

Working Group Discussion on new challenges, priorities and dimensions

Facing new factors of vulnerability (such as climate change, poverty, urbanisation, migration and ageing), it is becoming more and more crucial for Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies to work closely and complement each other, bearing in mind that the Health and Care Strategy and the Disaster Management share several cross-cutting issues and are in strong relation.

Four questions were submitted to the plenary:

Question 1: What is coming: new challenges, priorities and dimensions?

Delegates outlined some of the potential global challenges they see affecting the world and the work of the International Federation. These challenges will inevitably lead to an increase in mortality/morbidity and greater civil unrest.

Climate change will bring about increasing natural disasters such as:

- Flooding, drought, cyclones;
- Submergence of small low-lying islands;
- Crop failure.

Health challenges will include:

- The re-emergence of drug-resistant diseases;
- The threat of spreading and mutating avian flu;
- The development of new unknown infections;
- An increase in chronic diseases;
- HIV/AIDS: a re-emergence of a more drug-resistant virus and the threat of donor funding of treatment coming to an end and governments unable to take over the funding;
- Inaccessibility of clean water;
- An increase in drug use among young people.

Challenges will arise from population movement and growth:

- Increased urbanisation and resulting higher numbers of urban poor with limited resources and health services which will lead to increased crime and poverty and a greater number of disease epidemics;
- Increased immigration and a resulting increase in the needs of immigrants;
- The repatriation of refugees;
- The growth and ageing of the population.

We face a rising level of insecurity, which will stem from the increasing inequality in the distribution of wealth, an increase in serious conflict around the world and the deteriorating global food situation. These growing issues will also lead to more crime and civil unrest.

Delegates also raised the prospect of two positive developments: an increase in the number of diseases that are brought under control through vaccination and the greater capacity of organisations such as the International Federation to respond effectively to global events.

Question 2: How the Red Cross and the Red Crescent can prepare itself for leadership in development and emergency settings?

- Volunteer capacity. Need to use competencies of volunteers and improve capacity;
- Need to be working at the cutting edge;
- Less focus on politics within organisation and more on programmes and coverage;
- Partnership building. Need to work together so as not to reinvent the wheel. Important to work with other national

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- organisations in disaster management. Create more partnerships and stronger partnerships;
- Strengthening fundraising departments for capacity building, human resources, and infrastructures;
 - Capacity building. Improve human resource capacity, particularly at the Secretariat;
 - Support from secretariat to National Societies to help them plan strategically and make health care a priority;
 - Need clear roles defined on health issue between Governments and Red Cross and Red Crescent. Strengthen ties with governments. Emphasize auxiliary role to the government;
 - Change of leadership style;
 - Training on regular basis for staff and volunteers. Simplify and harmonize training at all levels;
 - Improve monitoring and evaluation systems;
 - Increase number of staff in emergency settings;
 - Focus on empowering people including vulnerable and marginalised groups (e.g. by providing seed and educating them on lead farming);
 - Increase staff salaries in a competitive environment;
 - Advocacy regarding food security and safety, education;
 - Focus on service delivery. Quality of services;
 - Prioritise and specialise. Prioritisation of disaster risk reduction activities. Disaster prevention and response;
 - Red Cross and Red Crescent National Societies needs to be more talkative, share programme experiences;
 - Merge health education and socio-economic issues through programmes and training;
 - Importance of a shared definition of Primary Health Care (PHC);
 - Important for the strategy plan to be translated into operational mode;
 - Principles of the Movement – neutrality and humanity. Promote unique auxiliary position of Red Cross and Red Crescent;
 - Work in and take lead in areas where gaps exist (i.e. chronic disease, global climate change, gender-based violence);
 - Scale up community-based health care work for better access to communities in times of disaster;

- Identify issues to take on and become experts;
- Rapid assessment and intervention tools;
- Realistic and achievable targets;
- Feedback and accountability, transparency;
- Question: Can we be both in development and emergency settings?
- Increase visibility;
- Needs to be led by National Societies' needs;
- Commitment toward achievements;
- Need for a holistic approach.

Question 3: Do we still need two separate Global Agenda Goals for Health and Care and Disaster Management?

YES – The majority of National Societies present voted in favour of retaining the separate Global Agenda Goals for several reasons:

- There was a fear of losing elements of one if merging takes place, especially Health & Care to Disaster Management;
- Funding issues between the two areas was also cited, along with causal attribution, which would be harder to verify with a singular goal;
- Better integration and cooperation between Health & Care and Disaster Management was also called for from several group members.

NO – Those voting for a singular Global Agenda Goal were less prevalent, but there were several comments as to why this would be a good idea, with some caveats:

- It's logical, since where there is disaster there is health crisis
- Resources are already used in a shared and cohesive manner between Health & Care and Disaster Management;
- One goal, but 2 separate functions maintained;
- Greater resources would be required in order to get there;
- Should be merged in practice but emphasis is still required;
- By subdividing Health Care and Disaster Management, health attaining activities are limited. Need for one community defence strategy;
- We need one clear goal as a focus.

UNDECIDED – Only a minority expressed ambivalence towards this issue, for the following reasons:

- Why are we asking the question?
- How much does this really matter?
- It's not good to keep changing all the time.

Question 4: What do the International Federation and National Societies need to do differently to be able to meet the challenges and remain effective?

A large number of issues came out of this discussion. First, some general statements called for a focus on:

- Increased monitoring, evaluation and accountability;
- Fundraising and more effective use of funds;
- Prioritising and specialising ('do less, do better');
- Improvements in information technology;
- Better volunteer management ('focus on what we do well, i.e. volunteers');
- Flexibility and the ability to adapt and keep relevant;
- Development of a corporate culture;
- Action rather than talk;
- Neutrality;
- Visibility and publicity ('show we make a difference');
- Development of supporting systems and procedures, and better planning and coordination at all levels;
- Ensuring there are skilled and experienced people in the field;

- Stronger, better leadership and increased transparency;
- Increased professionalism;
- More training;
- Improving strategic alliances and sharing information outside the International Federation.

In particular, National Societies should:

- Become more visible;
- Function well and keep credibility;
- Have a good collaboration with Ministries of Health.

The International Federation should:

- Evaluate the past year to take lessons;
- Have a clear strategy;
- Move the secretariat to Asia where the resources are!

A number of comments brought out a tension between National Societies and the International Federation, and opposing views were expressed. Whilst some felt that National Societies should stay united, stop competing and support the International Federation, others felt that the role of the Federation needed to be redefined, giving National Societies increased independence. The International Federation needs to be realistic about the guidelines they develop as National Societies find it difficult to keep up with centrally developed practice. They should increase consultation and collaboration with National Societies before developing new programmes and policies ('Listen more to National Societies'). Since the challenges are faced at NC level, the International Federation should support National Societies in fundraising and human resources.

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