

# Plan 2009-2010



International Federation  
of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

## Psychosocial Support Centre

### Executive summary

The global challenges confronting the world and hence the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) are mounting every day. Global and local levels are connected as never before. Over the next decade the Federation will have to respond to many new vulnerabilities, more frequent disasters, population movements and unprecedented social and demographic changes. Many of these problems will know no borders and many will result in major health problems, often psychosocial in nature.

The overall objective of the International Federation Psychosocial Support Programme is to assist the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement to increase awareness regarding psychological reactions at a time of disaster or social disruption, to facilitate psychological and psychosocial support, to promote the restoration of community networks and coping mechanisms, and to enhance emotional assistance to staff and volunteers.<sup>1</sup>

The IFRC Reference Centre for Psychosocial Support (PS Centre) aims to fulfill its objective through five distinct programme components: (1) Operational assistance, (2) capacity development, (3) competence development of Red Cross/Red Crescent (RC/RC) staff and volunteers, (4) advocacy and knowledge generation and (5) policy and strategy development.

The programme contributes to all Global Agenda Goals, as it strives to reduce the impact from disaster (Goal 1) as well as disease and public health emergencies (Goal 2), increase capacity to address the most urgent situations of vulnerability (Goal 3) and reduce intolerance, discrimination and social exclusion (Goal 4). The strategy of the PS Centre is also in line with the Global Health and Care Strategy.

Within this framework, the **mission** of the PS Centre is to **promote and enable psychosocial well-being of beneficiaries, humanitarian staff and volunteers**. This is done through:

- enabling National Societies in particular to respond better to the psychosocial needs of vulnerable groups;
- advocating for psychosocial support at policy levels;
- generating new evidence-based knowledge;
- contributing to the development of psychosocial support programmes; and
- promoting support and guidance to staff and volunteers.

Those affected by critical events will both be supported directly by the PS Centre through our contributions to the emergency, recovery and long-term interventions; and indirectly through the increased capacities of National Societies and the Federation Secretariat to respond to those in need.

The total 2009 budget is CHF 945,000 (USD 863,803 or EUR 601,911).

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<sup>1</sup> [International Federation Policy Paper for Psychological Support](#). (May 2003).

## Context

We live in a world with increasing numbers and magnitude of disasters, pandemics and conflicts, which, in addition to physical destruction, cause severe psychological wounds and disrupts social ties between individuals and in communities. Although invisible, this harm is just as real as physical injuries and often takes far longer to overcome than material losses. Early humanitarian efforts that responded to psychosocial needs took place during the Balkan wars in the 1990s. Since then, there has been growing awareness of this issue, and psychosocial support has been included in many aspects of humanitarian work such as shelter, food distribution and basic health care.

Psychosocial support programmes help individuals and communities to heal the psychological wounds and to rebuild social structures after an emergency or a critical event. The IFRC Reference Centre for Psychosocial Support (PS Centre) was established in 1993 to assist the Red Cross and Red Crescent National Societies to develop the capacity needed to provide psychosocial services in areas affected by catastrophic events or armed conflict. The centre strives to be in the forefront of improving psychosocial programming throughout the world. Its primary function as a “centre of excellence”<sup>2</sup> is to develop strategically important knowledge and best practice to improve future operations of the International Federation.

Over the past fifteen years, there has been a major increase in the awareness of psychosocial support in general and within the Red Cross Red Crescent Movement. The number of National Societies planning to include psychosocial support components in their work with vulnerable people is on the rise, but at this point many need additional capacity and skills to implement their activities. The PS Centre aims to support these Societies in building their capacities to respond.

## Priorities and current work with partners

While continuing work on a number of projects and initiatives from 2008, and working towards the five programme outcomes (see below), a few issues stand out as particularly important for 2009.

First and foremost, the PS Centre will continue to work towards its long-term goal of being a centre of excellence in its field. This will require scaling up in a number of areas.

The IASC mental health in emergencies guidelines, launched in 2007, marked an important step in the field of psychosocial support, but there is still a lot of work to be done in terms of advocacy and training to put the guidelines into practical use. Training will also be important when the revised version of the community-based psychosocial support manual of the PS Centre will be completed and distributed. This manual, and other tools produced in 2008, will be promoted and advocated for in 2009.

Global awareness and the sharing of best practices are the reasons why the PS Centre plans to arrange an international psychosocial support conference in 2009, to gather experts and practitioners worldwide.

Other initiatives in 2009 will include a review of psychosocial programmes for children, focus on protection and a scaling up of HIV/AIDS-related psychosocial work. The psychosocial component for the Health Emergency Response Units (ERUs) will be finalized and ready for deployment whenever there is a need for mobile clinics and hospitals. The PS Centre also aims to further develop its relations with the zonal offices and National Societies, and to focus on parts of the world where its involvement so far has been relatively low.

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<sup>2</sup> As encouraged in *A consultation on National Society centres and networks*, Commissioned by the Governing Board and concluded in March 2007.

The PS Centre works with a number of movement partners and other organisations. The centre is financially supported by the Danish Red Cross (maximum half of the total cost) and a number of other National Societies, and has institutional partnerships with several universities and research institutes.

## Secretariat programme in 2009-2010

Psychological support is increasingly integrated into a number of programmes: first aid, health, social welfare, disaster preparedness and disaster response, and care for staff and volunteers.

Psychosocial support programmes carried out by the International Federation are enacted under the Psychological Support Policy adopted in 2003, and the Health Policy adopted in 2005. The policies underline health as a cornerstone of human dignity and humanitarian assistance and the need for mainstreaming psychological support in all community-based programmes of a National Society and the International Federation, including emergency response.

In the immediate aftermath of an emergency, the aim of psychosocial support is to ensure that basic needs are met, that reliable information is available to the fullest extent possible, providing access to medical care, and psychological first aid. Early support and adaptation processes allow an affected population to better cope with a difficult situation, based on the concept of respect for the prevailing culture and its mental health or psychosocial healing practices.

In the long term, the Psychosocial Support Programme will promote activities that help beneficiaries to resume their normal lives by linking up to recovery and development-oriented activities, building capacities to provide psychosocial support in the local context and working on locally-identified needs, rather than on the reflexes of the aid community.

## Health and care/Psychosocial support centre

### a) The purpose and components of the programme

<b>Programme purpose</b>
The overall objective of the IFRC Psychosocial Support Programme is to assist the Red Cross/Red Crescent Movement to increase awareness regarding psychological reactions at a time of disaster or social disruption; to facilitate psychological and psychosocial support; to promote the restoration of community networks and coping mechanisms; and to enhance emotional assistance to staff and volunteers. The programme contributes to all Global Agenda Goals, as it strives to reduce the impact from disaster (Goal 1) as well as disease and public health emergencies (Goal 2), increase capacity to address the most urgent situations of vulnerability (Goal 3) and reduce intolerance, discrimination and social exclusion (Goal 4).

The PS Centre 2009 budget is CHF 945,000 (USD 863,803 or EUR 601,911).

<b>Programme component 1. Operational assistance</b>
<b>Outcome 1: Contribute to improved psychosocial programming during emergency situations</b>
<b>Outcome 2: Contribute to high quality psychosocial programmes and generate knowledge</b>

The PS Centre will contribute to improving the quality of psychosocial programming during emergencies, and decrease stress levels among staff involved in emergency response. This is done through participation in FACT and other assessment missions, identification of delegates, planning and coordination of missions.

The centre will carry out or provide input to assessments, baseline surveys, programme design, M&E systems design and implementation, trainings and evaluations upon request to contribute to high quality programmes and knowledge generation.

**Programme component 2. Capacity development****Outcome 1: Improve National Society and Federation response to psychosocial needs of vulnerable groups****Outcome 2: Assist National Societies and Federation with psychosocial expertise**

Psychosocial training materials will be developed and adapted. The PS Centre will create an overview of existing Federation training materials, assessing the quality and relevance of these. A revised community-based psychosocial training manual will be ready for final distribution after field testing, and experiences from usage of this manual will be collected. The quality and effect of trainings will be improved through standardized procedures for training. National Societies and the International Federation Secretariat (headquarters and field) will benefit through improved training that will allow them to respond better to the psychosocial needs of vulnerable groups.

The centre will support National Societies and the Federation through compiling lessons learned with the aim to establish best practices. This will be done according to target groups, programme types, different humanitarian situations etc.

**Programme component 3. Competence development of RC/RC staff and volunteers****Outcome 1: Influence relevant Federation trainings****Outcome 2: Implement trainings that ensure increased psychosocial skills**

The centre will advocate for inclusion and improvement of psychosocial modules in relevant trainings and improve the stress management training to make staff and volunteers more aware of psychological reactions and self-care practices.

A “psychosocial school” for delegates, staff and volunteers will be developed and relevant knowledge and skills delivered to the participants, including knowledge of how to link the psychosocial needs of beneficiaries to effective programming. This will give enhanced capacity to carry out relevant psychosocial activities and to plan and implement programmes.

**Programme component 4. Advocacy and knowledge generation****Outcome 1: Increase awareness of psychosocial support and the work of the PS Centre****Outcome 2: Generate psychosocial knowledge, make it available to stakeholders**

The centre will advocate for psychosocial support and needs of vulnerable groups in all relevant fora, contribute to relevant conferences, workshops etc. and produce visibility materials to ensure that psychosocial issues are visible.

PS Centre staff will participate in or organize workshops and conferences on selected themes in relation to psychosocial support (e.g. gender, children, post-conflict). Operational assistance will be linked to research initiatives whenever possible. A quarterly newsletter and other articles will be published and the quality of the centre web site and database will be improved. Knowledge of actual and potential users of the web interface and their information needs will be maintained. All these efforts will contribute to better knowledge generation and information sharing.

**Programme component 5. Policy and strategy development****Outcome 1: Influence relevant Movement policies/strategies/guidelines to include a psychosocial aspect****Outcome 2: Influence global mental health and psychosocial coordination efforts**

The centre will gain access to knowledge of all relevant policy developments and participate in relevant Federation decision-making to influence policy processes.

The centre will continue participating in the IASC reference group. The exchange of information with the Federation and other key stakeholders of external organisations will be increased to ensure that Federation psychosocial approaches are widely recognised and applied among global stakeholders.

## **b) Profile of target audience and final beneficiaries**

The mission of the Centre is to promote and enable psychosocial well-being of beneficiaries, humanitarian staff and volunteers. In order to achieve this, the primary target audience of the centre are *National Societies, Federation Secretariat structure (headquarters and field) and staff and volunteers*. The final beneficiaries are both people affected directly by critical events, and staff and volunteers responding to the events.

National Societies, the Federation Secretariat and delegates will receive training and support to increase their capacity to respond to psychosocial needs. At the next level, this means that delegates, staff and volunteers will be given the tools to do psychosocial support work. This same group will also be supported to recognise and manage their own psychological reactions, including self-care practices.

Those affected by critical events will mainly be supported indirectly through the increased capacities of National Societies and the Federation Secretariat. Support can also be given directly by the PS Centre through our contributions to the operations. The support given to the final beneficiaries will address the affected people's mental and psychosocial needs, enabling them to cope with their situation, seeking to restore their hope, dignity, mental and social well-being and sense of normality. The support focuses on individuals, families and communities, with special approaches to reach the most vulnerable, such as elderly people, orphans and other children, people living with HIV and displaced populations.

## **c) Potential risks and challenges**

As in most of the Red Cross Red Crescent Movement work, the major challenge lies in responding to the increasing number and magnitude of natural disasters as well as armed conflicts and health concern. On another level, the sustainability of psychosocial programmes, often initiated in the aftermath of critical events, is quite a challenge. Yet another risk for psychosocial support could be changing priorities and focus in the humanitarian field.

# Role of the Secretariat

## **a) Technical programme support**

PS Centre staff will support programmes in a variety of ways. At the operational level, staff will participate in FACT missions, identify delegates, plan and coordinate missions. They will also carry out or provide input to assessments, baseline surveys, programme design, M&E systems design and implementation, trainings and evaluations upon request.

To build the capacity of National Societies, centre staff will develop and adapt training material and improve the quality and effect of trainings. They will also provide support, quality assurance and consultancy services to identify and meet capacity development needs upon request. The centre will also work to improve competences to, and support of, staff and volunteers.

Furthermore, the centre will develop methodologies for translating psychosocial needs into effective programmes; link operational assistance assignments to research initiatives; and compile quality materials and ensure wide distribution. Finally, the centre will gain access to relevant policy developments within the Federation and externally, and increase exchange of information with IFRC and key stakeholders of external organisations

## **b) Partnership development and coordination**

In 2009, the PS centre will continue working to maintain and develop its relations with National Society partners, essential to the work of the centre. It will also develop its linkages to the psychosocial networks in Europe and MENA, and continue discussing the re-initiation of a similar network in Asia Pacific. At zonal and international level, the centre will participate in a number of meetings and conferences, not only to contribute to specific topics but also generally to strengthen its ties with the organisation. The centre will continue participating in working groups for IASC reference group, where it represents the International Federation, and health ERU, and liaise and collaborate with other relevant stakeholders. It will maintain its links to research institutions in Denmark, England, Austria and the United States and work to build more such links with other institutions.

The contacts to the above partners, together with contacts established through requests, presentations and services, are essential for spreading information from the PS Centre, for inputs to knowledge and policy generation, for centre support and for obtaining financial contributions. The most prominent constraints for developing partnerships are usually funding limitations and inability to make long-term commitments.

## Promoting gender equity and diversity

When providing psychosocial support to communities, groups and individuals, it is important to realize that the needs may vary. There are particular activities focusing on psychosocial support to children and other vulnerable groups, but also general support activities focusing on the needs of families and communities. The needs of women are often central to the activities, however, it is important to remember that men also have particular psychosocial needs, and often find it challenging to express these. The PS Centre works to develop methodologies to assess the needs of the various target groups and ensure that these needs are translated into effective programme design and services that will make a difference in the lives of the beneficiaries.

## Quality, accountability and learning

Psychosocial support as an element in humanitarian assistance is outlined in several global initiatives, including the handbook of the Sphere project for ensuring coordination and minimum standards in the provision of humanitarian assistance (2004) and the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) Guidance on Mental Health and Psychosocial Support in emergency settings (2007). The International Federation has been involved in the development of both these initiatives. They are part of an emerging consensus on how best to facilitate psychosocial support to alleviate the consequences of disasters or other critical events and thus guide the work of the PS Centre.

Sharing of best practices and dissemination of information is central to the work of the centre, fostering replication as well as accountability. Another central element in the work is the view that target groups are active survivors rather than passive victims; therefore, each intervention builds on the resources available in the community.

How we work	
<p>The International Federation's activities are aligned with its Global Agenda, which sets out four broad goals to meet the Federation's mission to "improve the lives of vulnerable people by mobilizing the power of humanity".</p>	<p><b>Global Agenda Goals:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduce the numbers of deaths, injuries and impact from disasters.</li> <li>• Reduce the number of deaths, illnesses and impact from diseases and public health emergencies.</li> <li>• Increase local community, civil society and Red Cross Red Crescent capacity to address the most urgent situations of vulnerability.</li> <li>• Reduce intolerance, discrimination and social exclusion and promote respect for diversity and human dignity.</li> </ul>
Contact information	
<p>For further information specifically related to this plan, please contact:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Nana Wiedemann, Head, PS centre, E-mail: <a href="mailto:naw@drk.dk">naw@drk.dk</a> / <a href="mailto:psychosocial.center@ifrc.org">psychosocial.center@ifrc.org</a>; phone: +45 35 25 93 59; fax: +45 35 25 93 50. To support or find out more about the PS Centre, click on <a href="http://psp.drk.dk">http://psp.drk.dk</a></b></li> </ul>	