

HONDURAN RED CROSS

Facing the challenge of deteriorating social conditions

The Honduran Red Cross is a 53-year-old organization that has grown significantly in recent years. It maintains close relations with the Government and other public authorities, confirming its role as their auxiliary in areas such as disaster relief and its ambulance service. A blood bank operates in each of the country's two chief cities, and a third is planned. It has also implemented the "Child Alive" program and has initiated housing programs. Further, the Honduran Red Cross has continued to provide its traditional food and clothing distribution services.

In addition, the armed conflicts in Nicaragua and El Salvador produced a heavy flow of refugees that posed a serious challenge to the National Society in the field of assistance in which, in cooperation with UNHCR, it conducted several refugee programs and gained significant experience.

These activities and, in particular, the ambulance service, which is provided exclusively in the entire country, to a large extent determine the National Society's public image.

From the viewpoint of its environment, the economic crisis of the 1980s that Honduras has experienced together with the other countries in the isthmus, has recently been made more acute as a result of the structural adjustment measures established starting in 1990. This has worsened the population's living conditions, and particularly those of people with low incomes, who already suffered from great poverty. From the viewpoint of social vulnerability, the most pressing problems are in rural areas, where 79% of households have unmet basic needs and there is great illiteracy. In the health sphere, indicators reveal high rates of malnutrition and child mortality and a high incidence of AIDS, especially in the northern part of the country. Dengue persists and malaria is endemic, together with poor sanitary conditions among the rural population, most of which does

not have potable water or adequate facilities at home

In addition, governmental health policies favor urban residents of San Pedro Sula and Tegucigalpa, to the detriment of large segments of the rural population, and have a largely curative approach.

Most of these indicators can be seen especially in the departments of Intibucá, La Paz, Comayagua, Valle, Choluteca, El Paraíso, Lempira, Santa Bárbara, and Copán. The most seriously affected social sectors are poor children in both rural and marginalized urban areas, women, especially single mothers, the elderly, and the unemployed.

Finally, one must note Honduras' great vulnerability to natural phenomena such as floods, hurricanes, droughts, landslides, and forest fires, against which greater prevention, planning, and population preparation activities are required.

The National Society has made efforts to expand its role and ability to deal with the challenges posed by the country's situation. In the financial sphere, major growth has taken place in the National Society's budget, which has doubled in barely four years, and a program has been conducted to strengthen the departmental committees to achieve self-financing through the branch development program. But this growth has not been free from problems and questions about the future. Today, close to 30% of the National Society's budget comes from external cooperation; only some of its services, such as the blood bank, are partially self-sufficient, and the financial situation is threatened by the drastic structural adjustment measures the Government recently adopted, which have translated into a rapid fall in the real income of the National Society.

Internally, the most important problems to be overcome relate to the statutes in force, which

date from 1986, and reinforce a centralized system of governance. Although significant administrative reforms have been introduced in the central structure of the Honduran Red Cross in recent years, including an accounting system and several internal regulations, concern persists about the lack of fluid communication between the headquarters and branches, among the different governing organs, and among the different auxiliary bodies. In the planning area, the 1991-1993 Development Program is in force, together with annual plans, but an overall strategic planning system is still lacking which could integrate the sectoral components of annual plans. Neither is there any form of continuous evaluation system. A "crisis" is mentioned in relation to human resources that affects the recruitment, retention, and stability of volunteers caused by external factors such as the country's economic situation and competition from other NGOs, as well as lack of clarity in the organization about the operation of the volunteer units, the shortage of leaders of auxiliary bodies in the Red Cross, and the absence of development programs to motivate volunteers, especially young people. Finally, the need is recognized to deepen and expand new activities—especially preventive ones—favoring the most vulnerable, as well as the redesign of assistance programs based on a more promotional model. Training in new development areas and in project design and evaluation is thus essential.

Organization of the National Society

Organizational structure and geographic coverage

According to the prevailing statutes, the basic decision-making body in the Honduran Red Cross is the General Assembly, which consists of the members of the National Council and the presidents of the departmental, municipal, and local councils. The National Council, the highest

organ between assemblies, is composed of 15 persons elected in the General Assembly, the presidents of the departmental councils, and the national heads of the auxiliary bodies.

The Honduran Red Cross has 43 branches covering the entire country. The office in San Pedro Sula, the country's second city, is the most important after the central headquarters and has a blood bank and other services. One of the most recent branches was founded in Mosquitia, the most isolated part of the country, where the Honduran Red Cross has been carrying out a major refugee program. It has been noted as a cause for concern that, in addition to the weakest branches' problems of financial dependence, there are problems in communication between the headquarters and branches and between the provincial and municipal councils and auxiliary bodies.

Administration and planning

The Honduran Red Cross conducted a Four-Year Plan covering 1988-1991 and a Development Program in 1991-1993.

The 1988-1991 Four-Year Plan was drawn up for the period between the Inter-American Conferences of the Red Cross, which are held every four years, defined general and specific objectives, goals, and methodologies by sector, and was supplemented by annual plans and budgets and sectoral plans for specific programs. The Development Program of the Honduran Red Cross for 1991-1993 is a logical continuation of the Four-Year Plan, and is today in effect together with the annual plans covering most of the National Society's activities. Strengthening the departmental committees to achieve their self-sufficiency, strengthening activities with the branches in environmental sanitation and ecological improvement, improving the ambulance service, with emphasis on training emergency medical technicians, and strengthening the blood programs have been established as the National Society's development goals.

Each department of the central headquarters is responsible for preparing its own part of the annual plan of action and budget. All annual plans and budgets are submitted to the National Council for consideration. After they are approved, each of the departments carries them out. Nevertheless, the staff responsible for this does not have enough authority to make each of the decisions necessary for their execution, especially financial and budgetary decisions, which causes frequent management problems.

After 1983 an extensive program of branch development was carried out in 40 branches, with support by the Nordic Societies, which was aimed at consolidating and extending the geographic structure of the Honduran Red Cross; its time limit was 1995. The program's principal objective was to develop branch self-sufficiency with respect to the central headquarters, but it was not fully achieved because of the persistence of dependency problems and lack of coordination.

The program began to be restructured in 1992 with a focus on seven branches—Choluteca, Nacaome, Comayagua, Catacamas, Colinas Danlí, and San José Colinas. One of its components is financing the salary of an administrator for each branch who, among other duties, must raise funds. This financial support is on a declining scale, so that 100% of the administrator's salary is paid in the first year, 75% in the second, and so on. An evaluation of the program showed significant advances: four branches are self-sufficient in paying the wages of their remunerated staff and 80% of expenditures on vehicle tires and spare parts. The poorest branches are not part of the general financial system and are supported with milk (for the nutrition program) and spare parts and expenses incurred by the ambulance service.

In branches not yet included in the branch development plan, activities are planned jointly by local managers and auxiliary bodies. The norm requiring the presentation of a municipal plan annually and sectoral planning is considered useful, as is the support that the central headquarters provides branches in putting prevailing programs into practice. Nevertheless, the lack of

certain defined criteria, the fact that information needed to carry out programs is not always transmitted, and the weakness of follow-up mechanisms are factors that negatively affect their execution.

Efforts have been made to identify the National Society's priority fields of action and progress is beginning to be seen in some of them, especially in strengthening departmental committees. Finally, it may be noted that all plans, both long- and short-term, are composed exclusively of sectoral elements; there is, in summary, no precise identification of priority fields of action and a definition of the strategies of the Honduran Red Cross.

Human resources

The Honduran Red Cross has three volunteer bodies—Relief Workers, Volunteer Ladies, and Youth—which together have approximately 2,500 members. The volunteer corps has been carrying out a large number of the activities, especially in relief and emergency work and assistance and social welfare.

The National Society has shown its concern about the "volunteer crisis" which, in its judgment, exists in the country and is negatively affecting the recruitment, retention, and stability of volunteers, especially in the branches. It particularly affects their leadership. Because of the economic crisis that Honduras has experienced, an ever-increasing number of volunteers, especially women, are obliged to enter the labor market and so abandon volunteer activities. Competition from other organizations in recruiting volunteers is another limitation.

Nevertheless, this "crisis" also has to do with situations peculiar to the National Society which are a cause of concern among volunteers; as are the lack of clarity in the organization of the volunteer units themselves and their relations with the internal structure. In this context, it has sometimes been observed that volunteer members identify more with their own units than with the Red Cross as a whole, which creates problems of

coordination. Also of significance are the lack of incentives to retain volunteers in the institution and the absence of insurance in activities carrying a clear risk of accidents, which according to sources in the institution is due to the fact that no insurance company wants to insure personnel with high turnover such as the volunteers. The scarcity of assistance activities and social programs in which volunteers take part, inadequate methods in the disciplinary regimen, the shortage of leaders in the auxiliary bodies, and the lack of programs especially attractive to young people are also among the volunteers' concerns and the cause of the "crisis" noted above.

In relation to these facts, we must note how young women join the National Society. They choose the relief-worker unit rather than the Ladies unit, which does not attract them because it is very traditional and its activities focus on assistance, which is directly related to a specific assignment of roles based on sex.

The National Society has around 150 paid staff, most of whom are distributed between the central headquarters and the San Pedro Sula office, though there are also full-time administrators and ambulance drivers in the branches. The paid staff has increasingly taken over the execution of activities requiring greater training, as a result of which almost half of the permanent personnel work in the blood banks. In recent years the National Society has made efforts to improve the working conditions of its paid staff. Today all employees are insured, except for the branches' drivers, and there has been a general adjustment in wages to the extent the institution's finances have made possible, especially as to the staff in lower grade jobs who have been the most affected by the increase in the cost of living. A retirement fund has also been created for employees.

Strong emphasis has been placed on training for several years through the Technical Training Unit (UNICAPT). Various specific areas of professional training for volunteers and paid staff were established in the 1988-91 Plan. Even so, the National Society is aware of the need to include new aspects; accordingly, an emergency medical

technician (TUM) curriculum has been created which has its own teaching staff composed of members of the Red Cross, PAHO, National Autonomous University of Honduras, and the Ministry of Public Health. The Honduran Red Cross has plans to establish a unit to recruit and select volunteers with defined profiles which will be closely coordinated with the Training Unit. The need to provide training in new development areas is recognized in the institution.

Financing and budget

The budget of the Honduran Red Cross has grown significantly in recent years in both current and constant lempiras, increasing from HNL 1,268,000 in 1987 to HNL 2,110,000 in 1989. According to the 1990 budget, the total estimated revenue of the Honduran Red Cross was HNL 2,590,000, of which close to 31% came from external assistance, as an expression of cooperation designed with a comprehensive perspective to support almost all of the National Society's programs. Thirty percent comes from activities themselves, 31% from fund raising by the National Society, and 8% is contributed by the Government (HNL 200,000 in 1991).

Estimates of expenditure in 1990 were that those for administration, including radio communications, consumed 25%; support activities, including training and aid to branches, 20%; blood services, 32%; medical and health care services, 15%, and social services, 1%. The blood program, which represents almost a third of the total budget, is 83% self-financing since public hospitals, which receive more than half of the blood and blood components, can reimburse only 30% of the cost of processing each unit. There is a desire to reduce the deficit by increasing unit prices until self-sufficiency is achieved.

As noted, the economic crisis that affected Honduras during the past decade, and especially the "structural adjustment" measures adopted by the present Government, have led to the end of the tax and tariff exemptions the National Society enjoyed, a reduction in its real income, and

restrictions on the importation of products needed for the operation of the blood center and laboratories, among other things, and these facts are one of the main concerns of the National Society today

The leaders of the Honduran Red Cross believe that raising funds within the country is uncertain because of the crisis and the weakness of fund-raising mechanisms. The annual sale of fruit at Christmastime has been playing an important role in fund raising. In 1990 it provided 20% of total revenues. This activity, which is a useful means of financing in a context of declining revenue from traditional sources, depends on the annual granting of a dispensation from customs payments which the Congress of the Republic has to approve. Every year this procedure means risk and uncertainty about a decision that is made outside the National Society. In addition, a cargo of contraband fruit entered the country in 1992, which appreciably decreased the turnover of the Honduran Red Cross.

The new branch development project has managed to expand the number of financially self-supporting branches, and it is hoped to advance this process systematically to solve one of the most important problems that has been confronting the institution, the financial weakness and dependency of the branches with respect to the central headquarters

Role and activities of the National Society in the context of the country

Principal activities

Relief and emergency services

One of the most important activities of the Honduran Red Cross from the standpoint of the quantity of financial and human resources involved as well as its public image is the ambulance service. It has 39 radio-equipped units, one per branch, and a repair shop in Tegucigalpa.

Even though the Honduran Red Cross has made a significant effort to improve the administration and quality of the ambulance service by training the staff who drive them, it is noted that improvements can be made in optimizing and regulating the use of the vehicles and their maintenance, and in improving the quality of the service provided to the community.

The adjustment measures have led to a large increase in the cost of maintenance in a service inherently in deficit. This has led the National Society to solicit voluntary contributions by users that to some extent cover the costs of its operation.

In the area of disaster relief, the National Society has traditionally acted in support of the public authorities. In recent years a National Disaster Preparedness Plan has been drawn up, and the principal activities carried out in this area have had to do with care of victims of landslides, Hurricane Gilbert, and floods caused by the Coco River in the area bordering on Nicaragua in Honduran Mosquitia. Through the Standing Emergency Commission (COPECO), the Honduran Government recently designed the "Guaymura 92" National Emergency Plan, which assigned a substantial role to the Honduran Red Cross in three main fields: health care (including rescue, first aid, primary care, and basic sanitation in disaster areas), participation in managing hostels and refugee shelters, and opening of first-aid posts in affected areas in coordination with the Ministry of Public Health and Social Assistance.

Health services

The Honduran Red Cross's health services, including clinics and laboratory services, have been basically curative in nature. Service provided by first-aid clinics is aimed at the marginalized population through free or low-cost services such as medical consultations, clinical analyses, and provision of drugs. There are three clinics, in La Ceiba, San Pedro Sula, and Tegucigalpa.

There have been few preventive programs and their coverage has been limited, though in

the past two years efforts have been made to expand them. The "Child Alive" health care and nutrition program was started in a Tegucigalpa suburb in 1984 on the Federation's initiative and was temporarily interrupted. A new program of this kind was begun in 1988 in rural areas in Siguatepeque with fairly positive results, and recently it was extended to El Paraíso Department. A project to provide potable water to 30 rural communities in the Las Trojes and Yamales area, affected by the presence of irregular Nicaraguan forces in earlier years, is now nearing completion and was implemented with support from the Spanish Red Cross.

The Honduran Red Cross began its blood service in 1978, and its development accelerated in 1984 when it became part of the Central American Blood Program. Today the program is conducted nationally through two blood centers, in the Tegucigalpa and San Pedro Sula offices, and provides 40% of all the country's blood and derivatives through a system of voluntary donors.

Operating in conjunction with the blood centers are reasonably priced clinical laboratories for the public at large which carry out blood analyses, and both centers are recognized nationally as blood reference centers, especially in the area of training. One of the program's strengths is the professionalism and reliability of the service and the staff who conduct it.

During the past two years, however, the program has declined because of a substantial decrease in donors, as seen in the fall in units collected from 9,619 in 1990 to 7,552 in 1992. There have also been equipment maintenance problems. Efforts to obtain a larger number of donors have been unfruitful, which shows the difficulties of promotion in a country with a high incidence of AIDS and much unemployment, which leads donors to want to obtain remuneration in exchange for blood.

The incidence of AIDS cases in Honduras, especially high along the country's northern coast, has forced the National Society to undertake activities in this field, among them a study of the public's extent and level of information about AIDS in order to provide recommendations

for action by the Government and the National Society itself in this field, and cooperation with the Ministry of Health in an educational campaign.

Aware of the importance of meeting all of the country's blood needs, the Honduran Red Cross presented a project to the European Community through the Federation at the beginning of 1993 to strengthen its institutional capacity to assume national coordination of blood services in the country. The project's most important components are construction of a small blood center in La Ceiba, purchase of a centrifuge for the San Pedro Sula center, provision of equipment, and training. Support in planning, training, and equipping by the American Red Cross is also foreseen.

Social assistance and welfare services

Refugee programs were an important activity in the 1980s because of the large number of refugees, especially Nicaraguans and Salvadoreans, in Honduras. According to UNHCR estimates, there were close to 27,000 recognized refugees, 250,000 undocumented refugees, and 22,000 internally displaced persons in Honduras in 1990. In collaboration with UNHCR, the Honduran Red Cross focused its assistance activities on Nicaraguan refugee camps through mostly multisectoral programs that included agricultural activities and health and education services. The most important were:

- a) The program for the Nicaraguan population of Ladino origin begun in 1982 in the department of El Paraíso, which is now ended due to repatriation policies and the closing of refugee camps.
- b) The program for Nicaraguan refugees of Miskito origin, begun in 1988 to care for 8,350 persons, which also included a program for the Sumu population with an important literacy and vocational education component. This program represented a significant logistical challenge because land communication is not possible with Hondu-

ran Mosquitia, an area difficult to reach where the refugee camps were located.

- c) A short-term program, started in 1990, to facilitate the repatriation of demobilized Nicaraguans to fulfill the peace accords, and follow up the activities of the United Nations Observer Group for Central America (ONUCA), specifically around Yamales and Las Trojes in El Paraíso Department.

A small program for Haitian refugees was implemented at the end of 1992 in collaboration with UNHCR. Two hundred and fifty persons have been repatriated, and only 38 remain in the country.

In the housing field, various programs have been carried out, such as construction of dwellings for persons affected by Hurricane Gilbert, jointly with the National Emergency Council and the Housing Institute, and construction of 120 dwellings in the community of Tizatillo, the result of a flood appeal.

In the assistance area, the Honduran Red Cross considers its program to distribute milk and clothing to children and families with few means important in view of the country's socioeconomic situation. The "Glass of Milk" program was conducted in 1989 in 21 branches and embraced a total of 36,000 children in 20 communities, and in 1990 the service covered a total of 20,000 children in 14 communities. Since 1992, only flour and oil from the European Community have been distributed. This activity is conducted with a very traditional "charitable" approach, however.

The Volunteer Ladies operate six free pre-school instruction or day-care centers in various parts of the country for a total of 652 children. This activity is carried out in collaboration with the Ministry of Education, which pays the salaries of the teachers.

Relations with the Government

The Honduran Red Cross has always maintained easy relations with the public authorities, including the Armed Forces. This collaboration

is especially significant with the Ministry of Health and the National Social Welfare Board concerning the National Blood Program and vaccination campaigns, and with the National Refugee Commission (CONARE) in programs in that sphere. In the area of disaster relief, the governmental agency responsible for the program was reorganized in 1992 and the Standing Emergency Commission (COPECO) constituted. It has developed a National Emergency Plan (Guaymura 92), which assigns an important role to NGOs and especially the Honduran Red Cross.

The Government has traditionally made a financial contribution to the National Society's activities (about 8% of its total budget). The Honduran Red Cross has also gained certain advantages from this relationship, including exemption from payment of taxes and other obligations. The "structural ordering of the economy law," approved in 1990, reduced these exemptions and limited access to foreign exchange to purchase inputs abroad. The Honduran Red Cross is negotiating this new arrangement with the Government in search of lasting solutions. The Ministry of Health recently increased its reimbursements to the Red Cross for the blood service in recognition of the good work the institution carries on, especially with volunteer donors.

Relations with other organizations and agencies

The Honduran Red Cross has maintained relations with various United Nations agencies operating in the country such as PAHO and UNDP, but they have been especially significant with UNHCR in Nicaraguan refugee programs. The collaboration agreements with UNHCR are ending with the closure of the refugee camps because of massive refugee repatriation. There are also relations with the World Food Program and the Honduran-German Food for Work Cooperation (COHAAT). Friends of Americas, a U.S. NGO, and other local philanthropic organizations, as well as the National Autonomous University,

also collaborate with the National Society in activities of various kinds. Support through donations of clothing and food has been provided to Casa Alianza, an NGO that works with street children.

The National Society believes that there is strong competition in raising financial resources by the NGOs. Another reason for concern is the fact that other, more dynamic NGOs can offer more interesting alternatives to young volunteers than those the Red Cross offers.

Role of external cooperation

Since the beginning of the 1980s the Honduran Red Cross has received sustained support from the International Red Cross Movement. The ICRC has maintained a permanent representational office in the country since 1983. The Nordic Societies have signed cooperation agreements with the National Society annually. Since 1982 there has also been support from the European Economic Community and National Societies such as the Spanish Red Cross and German Red Cross.

A joint development project was established in 1984 between the Honduran Red Cross and the Nordic Societies that covers almost all spheres of activity of the National Society and translates into financial, material, and technical support for infrastructure, community services, and institutional development.

The National Blood Program has also benefited from continuing cooperation by the Nordic Societies. Through the Spanish Red Cross, the European Economic Community has transferred material and financial resources in recent years for two blood projects, one on AIDS prevention and the other on transfusion safety. The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) has also financed parts of the Blood Program. For the 1994 period it is intended to establish a single national blood system that will be part of a broader subregional program. For this purpose, a project was presented to the European Community through the Federation at the begin-

ning of 1993 to expand and strengthen the Blood Program nationally. It will also be supported by the American Red Cross.

With UNHCR support, programs to assist Nicaraguan refugee camps were started in 1982. In 1990, a program to facilitate the repatriation of demobilized members of the Nicaraguan Resistance, or "contras," received support from USAID and the American Red Cross. Financial and material support was also received from the German Red Cross and Spanish Red Cross for a social development assistance project in local communities. Milk distribution received donation support from the ICRC. Clothing distribution depends chiefly on donations from the Swedish Red Cross. As a result of the International Conference on Refugees in Central America (CIREFCA) in 1989, the Spanish Red Cross contributed approximately USD 500,000 for the project to provide potable water to rural communities in Las Trojes and Yamales.

The National Society's perception of its public image

The perception of the leaders of the National Society of its public image is very positive, and they think that its activities and services are highly appreciated by the community. Nevertheless, the Honduran Red Cross does not have the financial resources to conduct promotion or publicity campaigns, even though its relations with the communications media are good. There are few newspapers and television channels, and fees are very high. For public image purposes, the refugee programs have had a twofold result. On one hand, they have reinforced the National Society's image of solvency and managerial capacity, given the complexity of the tasks undertaken, especially in Honduran Mosquitia. On the other, however, the National Society carried out major efforts in favor of the Nicaraguan refugees which translated into substantial improvements in their health care, education, and nutrition in an area where there is widespread poverty among Hondurans, who were displaced

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by irregular Nicaraguan forces operating along the border. This fact, which has been inadequately explained, has led to criticism and rejection from both the Honduran population, especially in El Paraíso Department, and certain communications media. The Honduran Red Cross nevertheless believes that the execution of the potable water project in Yamales and Las Trojes has to some extent resolved this problem.

The Honduran Red Cross has not had permanent staff responsible for information nor a specific department for public relations, which has been a major weakness that has affected both internal and external communication, and specifically, has been one of the reasons that has made fund raising difficult. To overcome these problems, the National Society hired a paid staff member at the end of 1992 to take charge of public image tasks.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusions

The Honduran Red Cross is an institution that has been characterized by the provision of a national ambulance service and activities in the area of blood, a program recognized for the professionalism with which it is conducted. In recent years the National Society has made an effort to extend and diversify the supply of services it provides by strengthening its budget, implementing refugee care programs, and expanding preventive programs in the health care area.

Nevertheless, to continue and strengthen this process and be able to deal with the magnitude of the challenges the country's situation presents, it is necessary to solve certain weaknesses.

The institution's financial situation has undergone a substantial decline in real income in recent years as a result of the application of adjustment policies by the Government. There is also the fact that most of the services provided are not self-supporting and around 30% of the institution's budget comes from external cooperation.

The absence of an overall strategic planning system hinders effective prioritization of activities

and results in scattered and fragmented planning. New social development activities are still inadequate and limited in coverage, and there is a charitable approach in some of the activities related to social welfare. In the area of principal activities, efforts have been made to optimize the provision of ambulance service and there has been substantial progress in the disaster relief activities that have been included in the National Disaster Preparedness Plan. The blood program has declined in recent years, however, as unit collection has diminished, among other reasons because of a substantial decrease in volunteer donors.

The prevailing statutes reinforce a centralized system of governance, which limits communication between the central headquarters and branches, among the various governing bodies, and within the auxiliary bodies. Human resources, especially volunteers, present problems in recruitment, retention, and stability caused by the country's economic situation, competition from other NGOs, and especially the absence within the National Society of clear policies and innovative options at the program level concerning volunteers.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1. Establish an overall strategic planning system**
- 2. Increase and strengthen the institution's finances**
- 3. Develop activities to care for the most vulnerable**
- 4. Modernize and streamline the organizational structure**
- 5. Establish a human resources development program**

1. Establish an overall strategic planning system

- 1.1 Define institutional strategies and priorities, taking into account the socioeconomic conditions in the country, especially the needs of the most vulnerable segments of the population.
- 1.2 Evaluate the Development Program, annual plans, and projects under way in light of the priorities established, and integrate them into an overall planning system that ensures an orderly and coherent planning program, and include continuous evaluation criteria and procedures.
- 1.3 Establish a Framework of Reference for Development Cooperation.

2. Increase and strengthen the institution's finances

- 2.1 Promote the signing of an agreement with the Government to establish a National Blood System which gives legal recognition to the Honduran Red Cross's leadership in this field and guarantees its full financing.
- 2.2 At the same time, promote agreements with the Government for stable and long-term financing of other services (e.g., ambulances) by securing legislation to establish customs and tax exemptions
- 2.3 Promote financing of new programs in the social sphere for poor and highly vulnerable social groups by concluding agreements with the Government through mechanisms such as the FHIS.
- 2.4 Strengthen and expand the program to support the financial self-sufficiency of the branches.
- 2.5 Develop revenue-producing projects of a commercial nature, such as the sale of fruit at Christmastime.

3. Develop activities to care for the most vulnerable

- 3.1 Increase the coverage of preventive health care programs based on experience from "Child Alive" and AIDS prevention programs, especially in the most disadvantaged rural departments.

- 3.2 Ensure continuity in the National Society's activities in areas where refugee programs have existed in order to provide services to the local population by incorporating a promotional approach.
- 3.3 Redefine assistance programs by including a community dimension that avoids an exclusively charitable approach, with nutritional education and health components.
- 3.4 Undertake new programs to deal with the needs of the most affected social sectors: poor rural and marginalized urban children, women (especially single mothers), and the elderly.

4. Modernize and streamline the organizational structure

- 4.1 Initiate decentralization of functions and deconcentration of the resources of the central headquarters by increasing the participation of departmental and local committees in decision making.
- 4.2 Revise and update the statutes to match the institution's reality and promote a more flexible and decentralized organizational structure.
- 4.3 Improve internal communication, especially between the central headquarters and the branches, and between the provincial and municipal councils and auxiliary bodies.

5. Establish a human resources development program

- 5.1 Establish streamlined methods of recruiting and selecting volunteers, especially young ones, by conducting attractive and innovative activities and expanding opportunities for training in areas of greatest interest.
- 5.2 Adopt measures to support and motivate volunteers, specifically through a system to insure against accidents, awards, and greater training opportunities.
- 5.3 Adopt measures promoting greater identification of volunteer units with the institution as a whole by diversifying the participation of volunteers in the National Society's various programs.
- 5.4 Review the training profiles of paid staff and volunteers, and strengthen the areas of project design and evaluation as well as new social development activities.

SOURCES

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