



RCRC Youth Network-ing Guidelines, 2013



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"Regional RC RC Youth networks help in framing global ideas, policies and strategies while considering regional contexts.

When we discuss issues on the global level, we often stay very general, while regional networks help make the issues discussed directly applicable at and relevant to regional and sometimes national level.

Finally, there are a lot of similarities among National Societies within a region and youth networks help in strengthening cooperation among National Societies in a wider context, going beyond youth matters."

*Bas van Rossum, The Netherlands Red Cross,
European Youth Coordination Committee
Facebook 16.1.2013*

Introduction

Purpose of this guiding document is to inform the process of the IFRC Youth strategy development as implementation of the Strategy aims at both engagement of regional RC RC Youth networks and at their strengthening throughout the Red Cross Red Crescent Movement.

This guidance aims at heightening understanding pertinent to processes of both establishment and facilitating relevance of Red Cross Red Crescent Youth networks to scale as this is important for both National Societies and the Red Cross Red Crescent Youth leaders.

These guidelines should serve as an operational tool outlining a common approach to youth networking initiatives with the IFRC. They build on the IFRC Guidelines for Red Cross Red Crescent networks (2009), Discussion paper on Red Cross Red Crescent Youth Networks (2012), and Global Meeting on Red Cross Red Crescent Youth Networks (February 2012). In fact, it serves to outline specific particularities and minimal requirements relating to Red Cross Red Crescent Youth networks.

Furthermore, these guidelines should allow for both regional adaptation and consideration of cultural context of how youth are engaged in National Societies, as Red Cross Red Crescent Youth networks function within operational frameworks of the IFRC.

Strong ownership and vibrant activity of the Red Cross Red Crescent Youth network members and their National Societies' representatives as well as knowledge development and innovative approaches to service delivery will be innate outcomes of bringing these Red Cross Red Crescent Youth networking guidelines in to practice.

IFRC statutory context

According to the IFRC Youth Policy approved by the General Assembly 2011, networks established by young people themselves are an invaluable contribution to sharing knowledge and innovation across the Red Cross Red Crescent Movement. Therefore the Youth Policy encourages National Societies to actively encourage and support youth representatives to participate in these networks aimed at promoting youth leadership and exchange of concrete ideas, innovations and activities.

Definitions

Networking is a process of meeting people, making contacts, forming informal, mutual relationships, and utilising them as required.

Networks are structures which harness the process of networking to articulate and attain goals of benefit to member organisations over a period of time.

By the term "networks" we refer herein to formal networks which are planned and managed, as opposed to the ad hoc and personal networks that also flourish within the IFRC.¹ In this context the networks are not supposed to be seen as permanent structures.

RC RC Youth networks are formed on regional and sub-regional level and operate and are structured rather horizontally with varied degree of institutionalized formality.

The youth networks, within the IFRC, are established and maintained for primary benefit of National Societies' youth actions targeting vulnerable groups in local communities.

Youth networks are led by youth leaders who apply peer to peer approaches in sharing, coordination, and partnership building for common goals of generating knowledge, collecting experiences, and recording lessons learnt and best practices of both individuals and National Societies.

Ownership of RC RC Youth networks should be shared between youth leaders and the National Societies' leadership.

¹ IFRC Guidelines for Red Cross Red Crescent networks (2009)



Statistics on Red Cross Red Crescent Youth networks^{2,3}

- Around 165 National Societies are members of one or more regional youth network.
- There are 20 Red Cross Red Crescent Youth regional and sub-regional networks.
- 11 networks report to have their Terms of Reference.
- 15 networks report to have a 2-5 years Plan of Action.
- 8 networks have done some form of evaluation of their network's efficiency and impact of their contribution.
- 8 of the networks were created right before or shortly after the 3rd World RC RC Youth Meeting in Solferino, 2009.

Key messages about Red Cross Red Cross Youth network-ing

1. Networking does cost, but is very cost-effective.
2. The form of a network should be informed by its function.
3. Focus should be placed on networking rather than on the network itself.
4. Being focused and responsive is the way for networks to be successful and sustainable.
5. Both domination and neglect by National Societies can hurt a youth network and purposeful networking.
6. Modern technology can help the network to maximise communication and engagement and a lot of information sharing and engagement can take place through the use of social media, IT platforms, and other virtual modalities. However, studies show that oftentimes there is no substitute for face to face meetings.

Added value of Red Cross and Red Crescent Youth network-ing

"RC RC Youth networks create greater connectivity through the Movement by ensuring effective and efficient lines of communication, in order to promote youth leadership and best practices which strengthen the International Movement"⁴

Among particular benefits of being a Red Cross Red Crescent Youth network member, following were listed: ⁵

- ü Credibility, stronger voice, and common identity of RC RC work for and with vulnerable groups on the regional level,
- ü Inspiration and motivation,
- ü Professional development of National Society representatives (leadership skills, technical expertise and life skills),

² Discussion paper on Youth networks in Red Cross Red Crescent (2012)

³ As of January 2013

⁴ Global Red Cross Red Crescent Youth Network Meeting, Dubai 2012

⁵ Discussion paper on Youth networks in Red Cross Red Crescent (2012) and the Global Red Cross Red Crescent Youth Consultation Report (2011)



- ü Avenues for new initiatives,
- ü Recognition of individuals by their nomination to represent NS in the youth network.

Lessons learnt about Red Cross Red Crescent Youth networks (*extract*)

1. RC RC Youth networks should be youth-led, but ownership must be shared with National Societies, encouraging inter-generational dialogue and leadership exchange.
2. Peer-to-peer cooperation and partnerships of National Societies are vital for representative participation in RC RC Youth networks.
3. System for network maintenance must be planned for (through a focal person or a group/committee; rotation of coordination role or “network secretariat” among NSs; use of modern technologies, free software and online platforms, FedNet’s Communities of practice; etc.)

Characteristics of effective and well-functioning Red Cross Red Crescent Youth networks

1. Clear profile and Plan of Action, which include:
 - a. Purpose of the network – Why are we supporting or working as a network?
 - b. Role of the network – How will our network add value to its members and fulfil its purpose?
 - c. Functions of the network – What are the activities we carry out in more detailed description?
 - d. Form of the network that facilitates an enabling environment for continued relevance – What type of structures and organisational approaches will we apply?
2. A common thematic focus that helps increase visibility, joint resource mobilization, and ownership of its members.
3. Functional coordination (focal points) and communication mechanisms in place.
4. Possibility of at least one in person, face to face meeting of the National Societies representatives annually.
5. Clear, tangible, and demonstrated added value to work of National Societies and global IFRC agenda.
6. Effective communication of youth representatives in the networks with their NS leadership ensuring continued ownership and commitment.
7. Connection to and bilateral communication with at least one IFRC Youth Commission member on regular basis and at least 2 times per year before the Youth Commission meetings.

“MUSTs”- Factors enabling Red Cross Red Crescent Youth network-ing

1. Commitment and support by National Society.
2. Commitment of individual National Societies representatives, as networking is dependent on building personal relationships.



3. Commitment and support at global and regional levels: IFRC Youth Commission, IFRC Secretariat and its Zone offices, inter-regional coordination and communication among networks.
4. Youth Commission members acting upon their senses of belonging to and coming from their networks.

Minimum requirements for the IFRC Secretariat support

1. RC RC Youth network has a functioning coordination and communication channels.
2. RC RC Youth network is connected to at least one Youth Commission member.
3. RC RC Youth network has a visible and tangible added value and is sustainable and growing, if needed.
4. Focus of the RC RC Youth network is clearly linked with youth activities and youth development in the region and a bigger picture perspective is reflected in the network's purpose and plans e.g. Regional RC RC Conferences commitments and the IFRC global agenda.

Critical items pertinent to Red Cross and Red Crescent Youth network-ing

Purpose of the youth network – Why are we supporting or working as a youth network?

Healthy “life cycle” of a youth network can be a circle with an end point.

Establishment of networks and definition of their purpose play crucial role in their healthy “life-cycle”.

Healthy “life cycle” of each youth network should entail regular monitoring and evaluation of progress, effectiveness, efficiency and can lead to closing the network after achieving goals set.

Reporting to relevant stakeholders and members should be ensured.

Role of the youth network - How does our youth network add value to its members and fulfil its purpose?

Partnership among members of the network is crucial for development of ownership towards the network on both the organisational level (National Societies) and the individual level (National Societies nominees, youth representative in the network).

Networking is built on personal relationships of NSs representatives and therefore individuals also benefit from the process.



Functions of the youth network - What are the activities we carry out in more detailed description?

Both youth action and youth development should be reflected in the Plans of Action. These are important for youth engagement as well as for projection of developmental trajectories and prediction of trends.

Linkage to global agenda and reflection of the local community needs must be ensured.

Recommended key action verbs in Plans of Action of Red Cross and Red Crescent Youth networks: Advocate, Channel, Convene, Co-ordinate, Enhance capacity, Facilitate, Mobilise, Participate in, Promote, Share (knowledge development), Strengthen, Track, Train, Map, etc.

Form of the youth network – What are the structural and organisational approaches we apply?

Coordination is inevitable and rotation system of coordination role of the youth-led network among NSs' proves successful, yet amendment of job description of respective staff member to allocate approximately 25 % of working time to be spent on coordination of the network activities is required.

Structures (formal or informal) and communication channels enable purposeful and effective networking; nevertheless they should be more of a means and less of an aim of networking.

Turn-over of National Societies representatives in the youth networks is inevitable. Therefore retention of knowledge within member National Societies and networks should be planned for. Similarly, knowledge transfer between Coordination teams / Coordination committees should be planned for.



Check list for your Red Cross Red Crescent Youth network-ing

Inter-generational dialogue and ownership of National Societies

1. Do you have a clear profile and “buy-in” from member NSs to your Plan of Actions (Purpose, Role, Functions, and Form)?
2. Do you have a concrete plan on how to attain National Societies leaders’ ownership and support to your youth-led network and its activities?

Resourcing

3. Do your intentions and plans with your youth network reflect reality of your ability to access resources (human, technical, etc. including financial) for establishment and maintenance of the network’s functions and activities?

Peer approach in networking practice

4. Have you consulted other youth networks on their processes and lessons learnt? This is about peer to peer support in action.

Global issues pertinent to local communities

5. Are you clear why your networking is relevant to vulnerable local communities?

Youth representation

6. When encouraging nominations of National Societies representatives in the youth-led networks, do you promote profile recommendations outlined in the amended Tarragona agreement (2012) and the Youth Policy (2011)?

IFRC operational framework

7. Do your plans meet minimum requirements for receiving support of the IFRC Secretariat?

Relevance vs. Permanence

8. Do you regularly review your Plan of Action to ensure relevance of your network?



Recommended further reading

D. Fischer, S. Vilas: Power networking, 59 Secrets for Personal and Professional Success, 2000

IT'S A SOCIAL WORLD: Top 10 Need-to-Knows About Social Networking and Where It's Headed, comScore. Inc <http://www.comscore.com/>

IFRC Guidelines for Red Cross Red Crescent networks (2009)

IFRC Code of Good Partnership (Approved by the General Assembly in 2009)

IFRC Tarragona agreement (2012)

IFRC the Youth Policy (2011)

"Membership in an organisation is only as good as one's participation in the organisation." (D. Fischer, S. Vilas: Power networking, 2000)

Reference documents

Recommendations included in these guidelines stem from and refer to:

1. "Networks and Centres: principles and procedures; Follow up of the decision of the Governing Board in May 2007" IFRC Governing board document (October 2007)
2. Consultation paper on National Societies centres and networks (2007)
3. IFRC Guidelines for Red Cross Red Crescent networks (2009)
4. Global Red Cross Red Crescent Youth Consultation Report (2011)
5. Discussion paper on Youth networks in Red Cross Red Crescent (2012)
6. Global Red Cross Red Crescent Youth Network Meeting (Dubai 2012).