



International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
Fédération internationale des Sociétés de la Croix-Rouge et du Croissant-Rouge
Federación Internacional de Sociedades de la Cruz Roja y de la Media Luna Roja
الاتحاد الدولي لجمعيات الصليب الأحمر والهلال الأحمر

Social welfare policy

Introduction

The Red Cross and Red Crescent commitment to working to improve the situation of the most vulnerable people offers the International Federation a solid basis for its involvement in social welfare issues. Social welfare is a state of human well-being that exists when social problems are managed, when human needs are met and when social opportunities are maximized.

National Societies' involvement in social welfare varies from one place to another and from one period to another, depending on needs, circumstances and capacities. In essence social welfare must be seen and treated as a continuous and dynamic process, subject to variation in time and place. It should be accordingly continuously adapted to the changes in the socio-political, cultural and economic characteristics of a particular society at any given time. Addressing this challenge is one of the aims of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies. Social life and problems in social relationships are not static; they are ever changing. As such the knowledge and the practice of social work, for what it contributes to the promotion of social welfare should also be a continuously evolving core of ideas, which are translated into practice by flexible, competent and reflective professionals.

Scope

The social welfare policy establishes the basis of Red Cross and Red Crescent action both in emergency response operations and the implementation of long term developmental social programmes as well as with respect to advocacy issues in the social development and social action field.

It applies to any type of social welfare activity carried out by an individual National Society or any of its branches, staff or volunteers or by the International Federation acting collectively.

Statement

The International Federation and each individual National Society shall:

- Work according to the Fundamental Principles of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement;
- Recognize that the general objective of social welfare is to manage social problems, meet the human needs and maximize social opportunities in order to improve the physical, psychological and social well-being of the individual, her/his family and community;
- Safeguard the individual rights of every person in view of the principle that every human being has the right to live and enjoy the basic necessities of life;
- Be proactive, by engaging in planning and preparedness activities to prevent or mitigate the effects of problems encountered by vulnerable populations served by the Red Cross and Red Crescent. This means working with the most

vulnerable addressing the social situation in emergencies and in the rehabilitation phase, for working on development through advocacy and/or direct action and taking preventive measures against various forms of social exclusion and vulnerability;

- Develop, at different levels, the appropriate specific social policies and strategies to monitor the economic, socio-cultural, political and technological interests of the population, paying special attention to the needs and rights of minorities. Indicators and quality standards need to be developed in order to measure and evaluate the impact of programmes;
- Reaffirms that social services and social welfare activities are a very important part of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and need to be created, reinforced, developed and adjusted to changes in the society;
- Define their own priorities in terms of target groups;
- Ensure the social perspective in every area of intervention of the Red Cross and Red Crescent. This should be done by an effective integration of services within the work of the National Society and the Federation with a holistic approach as a basis for identifying the needs of the persons to be assisted;
- Strive to establish and/or enhance the capacity for conducting tracing in disasters and/or restoration of family links with the aim of alleviating the sufferings caused by such situations and to incorporate this capacity to the extent possible, not only as part of social welfare, but in the other relevant Red Cross and Red Crescent programmes, in particular disaster preparedness and in disaster response operations;
- Recognize that the role of the Red Cross and the Red Crescent in providing social services is an auxiliary to governments and not a substitute for it;
- Promote the self-reliance of 'beneficiaries' by working with the most vulnerable people in the society. The involvement of the beneficiaries, with the aim of empowering them and increasing their coping mechanisms, includes their participation, to the extent possible, in the identification of needs and in planning, implementing, monitoring and evaluating the relevant social welfare programmes;
- Ensure that the social welfare programmes promote the participation of volunteers of all ages and both genders;
- Ensure the necessary recognition of the role and value of volunteers in social programmes. Volunteers must have an opportunity for guidance by experienced professionals;
- Ensure that all social welfare interventions are determined by the needs of beneficiaries and that programmes thus developed are solely needs driven and not determined by any other factor or consideration.

Responsibilities

National Societies should:

- Integrate a social welfare perspective in the overall national programme and its various components;
- Strive to ensure quality and accountability in the Red Cross and Red Crescent social services;
- Ensure that the relevant employed staff and volunteers are given appropriate training so that they are able to identify social needs and initiate the necessary response;

- Promote a community based approach and ensure community involvement in decision-making, needs assessment, programme identification, implementation, monitoring and evaluation;
- Promote co-ordination and collaboration between organizations and agencies working in the social field.

The International Federation should:

- Develop a strategy and the necessary guidelines in support and for the implementation of this policy. This will be done in co-operation with National Societies in order to enhance effective implementation;
- Develop a clear strategy for exchange of information and foster greater co-operation and sharing of experience amongst National Societies e.g. exchange of staff, materials and training programmes. The Secretariat shall be a resource centre for information and co-ordination. For increased efficiency the Secretariat can delegate part or all of this role to the National Societies upon mutual agreement;
- Foster opportunities for improving training of skilled and competent social service human resources;
- Promote a community based approach in decision-making, needs assessment, programme identification, implementation, monitoring and evaluation;
- Define strategies for advocacy and/or direct service delivery;
- Promote the use of research in social trends and social services;
- Offer guidance and assistance to the National Societies for the prioritization of social welfare programmes;
- Promote co-ordination and collaboration between organizations and agencies working in the social field;
- Carry on a review of implementation of this policy within four years of its adoption.

References

This policy was adopted by the 12th Session of the General Assembly of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, October 1999. This policy replaces all previously established general policies on social welfare. It does not replace complementary specific social welfare policies, namely regarding: people with disabilities, migrants and children affected by armed conflict, approved in recent years by the statutory bodies.