

# ***EVALUATION AND ORGANISATIONAL LEARNING***

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*The global programmes of the Emergency Appeal 2000 have been designed to promote strategies, develop programmes and provide tools that would benefit all members of the Federation and the people they seek to help.*

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## ***The context***

The purpose of this global programme is to strengthen knowledge management, institutional learning and co-ordination of development co-operation, both at the Federation Secretariat and within the Federation at large. It focuses in particular on sharing knowledge about National Society needs and capacities, establishing evaluation and quality assurance systems and developing a participatory approach to building a strategy for the Movement.

These themes have been central to the change process introduced by the Federation's new secretary general that has been underway since the start of the year to build a Secretariat implementation plan for Strategy 2010. As part of this process, a number of "solution teams" have been looking into such issues as knowledge sharing, monitoring and compliance and programme co-ordination. A common theme in the work of these groups has been identifying innovative approaches to improving programme impact and quality. These have included finding new ways to bring together the experience of National Societies, Federation delegates and outside organisations; better monitoring of quality standards in National Societies; and maximising the "value added" that external Red Cross/Red Crescent partners can contribute to a National Society's overall performance.

In general, there has been good progress in carrying out most of the activities foreseen within this global programme. Some planned activities have been delayed as a result of the work engendered by the change process, and expenditure has consequently been less than foreseen. However, the organisational changes that are coming about as a result of the change process will undoubtedly lay the foundations for the Federation to achieve the objectives anticipated in this global programme..

## ***Red Cross/Red Crescent action***

### **Development of the Federation-wide system that helps National Societies monitor and improve performance through learning more systematically from our collective experience •**

One of the main activities foreseen under this objective was the production of Strategy 2010-related training modules and other promotional material. During the first half of the year, work has been undertaken to develop and test a set of overhead slides for use with and by National Societies introducing the core elements of Strategy 2010. This will be produced and circulated to Societies and delegations during the third quarter of the year.

A 16-minute video "The Key to Open Doors" has been produced which introduces the key themes of Strategy 2010. Filmed on location with four National Societies (Colombia, France, Iran and Namibia) and using film clips from many other Societies, the video presents the strategic directions of Strategy 2010 from the point of view of National Society staff and volunteers. Currently being translated into the four official languages of the International Federation, the video will be circulated to all Societies during the summer.

The Federation web site has been substantially redesigned to reflect the strategic directions of Strategy 2010 and to be more accessible, both for National Societies and the general public. Launched in June 2000, it now provides a stronger basic structure upon which a broad range of Federation communications will be built.

Measures to set quality criteria and establish an evaluation function have been initiated by the new Planning and Evaluation Unit, which was established in the Secretariat in January 2000. Work is currently underway to collect all evaluations carried out in Secretariat-run programmes during the last three years and to produce a synthesis report presenting the key findings, best practices and learning. It is intended that this work will form the basis for a Federation-wide system to encourage greater accountability and effectiveness in Red Cross/Red Crescent humanitarian work.

Discussions have been held with the Evaluation Department of the ICRC and a group of interested participating National Societies to establish an active evaluation network to share experience and learning, and build competence and expertise. The dialogue with ICRC has also included the identification of areas of common interest in evaluation, including skills development of staff. This work will be further pursued in the coming six months.

One constraint in making progress with achieving this objective has been the availability of staff, due in part to their involvement with the change process and more particularly linked to the inevitable challenge of starting up a major new function at a time of limited resources. However, the current change process is reinforcing the commitment to improve performance through a more active monitoring and evaluation of quality standards in Federation work.

### **Promotion of knowledge about the capacities needs and activities of National Societies as the basis for improved development co-operation within the Federation •**

The publication *Partnerships in profile 2000/01* was issued in June. This is the third edition of this publication, which was originally launched in 1996. It provides a concise overview of 147 National Societies, including for the first time many from industrialised nations. The presentation has been changed to make the texts both more readable and informative. New sections have been added that describe the partnerships the Society is involved in and where further information can be found.

As before, each profile is structured on the "characteristics of a well-functioning National Society", and therefore gives a concise overview of the Society's organisation, programmes and structure, as well as its existing partnerships and external assistance. The purpose of presenting National Societies in these terms is to provide an "honest photograph" of their activities, capacities and needs. By sharing this knowledge, it is hoped that Societies will be encouraged to work together and support each other more closely.

Introductory articles contributed by the Nigerian and British Red Cross look at what “partnership” means from an African and a donor country perspective. The last section of the book contains statistical data on all development programme funding provided in 1998 whether on a bilateral basis or through the Federation, as well as comparative charts showing trends with previous years. The overall amount spent on development within the Federation in 1998 increased to CHF 102 million, compared to CHF 86.3 million the previous year. The percentage of development programme funds coming through the Federation Secretariat also increased (38% compared to the usual 25-30%).

Greater attention has been given to making this information more widely available. The National Society profiles contained in *Partnerships in profile 2000/01* are prominently featured in a new “where we work” country section of the Federation’s redesigned web site. It is planned to produce French language versions for the web site later this year, and Spanish versions of the Latin American Societies will be available on the respective regional delegation web sites.

This global programme has also supported the production of two sets of guidelines as part of ongoing efforts to improve development co-operation within the Federation. The first set of guidelines, on partnership meetings, provides practical “how to” advice in a short and attractive format. These are intended for use by both National Societies and Federation Secretariat staff in the field and Geneva involved in planning and organising such meetings. Work on developing these guidelines was finalised in June following consultations and the incorporation of feedback from different sets of users. Available in English, French and Spanish, the guidelines will be distributed in the second half of the year.

The second set of guidelines deals with partnership agreements. Such agreements are an important element in formalising the co-operation between all components of the Movement, be it in “development” or “relief” contexts. Drawing on experience gained from the regular review of some 50 such agreements per year, draft guidelines have been drawn up to assist National Societies and delegations dealing with this issue. These draft guidelines have recently been shared with selected National Societies and delegations, and it is hoped to be able to produce a final version by the autumn.

One important aspect of this work has been the close collaboration with the ICRC, which has been very supportive and willing to collaborate within an agreed framework that links together all the different partners working to strengthen National Societies’ capacity and performance.

Limited progress has been made so far in one activity under this objective, namely the initiation of peer reviews amongst participating National Societies of their international co-operation strategies. However, a survey of existing material is underway, and it is hoped to develop this work in the second half of the year.

**Development of knowledge management systems to make the most of being a global network, in terms of efficient accessing and sharing of knowledge and learning to improve programme quality within the Federation •**

Work has been undertaken by staff within the Information Systems Department to finalise the technical aspects of a full scale roll-out of Lotus Notes to all staff in the Geneva Secretariat. This has included using outside expertise to validate the fundamental parameters of the Notes configuration being used. The number of “pilot group” users in the Secretariat has already been increased and the potential for the use of Notes in the regional delegations is being explored.

In the area of developing better use of Internet-based technologies, a number of innovations have been piloted in the first six months of the year with a view to studying their applicability for wider uses within the Federation. For example, a secure web site has been set up to facilitate information and document exchange among members of the Governing Board. An Internet-based tool for collaborative communications, known as Quick Place, was used in March and April to facilitate communication among members of the “solution teams” working on the change process in Geneva, certain delegations

and selected National Societies. This same tool is now being used by two pilot “expertise networks” established as a result of the work of the knowledge sharing solution team.

In order to ensure that the largest possible number of National Societies can benefit from modern communications, work is now under way at the Secretariat to establish exactly which Societies do not have e-mail connectivity and to identify the barriers they face. This issue was presented at the April participating National Societies (PNS) information meeting in order to provide a better understanding of the dimensions of the subject to that group and to seek their involvement and support in working on solutions. A programme to begin to address these barriers will be undertaken during the balance of 2000.

Discussion of issues relating to information management and supporting technologies will also be included in the Pan-African Conference to take place in September. Good experience of helping Societies develop information systems geared to their needs is being gained through implementation of the LISN (Library and Information Systems Network) project in the Southern African region. This will be used as the basis for a wider discussion of the issues involved at the Conference.

Progress in working on this objective has been constrained in part by work linked to the major review being carried out into the requirements for an integrated financial and information management system for the Federation. However, this work should lay the basis for a modern and responsive technological infrastructure to facilitate the work of National Societies and the Federation Secretariat in the years ahead.

**Mobilisation of the Federation's input into the building of a common strategy for the Movement through a process that builds on lessons from the field and the experience of the Federation's Strategy 2010 and the ICRC l'Avenir study •**

In line with the resolution taken at the 1999 Council of Delegates, the Standing Commission has set up a working group to develop a strategy for the Movement, with a sub-group looking specifically at the issue of international relief operations. The Standing Commission is leading this process including the handling of consultations with National Societies within the working groups.

The senior management of the ICRC and the Federation continue to meet regularly as part of their now well-established process of informal consultations. As part of their reflection on ways to improve co-operation, they have established a working group to identify and develop opportunities for harmonisation between the two institutions. Building also on the recommendations coming from the evaluation of the joint Balkans operation, this group has been looking at opportunities for harmonisation in such areas as finance, logistics and human resources. Further work is required, and one of the planned next steps is to look into the experience of other organisations that have harmonised systems and procedures.

## ***Contributions***

See Annex 1 for details.

## ***Conclusion***

As noted in the introduction, several of the themes underlying this global programme have been taken up and reinforced by the work that is underway as part of the current change process initiated by the Federation's new secretary general. These include the importance being given to monitoring and evaluation, and the sharing and leveraging of knowledge within the Federation at large.

In general, satisfactory progress has been made in starting up most of the activities foreseen for the first year of this programme. This has been the case in particular in the areas of promoting Strategy 2010 and some of the development co-operation activities. This work will be continued in the second half of this year. Progress in implementing some activities has to a certain extent been hampered by the

involvement of staff in the change process itself. However, the recruitment of new senior staff, notably in the evaluation and information systems areas, will facilitate progress in the second half of this year.

This global programme has started to lay the foundations that the change process is now building on in order to ensure that the Federation builds its capacity as a learning organisation. Achieving this aim will take time and require commitment from both the Secretariat and National Societies. However, working in this direction is a key element of implementing Strategy 2010 and improving the quality and impact of Red Cross/Red Crescent programmes.

Peter Rees-Gildea  
Director  
Operations Funding and Reporting Department

Alistair Henley  
Director  
Development Cooperation  
Department

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