



YOUTH POLICY

The purpose of this Policy is to set the standard in working with and for young people throughout the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent National Societies (IFRC). It serves as a global point of reference to ensure consistency in decision-making and builds on and replaces the IFRC Youth Policy and Strategy (1991) and the IFRC Youth Policy (2011). National Societies are accountable to adhere to this Policy by adapting it to their context, aligning their existing policy with it or developing a new policy respectively. The IFRC Secretariat is accountable to adhere to this Policy in all its work. This Policy will be reviewed by the 25th session of the General Assembly in 2025.

Introduction

Young people are key drivers in humanitarian action and development. Being meaningfully engaged as today's and tomorrow's leaders, volunteers, and members of affected communities, they foster community resilience. As contributors to the IFRC's vision to prevent and alleviate human suffering and promote and protect human dignity and peace, they enable the targets of the Agenda for Humanity and the Sustainable Development Goals to be achieved.

The population of young people has consistently risen over the last decade and they have become a growing constituency of communities affected by humanitarian crises. Their specific needs, rights, and potential are however often overlooked and even more so, they are missing at the decision-making tables where the communities they live in are being shaped.

The IFRC recognises meaningful youth engagement as a strategic vehicle for transforming institutional cultures that directly and positively impacts the Red Cross Red Crescent operational capacity to deliver on our humanitarian mission. Hence, adequate investments in meaningful youth engagement are inevitable for the transfer of experiences, leadership renewal, and progress overall.

Definitions

For the IFRC, the terms "youth" and "young people" cover all people in the age range of 5 to 30 years. This includes children (5 to 12* years old), adolescents (13* to 17 years old), and young adults (18 to 30 years old). Youth are a heterogeneous group with diverse backgrounds, expertise, skillsets, and needs which requires appropriate human development approaches for meaningful engagement. National Societies are guided reasonably by the national legislation in adapting the IFRC global age definition.

The term "youth engagement" refers to youth-led action and youth development. It speaks to active and meaningful participation of youth and inclusion of their voice in the humanitarian work across governance, management, programmes, and service delivery. It also recognises three interconnecting and fluid pathways of engagement: youth as leaders, youth as volunteers, and youth as members of affected communities. As an approach, it goes beyond a symbolic inclusion and is practiced through equal partnership in both the inter-generational co-operation and peer contexts.

Youth as Leaders

Young people, including members, volunteers, and staff, taking a lead as agents of change in different capacities and duration are considered young leaders. In their leadership, they are not limited by a title or position. Their specific abilities and unique qualities shape their leadership to inspire and influence positive change in the world around them.

To harness positive contributions of young people, National Societies must create empowering and stimulating environments that enable participation of youth in decision-making and follow-up action. Allowing young people to self-organise through youth-led structures fosters leadership development and enables youth to have own voice. In addition, nurturing intergenerational cooperation while ensuring equitable participation in governance, management and service delivery on local, regional, and national levels benefits individual development and

*as of April 2018 the Federation-wide Databank & Reporting System (FDRS) uses age brackets following international standards (SPHERE).

strengthens the National Societies' operational capacity and institutional growth. Investing in systematic and competency-centred learning for young leaders is key for transformational impact on the quality leadership in National Societies.

Youth as Volunteers

Young people who invest their time to contribute to a greater good for their communities, not motivated in any manner by desire for gain, are considered young volunteers. They plan, design, deliver, review, and innovate the Red Cross Red Crescent programmes and services. Young volunteers enrich the delivery of these programmes and services by bringing their unique skillsets stemming from their education and life skills. The volunteer management approaches, especially recruitment, accompaniment, and retention, must be tailored to reach diverse groups of youth, including those from affected and marginalised communities.

Young volunteers are treated in accordance with the IFRC Volunteering Policy while recognising that they may have different and/or additional needs to those of adult volunteers. They are particularly vulnerable when volunteering in the field and the National Societies are accountable for their security, safety, protection, and physical and mental well-being. National Societies must provide young volunteers with access to youth-friendly information, training opportunities, and resources for their work.

Youth as Members of Affected Communities

Children, adolescents, and young adults who participate in and benefit from Red Cross Red Crescent programmes and services are not passive recipients of aid. On the contrary, they are involved in the planning, design, delivery and review of programmes and services reaching them. Resilience strengthening is at the core of the National Societies' engagement with young members of affected communities so that they are better able to bounce back, contribute, and take a lead in addressing humanitarian issues. In the fast-paced world, vulnerabilities are becoming increasingly invisible, therefore the Red Cross Red Crescent programmes and services must also address the hidden vulnerabilities that children, adolescents, and young adults face, including mental health and well-being.

Measuring the Impact

This Policy will contribute to expanding the local impact and global reach of the IFRC through ensuring that children, adolescents and young adults are prepared, empowered, enabled, and recognised as agents of change for themselves and their communities. Success of this Policy will be measured through capturing the quality change in institutional culture across the IFRC membership through tracking:

- Number of National Societies with their own Youth Policy
- Number of National Societies with a strategic plan on youth engagement
- Number of National Societies with young people in the Governing board and at all levels of decision-making
- Number of National Societies with youth-led structures
- Number of National Societies with full-time equivalent paid staff dedicated to providing technical support in youth engagement
- Number of National Societies with financial resources specifically earmarked for youth engagement
- Number of National Societies with frameworks for individual and professional development for young people
- Number of young people working in the National Societies as paid staff
- Number of National Societies with approaches to recruit, accompany, and retain young people from marginalised groups as their volunteers
- Number of National Societies with guidelines on engagement of young people from affected communities
- Number of National Societies that actively participate and support the Regional RCRC Youth Networks

As for the IFRC Secretariat's accountability to adhere to the Policy, the following will be tracked:

- Number of Areas of the Secretariat's work that have youth engagement included in their operational plans
- Percentage of Secretariat's Plan and Budget earmarked for advancing youth engagement per each IFRC Secretariat operational structure
- Number of Secretariat's initiatives with youth voice incorporated
- Number of full-time equivalent paid staff that is dedicated to youth engagement per each IFRC Secretariat operational structure
- Number of National Societies supported by the Secretariat in the process of development of their own Youth Policy



Sharing Roles and Responsibilities

Ensuring the IFRC Youth Policy's impact is a shared responsibility.

National Societies are accountable to adhere to this Policy by adapting it to their contexts, aligning their existing policies with it, or developing a new policy respectively.

The IFRC Secretariat is accountable to adhere to the IFRC Youth Policy in all its work and provide technical support through its operational structures in the Policy adaptation by National Societies.

The IFRC Youth Commission's role is to promote and assess the advancement of the IFRC Youth Policy, review and suggest revisions to the Governing Board or the General Assembly, and advise the IFRC Secretary General and the IFRC Secretariat operational structures on its advancement. Youth Commission shall include the progress on the Policy in its report for the IFRC General Assembly.

It is the role of the *Regional RCRC Youth Networks* to promote the IFRC Youth Policy and provide peer support in its adaptation among the National Societies.

Young peoples' roles are to proactively pursue the IFRC Youth Policy commitments in their National Society.