffers from the want of the necessities of life, while one third has overproduction and excess of commodities is the case on the globe at the moment. In an individual state, this would before long lead to a catastrophe whose consequences could become irreparable. A wise government tries to prevent such a situation from developing by supporting under-developed areas and by trying to balance the exchange of commodities and services. It is only this way that a healthy and strong community can be built up.

Before the situation reaches uncontrollable proportions, mankind must find a solution to its problems. Disinterested humanitarian work of the Red Cross, directed to the most urgent needs of man, holds a pioneering position in this activity.

This is the practical basis of the Development Programme of the League of Red Cross Societies ; it refers very largely to tomorrow when the problems of the world will be still more closely intertwined than today.

The ultimate aim of this Development Programme is to encourage the establishment of National Red Cross/Red Crescent Societies in all newly independent countries and the development of the basic organization and activity programmes in these Societies or in older Societies that for some reason have not developed rapidly. The League Development Programme, following the principle of uni-

versality of the Red Cross, which obliges the National Societies to help each other, strives to bring all positive forces in the Red Cross to co-operate constructively in order to develop those 70-80 National Societies that have been or are being founded in the developing areas, i.e. in Africa, Asia or South and Central America. This is being carried out by giving technical assistance and material assistance connected with it ; by arranging regional and other meetings for training purposes or individual study visits ; by sending delegates and experts to assist developing Red Cross Societies ; by giving information and publicity material to these Societies for their general information and training activities ; and by launching special projects which are closely connected with the development of these Societies.

The Red Cross Development Programme in itself—and not least the motives given above in the beginning—shows the important role of the Red Cross in developing countries. It must today be regarded as a fact that, besides relief actions, the Development Programme is of paramount importance in the international activities of the Red Cross, if the Red Cross wants, today and in the future, to fulfil its duties and obligations in alleviating human suffering.

The Red Cross is a relief organization above all, and we know the statistical fact that by far the greatest part of the disasters that have required international relief have occurred in the area on both sides of the equator where most of the developing countries are situated. One of our tasks is therefore undeniably to build up an efficient disaster preparedness system in that area. The only means to do this is to develop the organization and activity programmes of the National Red Cross Societies concerned and to incorporate the disaster preparedness with their everyday Red Cross work. The establishment of a detached preparedness system is of no use, for experience has proved that in an organization like the Red Cross, which is based on voluntary service, the enthusiasm of even the most active members cannot last, if it is maintained only by means of training and by “ anticipating a disaster ”; other activities must be planned and carried out at the same time.

Each National Society is to act as a voluntary aid society auxiliary to the public authorities of their respective countries. This

provision is contained in the constitutions of all National Societies and was originally to support the medical services of the armed forces in order to alleviate the sufferings of the wounded and sick soldiers. It is evident that this duty of the National Societies in peacetime is to support the work of the national public health and social welfare authorities. In this way, the role of the Red Cross in developing countries assumes almost endless aspects. There is no shortage of tasks ; it is a question of priority and of resources—in personnel, material and, of course, in money. It is these resources that the League Development Programme tries to increase, relying on the generosity of the older Societies, and the sense of responsibility of the younger ones, as well as their willingness to stand on their own feet as soon as possible.

In my opinion, the resources of the Red Cross/Red Crescent Societies in the developing countries can fast be increased through joint efforts so that they can take up, step by step, different activities which will fit appropriately into the worldwide sphere of public health and social welfare. Then the Red Cross, by helping children and old people, the sick and the handicapped in various ways and by increasing knowledge of health education and first aid, performs its important role in developing countries.

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## Pakistan

*The " Newsletter of the West Pakistan Red Cross " (Lahore, 1965) has published an article on " Family Planning " in West Pakistan. We reproduce it because it demonstrates that new fields of action are always open to our movement.*

Pakistan is in the process of development and the present food situation in particular reflects a precarious balance between production and consumption and this uncertainty is expected to grow with the rapid growth in the population. Family limitation is, therefore, an obvious necessity and the basis of all economic