International Federation
of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

strategy2020

Building strong National Societies:

Our common endeavour. A comprehensive framework

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FRAMEWORK AND PRINCIPLES FOR BUILDING STRONG NATIONAL SOCIETIES

INTRODUCTION

The combined service delivery ability of National Societies is the main strength of the International Federation and, indeed, the whole Movement. To help National Societies become strong and sustainable service providers is the best way to tackle vulnerability anywhere and everywhere. It is also how Red Cross Red Crescent influence and share of humanitarian and development action can be expanded. That is why the International Federation has made making National Societies strong one of its main objectives.[1] So has the Movement.[2] The International Federation has the lead in the Movement of the work to support National Society development.

WHAT IS A STRONG NATIONAL SOCIETY?

All Red Cross and Red Crescent National Societies can become strong. This is true regardless of whether a country is rich or poor. Over the years many National Societies have gone from weak to strong. However, an achieved strength is not permanent; it must be nurtured and adapted to remain so. Neither is a weakness permanent; it can be overcome.

Growth of strength in an organisation always comes from within. It is the result of good strategies, right leadership, strong partnerships, and hard work. When those are in place, external partners can make a difference through appropriate support that is carefully applied to help and not undermine the National Society. Thus, it is critical that all Movement actors recognise that each National Society is responsible for its own sustainable development and growth.

A National Society is a service delivery voluntary organisation. People join it mainly to help others; unmet needs in the community are their driving force. As a service delivery body, a National Society must do so to consistently high standards if it is to remain in business. It must also run its services continuously for as long as needed. This also keeps its volunteers motivated and busy, and maintains its delivery strength.

When a National Society is set up as a nationwide network, it allows its work to be done efficiently in many places simultaneously and enables it to grow in size and scope. Good practice demonstrates that this is based on member democracy and achieved through a bottom up hierarchy of self-governed, self-managed organisational units (branches or chapters).

[1] "Enabling action 1: Build strong National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies" in *Strategy 2020: Saving lives, Changing minds* (2010)

[2] Strategic objective number one *in Strategy for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, Update (2005)*.

It is the activity and behaviour of local volunteers that decide the quantity and quality of services and hence the strength of the National Society. The “moment of truth” for a National Society is when a volunteer interacts with a beneficiary. This moment should, for each service, be consistently good, regardless of where it takes place. It is the role of local branch leaders to organize and lead this. To succeed, they need guidance, support and training from well-coordinated regional branches and headquarters.

What the local units do, how they do it, and the importance of what they do, is the main factor creating the image and strength of the National Society. That reputation decides who are attracted to the National Society as leaders, members, staff, volunteers, donors and partners. This is also the base needed for domestic and international resource mobilisation.

Sustaining its strength is a challenge for any National Society. This is the ability to endure through both good times and bad. Sustainability is determined by the ability to turn a managed mix of mobilised resources into an organisation that can endure both good times and bad by maintaining itself and its key services.

At the local level, the branch mobilizes most of the resources it needs from the community it is serving. The main resource is the unpaid work of members and volunteers. This is complemented with other local gifts to run the organisation or to deliver its services. At the regional and national level, money is needed to pay for staff, offices, communication, transportation, learning systems, and so on. Normally this is raised in a planned way through cooperation, fund-raising, collections, grants, membership and service fees, entrepreneurship and many other ways.

What makes the successful mobilisation of resources possible is the service rendered. If the service is well-known, important, done well, and has real impact – then mobilising the resources for it is possible in any country.

Characteristics of organisational strength

Accordingly, we may define a strong National Society as follows:

A strong National Society is one that is able to deliver country-wide, through a network of volunteer-based units, a relevant service to vulnerable people sustained for as long as needed.

Experience suggests that a strong National Society demonstrates characteristic norms. It:

- lives up to a clear, important and well-known mission.
- runs a few well-known services on a long-term basis.
- has a strong democratically involved membership base.
- has local branches based in and resourced by the served communities.
- has an effective volunteer management system in place to attract and retain a diverse range of volunteers from all sectors of society.
- has a strong headquarters coordinating regional branches that lead, guide, train and support local work.
- covers through a managed mix of incomes, the costs for its organisation and services.
- mobilises on a voluntary basis competent people to govern, lead and deliver services.
- attracts and keeps competent managers and staff.

- enhances the knowledge and skills of governance, management, staff and volunteers through its own nation-wide learning system.
- is accountable to its members, the communities it serve, and to donors and partners.

Besides fulfilling the organisational criteria mentioned above, a National Society must also fulfil specific Movement criteria:

- It is recognised by its government on the basis of the Geneva Conventions and in national legislation as an autonomous, voluntary aid society, auxiliary to the public authorities in the humanitarian field. It keeps its statues up to date in line with the conditions stipulated in the statutes of the Movement.
- It acts always in accordance with our Fundamental Principles, and values, and knows how to discharge its auxiliary role appropriately and effectively in its own context.
- It participates actively in the affairs of the International Federation and meets the constitutional obligations of membership.

How are these characteristic norms turned into organisational success? This is done by National Societies acquiring and sustaining a minimum set of core capacities:

CORE CAPACITY:	**ATTRIBUTES :**
TO EXIST	Legal base (Including appropriate Red Cross Law, up to date statutes, autonomy for leadership, interventions, structure. Effective mission statement, guiding principles, strong governance, relevant policies, branch coverage) and integrity
TO ORGANISE	HR planning and management (members, volunteers and staff), constituency empowerment, internal communication and decision making, management of material resources : infrastructure (buildings, telecom, computers) and logistics management, finance management (budgeting, budget management, expenditure control, compliance and accountability, financial statements and reports), integration of activities into services, services sustainability, operational planning, targets and performance indicators, systems and procedures, business continuity planning, knowledge management, timely and adequate reporting.
TO RELATE AND MOBILISE	Relations with government, external stakeholders, participation in Movement initiatives, effective public relations and image building, Recruitment of members and volunteers, resource mobilisation and revenue generation, diversification of founding sources, advocacy and dissemination, active lobbying
TO PERFORM	Identification of success indicators (quantitative and qualitative), satisfaction of beneficiaries, staff, volunteers and relevant partners, systematic evaluations, feedback and programme adjustments, effectiveness and relevance, efficiency, operational preparedness and reactiveness
TO ADAPT AND GROW	Adapting to changing environments, challenges and opportunities, replication/multiplication of success, pilot programmes, partnership development and strategic alliances, business intelligence

Such an organisation that aspires to characteristic norms and core capacities and is also a volunteer-based and networked body is highly effective but complicated to run. It is governed bottom up, led top down, and managed within and through its units. In larger National Societies, the headquarters leads regional branches and, through them, the local ones, but cannot force its will upon them. Neither can the regional branches do so in relation to the local ones. And, of course, the local branch cannot force its members to volunteer.

Small country National Societies may not have regional units but should always have some local units in the communities served. Such a structure is important to enable beneficiaries to participate meaningfully in the National Society's services.

When one cannot give orders, good leadership with proper vision and commitment, and relevant knowledge and skills is most important. The National Society must ensure that it has good leaders at all levels. It needs a good system to find, develop and train leaders who are then actively guided, supported, rewarded, and held accountable.

The importance of context

National Societies differ from one country to another. This is due to differences in national law, history, traditions, needs, and the operating environment. The latter is a combination of the country's socio-economic situation and prevailing political and security conditions. By and large, National Societies may be categorised as functioning in one of three types of contexts:

Organisational context	**Socio-Economic situation**	**Political and security conditions**
Type 1: The enabling environment	Even if the economy is perceived as "under stress", it provides sufficient resources to individuals or collectives to allow them to support the National Society financially through membership contributions or in response to campaigns. The Government and the private sector are additional sources of resource mobilisation *or* Although the National Society receives most of its resources from foreign sources, it manages to mobilise a sufficient number of them leaving each single one with only a "minimum participation" in the overall funding of its core costs and essential programmes. It thus maintains control over its choices and activities.	The National Society can freely decide on the choice of its leadership, its services, and emergency interventions, its structure and branch coverage. The prevailing security conditions allow it to function anywhere within the country.
Type 2: The organisationally restrictive environment	Core costs are covered by funds that have their origin in-country either through membership contributions or through government subventions. Funding of the National Society is less related to the economic situation than to it being perceived as legitimate or trusted.	There are government policies or rules and/or security constraints that set real limits to the National Society's potential to freely decide on the choice of its leadership, its programmes and emergency interventions and/or its structure and branch coverage.
Type 3: The financially restrictive environment	Economic conditions in the country are generally perceived as being problematic or failing. There is little local fundraising potential. The Society turns itself to foreign donors to cover a substantial part of its core costs and only manages to convince few of them. It gradually loses control over the choice of its activities in the process.	The Society can freely decide, within the limits set by its financial constraints, on the choice of its leadership, its programmes and emergency interventions, its structure and branch coverage. The prevailing security conditions allow it to function anywhere within the country.

The implication of these differing contexts is that best practices for becoming strong e.g. appropriate statutes, roles of governance and management, organisational structure, and service delivery systems are different. National Societies belonging to any context can become strong, but not necessarily through the same measures.

HOW DOES A NATIONAL SOCIETY BECOME STRONG?

As noted already, being strong is an internal quality. A National Society can only become strong through its own, systematic work, led by a dedicated and convincing leadership.

National Society planning

Systematic work starts with a clear strategy and plan. For a National Society to become strong, it needs an overall strategy setting out its objectives and services covering a period of at least four or five years. This conveys the vision of the leaders of the National Society and is developed through consultation with its members and other stakeholders. It should be informed by *Strategy 2020* and fully based on the realities of the National Society itself including its understanding of the operating environment, trends in vulnerability, and its place in meeting them. From the strategy derive annual or biannual workplans for which resources can be allocated and mobilised, and where service delivery targets can be set and performance measured.

To realise its overall strategy and deliver its workplan, the National Society will also need a self-development plan which outlines the needed organisational development and capacity expansion work.

The National Society leaders must ensure that these plans are well known and understood, and accepted internally and by external stakeholders.

The first step

Developing a sustainable country-wide local-branch-and-volunteer service to vulnerable people is the first step for a National Society in making itself strong. That creates the platform from which the National Society can grow, step by step, in scope, importance, competence and strength. No environment can hinder a National Society to become strong, but all have their special challenges.

A holistic approach

A National Society is not a machine; it is a living thing. All its parts interact in one way or another. If something important is changed or added, that change will not stick if it is not made an integrated part of the organisation and its culture and self-image. Every major change, therefore, has to result in a well-functioning whole. The new has to be supported by whatever is needed, but it must also fit the rest of the organisation. A change is, therefore, seldom a single change; it is a chain of changes.

A balanced organisation

It is very important that the National Society has the right organisational design. It should suit the operating context, tasks and resources. Only such a balanced organisation can be sustained. The headquarters should be lean and stick to its main task, which is to lead and support the regional structure. The regional branches are there mainly to coordinate and support the self-sustained work at the local level. A top heavy structure cannot deliver much, is expensive to maintain, difficult to finance, and hampers its development. Often this can happen when a National Society is project and not service driven.

Organisational development to reach a "turning point"

National Societies are always changing and most of this is a spontaneous process which can make it stronger or weaker. A planned change process is called organisational development (OD)[3]. This is an internal strategic top-leadership responsibility and starts with the leaders themselves as part of their duty to lead and run the National Society.

There are several situations in which National Societies should use organisational development:

1. Starting a new National Society. If a new National Society gets the right organisational structure and statutes from the very beginning, it will have a good, sustainable base from which to grow.
2. Adjusting a National Society to new external conditions. When there are major changes in the country, the National Society needs to adjust itself to the new situation.
3. Adjusting a National Society to emergencies. During major disasters, the big challenge for the National Society is to temporary scale up and then down. With the right strategies this can be done without harming its long-term interests.
4. Transforming a National Society. If a National Society is not, but wants to become sustainable, if it wants to change its structures or services, or if it wants to add a great number of local branches or a new nationwide service, then it has to go through an organisational transformation.

The turning point

Once a National Society acquires the right leadership, structure, systems, and services it is potentially fairly stable and sustainable. It has reached a turning point.

To reach the turning point is always a transformation process i.e. organisational development. The work to be done depends on the situation. It is likely to be divided into steps. Good practice within IFRC has developed a "design, test, and duplicate" method to improve the new before going up in scale (which is capacity enhancement). For example:

1. With a local community develop a model for them to run a sustainable Red Cross or Red Crescent unit with a simple service. It must serve the vulnerable in the community and must be based on local leadership, volunteers and resources.

[3] **Organisational development** (OD) is work done within a National Society by its leaders to change what exists. The aim is a major increase or improvement, often requiring a transformation. The result is a new quality (from weak to strong National Society, from dependent to sustainable), a modification of structures, delivery systems or services; or a dramatic increase of key numbers (including the adaptation of the organisation to a new situation).

2. Test the model and its community entry approach in a couple of other communities. Improve until good enough.
3. Duplicate step by step the agreed model and approach in other communities to create a country-wide, local branch network that self-sustainably delivers a nationwide service.
4. Transform existing regional branches, or put in place new ones, to coordinate and support the local branches that have been set up.
5. Transform the National Society headquarters for its new role of leading a system that delivers a countrywide service.
6. Develop and run domestic fundraising to finance the support system.

Through these six steps, which might take three to five years to implement in a small or medium sized National Society, it makes itself strong. From then on, it becomes a major player on the domestic scene by running a sustainable national service.

A transformation takes time to implement, but also needs time to settle. It has to become a permanent feature of the National Society and its culture. That could take another five years, during which the change must be actively protected and supported, and, if needed, improved.

Capacity enhancement for growth

After reaching its desired turning point, the National Society can then gradually grow bigger by improving and duplicating or expanding what already exists. This is known as capacity enhancement and recognises that all communities – and the National Societies which emerge from them – have pre-existing capacities that can be built upon.
It can also start moving up the "self-development staircase". Each step in moving up the self-development staircase is a transformation followed by expansion. At each step the National Society becomes stronger serving more vulnerable people in a more advanced way.

The 2009 General Assembly decision on *Strategy 2020* called for several practical methods to help the self-development of National Societies. These are clustered around key questions the National Society should ask itself as it seeks to get stronger:

- Who are we?
- What do we do?
- How well do we do it?
- How can we do better?

How can we reach further?

"Who are we?" and "what do we do?": The Federation-Wide Databank & Reporting System

The starting point for National Society development is objective self-knowledge on its own strengths, constraints, and potential, within its own context. Having done this, a strong National Society is able to project influence and grow its business through showing partners, donors and the public that it is transparent, effective, accountable, and trustworthy.

Thus the Federation-Wide Databank allows a National Society to present and regularly update information about itself[4] that should be publically and transparently available. Located as part of the Databank is the Federation-Wide Reporting System where a National Society highlights the key aspects of its work through seven proxy indicators[5] that illustrate the performance dimensions agreed in *Strategy 2020*: *compliance, coverage, quality, efficiency, and impact.*

This profile of existing capacities and services, and future plans creates a more positive appreciation from external partners, governments, public, and media of what the National Society does and where it has the potential to do more through partnerships and other support.

The Federation-Wide Databank & Reporting System also reduces and simplifies the reporting burden on National Societies. It provides an informed basis for humanitarian diplomacy on behalf of vulnerable people, and for increasing resources for Red Cross Red Crescent services, and for tracking progress.

"How well do we do it"?: The Organisational Capacity Assessment and Certification process

A strong National Society always seeks to maintain and further build its strength. This needs objective assessment of "how well a National Society is working" and where it can improve compared against Federation-wide standards and norms for excellence. That is why *Strategy 2020* makes a commitment to developing *"an independently validated, Federation-wide peer review mechanism to accredit well-functioning National Societies".*

The proposed "organisational capacity assessment and certification process" is based on the set of core capacities that were indicated earlier as being critical for strong National Societies. Each capacity is defined by a set of key attributes, each of which is translated into indicators. The weighting and value given to each of the five steps of a particular indicator is corrected to take into account objective limitations that are imposed by the specific environmental and operational context of the National Society. The process consists of two main phases: *self-assessment,* and *peer review* followed by *certification* by a procedure to be developed after piloting.

The overall benefit for a National Society that has undergone such assessment and certification is that it diagnoses, within its own context, the specific areas for self-improvement and allows tailor-made development support to be designed and provided.

"How can we do better?" The Red Cross Red Crescent Learning and Knowledge Sharing Network

A National Society that is self-aware of its strengths and limitations also strives to do better by lifting up the thinking and practice that underpins the relevance, quality, magnitude, and impact of its services. That is why *Strategy 2020* gives strong encouragement to the development of a culture of learning and knowledge sharing.

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[4] The Federation Databank is web-based and intended for National Societies to keep updated their own profiles covering: *who we are; how to get in touch with us; what we do; who are our partners; how we can help others; where others can help us; what are our financial resources; what are our key documents e.g. Founding law, statutes, annual reports and audited accounts; how we learn and share knowledge.*

[5] The proxy indicators reported annually by National Societies are: *number of people volunteering time; number of people donating blood; number of local units; total income received; total expenditure; number of people reached.*

The Red Cross Red Crescent Learning and Knowledge Sharing Network intends to stimulate new thinking, set standards, and establish curricula of relevance to our core business areas[6], and then to signpost workers towards accredited providers who offer structured and professionalised learning opportunities. This starts with an already-functioning Online Learning Platform that awards "Red Cross Red Crescent Learning Credits". These may be carried on a life-long "Learning Passport" that is part of a more comprehensive human resource development and career management system.

The Network also envisages an academic path for those who wish to go there. This would be through a worldwide network of collaborating centres located in National Societies and recognised universities and other seats of learning, offering tailor-made vocational training as well as professional qualifications in humanitarianism and development. These could be at certificate, masters, and doctorate levels in specific academic contexts and traditions. The courses include a common curriculum that is informed by codification of the long accumulation of Red Cross Red Crescent experience, from which a body of core knowledge and practice is distilled, and accredited for Red Cross Red Crescent training purposes by a standards committee. To maximise access to accredited leaning opportunities, modular approaches, correspondence, and e-learning are envisaged for those who would not otherwise be able to access and acquire respected professional qualifications. Part of the Network would be think tank capacities drawing on expertise from within and outside the Movement and an active research agenda to renew and generate new knowledge, analyse and develop policy options, and seek innovative solutions to current or projected humanitarian and development challenges.

The overall benefit to National Societies is in terms of growing better skilled and motivated staff, volunteers and members able to lift up organisational capacities at all levels.

"How can we reach further?": Bridging the Digital Divide

A strong National Society also needs to be a well-connected National Society. That is why *Strategy 2020* aspires that all members should have access to the best affordable information and communication technologies.
A strong National Society needs to use the latest affordable technology to manage efficiently its internal business processes and operations and to continuously look at expanding its ability to attract and motivate its supporters and workers, and to reach beneficiaries and donors in novel and engaging ways. Furthermore, National Societies that are better connected within themselves and with other Societies deepen our "spirit of togetherness" in a practical way by being able to share knowledge and experience that enables all members to play a fuller role within the Federation and Movement.

Hence, the digital gaps within and among National Societies must be reduced as quickly as possible. An assessment of the necessary digital connectivity and applications needs has been carried out to identify those National Societies that need assistance, as well as those who have capacities in information and communication technology to share. Improvements to be delivered are in the key areas of connectivity, standards, mission moving applications and learning, all of which are supported by an efficient technology infrastructure. This can be achieved in partnerships among National Societies and other organisations able to share resources including a technology catalogue of shared applications, services, and learning.

[6] Derived from *Strategy 2020*, the core business areas are: disaster management; health and development; capacity building; humanitarian diplomacy; and working together effectively.

Each National Society aiming to cross the digital divide can be helped to find tailor-made solutions for itself. This includes the ability to use basic office productivity applications, a minimum level of good quality internet connections from branches to headquarters and externally, a functioning website which promotes its identity and capacities, and access to Federation tools and technical applications, learning resources and support materials through easier access to a revamped FedNet.

HOW CAN EXTERNAL SUPPORT HELP?

Outsiders can support but they can never make a National Society strong. In fact, if outside supporters are too involved, they will jeopardize the sustainability of the development. External support for a National Society's self-development has to be appropriately tailored to its needs, and closely supervised and controlled by its own leadership. When in a transformation process, a National Society must be vigilant so that it is not led astray or undermined. When agreeing on short-term support, it should ensure that this also contributes to its own long-term development.

Good "supportership"

All assistance actors have their own ideologies, goals and criteria and, in their turn, are individually influenced by their own set of back donors, trends, and experts Thus, a particular challenge for the National Society is to manage the many well-meaning approaches it receives, often accompanied by contradictory or overwhelming demands, rules, interventions, proposals and projects. This complicated support environment makes strategic planning and strong National Society leadership with good vision, judgement and will, even more important – to ensure that the National Society stays on track.

The external supporters of the National Society can help most by respecting it. They should avoid burdening the supported National Society with control mechanisms ideal for the donor but alien to the supported. External support in the form of project funding, which makes the National Society run projects and not services is also not ideal. As the greatest share of external support going to National Societies is not for its self-development but to serve the vulnerable in a more direct way, the Movement can protect the National Society through good coordination that does not hinder or shortcut the National Society's self-development process.

Of course, in supporting a National Society's self-development, partners should choose to support only where they trust that there is a convincing self-development strategy, plan, leadership and actions. Such support should never be an unconditional gift but associated with relevant and agreed milestones for achievement and a reasonable rate of success.

If a National Society is not ready to make productive use of external support, then it can be helped to move in that direction through peer engagement and dialogue. Sometimes it can take a long time to get a National Society prepared and ready to transform itself. Identifying the right moment to offer support is a not an exact science: it relies on experience-based judgement and trust.

The best external support to a National Society with a good self-development plan and leadership is to finance its implementation. Such an investment, could be given in instalments, but should always cover the whole process of 3-5 years. It does not make sense for a National Society to launch a transformation process if only part of it is financed. In addition, the external partner can contribute learning and technical expertise in such a way that the National Society can always lead and take responsibility for its own self-development. It should not become dependent on permanent external support for its own existence and basic functioning.

The nature of the external support before and after a National Society has reached its "turning point" is different. Beforehand, the focus is on organisational development and only after the turning point does it make sense to do capacity enhancement.

As National Society leadership is the critical success factor, influencing that is best done through a peer coaching approach from the Movement's other respected leaders. For other organisational development or capacity enhancement advice, the most appropriate resources for support might be local consultants or advisers from other similarly placed National Societies. The International Federation secretariat can set up a mechanism to facilitate support including generic methods, tools, introductions to peers, and examples of good practices – that can inspire and be adapted to specific situations.

To be the external partner of a strong National Society is different from working with a weak one. By becoming strong, a National Society takes on new qualities that alter its way of working including the style and content of its relations with external partners. The real benefit for an external partner in working on an equal basis with a strong National Society is that it will make much better use of the resources invested through it, and result in bigger and better documented help to the vulnerable.

Using the dynamic of the collective

In practical terms, support has to be targeted at individual National Societies. As each National Society is unique in its unique environment, success itself is also specific. Other National Societies can learn from it, but cannot copy it.

At the same time, National Societies have voluntarily elected to be part of a common International Federation and Movement. They influence each other as part of a global Red Cross Red Crescent through creating many different types of understandings such as jointly agreed policies, rules, and obligations These span both inter-organisational as well as personal relationships that influence how we work.

The implications of such a networked reality are that, for a strong Federation and Movement, it is not enough to support National Societies on an individual basis. They must also be supported as a collective by creating a critical mass for self-development among all. Then, as some National Societies succeed in becoming strong, they inspire others to also do so in their own ways. In this way, the whole Red Cross Red Crescent global collective changes, improves, and grows.

PROGRESSING THE FRAMEWORK AND ITS IMPACT

Building-up and sustaining strong National Societies is a long-term and permanent endeavour through the current decade covered by *Strategy 2020*, and beyond. The framework presented here draws on accumulated experience that is moved forward steadily with decisions and guidance from the General Assembly and Governing Board and consultations with National Societies. It will adapt and evolve as lessons are learnt and needs evolve in an ever-changing world.

The overall impact is through all National Societies becoming and remaining strong in terms of their core capacities to deliver relevant services to vulnerable people, and being able to partner together effectively so as to make a strong International Federation that asserts greater influence over the factors that underpin vulnerability.

Annex 1

Building strong National Societies:
THE FEDERATION–WIDE DATABANK & REPORTING SYSTEM

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Strategy 2020 introduced the concept of a Federation-wide performance management, reporting, and accountability framework to progress which the Governing Board of May 2010 requested the Secretary General, as part of his agreed objectives, to *"establish a databank of objectively-analysed National Society capacities that creates greater self-awareness of their profile at all levels, services, strengths, gaps, and their future potential for boosting their own development".*

The *Constitution*, as adopted in revised form in 2007, created an obligation to set up a Federation-wide Reporting System, and decision 14.2 of the Nairobi General Assembly requested *"the Secretary General to develop, as quickly as possible, the Federation-wide…..reporting system along the lines of the principles agreed in Strategy 2020, for approval by the Governing Board".*

Accordingly, we propose a model for a Federation-Wide Databank & Reporting System (FDRS):

The general objectives of the Federation-Wide Databank & Reporting System are:

- to promote greater self and partner awareness of the capacities, services, and potential of National Societies, so as to boost their self-development, and their external profile.

- to facilitate monitoring and reporting of performance in a consistent and transparent manner, thereby enabling individual National Societies and the collective Federation in promoting accountability and positioning for greater influence and growth.

The model is situated squarely within a National Society development framework based on the notion that the starting point for National Society strengthening is self-knowledge. That is why *Strategy 2020* places considerable emphasis on a shared understanding of *"who we are"* and *"what we do"* as a basis for moving forward. The success of National Societies and our collective strength as the International Federation, depends on timely and reliable information and analysis for our work at all levels. The Federation-Wide Databank & Reporting System is thus a means for demonstrating our credibility, enhancing our reputation for trust and transparency, extending our influence and garnering increased support for all that we do.

Starting with baseline information on National Society capacities, services, and strengths at all levels, a consistent and up-to-date profile creates greater external, internal and Movement self-awareness on what the National Society does and it's potential to do more. This objectively-analysed foundation for National Society strengthening enables tracking of progress, while ensuring institutional history and continuity. It captures accurate and reliable data on our progress worldwide that is analysed for the Organisational Capacity Assessment and Certification process and the Learning and Knowledge Sharing Network, strengthening our sense of accomplishment with added confidence.

A repository of capacities, resources, and technical expertise, made available to partners, facilitates capacity enhancement through peer exchange. In addition to upholding accountability and transparency at multiple levels, the benefits of having reporting as an integral component of the system include enhanced programme management which contributes to informed policy decisions, and ultimately guides our mission to deliver improved services to those in need.

OVERVIEW OF THE FEDERATION-WIDE DATABANK & REPORTING SYSTEM

The Federation-Wide Databank & Reporting System covers key domains of information and provides a single place depository of key documents such as laws, statutes, annual reports and audited accounts. It has been conceptualised around nine initial datasets covering:

- ***Who we are***
- ***How to get in touch with us***
- ***What we do***
- ***Who are our partners***
- ***How we can help others***
- ***Where others can help us***
- ***What are our financial resources***
- ***What are our key documents***
- ***How we learn and share knowledge***

The FDRS is designed as an adaptable, accessible and low maintenance resource that captures standardised data in a systematic manner. Each National Society is the owner and gatekeeper of its own data, and holds responsibility to keep updated its own webpage on an upgraded FedNet - with technical support from the secretariat as needed. By designating authorised personnel to enter this data, each National Society takes self-responsibility — an important aspect of practical National Society capacity enhancement. Three levels of access (public, service, and managerial) exist, with input and/ or viewing rights determined by the user's profile. A mechanism for auditing entered data to cross check accuracy will be developed.

The data will be acquired from two sources. First, existing statutory reports, evaluations and reviews, project and operation reports, sector and functional databases and other publications. Second, from seven key proxy indicators representing a practical interpretation of the performance dimensions agreed within *Strategy 2020.*

These dimensions use gender and age specific data to assess progress. 'Compliance' assesses how suitably we function, i.e., the extent to which we adhere to our stated principles and values, and the policies and guidelines that drive our service delivery, the codes of behaviour that underpin our integrity, and the way we relate to our clients, partners and other stakeholders. 'Coverage' assesses how much we do, i.e., the extent to which we meet identified needs and vulnerabilities in defined geographical areas or population groups and communities. 'Quality' assesses how well we do, i.e., the extent to which our services reach appropriately set standards and norms. 'Efficiency' assesses how we use resources, i.e., the extent to which our services make the best possible use of the human, financial and material inputs at our disposal. 'Impact' assesses how much difference we make, i.e., the extent and sustainability of the changes that occur within the communities where we operate.

To reliably measure the above performance dimensions while capturing the diversity and scale of programming, annual reporting for all National Societies is constructed around the following seven key proxy indicators:

1. **Number of people volunteering time:** People that have volunteered at least four hours during the annual reporting period.
2. **Number of paid staff**: People who work with a National Society or the Secretariat for a minimum of three months and are remunerated.
3. **Number of people donating blood:** People that have donated blood at least once during the reporting period.
4. **Number of local units**: National Society subdivisions that work directly with the community – this can include local chapters, branches, regional and intermediate offices, and headquarters.
5. **Total income received**: The fiscal value of money, material goods, and services a National Society receives during the fiscal year.
6. **Total expenditure**: The fiscal value of money, material goods, and services a National Society spends during the fiscal year.
7. **Number of people reached:** Direct and indirect recipients and people covered by Federation services counted, disaggregated by service areas.

In case of difficulty in accessing FedNet, a printed form is available from the zone. The process of collecting and monitoring data is ongoing and, in many instances, already operates as a regular part of good programme management (i.e. to understand needs, allocate resources, and coordinate services and partners).

DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

The design of the Federation-Wide Databank & Reporting System is informed by lessons from past Red Cross Red Crescent experiences and ongoing consultations with users. The feedback received from National Societies during initial piloting has helped to shape the data parameters and the overall architecture of the system. As the system is progressively tested and rolled out with National Societies the following practical elements are being developed:

1. A **complete package of key resources**, including guidelines and tools to assist National Societies to reliably collect and report on data.
2. An **IT platform on FedNet** for the data management and dissemination of data, both for individual National Societies and the Federation as a whole
3. A cadre of **FDRS resource people within each Zone**, drawn from National Societies and the secretariat, to provide technical assistance and support for FDRS roll-out.

It is anticipated that progressive coverage of National Societies will be attained in time for the November 2011 General Assembly. This will enable substantive reporting of results for 2010 around the seven proxy indicators – thus establishing, along with the information and analysis, a baseline by which the progress of *Strategy 2020* can be tracked across the International Federation.

Annex 2

Building strong National Societies: ORGANISATIONAL CAPACITY ASSESSMENT AND CERTIFICATION

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Strategy 2020 introduced the concept of a Federation-wide performance management, reporting, and accountability framework. The 2009 Nairobi General Assembly's decision 14.2 requested *"the Secretary General to develop an independently validated Federation-wide peer review mechanism to accredit and rate National Societies for approval by the Governing Board".*

Accordingly, we propose a model[7] for a Red Cross Red Crescent organisational capacity assessment and certification (OCAC) process.

The general objective of OCAC is to enable National Societies to assess their own capacity and performance so as to determine the best approaches for their self-development, and also to acknowledge those National Societies that have reached a high level of proficiency.

The model is situated squarely within a National Society development framework based on a set of core capacities considered critical for the successful functioning of a strong and sustainable National Society. Each capacity is defined by a set of key attributes, each of which is translated into indicators. The weighting and value given to each attribute takes into account the specific environmental and operational context of the National Society. The overall OCAC process consists of two phases: self-assessment and peer review followed by certification by the Board.

The benefits for a National Society undergoing OCAC are that it provides precision and focus in its efforts to become strong and sustainable. This starts by generating a detailed understanding of a National Society's strengths, weaknesses, and potential within its own context. Every capacity deficit that is discovered represents an opportunity for further development and growth. On the basis of this, it will be able to identify tailor-made organisational development and capacity enhancement approaches to prepare its unique National Society Self-Development Plan. This is the framework for coordinated input from all its invited partners who wish to help the National Society to get stronger.

Certifying that a National Society has reached a high level of proficiency will help it to attract wider confidence and support, and grow its influence and services. As more and more National Societies achieve certification, there is a collective benefit for the International Federation in demonstrating the quality and accountability of our global network.

The National Society will keep ownership of the findings and the analysis associated with its OCAC process. Its leadership can decide the elements to be shared beyond its own senior management and staff, and the secretariat unit that is facilitating the process.

[7] The proposed design of OCAC draws on the lessons from many past Red Cross Red Crescent initiatives including, in particular, the "Well Functioning National Society" framework and NEPARC. In addition good practices from other voluntary organisations, donors, public sector, and the corporate world have been considered.

DEFINING THE CONCEPTS

The OCAC process is deemed vital for the success of Strategy 2020 as it identifies opportunities for growth which are expected to result in Societies doing more, doing better and reaching further. The large scale participation by National Societies is therefore critical although it ultimately remains a voluntary process. Full facilitation and technical support will also be available from the secretariat.

OCAC starts with the adoption of a set of six core capacities that are essential for the successful functioning of any National Society. These are: *the capacity to exist, the capacity to organise oneself, the capacity to relate to others, the capacity to mobilize resources, the capacity to perform, and the capacity to adapt and to grow*.

The dimensions of each capacity may be defined by a set of attributes. This term covers the essential requirements and capabilities that should be possessed by a National Society in relation to achieving proficiency in that capacity[8]. The number of attributes may vary depending on the capacity under definition.

Although the core capacities are universally applicable, the *relative* importance of each related attribute to a particular National Society depends on the specific characteristics of its own external environment and operating conditions. Thus three broad types of organisational context may be recognised i.e. an *enabling environment* that imposes no significant restrictions on the functioning of a National Society; an *organisationally restrictive environment* that limits the autonomy of a National Society to choose its leadership or to decide on its policies and interventions and/or the way it covers the territory (e.g. If security is a problem); and a *financially restrictive environment that* severely limits a National Society's potential to cover its core costs through domestic resource mobilisation only. A standardised approach with key questions will be used for defining and validating the categorisation of the organisational context that most fits a National Society.

The extent of attainment of each attribute would then be determined by indicators. The National Society is asked to choose between five situational descriptions which are each "indicative" of a progressive level of proficiency with regard to the given attribute[9]. For each indicator there would be a benchmark level: this is the minimum level of proficiency expected from a typical National Society. The benchmark level for the same indicator may be differently set depending on whether the National Society is functioning in an enabling or organisationally restrictive or financially restrictive environment.

[8] For example, the "capacity to exist" may have several different attributes such as an appropriate Red Cross Law, up to date Statutes, a reasonable level of organisational autonomy, active and strong governance, a branch network that sufficiently covers the territory.

[9] For example, the attribute on "up to date RC/RC law" may have five levels of progressive proficiency for the associated indicator (A) The National Society is recognise under a RC/RC law; (B) The RC law is relevant to current situation and up to date; (C) The RC law is relevant, up to date, and respected by the authorities; (D) The RC law is relevant, up to date, respected, and disseminated to staff and members; (E) The RC law is relevant, up to date, respected, disseminated to staff, members, and general public.

As one size does not fit all, the assessment results will thus be practically meaningful to a National Society because it is contextualised[10].

The overall OCAC process would be a combination of self-assessment (phase one) and a peer review (phase two) for those who succeed in passing the initial self-assessment.

THE SELF-ASSESSMENT PHASE

The National Society would convene a group of its internal stakeholders including from its governance, management, members and volunteers selected across the various layers of the National Society. The appropriate selection of such a group is essential to the credibility of the outcome and good practice guidance will be made available in this regard.

The self-assessment group will use the capacity assessment tool provided to assess their National Society's performance for each of the capacities and attributes by choosing between the five indicators. The consensus of the group will serve as a basis for the next steps in the process. An external facilitator, selected and trained from a panel of experts coming from National Societies, will support the Society in the use of the assessment tool. The facilitator's prime role is to ensure that any divergence between participants is used constructively in reaching group consensus, and to take note of relevant clarifications or qualitative additions that might be given by the self-assessment group.

Each time a National Society believes that its performance is higher than the benchmark indicator level for an attribute, additional evidence will be collected to confirm that perception[11]. In contrast, whenever a National Society indicates a proficiency level lower than the benchmark, it will be asked to state *how important* it feel it is to further develop the attribute within a one-year time-frame, on a scale ranging from *1 (not relevant now)* to *4 (critical).* This allows for a better understanding of how the National Society perceives its own self-development priorities. The National Society would also be asked what it sees as the two main conditions for allowing further improvement to happen. It has a choice between several options: "acquiring additional know-how", "strengthening its commitment", "mobilising or receiving additional resources" or "ensuring better monitoring & systems". This provides further helpful information to organisational development practitioners in their efforts to assist the Society in its growth.

The response sheet, duly signed by the entire self assessment group and attested by the facilitator will go to the Performance Development Department in Geneva for processing. This analysis, taking into account the organisational context category to which the National Society belongs, will translate the answers into a series of *scores*. These will be plotted graphically to allow the Society to easily understand how it performs in comparison to the set benchmarks. The scores will be accompanied by qualitative statements and recommendations. Thus a detailed overview of the National Society would be constructed in such a way as to get the National Society "to know itself" and think about how to sustain its strengths and how to address identified weaknesses.

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[10] For example, it would be unrealistic to expect a National Society in a conflict weakened economy to *fully* cover its core costs through local fundraising unless one settled for a very low core budget that limited the National Society capacity to respond to community needs. Therefore, the weight given to the attribute "all core costs covered through domestic fundraising" must be adjusted in view of the *restrictions* that are *imposed* on the Society by its environment.

[11] For example, by asking for specific documents, dates, places or examples of actual practice.

THE PEER REVIEW PHASE

The peer review is intended to validate the National Society's self assessment and to acknowledge its efforts to strengthen itself. Such a review would be exclusively offered to those who reach the benchmark score on all attributes for all capacities and are willing to go forward for formal certification.

Societies who do not obtain the required score on *all* attributes of the self-assessment tool would not be offered peer review but invited to consider tailor-made organisational development agreed and led by its leadership and defined jointly with the preferred partners of the National Society, supported by the secretariat where this is needed. The Learning & Organisational Development Department, working through the zones, will enable access to a range of tools and produce new ones as required.

This step in the process uses a revised version of a methodology developed by Root Change[12]. Unlike the traditional approach to assessments, this methodology makes *the party that is being assessed* responsible for defining what evidence will be presented to and evaluated by its peers. The process starts by asking a National Society to define its level of achievement on four performance domains: *internal cohesion; commitment to the objectives of Strategy 2020; learning skills;* and *investment in scaling-up and growth*.

a. "Internal cohesion" is a critical condition for the performance and growth of an organisation. Whatever an organisation's capacities, it will not succeed in its mission if it falls prey to constant in-fighting by lack of internal cohesion.

b. The three other dimensions represent key conditions for obtaining *impact*. While the core capacities that are assessed in the self-assessment phase create the fertile ground upon which an organisation *can potentially* build impact, this will only happen if that organisation *chooses* the right objectives, delivers at the best possible *quality* and on a *scale* that is sufficient to make a significant and lasting difference. The proposed dimensions represent exactly that: "commitment to the objectives of Strategy 2020" relates to the issue of *choice*, "learning skills" relates to the issue of *quality* and "investment in scaling-up and growth" relates to the issue of *scale and critical mass*. By including these three dimensions, the assessment and certification process looks beyond the issue of *capacities* (the nuts and bolts) but also includes appropriate attention for the issue of *performance*.

Three levels of achievement are defined for each of these domains: d*eveloping; accomplished;* and *exemplary*. The National Society is then asked to identify evidence, not more than 18 months old that confirms its perceived level of accomplishment. Evidence can take different forms ranging from documents, formal decisions, policies, programme descriptions, training curricula, interviews with stakeholders and visits to branches or ongoing activities. All evidence is collected, internally reviewed on its relevance, sufficiency and adequacy and presented to the peers, accompanied by an evidence presentation form that explains the nature and origin of the evidence and its relevance in view of the given rating.

The team of peers would then join the National Society's own counterparts for the peer review exercise. The peers are senior members of sister National Societies and a panel of willing colleagues with different skills will be constructed from which the National Society can choose.

[12] A US based consultancy group working with the Federation on a study sponsored by the American RC with supplemental financial and human resource support from the International Federation, the ICRC, Australian RC, Belgian RC, British RC, Canadian RC, Finnish RC, Norwegian RC, Spanish RC and Swedish RC.

The peer team may be joined by one or more experienced organisational development practitioners from interested Societies and from the secretariat.

The peer team will evaluate all evidence on its relevance, sufficiency and adequacy. This might take a few days since the evidence could include interviews and visits and since it make take some time to allow the peer reviewers to fully appreciate the value of the suggested evidence. After a reiterative process where the peers can request for additional evidence, the reviewers will conclude whether they accept the initial self-rating or whether they propose a revised rating of the Society's level of achievement on the 4 domains. The final options are: "*Exemplary*", "*Exemplary with reservation*", "*Accomplished*", "*Accomplished with reservation*" or "*Developing*". The National Society being reviewed can attach its own comments in relation to any issues where there has been a divergence of views.

The outcome of the review is then forwarded to the Performance Development Department which then prepares the full file, including all supporting evidence.

In case the conclusion of the peers is lower than "accomplished with reservation" the Society is informed of what weaknesses were discovered and is offered priority capacity enhancement support in order to correct them as soon as possible.

In case the conclusion of the peers is "accomplished with reservation", the file is forwarded to the USG National Society and Knowledge Development (NSKD) for submission to a panel of experts who will advise whether the reservation is sufficient to withhold certification until corrective action has been taken by the National Society or whether certification can be granted immediately.

In case the conclusion of the peers is "Accomplished" or higher on all four dimensions, the National Society will be accepted for Certification.

CERTIFICATION

The formal modalities for certification will be considered further following initial piloting of the OCAC process.

The certification is anticipated to be valid for a time-bound period of 3-4 years. A re-certification process which is "lighter" than the first certification could be conceived if the National Society continues to meet and report on the benchmarks of routine performance.

OCAC DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

The development of this model is seen as an iterative process through consultation with National Societies and refined progressively through piloting with willing members.

The intention is to have a fully tested version ready and in initial roll-out to a first batch of National Societies by the time of the General Assembly in November 2011. In due course when the method has proven its effectiveness and utility, governance may wish to consider if National Society participation should be left to individual discretion or promoted with a view to universal compliance.

Annex 3

Building strong National Societies:
THE RED CROSS RED CRESCENT
LEARNING AND KNOWLEDGE SHARING NETWORK

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Strategy 2020 promotes the notion that a learning culture is essential to adapt to a changing world so as to ensure that we can match appropriately and adequately the evolving needs and vulnerabilities of the communities of which National Societies are a part.

The 2009 Nairobi General Assembly's decision 4 requested the Secretary General to develop *"a certified training mechanism as part of capacity building efforts".* Accordingly, we propose a model for a Red Cross Red Crescent Learning and Knowledge Sharing Network.

The general objective of the Learning and Knowledge Sharing Network is to boost access to accredited learning and training, and to promote analysis and research on humanitarian and development concerns of importance to the Red Cross Red Crescent.

The model for the Network is situated squarely within a developmental framework which sees knowledge development and sharing as central to building strong and sustainable National Societies. This depends on the knowhow, skills, attitudes, and resourcefulness of the volunteers and staff who work with National Societies and the way they are motivated, organised, managed, and led.

The Network design builds on and develops further our accumulated knowledge and our existing learning systems and partnerships by improving availability, access, and affordability so as to enable continuous learning for all during their Red Cross Red Crescent career. It has two components: a Learning Platform and an Academic Path by which credits may be earned and accredited qualifications built up on a progressive basis.

The benefits of a Learning and Knowledge Sharing Network are that the greater professionalisation of Red Cross Red Crescent workers brings essential credibility in a globalised world that demands transparently assured adherence to explicit standards. In addition, attracting, motivating, and retaining our staff and volunteers is more likely when they are offered recognised opportunities to develop themselves as part of the benefit of committing to serve in the Red Cross Red Crescent. The personal and professional empowerment that comes from such professionalisation also equips our people to protect and promote our specific ways of working according to our Fundamental Principles and values that is the basis for the unique positioning of the Red Cross Red Crescent. Furthermore, in a world of changing needs, expectations and opportunities, our knowledge, skills, and competences must keep up to date to meet new demands. We need to address familiar problems by being more proficient in applying what works as well as by using the innovations and insights from new research and technologies that have the potential to bring better results.

THE CONCEPT

The Network model integrates a continuous learning concept along the career of all Red Cross Red Crescent staff and volunteers, acknowledges their previous training, and contributes to their

further career development by opening doors to higher academic study. Along the way, it encourages active participation in research into contemporary humanitarian and development concerns. The Network has two components: the Online Learning Platform and the Academic Path.

The Online Learning Platform

The starting point is our own accumulated experience over several decades that has often been taken up by other organisations and influenced wider humanitarian standards. For example, a very large range of training courses have been developed and disseminated by many National Societies and the secretariat[13].

The first step is to map their relevance in relation to the five major business areas for the International Federation: disaster management; development and health; humanitarian diplomacy; capacity enhancement; and working together effectively.

The second step would be to review their content for accreditation i.e. decide on the Red Cross Red Crescent credits to be given to each relevant course. This process[14] would be done by a Learning Reference and Standards Committee appointed by the Secretary General composed of technical experts and academics drawn from across the Federation and externally. This would have panels corresponding to each of the five key business areas. The result would be an accredited learning catalogue. The committee will also identify gaps in the catalogue and make recommendations for developing new courses. It would also review and "re-accredit" all previously accredited courses on a periodic basis of 3-4 years to ensure that they remain relevant and up-to-date. A course director who disagrees with the Learning Reference and Standards Committee's decision to refuse or remove accreditation from their course may appeal, if they wish, to the Secretary General whose decision should be final.

The learning catalogue of accredited courses will be hosted on the already-available Online Learning Platform[15] which will be developed further but which already includes many different learning options (online, blended, curricula, guest lectures, reading, videos, and community of practice).

The Online Learning Platform can also include any other courses offered by any member of the Movement. Thus all National Societies and the ICRC would be invited to post their own courses, and contribute to the collective knowledge of the Movement. But if they want one of their courses to be part of the *accredited catalogue*, it would have to go through the scrutiny of the Learning Reference and Standards Committee. Movement partners who wish to put their courses on the Online Learning Platform would also need to sign a partnership agreement clarifying the conditions for access and use of their own courses, and intellectual property and copyright issues. The strength of the Online Learning Platform is based on the value of sharing

[13] More then 160 courses are offered by the Secretariat alone and the courses offered by National Societies and ICRC are likely to reach into the hundreds.

[14] Credit allocation criteria will be determined by the Learning Reference and Standards Committee guided broadly by prevailing methods in the academic world. It would include, for example, course complexity, total time invested to reach the learning objectives of a course, and testing the acquired knowledge or skills.

[15] In 2010 over 11,000 courses were taken on the Learning Platform by Red Cross Red Crescent staff and volunteers (National Societies, ICRC, and Secretariat) and external participants (UN, NGOs, general public) from all parts of the world.

knowledge across the Movement by maximising access to all existing courses and internal networks. The sister initiative on closing the digital divide is intended to ensure that access to online learning is progressively improved.

The Learning Platform will be multilingual and openly accessible online so that anyone worldwide can see what is available and can become a registered user. This will enable them to receive e-alerts as new learning resources come on line. But when actually enrolling for a particular course, the course director would be able to limit enrolment on specific course entry criteria[16] which may include preferential access to Red Cross Red Crescent personnel before "vacant" places are released onto the open market.

A student can choose courses to enrol according to their own self-development objectives as agreed with their line and human resource managers. For Red Cross Red Crescent personnel in the secretariat or National Society, the relevant Secretary General could decide if certain courses were mandatory for all their staff or/and volunteers, passing which could be a condition to undertake any further courses. For example, the Federation Secretary General may decide that all secretariat staff must get through the accredited courses on: "International Computer Driving Licence"; "World of the Red Cross Red Crescent"; Strategy 2020; Staff Code of Conduct; Gender Awareness; and "Stay Safe".

Each accredited course completed would qualify for a Red Cross Red Crescent certificate issued directly to the participant by the Learning Platform highlighting the curriculum of the course and the number of credits gained.

It would be possible to earn credits by the valorisation of field experience that has a pre-planned learning element built into it. Many of our field staff and delegates have significant experience acquired in various missions or in the office. This experience could be intellectualised into a learned dissertation, which can then be registered in the staff member's learning passport and lead to Red Cross Red Crescent credits. It could also be validated for advanced studies. This practice will allow us to capture the capacity of our staff to analyse a situation, integrate the learning into practice, conduct research and develop new knowledge, evaluate and document good practice, and publish their work.

The Red Cross Red Crescent credits are a human resource development tool. They will be useful for performance review, career planning and development, and access to further studies. Subject to the human resources management policy of the Red Cross Red Crescent entity concerned, they may also be used for reward purposes.

The completed courses would be registered in a Red Cross Red Crescent Learning Passport available online and that could be printed. It will indicate the courses passed, the number of hours studied, and the number of credits received. The passport would be recognisable across the Movement as a portable tool to capture all your Red Cross Red Crescent volunteer and staff development career, in a globalised human resource marketplace. It will be possible to include in the Learning Passport previous training courses and acquired qualifications (with proof of the certificates or diplomas received).

The academic path

[16] For example, maximum numbers for a particular round or minimum entry experience or qualifications and whether or not the course is only for Red Cross Red Crescent personnel or may be taken by anyone. Some courses may require fees to be paid.

The student can also decide, at any time, to pursue additional learning on an academic path. This may require a change of mindset to move from knowledge sharing to standards set within the Red Cross Red Crescent, to demonstrating that they can meet standards set by a recognised university or other licensed educational body of similar status.

The Learning and Knowledge Sharing Network would establish partnerships with higher education bodies based on their relevance to Red Cross Red Crescent areas of interest. The criteria for selection and partnership would be the external academic body's status in their own home country as a licensed provider of higher education, and their willingness and capacity to work with us in adapting their existing courses or developing new ones to meet learning needs including being able to offer some study places to Red Cross Red Crescent personnel on an affordable basis. Many National Societies have already established fruitful partnerships with colleges and universities in their countries: these will be invited to join the Network with the active collaboration of the host National Society concerned. If new courses with Red Cross Red Crescent content are developed as part of the academic partnership, they would, of course, have to satisfy the normal standards of the University to be eligible for award of a recognised qualification.

The Red Cross Red Crescent student would have several entry points to the academic track to gain certificates and diplomas or bachelors and masters degrees, based on the academic partner's rules which, in turn, depend on the country's education system. The purely academic stream courses offer largely theoretical knowledge; the professional stream courses are more vocationally based (e.g. nursing), and the advanced studies stream - also called continuous learning - includes practical knowledge building on the student's past professional and academic experience. This study stream is probably most useful to Red Cross Red Crescent personnel. A modular approach will allow a student to gain academic credits that build up to higher qualifications[17].

Recent academic reforms are encouraging the validation of knowledge and professional experience which provide equivalence in academic credits and modules, and recognition of diplomas across countries. However, not all universities have their validation system in place yet and IFRC will have to consider this possibility as one criterion in the selection of universities for the Network.

Transforming RCRC credits into academic credits

The Red Cross Red Crescent credits acquired on the Online Learning Platform may be transformable into academic credits. This will require each student to present a request for validation of their knowledge and background education to the university's academic jury for the academic credits to be granted. The advantage of such a process is shorter studies and thus a cheaper study fee. The organised accreditation system proposed by the Online Learning Platform will be an advantage in that the Network could negotiate the equivalent academic credits on a more systematic and collective basis, especially with those academic bodies that are Network partners.

Knowledge development and sharing

[17] An academic credit corresponds approximately to 25-30 hours of studies and varies from one university to another. As a general guide, an academic certificate may need from 10 to 15 credits / 150 hours. A diploma to bachelor's level may require 30 to 60 credits / 300 hours, and a master's 60 to 180 credits / 1500 hours. A student who has taken some but not all of the modules required for a Bachelor/Master can obtain a certificate for the modules completed.

During their studies, students will be asked to do **internships or research** and the Movement will be well placed to offer them placements to do so. The Network could maintain a list of questions needing study and research in key areas to offer to students as part of their course work. Such research will help develop new knowledge that can be easily fed back into the Learning Platform. Additionally, the Network would include partnerships with think tanks and resource centres on specific areas of work.

Extending beyond its formal tracks, the Network would encourage a wider culture of continuing learning. Thus, a Guest Lecture series has been initiated with external and internal speakers invited to speak on a range of relevant issues. These lectures – attendance at which attracts RCRC credit – are now accessible online so that they can be viewed at convenience from anywhere with internet access.

This model relies heavily on online approaches. Experience suggests that, for some, this needs to be accompanied by individual and personalised support through both peers and more senior mentors that can coach in a more personal way. Across the Federation, it should be possible to find a group of volunteers with varied expertise and skills who would be willing to do this. So a Coach Group is envisaged as part of the Network.

Similarly, with rapid technology advancement and fast uptake, students' demands may not all be met from one place or may outstrip the resources of the Online Learning Platform. So, the Network proposes to set up a volunteer "community of practice of "super-users" to help with problem solving, somewhat like the Wiki approach,

NETWORK DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

In proposing this model, the secretariat has studied available educational experiences from within and outside the Red Cross Red Crescent, and some potential academic partners have been identified with others also indicating their keenness to participate in curricula review and development. Enthusiastic signals have been received from many National Societies who want to both benefit and contribute. The Learning and Knowledge Sharing Network is seen as a progressive development over this decade building itself up step by step including all who would like to partner within its framework. The intention is to have some of the key elements tested and in early use by the time of the General Assembly in November 2011.

Annex 4

Building strong National Societies: BRIDGING THE DIGITAL DIVIDE

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Strategy 2020 introduced the concept of National Societies that are internally strong and that play a full role as equal members of their International Federation. To progress this, the Governing Board of May 2010 requested the Secretary General, as part of his agreed objectives, to *"promote Federation-wide communications through best affordable technologies that bridge the digital divide and inform and connect National Societies to ensure mutual trust and belonging, and enhance productivity, knowledge sharing, collaborative working and outreach".* Accordingly, we propose a model for bridging the digital divide.

The general objective of the digital divide initiative is to ensure that all National Societies are well-connected through information technology so that they function effectively as well as participate fully as members of the International Federation.

This model is situated squarely within a National Society development framework based on the notion that, to be strong and sustainable, they need to make the best possible use of available modern information and communications technologies, so that they are more accessible and influential, knowledgeable, efficient, productive, and collaborative.

The broad benefits for well connected National Societies are that they would be able to participate fully in an interactive, globalised world. This means that they could make full use of information which is available on the internet; they could access services and interact with service providers, and use all online tools offered by the Federation such as FedNet and DMIS. It means that they could participate fully in online discussions, knowledge sharing, planning and decision making, and be able to access easily the information necessary for them to fulfil their role as Federation members and in Federation governance. They would also be able to discharge their obligations on transparency and accountability through the Federation-Wide Databank & Reporting System. They would also be able to assert their presence online, and promote themselves appropriately to gain influence and attract partners and resources.

THE CONTEXT AND OPPORTUNITY

National Societies cannot afford to be left behind by the revolution in information technology. Institutions and individuals now have unprecedented and affordable access to the internet and also unprecedented capability to engage, interact, and influence in the global information environment. Standard business processes are now assumed to have a digital basis, and organisations, both commercial and non-commercial, interact with their clients, peers, service providers and even competitors through digital channels. The scope for collaboration and social activism is greatly enhanced with the huge increase in personal interconnectivity and online engagement brought about by the advent of social media. Today, online communities of shared interest can be initiated with an ease which makes common enterprise a global phenomenon as easily as it once functioned at the village level. At the same time, telephony has first become mobile, exchanging its association with location for an association with individuals, and is merging with the online world.

Information technology can have an enabling effect even in the most deprived regions. Mobile telephony has brought connectivity within the reach of a larger proportion of the (particularly urban) poor. As computers have become cheaper and the skills needed to use them have become more widespread, governments and institutions even in the poorest countries have been able to benefit from the increased efficiency they can bring, as well as to be held to account by their citizens and clients. Online communications, particularly email, have hugely reduced the once prohibitive costs of regular, day-to-day interaction across international borders and between continents.

However, this revolution has not reached everyone equally. The most deprived communities including the poor or old have seen their relative deprivation increase as the rest of the world moves on. They do not have the knowledge and skills to work with the new technology and though costs have been falling, the price of equipment and connectivity is often highest in the poorest places in the world. This is the digital divide.

The Federation is in the middle of this dynamic change. National Societies in the developed world are benefiting from efficiency savings from more effective information technologies. Their finance, human resources, communications, volunteer management and logistics can all be managed using computer systems. The worldwide web and online communications have made global information and knowledge sharing as a Federation incomparably easier. Entirely unforeseen ways of using information in the humanitarian context have emerged, for example with crowd-sourcing of information after disasters, and resource mobilisation (especially when people are spontaneously moved to contribute when tragedy strikes). At the same time, much of our work is in the most deprived parts of the world, and National Societies at the front line of delivery to the most vulnerable are least equipped to benefit from new ways of working. This is the internal digital divide on which we are focused.

Additionally, there is often an inter-generational technology divide. Even in rich countries, older people can feel overwhelmed by technological advances and become increasingly isolated in a world where the essential activities of daily living and interaction are conducted online. This is an opportunity to better engage our youth volunteers to work with their seniors in reaching across the digital divide to promote social inclusion.

THE CONCEPT

As we increasingly use information technology to accomplish our mission *"to do more, do better, and reach further"*, we must bridge the digital divide within our Federation. We must ensure that making services available online benefits all National Societies. We must ensure that where it is necessary to use modern technology to participate fully in the life of the Federation, the costs do not fall disproportionately on those with the least resources. We must use the power of our global network to bring these benefits to all.

We aim to help bridge the digital divide through:

- Identifying the minimum level of connectivity and online capacity required to participate fully in the Federation, and ensure that all National Societies are well connected;
- Create mechanisms to enable National Societies to increase their capacity in information technology in response to their own specific contexts and needs.

Technology can be a tool for social inclusion. It can bring those in the Red Cross Red Crescent together, irrespective of location. It can be an area of strength for our youth volunteers, allowing them to reach out to their seniors. It can unify the elements of the Movement within itself and with the wider community, across generations, across distance, and across the gulf which separates the richest and the poorest in society.

The requirements of National Societies vary widely depending on their individual situations and needs. Furthermore, the range of information technology solutions on offer changes and develops very quickly. Nonetheless we can identify where the digital divide falls by the effects it has on the strength of National Societies. Specifically, a National Society is on the wrong side of the digital divide if, through its lack of capacity in information and communication technology, it is prevented from delivering services and managing its programmes effectively; it is impeded in its ability to manage its internal processes; and it is unable to participate fully as a member of the International Federation.

The focus, therefore, is on strengthening and capitalising on the capacities, adaptability and resilience of the Federation as a whole, and creating an environment in which National Societies can become mature and accomplished users of technology, rather than in developing individual solutions or systems. Introducing new technologies without boosting the general capacity of the National Society to manage them may weaken them in the long term, either through dependency on external assistance or through dependency on unstable or unsustainable tools.

The minimum required levels of connectivity and capacity in information technology are being identified along with National Societies capacity enhancement assistance so as to ensure longer term sustainability. An important element of this is knowledge sharing: allowing National Societies with similar requirements to work together to identify and disseminate best practice, building a knowledge base of solutions and staff capacities.

Partnerships will be developed more widely with the corporate sector as a source of expertise and project funding, and with civil society technology groups for their local knowledge and ability to develop relevant solutions.

A specialist team has been created in the secretariat, uniting skills in information technology and National Society capacity enhancement, to strengthen the use of these tools throughout the Federation and to provide particular assistance to those National Societies which are most in need.

IMPLEMENTING THE DIGITAL DIVIDE INITIATIVE

An initial mapping of National Societies' capacities in information communication technology has identified the following areas for intervention, characterising our internal digital divide:

1. National Societies are conscious of a critical lack in IT training and expertise. The digital divide is as much in skills and awareness of the possibilities as it is in access to hardware, software and connectivity.

2. National Societies are failing to plan or budget for their use of technology. 67% of National Societies do not have an IT strategy and 74% report limited or no IT budget.

3. Each National Society has specific needs. There is no single solution that can be applied everywhere; rather we must develop a portfolio of solutions to common problems.

4. The same problem is addressed with endless different solutions; over 500 applications are in use in National Societies. Of these perhaps 5% might be sharable, allowing us to pool resources and expertise; this is an important resource to be harvested.

5. While National Societies in rich countries are generally stronger in ICT use than those in poor countries, there is a notable group of outliers that are leveraging technology in challenging economic environments; we can learn from their success.

The secretariat's own information technology strategy has been reoriented in line with this Federation-wide approach, and now proposes a set of programmes specifically designed to address global needs. These include:

- a new focus on connectivity, as the enabling technology without which little else can be achieved, including specialist assistance and limited, targeted funding to allow National Societies to make the step to full connectivity;
- a programme to assist small and medium National Societies, identifying standard capacity levels and providing them with a choice of tools and services to enable them to develop, along with specific assistance to 15 National Societies in 2011 in an extended pilot and proof of concept;
- a catalogue of services, applications, and special deals from suppliers; this is a way to enable a National Society to access help from the Federation, in comprehensible form from a single location;
- a programme to identify the best applications already in use, enabling them to be made available more widely in a National Society Technology Catalogue, allowing the Federation to benefit globally from the successes of individual National Societies;
- expanded support for e-learning and technology support, giving more control over the availability of the necessary skills, with collaboration platforms and training programmes to support the development of a trained cadre of Red Cross Red Crescent technology specialists.
- through advisory and consultative services, encouraging National Societies to use technology at all levels of the IT Strategy Pyramid, including infrastructure, business applications, applications for programme delivery and field support, and those most strategic technologies that directly benefit the vulnerable whom we serve.[18]

To free resources in the short term, the secretariat has de-prioritised internal technology projects until 2012 and existing systems will be progressively outsourced, allowing the secretariat to focus on providing services to National Societies. Outreach, through zones, will be provided to support National Societies that cross the digital divide, to ensure their long-term sustainability. These measures are allowing work to start immediately, but the programme will require significant funding in the longer term.

[18] "IFRC Information Technology (IT) Strategic Plan", published December 2010 and approved by the Global Senior Management Team in February 2011.