



International Federation
of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

9th Pan African Conference Investing in Africa

Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire | 9 to 12 April 2017

ABIDJAN YOUTH DECLARATION

We, the African youth leaders of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, gathered in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire to discuss how we can do more, do better and reach further in achieving our common humanitarian mission.

The humanitarian work of young people in Africa is diverse, and shaped by regional contexts, and includes response to epidemics, large population movements, food insecurity, the humanitarian impact of climate change, among other challenges. In both response to humanitarian crises, and in community development, young volunteers are a key element of Red Cross and Red Crescent action. They are our local heroes, who are devoting themselves to assist the most vulnerable people through their Red Cross and Red Crescent spirit.

Youth is the backbone of our Movement, bringing power to our humanitarian action. *Strategy 2020*, complemented by the IFRC's Youth Policy (2011) and Youth Engagement Strategy (2013), recognizes that "young people are a crucial investment" and "their experience is vital for the progress and stability in societies". Young people, as one of our Movement's greatest and most treasured assets, require sustained investment to ensure youth has a strong foundation in order to grow humanitarian action. Building strong National Societies can only be achieved by ensuring that solid youth structures are in place that youth are truly involved in decision-making and that cross-border learning and exchange are nurtured in order to leverage our global potential, and accelerate the Movement's journey toward humanitarian excellence.

Development of strong youth structures

In times of crisis, we need strong National Societies who can adequately respond to the needs of the most vulnerable people. We must be prepared and invest today, to provide our humanitarian services tomorrow. To be efficient and effective, our Movement requires solid foundations that strengthen youth action, investment in the development of contextualized youth policies, and dedicated structures that empower young people to strengthen and grow their action, broaden the scope of their work, and raise their collective voice in our pursuit of humanitarian excellence.

During the 8th Pan-African Conference, National Societies committed to involve youth in programme development, and to empower youth to take responsibility and join decision-making through active participation in their governance and management. Many National Societies have not yet met these commitments; therefore efforts to ensure young people are heard, engaged and empowered throughout our National Societies must be redoubled.

We, African youth leaders, commit to:



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- I. Develop contextualized national youth policies through youth-led and inclusive approaches where the voice of youth is strongly represented;
- II. Develop national youth structures, where youth governance and management are complimentary;
- III. Build upon the IFRC Youth Policy (2011), Youth Engagement Strategy (2013), and good practices of National Societies.

We call on the leadership of African National Societies to:

- I. Provide enabling environments, and empower their youth leaders to develop national youth policies and national youth structures, and ensure their implementation;
- II. Welcome youth leaders to the decision-making table and engage them in the direction-setting of the National Society, including strategic planning;
- III. Support the development of youth programming, in consultation with National Society youth structures;
- IV. Recall and honour decisions of the 8th Pan-African Conference, and commitments made through decisions at the Movement's statutory meetings.

We call on the IFRC secretariat to:

- I. Provide dedicated technical staff support with expertise on youth engagement to guide and assist the development process in our National Societies;
- II. Practically support the development of strong youth structures in their annual operational plans and engage with partners to ensure appropriate support is provided.

Cooperation through sub-regional youth networks

Young leaders across the African continent are connected to one another through sub-regional youth networks. These networks function as unique knowledge-sharing hubs, where young leaders can leverage the regional presence of the Red Cross and Red Crescent to strengthen their domestic operations. Each sub-regional network is driven by the National Societies that are its members, and therefore are unique in their structure and focus, but all aim to strengthen humanitarian action in local communities.

African youth networks are based on geographical location: West-Central Africa, Southern Africa, East Africa and North Africa (as part of the MENA region). Investing in building strong, well-functioning networks will empower young people to be informed, share knowledge and experiences, and enhance the capacity of young leaders to assist the most vulnerable people. We are the world's largest humanitarian network, but must leverage our global potential and work together if we are to do more, do better and reach further.

We, African youth leaders, commit to:

- I. Better structure our sub-regional youth networks through further formalization and well defined terms of reference;
- II. Prepare and present concrete action plans of our sub-regional youth networks, and work collaboratively for their implementation.



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We call on the leadership of African National Societies to:

- I. Prioritize cooperation through sub-regional youth networks and empower young leaders to engage;
- II. Embrace the participation of youth leaders in regular regional leadership meetings to bring youth voices to the discussion table;
- III. Commit to financially support the plans of action of the networks.

We call on the IFRC secretariat to:

- I. Provide dedicated technical staff support with expertise on youth engagement to guide and assist the development process in our sub-regional youth networks;
- II. Prioritize the development of strong youth networks in operational planning, and when engaging with all partners.

Strong youth foundations for Africa will be established by the 10th Pan-African Conference only if commitments are followed by action by youth leaders, National Society leadership and the IFRC secretariat. Investing in young people is investing in both the present and the future of National Societies, and strengthens their ability to pursue our shared humanitarian mission to support the most vulnerable people.