

# Programme Update



International Federation  
of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

## Capacity building fund

Appeal No. MAA00011

31 August 2009

This report covers the period 1 January to 30 June 2009



Farming to raise funds is one of the ways identified by the Burundi Red Cross grassroots branches to mobilise resources locally. **Burundi Red Cross**

## In brief

**Programme purpose:** The capacity building fund (CBF) is a multi-year organizational development (OD) funding mechanism to make International Federation members strong in order to scale-up service and programmes delivery, through financing priority OD and capacity building activities of National Societies that do not manage to attract adequate funding.

**Programme summary:** The capacity building fund provided the following support during the first half of 2009:

- Intensified capacity building (ICB): One National Society received financial and technical support to prepare an ICB development plan, three National Societies received financial support for the implementation of their ICB plan and three others were advised to rework their plans for possible future selection.
- Specific organizational development (OD) support: Nine National Societies that did not receive ICB support were selected for specific development initiatives.
- 13 updates and reports on previous grants were received during the reporting period (see annex).

**Financial situation:** There has been a decrease in the 2009 budget from CHF 5,648,390 (USD 5,204,115 or EUR 3,704,542) to CHF 3,986,370 (USD 3,672,821 or EUR 2,614,493), a reduction of 29 per cent, due to the difficult global financial situation and insufficient funding. Of this revised budget, CHF 691,903 (17 per cent) was covered during the reporting period (not including the opening balance). Overall expenditure during the reporting period was CHF 735,714 (106 per cent of the income received during the year).

At the end of June, 100 per cent of the fund's closing balance (CHF 5.1 million) is already earmarked for future grants for which the fund is committed (multi-year projects approved

between 2007 and 2009). The fund currently has a potential negative balance exposure of CHF 736,312, as detailed in the following breakdown:

	CHF
End of June balance	5,097,330
All time fund reserve	- 1,000,000
ICB commitments 2009-2011 (rounds 1 to 3)	-3,957,018
Specific OD support commitments 2009-2011 (from specific OD support 2007 and 2008)	-876,624
Negative balance exposure with current commitments and end-June 2009 situation	<b>-736,312</b>

This exposure is likely to disappear in the coming months as the annual Swedish Red Cross and SIDA contribution to the fund as well as the matching amount from the International Federation reserves contributed to the sub-fund for Africa and were both not registered at the end-June financial closing.

On 1 July 2009, the CBF committee (see the “Working in partnership” section below) considered the financial situation of the fund and decided that it would not take new commitments that it is not sure to afford. Following this decision, the 2009 budget was reduced through postponing the launching of the CBF fifth round till 2010. Further contributions are nevertheless needed in 2009 (CHF 2.3 million) to ensure:

- Launch of the fourth round of ICB support (CHF 1.8 million) and
- Launch of a new round of specific OD support in 2009 (CHF 500,000).

[Click here to go directly to the attached financial report.](#)

See also the Organizational Development Department programme update.

**No. of people we have reached:** 44 National Societies have been directly benefitting from the support of the CBF in the last year. Around 20 additional National Societies benefitted indirectly from the fund through regional programmes in South America and Africa (New Partnership for African Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies or NEPARC).

#### Our partners:

- The current support provided by the CBF to National Societies is possible thanks to the valuable contributions from the British Department for International Development and the governments and National Societies of Sweden, the Netherlands and Finland.
- National Society partners with a contribution above CHF 250,000 per year were given the ability to propose an OD expert practitioner in the CBF’s expert advisory panel (see “Working in partnership” section). Other partners who provide an expert in the CBF’s expert advisory panel were the National Societies of Jamaica, Kazakhstan, Nepal, Norway and Ghana.
- In the first half of 2009 the International Federation secretariat, with the support of the American Red Cross, did the preparatory work for a study on the initial impacts of ICB and other National Society development models.

## Context

Over the years, the International Federation has provided substantial OD and capacity building support to National Societies, mostly targeting individual programmes, and trying to reach as many of them as possible with limited resources. Although successful, this has often not made National Societies stronger in the long-term.

The decision of the International Federation Governing Board, at their 2007 meeting in Addis Ababa to upgrade the CBF, was followed by the taking up of significant measures to utilize the fund more effectively<sup>1</sup>, towards a more strategic approach to OD support to National Societies. In addition, measures were taken to improve the fund management as per recommendations of the external review published in 2006.

The capacity building fund offers the following types of support:

- **Intensified capacity building:** This is the main National Society development strategy of the International Federation secretariat. Its' aim is to enable National Societies to strengthen themselves in order to best serve vulnerable people through a tailor-made and holistic approach. It helps selected National Societies build the organizational capabilities needed to scale-up countrywide services delivery. Assistance is provided through rounds of three-and-a-half years. For more information, see the "Contributing to longer-term impact" section below.
- **Specific OD support:** Addresses specific development initiatives, particularly for National Societies that are not receiving ICB support. Assistance is provided through zone offices for targeted OD activities, limited in range, time and budget, with existing staff of National Societies, but that will leverage the strength of the National Society.
- **Urgent OD interventions:** Special, one-off small-scale and rapid response from the International Federation to organizational challenges, such as integrity cases, faced by National Societies. Urgent OD interventions have fast-track application procedures, and result in small disbursements cash from CBF, which are used by zone offices as start up capital, until the International Federation develops a plan of action to handle the case.

## Progress towards outcomes

### Outcomes

- Intensified capacity building support is provided to 60 National Societies. 50–65 per cent of the fund's resources are allocated to ICB.
- Specific OD support is provided to National Societies who do not receive ICB support and do not have the adequate funding for the targeted transformation needed.
- When needed, urgent OD interventions by zone offices to National Societies are possible with the necessary funding available under short notice through a fast-track application procedure.
- 50 per cent of the fund's resources serve programme delivery and development in Africa.

### Achievements

- **Intensified Capacity Building support:**  
During the reporting period, 4 National Societies received financial support from the CBF for a total amount of CHF 355,119:
  - ICB 1<sup>st</sup> round: Salvadorean Red Cross Society
  - ICB 2<sup>nd</sup> round: Namibia and Seychelles Red Cross Societies
  - ICB 3<sup>rd</sup> round: Liberian Red Cross Society for their ICB plan preparation.

Overall, 29 National Societies have so far been benefitting from technical and financial support to prepare ICB development plans, and received recommendations and advice to improve them - the National Societies of Benin, China, Comoros, El Salvador, FYR of Macedonia, Morocco, Yemen, Zambia, Belarus, Brazil, Colombia, Kiribati, Malawi, Moldova, Namibia, Seychelles, Tajikistan, Cambodia, Central African Republic, Democratic Republic

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<sup>1</sup> See 2006-2007 report: [http://www.ifrc.org/cgi/pdf\\_appeals.pl?annual06/MAA00011r0607.pdf](http://www.ifrc.org/cgi/pdf_appeals.pl?annual06/MAA00011r0607.pdf)

of Congo, Ethiopia, Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia, Montenegro, Philippines, Liberia, Uzbekistan, Ghana and Burundi.

Among these,

- Two ICB pilot projects of Ghana and Burundi Red Cross Societies have reached two years of implementation and already show significant impact and learning.
  - Eleven were selected for full support (National Societies of China, El Salvador, FYR of Macedonia, Yemen, Colombia, Kiribati, Namibia, Seychelles, Central African Republic, Montenegro and Philippines) and benefit from technical and financial support for the implementation of the ICB plan over three years.
  - Four are still working on their ICB plan before a final decision is taken - the National Societies of Democratic Republic of Congo, Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia and Liberia.
- **Specific OD support:**
    - Eight National Societies have benefitted from the new round of specific OD support in the reporting period for a total amount of CHF 269,773 transferred through individual grants during the reporting period.
    - Eleven National Societies are still benefitting from previous years' grants (implementation ongoing).
  - **Urgent OD interventions:**
    - A reserve was set aside for urgent OD interventions applications by zone offices but no application was received during the reporting period.
  - **Priority on Africa:**
    - During the reporting period, 40 per cent of the fund's resources were allocated to Africa. The variance compared to the objective is due to the fact that not enough applications are received from Africa. The quality of the applications and plans are sometime also an issue in meeting the selection criteria.

## Constraints or Challenges

- **Fundraising**

The likely annual contributions from the current three partners will only cover around 17 per cent of the amount budgeted for 2010 based on the objectives set in the decision of the Governing Board in 2007.

At its meeting in Addis Ababa in 2007, the Governing Board strongly urged National Societies to make financial contributions to the CBF. Since then, only one new donor has made a contribution. 100 per cent of the current balance of the CBF is earmarked for future grants for which the fund is already committed (multi-year projects). At the end of June 2009, the fund was even forecasting a negative balance of CHF 736,312. The CBF committee decided in July 2009 that it would not take new decisions on allocations that it cannot financially commit itself to.

- **Fund management**

The CBF is managed by a funds manager at the secretariat since July 2007. Among various improvements, this has allowed the upgrade of the fund and the launching of the New Operating Model's ICB. In addition, the position covers the management of the Empress Shôken fund and involves acting as the secretary of its joint ICRC and International Federation commission. The number of grants managed is increasing significantly and so is the budget. At a time when funding development is of crucial importance, the CBF manager spends too much time on the grants and fund administration. Gradually more and more emphasis should be placed on programme and impact monitoring, knowledge capturing, analysis and sharing, developing OD strategies further, the fund's communication and fundraising, as well as partners relationships. This is a challenge with the current human

resource set-up.

The following steps are being taken to overcome these challenges.

- The 2009 budget was reduced to a more realistic level, based on the global financial crisis and the level of contributions to the fund.
- The CBF team will increase its human resources. It will include 2.5 staff: the CBF manager, one additional officer (to be recruited in 2010) and a 50 per cent assistant (already in place). Partners will be approached to discuss the possibility of providing a fully funded staff on loan.
- The initial successes and learning of the global OD pilots in Burundi and Ghana are starting to raise the interest of current and potential partners. They will be further shared with partners.
- A study on the initial impacts of the ICB strategy and modality will be conducted and communicated to current and potential future partners (see under “Working in partnership”).

## Working in partnership

The current support provided by the CBF to National Societies is possible thanks to valuable contributions from the governments and National Societies of Britain, Sweden, Finland and Netherlands.

To further increase its quality and accountability, the fund is guided by the CBF committee, on behalf of the International Federation Secretary General. The committee consists of the deputy secretary general as the chairman, the under-secretary general for development, the director for support services, the director for innovation and knowledge management, the head of the Organizational Development department and the CBF manager as secretary.

An expert advisory panel was established in 2008 to support the CBF committee and the Organizational Development Department. The expert advisory panel provides the CBF committee with expert, objective technical advice on the fund allocation decisions. It ensures stakeholders engagement, professionalizes the CBF selection process and provides objective and technically sound assessment of development plans. The members are appointed by the Secretary General of the International Federation and are currently as follows: president of the Jamaica Red Cross, director for OD and support at the Norwegian Red Cross, vice-president of the Kazakh Red Crescent, secretary general of the Nepal Red Cross, secretary general of the Ghana Red Cross, and deputy secretary general of the Swedish Red Cross. The panel met in April 2009 to review the ICB plans of the third round as well as several plans from the second round that had been re-worked.

The International Federation, in partnership with the American Red Cross, is undertaking an eight-month study to identify the conditions, elements and inputs that have led to the development of strong National Society capacities. A substantial part of this study is based on an assessment of the impact and effectiveness of the ICB programme on National Society strengthening and sustainable community development, as well as key lessons related to successful OD and capacity building from the assessment of a selection of other National Societies. The study will be part of the 2010 review of the upgraded CBF, as requested by the Governing Board, and will overall benefit all elements of the Red Cross Red Crescent Movement committed to strong National Societies. It is also proposed that the study be an element of the First Red Cross Red Crescent Global OD Forum, which is planned for 5 December 2010 to coincide with International Volunteers Day.

## Contributing to longer-term impact

The CBF aims at improving the strategic use of resources and the long-term impact of strengthening National Societies. Priority is given to organisational change processes to create or strengthen National Society's ability to deliver sustainable services at the community or country level, with resources mobilised locally and limited dependency on foreign funding.

The National Society development knowledge, generated through the CBF and particularly through the ICB, is collected, analyzed, discussed and shared with zone OD staff and partners. It also feeds in the development of global models approaches, principles and strategies for sustainable National Society development. It is expected not only to help individual National Societies greatly improve and expand their organization and work, but also to inspire and encourage further development in a growing number of National Societies through knowledge sharing and dissemination of success stories.

## Looking ahead

During 2010-2011, the CBF will put a priority on communication and knowledge generation and sharing. It aims to provide support to over 80 National Societies' ongoing development processes through its three modalities:

- ICB - 60 National Societies will receive financial and technical support for their internal development process. In addition, Burundi and Ghana Red Cross Societies will continue and end their OD pilot projects under the umbrella title "Mobilizing the local capacity of Africa".
- Specific OD support - Financial support will be granted to specific OD activities by 20 National Societies who are not selected for ICB support.
- Urgent OD intervention - A reserve will be made available for the zones to tackle urgent OD situations faced by National Societies as needed.

### How we work

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".

#### Global Agenda goals:

- Reduce the numbers of deaths, injuries and impact from disasters.
- Reduce the number of deaths, illnesses and impact from diseases and public health emergencies.
- Increase local community, civil society and Red Cross Red Crescent capacity to address the most urgent situations of vulnerability.
- Reduce intolerance, discrimination and social exclusion and promote respect for diversity and human dignity.

### Contact information

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## **Updates on CBF funded development initiative (reports received during the reporting period)**

### **Update on ICB pilots – Burundi and Ghana Red Cross Societies**

A global project on local capacity building, initiated in 2007 by the International Federation secretariat in Burundi and Ghana to pilot its OD strategy, is witnessing concrete and sustainable impact. Leadership of both National Societies have decided to strengthen their organizations' long-term capacity through creating grassroots Red Cross units that are based on local leaders and volunteers, mobilized among the villagers, trained and supported by the regional branches. Each grassroots unit mobilizes its own resources in order to serve the vulnerable in their own community. Both projects have already illustrated the will and ability of local communities to organize themselves in a sustainable manner to address vulnerability through ongoing services. This project has been implemented and led by the National Societies themselves, through an initial financial investment by the CBF and DFID, and thanks to external coaching from the International Federation when needed. Through these projects, both National Societies have also piloted the ICB strategy of the International Federation.

#### **Burundi Red Cross**

Within three years, the project aims to establish a Red Cross unit and service in each one of the 2,725 *collines* (villages) in the country. The National Society will have 340,000 service volunteers delivering a total of 24 million volunteered hours per year. This equals to 13,000 full time staff, and the annual value of this work is 18 times greater than the International Federation's initial investment in the project which was CHF 300,000. Most importantly, at least 140,000 of the country's most vulnerable rural people will be served and 95 per cent of the population in the country will be exposed to the work of the Burundi Red Cross.

#### **Achievements in 2008 and 2009**

- A total of 1,724 new Red Cross units made up of 127,674 volunteers were created in two years. These new units already cover 63 per cent of the entire country, and respond to community needs on an ongoing basis by providing social services to vulnerable people using resources mobilized at local community level.
- In 2008, 8,666 vulnerable people were assisted, and 1,860 thatched houses were built with a total value of approximately USD 121,893.

#### **Ghana Red Cross**

In Ghana, the project is to establish service delivering Red Cross units in 10 per cent of the 78,664 local communities in the country, building on existing mother's clubs and already existing local branches. The entrepreneurial stage of the first year is over and the replication phase started.

#### **Achievements in 2008 and 2009**

- A total of 307 community chapters made up of 8,502 volunteers were created.
- In many of the newly created grassroots branches, in poor and remote villages, the community leaders illustrated their support to this new process by offering a land with a facility to the Ghana Red Cross.
- A training centre for Ghana Red Cross has been created, thanks to support in the form of land and buildings, by the governor of one of the regions in which the pilot was first carried out.

#### **Namibia Red Cross – ICB second round (planning support)**

After a second attempt and changes within the National Society, the Namibia Red Cross was short-listed for ICB. The plan they put together was a consultative and inclusive process which culminated in a meeting led by the secretary general, with the participation of senior managers

as well as regional staff, and where the following ICB strategic approaches were agreed upon and endorsed:

- Develop community based first aid as a core programme
- Establish local governance structures in four branches
- Strengthen human resources
- Review and develop supportive policies and guidelines.

The expert advisory panel was impressed by the Namibia Red Cross ICB plan. It was well presented, well thought through and seemed manageable and achievable. It was felt that there was a clear sense of the vulnerabilities the National Society was trying to address through strengthening its capacities. Further clarification was requested on the division of roles and responsibilities in the ownership of the process and then the National Society was final selected for the three years implementation.

### **Cambodian Red Cross – ICB third round (planning support)**

An initial consultation at headquarters and two vulnerability and capacity assessments were conducted in Kandal and Oddor Meanchey provinces, involving 300 to 400 community members and representatives. The ICB plan designed addresses community vulnerability by enhancing the programmes' service delivery and offering a wide range of activities to be implemented. A Cambodian consultant, director of Cambodia's advocacy and policy institute, assisted the National Society. The whole process of drafting the ICB plan was finalised by a workshop chaired by the president of the Cambodian Red Cross in February 2009, with representation from the National Society's governance, management and staff from the headquarters and branches, as well as partners. The main constraint was the reluctance from some headquarters and branches staff to adapt to these new changes. This was overcome through numerous discussions and led to a general commitment.

The CBF committee did not select the plan from the Cambodian Red Cross. It was estimated that although the approach was good, the plan was not clear enough. It focused more on the process than the description of the activities to be developed. The National Society should be proposed OD support if it wants to re-apply.

### **Philippines National Red Cross – ICB third round (planning support)**

The Philippines National Red Cross created an ad-hoc working group and used the advice of an external consultant for the preparation of their ICB development plan “community and branch strengthening programme”. The whole process was coordinated with the International Federation zone offices. As an initial step, a consultation meeting was held to introduce staff, chapters and other stakeholders with the basic concepts and modalities of the ICB process. This included identification of key focus areas and components for the future programme and development of selection criteria which should be applied when identifying potential chapters for the ICB programme implementation. The major constraint faced was the timing. It took place at the end of the year 2008 and the beginning of 2009, when the majority of the National Society's staff were busy with final reporting, consolidating and finalising of the results for the year 2008.

The ICB plan was final selected for the three-year implementation after the National Society brought clarification on some questions raised by the expert advisory panel. The activities planned create a replicable model that is likely to establish stronger and lasting relationships between vulnerable communities and the National Society. It is a well written, prepared and documented development plan. If the implementation is successful, it could become a good learning model for other National Societies to follow.

### **Mongolia Red Cross - ICB third round (planning support)**

The ICB plan is about strengthening the Mongolian Red Cross Society at grassroots level in four selected branches that will serve 4,000 vulnerable after three years. The National Society asked all mid-level branches to submit proposals of community level capacity building initiatives. A task force team reviewed the dozens of proposals received and chose four mid-level branches in

isolated locations of four provinces in the country. The main challenge faced during the planning process was the access to some of the target groups, because of the distances. The participatory process to identify needs and solutions therefore had some limits.

The expert advisory panel and the CBF committee found the planned activities with local resource mobilization realistic but is seeking some clarifications and revisions on the budget as well as on how the micro-finance activities planned at local level will be developed and implemented.

#### **Red Cross of Montenegro – ICB third round (planning support)**

A centre for development of non-governmental organizations was hired to assist in producing the development plan. The National Society conducted a self assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of the organization, involving staff from the headquarters and local branches. In order to have a complete picture of the perception of the Red Cross of Montenegro, two focus group workshops were organized involving representatives of 12 institutions and 5 non-governmental organisations, and a public survey was conducted by a private marketing research institute. The ICB plan working group and secretaries from the local branches met in January and identified four priority core areas for the implementation within the three-year ICB plan: improvement of strategic governing and management; development of human resources; fund-raising; and improvement of communication.

The plan was appreciated as good by the expert advisory panel fund's management but the National Society was requested to clarify the linkages with the service delivery and ensure the involvement of governance.

#### **Red Crescent Society of Kyrgyzstan – ICB third round (planning support)**

The Secretary General of the National Society led the development of the plan by defining which capacity building areas of the programme strategy outline should be included in the plan. The National Society involved local and international consultants who helped to draft the ICB plan and map current systems of planning and approaches used within the community-based programmes. The coordination unit of the Kyrgyzstan Red Crescent headquarters managed the detailed development and drafting process of the plan. Two local consultants have also been involved in assessing the current situation in three capacity building areas where no earlier mapping had been done: experiences and systems for planning and the administration system, as well as community-based programme approaches used in communities and by other organizations in the country. This information has been used when drafting the ICB plan and will be baseline information for the National Society. The main constraint was that a two month period is too short to develop a comprehensive plan that is meant to guide the National Society through the process of ICB support.

The Red Crescent Society of Kyrgyzstan was proposed to rework its approach and plan before resubmitting to the expert advisory panel. Although the plan was well written and in line with the ICB concept, the link between the objective of becoming a stronger National Society and the actions described were not concrete and clear enough.

#### **Red Crescent Society of Uzbekistan – ICB third round (planning support)**

The Red Crescent Society of Uzbekistan first held a meeting where branches and headquarters analyzed the perspectives for capacity building and needs to be addressed through the ICB plan. A working group, composed of the executive director, OD programme coordinator, heads of departments, and the regional OD programme coordinator, as well as a local consultant was established and tasked to provide technical support to the drafting and editing. The group prioritized the issues that should be addressed by the plan and discussed these with branches. The final list of priority areas included the Red Crescent Law development; establishing effective governance and management structures; capacity building in the areas of planning, monitoring, evaluation, and reporting; human resources management systems improvement, and finance development. In addition to the ICB application, the analysis undertaken will be used for the future capacity building work of the National Society.

The ICB plan from the Uzbekistan Red Crescent was not selected for implementation. The main comments were that the plan is very much focused on governance and management, that it is difficult to understand the organizational structure, and not possible to see if it will have an impact for the improvement of service delivery to beneficiaries.

### **National Red Cross Societies of the Caribbean – specific OD support**

Project: community volunteering promotion through the use of standard volunteer management tools.

The inclusion of volunteer management training in the recovery phase of Hurricane Dean in January 2008 and in the disaster preparedness project DIPECHO VI in January 2009 allowed the training of 118 volunteer leaders and staff in seven National Societies. They were trained on the volunteer management cycle and its domestic application, to lead the development of a volunteer management programme in their respective National Society, drafted a volunteer management plan to be incorporated into the National Society strategic plan, and to roll out the volunteer management training throughout their respective country.

### **Red Crescent Society of Kyrgyzstan – Specific OD support**

Project: National Societies increased their capacities through the development of human, financial and material resources at headquarters and branch levels

The Red Crescent Society of Kyrgyzstan undertook an external audit of the 2006 financial year in the period from December 2007 to March 2008. The audit final report was released in April 2008, shared with National Society's partners and published on the National Society's website. Following the recommendations of the auditors, the National Society worked towards putting them in practice. The second audit planned in 2009 should validate the progress and achievements. In addition, the society is working on compiling comprehensive financial procedures in line with the local legislation as well as the National Society's specific procedures. The main challenge faced by the National Society was the workload in the second half of the year, including the ICB application and heavy reporting to local tax authorities, which delayed completion of planned activities.

### **Belarusian Red Cross – specific OD support**

Project: Development of youth volunteer movement and participation

An important priority for the Belarusian Red Cross is to foster volunteering in local communities as a way of developing new initiatives, building partnerships and strengthening capacities of the branches. Supported by a three-year CBF grant, the volunteer programme was extended to a new region in January 2008, Vitebsk Oblast. The programme plan for 2008-2010 foresees institutionalizing already tested methodologies and practices for youth involvement and replicating the successful approaches in the Vitebsk region with a focus on up to 20 local communities. In 2008 a good base for project development was established. New volunteers were attracted, a team of trainers on leadership and project planning was formed, branch level focal points were trained and started their work, and a booklet of good practices was published and distributed. About 240 volunteers were involved in implementing the initiatives in the seven local communities covering over 3,400 vulnerable people, including orphans, people with disabilities, elderly people and underprivileged youth. The official recognition through letters of support from the local authorities, youth departments, educational institutions, enterprises and local newspapers, resulted in an allocation of local resources for the initiatives. Over CHF 10,200 was raised from local sources (76 per cent of the youth initiatives' total budget).

### **South America youth – Specific OD support**

Project: Update and professionalize the knowledge of technical experts, young leaders and heads of youth programmes

In the second year of this innovative youth diploma, 20 participants from seven National Societies of the Americas participated and built their capacities to respond to youth related issues in the region. The new students came from a range of Red Cross branches, bringing new experiences to the joint distance-learning initiative. After an evaluation workshop, all participants expressed their satisfaction with the training. It widened their understanding of the complexities

faced by youth in the Americas and contributed to identify key action points and strategies to be applied to future youth projects and programmes at the local level. The full application of learning from the diploma will be seen further ahead. Results can nevertheless already be witnessed through the youth micro-projects being carried out in a number of National Societies. The commitment to create a virtual community will ensure that the diploma students continue to share experiences and support will be provided to future students. At the same time, innovative ways of promoting exchanges amongst Red Cross youth are being explored. During 2009, a group of outstanding students are to carry out research on specific youth issues with support from the Latin American School of Social Sciences.

Narrative and financial reports are available on FedNet in the knowledge centre of the capacity building fund, at the following address: <https://fednet.rog/sw122097.asp>