

COSTA RICAN RED CROSS

The process of administrative reform and confronting the country's economic crisis

The Costa Rican Red Cross has traditionally played, and continues to play, the role of auxiliary to the Government in emergency situations. This is clearly reflected in the emphasis placed on the ambulance service in agreement with governmental institutions, and on relief in disaster situations, which are the main activities of this National Society. Both services cover 80% of the country through a widespread network of branches.

In recent years, the National Society has undertaken certain other activities, such as administration of refugee camps, in collaboration with UNHCR, as a result of the large number of refugees who arrived in the country because of the armed conflicts in Central America. In April 1993 it will also take over the continuation of a community development project which had been conducted by the Spanish Red Cross to settle refugees. Since 1989 it has also been conducting the "Child Alive" program in communities with high social vulnerability, which emphasizes health care but has useful training and education components which give this program a comprehensive character.

The environment in which the National Society operates, characterized by traditional political stability, has experienced the impact of an unprecedented economic crisis that affected the population's living standards, especially in sectors with limited means. In the context of the crisis, the structural adjustment programs (PAES) negotiated with international financial agencies since the mid-1980s are having a high social cost by reducing public expenditures on health care and social assistance.

In consequence, social problems are increasing and new needs and demands are being created in the area of social services and health care. This creates new problems and challenges for the National Society in the future, especially in the

area of social development where, despite the efforts it has made, its presence is still inadequate.

Internally, the Costa Rican Red Cross has made a significant effort to regain its former levels of fund raising, despite the financial crisis the country is experiencing. At the same time, it has recently adopted actions to increase transparency and flexibility in the financial and accounting areas, and to restructure the relief area administratively. It nevertheless retains a very broad and complex organizational structure which has not progressed as much as desired in decentralization. Delegation of responsibilities and authority is not thorough, which creates bottlenecks and friction between volunteers, staff, and managers at different levels and in different components and programs of the institution. The organizational structure still duplicates some of the functions of the national directorates, and there is a proliferation of administrative units which may promote bureaucracy.

In the area of planning, the complexity of the design and structure of the 1988-1991 Four-Year Plan, together with the limited participation of other levels of the institution (especially the branches) in its preparation, made its dissemination and understanding difficult. The absence of precise annual plans matching the overall objectives of the Four-Year Plan hindered its execution. Moreover, planning was not adapted to available resources. At the beginning of 1993, the National Society shows serious weaknesses in this area caused, among other things, by the absence of a long-term development plan, the lack of influence of the plans and projects office (now without a chief and staff), and the regular turnover of planning staff.

Finally, training in the National Society, though fairly extensive and under a specific national directorate, is not integrated in an overall plan, is given specifically by each of the director-

ates requiring it, and focuses heavily on the staff of the ambulance service, to the detriment of other areas. The lack of training in areas related to social development, except for staff in the "Child Alive" program, is particularly noteworthy.

Organization of the National Society

Organizational structure and geographic coverage

The National Society's most recent statutes date from November 1987. They were revised at the last National Convention, in March 1990, and approved and entered in the Civil Register the same year. There are two main governing organs, according to the statutes: the General Assembly, which is the highest authority, consists of all members, and elects the members of the National Council and financial officers; and the National Council, which is the Association's governing body and is responsible for establishing policies, approving budgets, and appointing all paid staff of the National Society. It consists of 15 directors, nine of whom are regional representatives, and one representative of the service sections and special programs. The leaders of the National Council serve for four years, may be reelected, and are the following: the President, Vice President, Secretary General, Deputy Secretary, National Treasurer, Deputy Treasurer, and nine members. The Financial Office, which includes a Comptroller General and a Deputy Comptroller, is an organ independent of the National Council which appoints comptrollers to the governing boards of auxiliary committees and regional boards.

The statutory reform of 1990 includes a new senior body called the Ethics Tribunal, which will deal with disciplinary cases relating to the statutes and regulations, and will be under the National Council. Another statutory change is an increase in the participation of the regions in the National Council, with nine representatives (one per re-

gion), plus a representative of the service sections and special programs.

There are nine regional boards, appointed by the National Council, in the country's regions, as well as auxiliary committees, which operate under the supervision of a directing board. In March 1993, the National Society had 118 auxiliary committees in almost all of Costa Rica.

Administration and planning

The administrative structure of the Costa Rican Red Cross is based on national directorates that execute policies together with an Executive Director General. Since 1988 the National Council has promoted a regionalization system to stimulate decentralization through the nine regions already mentioned.

The regionalization system, which was intended to decentralize the technical and administrative level, has not managed to decentralize decision making. The result has been an increase in the participation of local units in planning, but at the same time it has created one more link in the administrative chain of decision making. In some cases it may duplicate the activities of the central headquarters, so that delegation of responsibility has not always been accompanied by delegation of authority. The result has been bureaucratization of the process and a reduction in efficiency.

An effort has been made since early 1993 to streamline and simplify the structure on the basis of a pilot experiment involving the Directorate of Relief and Operations, in which manuals and procedures were updated, various offices were merged, and functions were clarified. This new model will shortly be submitted to the National Council for approval in order to extend it to other directorates.

The Costa Rican Red Cross has various weaknesses in the planning area. The Four-Year Development Plan for 1988-1991 was based on projects in each of the national directorates and, as an operating principle, defined a functional structure that would facilitate horizontal communication and promote decongestion of higher levels.

Its design and structure were very complex, however, and that made their dissemination and understanding at all levels and in all branches of the National Society difficult. Another problem in implementing the plan was the divergence between the provisions for the growth of the National Society in the plan and the difficult financial situation which the institution began to experience in 1988. In practice, that made it impossible to carry out some of those provisions. Finally, the lack of precise annual plans matching the guidelines and objectives of the Four-Year Plan, and which would revise and adapt the four-year objectives to the institution's real situation and its environment in each of the plan's years, was another factor that made its execution difficult. At the beginning of 1993, the National Society still lacks a long-term development plan, and the office of the chief of the planning area is vacant; there is only a planning commission, which reports to the Council. Among the causes of this situation mentioned in the National Society are the excessive turnover in recent years in the Executive Directorship of the institution and of technical staff in the Planning and Projects Unit, as well as the fact that the National Society is going through an election period to renew members of its National Council. The absence of a long-term development plan has also made preparation of a Reference Framework for Development Cooperation difficult. The Costa Rican Red Cross is aware of and interested in the need to overcome its problems in planning, an area to which it attaches priority.

Human resources

The Costa Rican Red Cross has 5,450 volunteers in all parts of its operational structure who conduct almost all activities in the regions and capital. It has more than 600 paid staff, of whom 85 (15% of all paid staff) work at the central headquarters. Some of the volunteers occupy posts in the structure; examples are the Director of Assistance, the Director of Relief, and the Director of the Women Volunteers' Section.

Among the professional volunteers are 65 physicians and 670 nurses who undertake various tasks.

The National Society is concerned about the lack of volunteer stability, which results in high turnover of personnel in the activities and branches. This concern extends to recruitment policies, incentives, and the relative unavailability of human resources suited to the nature of each program.

Training is being heavily promoted, and there is a specific national directorate for this function. Despite this, each of the directorates carries on its own training activities in the area of its responsibility, and agreements have been signed with other institutions on internal and external training programs. For several years, an effort has been made to establish a training plan and a curriculum for the paid staff, but they have not been realized. Volunteers worry because training focuses on the ambulance service staff and because training plans are not homogeneous and lack different levels to allow progressive specialization. Although there is incremental training for the paid staff, the turnover in posts makes its use difficult. A need has been expressed for courses and seminars on how to raise funds, on project planning and preparation, especially in the branches, and on social development projects.

Women represent slightly more than 20% of the volunteers and are predominantly involved in youth and relief work. Generally speaking, women are not interested in and do not join the Ladies Auxiliary, which is devoted to social assistance and welfare activities. The higher the management level, the less the participation of women; there are no women in any of the directorates, and only in 1993 did a woman become a member of the National Council.

Finance and budgets

The financial situation of the Costa Rican Red Cross has been relatively stable, but in recent years it has been affected by the economic crisis and the fall in state and community contributions. Specifically, revenues from traditional sources,

such as Bingo games, decreased from 125 million to 49 million colons from 1988 to 1990. Revenue from governmental subsidies fell almost 40%. In 1988 it represented more than 25% of total revenue, but in 1990, barely 10%. Donations, which had declined considerably in earlier years, increased very significantly and produced \$2.1 million. This amounted to 59% of total revenue in 1990. Other categories, such as revenue from state taxes and stamps, rentals, and bank interest, have increased in recent years but retain their proportional share of overall revenue. As for expenditures, the restricted trend of the National Society's revenue had an immediate impact on subsidies for the committees, which fell drastically from more than 85 million colons in 1988 to only 12 million colons in 1990. This caused sizable deficits, which translated into heavy committee debts to the central headquarters.

In this situation, the National Society made a major effort to extend fund raising in 1991 and 1992. Its basic thrusts were:

- a) Strengthening the national lotteries known as "Tico-Bingo" and the "Red Cross of Luck." The latter is generating revenue of around 90 million colons a year (approximately \$656,934).⁷⁰
- b) Renegotiation of agreements with governmental agencies (the Costa Rican Social Security Fund and the National Insurance Institute) governing the provision of ambulance service. In earlier years the National Society had problems because the amount allotted by the two institutions did not match the real cost of the service, but at the end of 1992 the agreements were readjusted by updating the contributions according to inflation and by establishing a mechanism to review the inflation rate every six months. In themselves, retroactive contributions for increases in inflation in earlier years brought the institution around 100 million colons in 1992, which enabled the service to be largely self-sufficient.
- c) Approval by the Congress of the Traffic Law

which, starting in July 1993, will enable the Red Cross to receive 15% of all fines imposed nationally for traffic infractions.

- d) Starting in May 1993, implementation of a trade discount card from whose proceeds the National Society will receive a percentage. Financial projections forecast revenues of around 100 million colons during the card's first year of use; the activity will be entirely managed by a private company, in association with the Costa Rican Red Cross.
- e) Reorganization of the accounting area. Because of the decline in funds raised and certain problems the institution experienced in the deterioration of its image in 1992, concrete control measures have been undertaken in the accounting area to achieve absolute transparency and greater efficiency. The most important are the establishment of a comprehensive accounting system for the auxiliary committees, starting in 1993, through a project to train the governing boards in administration and accounting, human resources, legal advice, and the appointment of a paid administrator in each auxiliary committee. Two and a half million colons have been allocated for the initial stage of the project and 17 administrators have already been appointed, and the goal for the end of 1993 is the appointment of administrators in 50% of the country's auxiliary committees.

Another source of funds which had already been implemented and is still in existence is the agreement between the Costa Rican Red Cross and the Costa Rican Electricity Institute (ICE) on maintaining public telephones, which produces 108 million colons a year for the institution that go entirely to the auxiliary committees, which provide the maintenance.

Seventy ambulances were purchased from the donations received in 1992. The rest was used to construct a new building, which will house the emergency center and will be finished in mid-1993 at a cost of approximately 100 million colons.

The role and activities of the Costa Rican Red Cross in the context of the country

Principal activities

Relief and emergency services

The symbol of the National Society and also one of the oldest activities which the Costa Rican Red Cross conducts, is the ambulance service. This covers 80% of the country with a fleet of 400 vehicles, including five advanced life-support paramedical units, and is an important support for the public authorities. It is provided through the agreement on collaboration with the ccss and INS. More than a million ambulance services representing 114 million kilometers were provided in 1991.

Closely linked to the foregoing service and created in support of the ambulance service are emergency activities related to accidents and water and land rescue, which are conducted by the Metropolitan Emergency and Rescue Service Unit (UMSER). There is also coordination with and support of the state in this field. Life-guarding and assistance at beaches, highways, and special sports, political, civic, and religious activities have been conducted for many years as traditional activities of the National Society, but the most important activity in this area is disaster relief. There is a framework of governmental action for this, the National Emergency Commission, for which the National Society is a major support and through which it receives financing for regional and national projects. Among recent activities carried out in this field have been those related to Hurricane Joan, in the southern region, floods in the Atlantic region, and local, medium-intensity earthquakes. Major relief was recently provided to persons affected by the December 1990 earthquakes in Alajuela, Heredia, and Limón Provinces.

Finally, specific first-aid publicity and training activities aimed at workers in public and private companies are of some importance in the assis-

tance and emergency sphere and also enable the Costa Rican Red Cross to supplement its revenue.

Health services

The "Child Alive" program, with a component of health education and disease prevention, was started for 84 families in the disadvantaged settlement of El Indio in Guápiles, Limón Province, in 1990. Four more communities in El Indio (San Gerardo, El Patio, Iztarú, and Sector 9), in which 380 families were involved in 1993, were later added to the program, and it was extended to the communities of Barra del Colorado and Tortuguero. In addition to those already noted, the program's basic components have been environmental sanitation (provision of latrines and potable water pumps) and AIDS prevention. The program has been conducted with strong participation by young secondary students, who are trained as health promoters, and has been supported interinstitutionally by the Costa Rican Social Security Fund (through its Guápiles Hospital), the Ministry of Health (Guápiles Regional Directorate), and, recently, the Ministry of Education, through which primary school pupils were included in the program starting in 1993. Among the achievements of this program, it is important to note the high motivation of volunteers, the interinstitutional support it receives, the development of appropriate technology in the form of a low-cost potable water pump, which is now used in and outside the country, and—above all—its presence in socially highly vulnerable communities in Limón, one of the country's poorest provinces.

As for blood services, the Costa Rican Red Cross has operated a blood bank for many years which, to a large extent, is financed and administered by the ccss with support by the National Insurance Institute. Its basic activities are donor recruitment, essentially in public and private companies, and processing and distribution of blood to national hospitals.

The National Society also has a blood pressure measurement service which operates to prevent hypertension at various places in the capital.

Social assistance and welfare services

This area includes traditional activities such as distribution of emergency food, clothing, and aid to marginalized groups and communities, activities related to the elderly in day-care centers and homes, and help for persons affected by natural disasters. The last have benefited from activities such as home construction and distribution of clothing, food, and seed grain.

During the period in which the war in Nicaragua became acute, Costa Rica received a large number of refugees from that country, some of whom were cared for by the Costa Rican Red Cross at the request and with the collaboration of UNHCR. This activity consisted of administering two refugee camps in the northern part of the country, and infrastructural and development works were carried out which also benefited nearby communities. Traditional activities such as the distribution of food, clothing, and cooking utensils were conducted, as were health care and education programs coordinated with the respective Ministries. The program ended in conformity with the regional and national policies implemented after the International Conference on Refugees in Central America (CIREFCA), which resulted in the closure of camps and the repatriation of refugees. It was resumed and redesigned in 1989 by the Costa Rican Red Cross, the Spanish International Cooperation Agency, the Spanish Red Cross, and UNHCR as a community development project (the CREDES Project) to last two and a half years for 70 families in Santa Rosa de Pocosol, 50% of whom were refugees and 50% of whom were Costa Rican peasants. The basic components of the project were training in production organization (technical advice on crops, marketing, credit management, organizational methods, and legal matters), development of infrastructure for the community (roads, classrooms, water mains), health (environmental sanitation and AIDS and cholera prevention), and education (sex, family, and training for women). Until the beginning of 1993 the project had an external coordinator financed by the Spanish Red Cross and a budget of \$1,086,000 from the

Spanish International Cooperation Agency, in addition to the donation of a farm and 4 million colons by UNHCR. The Costa Rican Red Cross provided administrative support. In March 1993, the Directing Council of the Costa Rican Red Cross took over the continuation of the project, which will be operated as an extra duty by the Executive Director and the institution's accounting directorate.

Relations with the Government

Relations between the Costa Rican Red Cross and the Government have been satisfactory, taking into account that the way in which the Costa Rican state has dealt with social policy and the importance historically attached to it differ significantly from other countries in the region. This explains the relationship of agreement and joint action with the CCSS and INS in the ambulance and blood programs. In this context, the institution's independence has been maintained in such a way that changes in Government have not affected it significantly, something that is perhaps more an expression of the country's stability.

To coordinate emergency activities, operate the ambulance service, publicize International Humanitarian Law, and provide training, ongoing relations are maintained with various public agencies. Even though each department coordinates its own activities, it is significant that the Costa Rican Red Cross maintains collaborative relations with the Ministries of Health, Education, the Presidency, Public Safety, the Interior, Housing and Human Settlements, and Labor and Social Security, as well as with other institutions responsible for specific policies, especially in the social, emergency, and refugee areas.

Relations with other organizations and agencies

This same model, in which each of the departments of the Costa Rican Red Cross maintains its own relationships, is found with respect to other

private, nongovernmental, and international institutions. The Colleges of Physicians and Microbiologists, private centers and NGOs such as the Bible Clinic and Project Hope, with which training activities are coordinated, private companies, etc., collaborate or coordinate some of their activities with the National Society. At the same time, the Costa Rican Red Cross has increased its relations with international agencies such as UNHCR, PAHO, ICMRT, and CIM.

The Costa Rican Red Cross believes that its relations with UNHCR have been especially significant since they have pushed the Red Cross into a new set of activities—those related to refugee camps, repatriation, and integration.

The role of international cooperation

During the 1980s the Costa Rican Red Cross established cooperative agreements with the Nordic Societies and the Spanish, German, and Canadian Red Crosses and took part in subregional programs sponsored by the Federation. It also received support from other bilateral cooperation agencies, such as Canada's CIDA and the Spanish International Cooperation Agency (in the CREDES Project), and, as we noted, from international agencies such as UNHCR. The National Society has been able to strengthen its ambulance service through external financing. The Federation, German Red Cross, and Nordic Societies have financed projects and activities related to the National Society's emergency and relief services. In such activities, training in disaster preparedness for young people and in water safety for lifeguards has been promoted. The water safety project, financed by the Nordic Societies for three years, was not well attended, however, since the National Society made limited use of the funds approved.

The Federation provided financial support in 1990 for certain projects related to housing construction in the southern part of the country and dealing with the aftermath of the late 1990 earthquake in Limón. To deal with the aftermath of

Hurricane Joan, the German Red Cross provided material and financial resources to the Costa Rican Red Cross.

The Blood Program has been supported by the Nordic Societies since 1986. In the last three years they have also provided financing to diagnose and evaluate a possible national blood program which would have governmental support. The "Child Alive" health and nutrition program has been supported by the Federation and the Finnish Red Cross since 1988.

The project to settle Nicaraguan refugees in communities around Santa Rosa de Pocosol in the border area, which followed the closing of the refugee camps administered by the National Society, received funds from UNHCR, the Spanish International Cooperation Agency, and the Spanish Red Cross.

Institutional development projects—specifically, building branch offices, construction of a building to create a national disaster and emergency center, and the extension of the vehicle fleet—have benefited from the financial cooperation of the Spanish Red Cross, the German Red Cross, the Canadian Red Cross, the Canadian Government's CIDA, and other agencies. The Costa Rican Red Cross's priority in the Development Appeals of 1991, 1992, and 1993 continued to be reconstruction of the central headquarters building.

The National Society is concerned about the decline in international financing and cooperation, despite the fact that it has been significant, as already noted. The Costa Rican Red Cross is interested in strengthening subregional cooperation and establishing long-term interinstitutional agreements to enhance specific areas, such as training, financial administration, and project formulation and evaluation.

The National Society's perception of its public image

The ambulance service, disaster relief, and the blood bank are activities thought to identify the National Society in the public mind. Although

generally speaking it is believed that the public views the Costa Rican Red Cross positively, it is thought that there is greater identification with the institution in the countryside than in cities. In the opinion of the National Society, the Costa Rican Red Cross is affected by the popular belief that its ambulances are the "taxis" of the Costa Rican Social Security Fund.

During 1992 the communications media strongly criticized the National Society in questioning its methods of work. Despite that, leaders note that the public backed the Costa Rican Red Cross, a demonstration of which was that the public bought 310,000 boxes for the "Cross of Luck" lottery. The National Society has nevertheless allotted 250,000 colons to conduct a survey of the public's perceptions of the institution.

The absence of a public relations office in the Red Cross has hindered promotion of a different

image by broadly informing communities about the National Society's activities, as well as improving fund raising. It is thought that communities are not informed about the use of funds obtained from the "Tico-Bingo," raffles, lotteries, and other fund-raising activities. Thus, donors do not understand exactly what use is made of their contributions or the benefits stemming from them. At the end of 1992, therefore, the press office was reopened under a paid journalist to publicize the institution's image.

As for the relationship between fund raising and public image, the leaders of the National Society say that there is a widespread belief that the National Society raises large amounts through lotteries, and so has solved its financial problems. This image of "wealth" has turned out to be very detrimental when other fund-raising activities are conducted.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusions

The Costa Rican Red Cross is an institution with long experience and broad coverage in the country which has been characterized by implementation of an operational model focused on two basic activities: its ambulance service and disaster relief. In the 1980s it involved itself in new activities in caring for the refugee population, and at the end of 1989 it initiated the "Child Alive" program in socially very vulnerable communities. The efforts the National Society has made to raise funds are reflected in its financial stability; an administrative reorganization has been started in the financial and accounting as well as relief areas, a process which is intended to be spread throughout the institution to optimize efficiency and effectiveness. In addition, actions were undertaken at the end of 1992 to strengthen its institutional image, among them the reopening of the press office.

These achievements must be consolidated, however. The basic problems which the National Society must overcome to meet the challenges of the future are the following.

The institution lacks a strategic planning system that defines priority areas of action and encompasses current programs and services through a national development plan. The admin-

istrative reforms already undertaken have still not managed to simplify structures and streamline procedures, many of which continue to be bureaucratic and centralized, especially decision making and internal communication.

Although there are some specific programs aimed at the most vulnerable, dealing with them is not an institutional priority and there is still no willingness to establish such a priority, which would have to be accompanied by the assignment of financial and human resources to implement it.

The National Society operates effectively in dealing with emergencies. Even so, there are weaknesses in decision making and intermediate-level responses. Moreover, neither the environmental aspect nor analysis of social and economic aspects has been included in disaster policy.

Overall policies to develop volunteers and paid staff which include recruitment, promotion, and incentives are lacking. Training, though plentiful, is dispersed, heavily focused on the relief and emergency areas, and shows serious weaknesses in new areas of social action, management, planning, and evaluation.

Finally, there is still no unit specifically responsible for public relations and information dissemination in and outside the institution and which is provided with adequate financial and personnel resources.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1. Establish a strategic planning system**
- 2. Deepen and extend the administrative reforms already begun**
- 3. Include assistance to the most vulnerable among the National Society's priorities**
- 4. Strengthen the National Society's ability to deal with emergencies**
- 5. Establish a human resources development program**
- 6. Strengthen the National Society's public image**

1. Establish a strategic planning system

- 1.1 Draw up and implement a National Development Plan that defines strategies and priority areas of action which is consistent with current programs and services, and allows streamlined and decentralized operation throughout the institution.
- 1.2 In defining institutional strategies and priorities, take into account an analysis of the country's socioeconomic conditions, prospects, and trends, with special emphasis on the situation of the most vulnerable in the population as well as the Government's plans
- 1.3 Implement the National Development Plan through annual plans, using participative methods in preparing it. It should be simple in concept and organization, and include concrete follow-up and evaluation methods and criteria.
- 1.4 Establish a Reference Framework for Development Cooperation.

2. Deepen and extend the administrative reforms already begun

- 2.1 Deepen and fully implement the process of administrative and functional reform by promoting simpler organization and more streamlined procedures.
- 2.2 Redefine the organizational structure and duties of paid staff at the central headquarters by optimizing present personnel and, as much as possible, reassigning staff to the auxiliary committees and the weakest services.
- 2.3 Evaluate the results of decentralization and adopt measures to make it fully effective, especially in the decision-making area.
- 2.4 Improve internal communication within the central headquarters and especially with the auxiliary committees and the various volunteer units, and between them and paid staff, by

using non-statutory and more streamlined methods such as specific workshops, leader tours, etc.

- 2.5 Adopt concrete measures to increase women's participation in the National Society's leadership bodies
- 2.6 Continue and extend the measures recently undertaken concerning training, control, and streamlining in the area of financial administration.

3. Include assistance to the most vulnerable among the National Society's priorities

- 3.1 Increase the coverage of the "Child Alive" program by expanding it in Limón Province and starting to implement it in the cantons comprising the country's "poverty map," particularly in Puntarenas Province.
- 3.2 Ensure the continuation, approach, and extension of the CREDES Project in the San Carlos area.
- 3.3 Reinforce experience accumulated in these two projects in organizing, training, and motivating volunteers and in interinstitutional coordination to promote programs with community participation in the areas and with groups having greatest vulnerability.

4. Strengthen the National Society's ability to deal with emergencies

- 4.1 Strengthen relief and emergency services, especially planning and preparation for disasters, with emphasis on regional plans, on the basis of risk areas, and reinforce middle-level decision-making and response levels.
- 4.2 Revise the present approach to disaster activities by including, for purposes of prevention and mitigation, environmental aspects and analysis of geographic, social, and economic components in preparing risk maps.

5. Establish a human resources development program

- 5.1 Include a unified human resources development plan for volunteers and paid staff in the Development Plan which includes continuous training and promotion and incentive systems.
- 5.2 Integrate the different training plans to prevent their dispersal and establish curricula that include common basic training for all volunteers and different levels of specialization according to specific programs and services.
- 5.3 Increase training activities by paying more attention to new areas of social action, management, and planning.

6. Strengthen the National Society's public image

- 6.1 Carry out a self-critical analysis of the National Society's public and social images according to the activities and social role which the institution plays to correctly identify and solve problems in this area.

Conclusions and recommendations

- 6.2 Reinforce the recently opened press office and turn it into a specific unit, adequately equipped and staffed, responsible for public relations and information dissemination.
- 6.3 Establish procedures for providing information about and publicizing the activities which the institution is conducting in new social action areas with the most vulnerable.

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