



YOUTH ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY

BUILDING BRIDGES
BREAKING BARRIERS





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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

With the completion of the IFRC Youth Engagement Strategy 2.0 project (YES 2024), and as we celebrate another milestone in advancing meaningful youth engagement in the IFRC network, we are reminded of the profound impact that empowered and enabled young leaders can have on global development.

The IFRC Youth Commission 2019–2024 extends its most heartfelt gratitude to Ms. Luciana Marino of the Argentinian Red Cross, Ms. Mozhdeh Zinger of the Iranian Red Crescent, Mr. Inri Dominic Flores of the Philippines Red Cross, Mr. June Munyongani of the Zimbabwe Red Cross, and Mr. Rui Jorge Cancela Ribeiro of the Portuguese Red Cross. Along with the sitting Commissioners—Ms. Jie Michelle Chew Shi of the Malaysian Red Crescent, Ms. Miriana Joseph Bader of the Lebanese Red Cross, Ms. Silvia Patricia Gelvez Delgado of the Colombian Red Cross, and Mr. Bas van Rossum of the Netherlands Red Cross—they formed a regionally representative and gender-balanced IFRC Youth Engagement Strategy 2.0 (YES 2.0) project Core Team (CT).

These nine exceptional young leaders have demonstrated unwavering dedication and remarkable expertise in youth engagement and strategic thinking. They have exemplified the spirit of collaboration and inclusivity. As volunteers, they successfully spearheaded a demanding two-year, truly “youth-led and IFRC-owned” project, proving young people as thought leaders and inspiration to their peers.

The Commission also extends its deepest appreciation to the Colombian Red Cross and the Philippines Red Cross for their generous support in co-hosting the YES 2.0 CT write-shops with the IFRC Secretariat. These workshops provided Core Team members with invaluable opportunities to engage with local youth and witness the impactful youth-led projects implemented at the community level. These experiences have enriched the YES 2.0 project, further strengthening the Core Team's dedication to effectively bridging global aspirations and local practices.

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FOREWORD

The IFRC Youth Engagement Strategy (YES) is an institutional strategic guide that sets out recommendations on how to put our institutional commitment about the role of children, adolescents and young adults in Red Cross and Red Crescent work into practice. It builds on the IFRC Youth Policy (2017), which formally acknowledges the critical role of children, adolescents, and young adults in achieving our vision of a world where human suffering is prevented and alleviated, human dignity is protected, and peace is fostered.

We are bringing you an updated document that builds on the foundations of the previous YES 2013. We have listened to the voices of young people from all corners of the world to understand the unique challenges they face. Guided by the Fundamental Principles of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, this strategy envisions a world where young people are active contributors, decision-makers, and leaders within our organization. It outlines a roadmap that supports National Societies in rolling out this strategy

In recent years, we've seen a sharp rise in both natural and man-made disasters, leading to greater humanitarian needs.¹ The increase in disasters is primarily due to an increase in climate and weather-related hazards such as flooding and droughts. Considering the impact of this increase in disasters, compounded by protracted crises and conflicts, the IFRC network, with around 16 million volunteers spread across more than 191 countries,² is uniquely positioned to help address vulnerabilities and mitigate risks faced by communities. This includes addressing individual crises, and contributing to community resilience strengthening, which involves both development work and humanitarian aid.

Young people are critical stakeholders in the IFRC network. Over the years, those under 31³ have been the largest group of volunteers for National Societies worldwide. Their time, skills and creativity have proven an invaluable asset in fulfilling our humanitarian mandate and role as auxiliary to governments. However, it is not only the number of young volunteers that motivates the Red Cross Red Crescent

Societies to purposefully engage young people; their unique perspectives and ways of experiencing the world also contribute to new ways of thinking, engagement, and experimentation, which enrich the IFRC network's programmes and services.

As members of their community and individuals engaged with National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, children, adolescents, and young adults help accelerate the IFRC's commitment to localization and representation. Their contributions are crucial to our community-based health-care and first aid efforts, and they also facilitate the implementation of innovative practices like the One WASH initiative, which integrates water, sanitation, hygiene, and public health. They also play a strategic role in advancing our community engagement and accountability aspirations to become a more risk-resilient network and in implementing safeguarding principles for children, adolescents, and disadvantaged groups. Young people are also supporting our migration programmes, where we have expanded assistance and protection across borders and along migration routes.

The implementation of YES is a collaborative effort, a collective pledge to mobilize the energy, creativity, and resilience of young people to build more resilient communities. More specifically, YES includes what has worked best in advancing meaningful youth engagement, and underlines the heterogeneity of children, adolescents, and young adults. Furthermore, YES outlines concepts and key approaches that make youth engagement practice successful. Lastly, it better recognizes the role of young volunteers on the front lines of all our work.

We want YES to become our institutional guidance for inter-generational collaboration and a strategic vehicle for strengthening meaningful youth engagement to achieve our humanitarian mission.

Kathryn A Forbes,
IFRC President

 **IFRC Youth**
Commission Chair

¹ UN News, [“Emergency aid needs set to rise by 17% to assist 274 million, UN humanitarian warn”](#)

² [Federation-wide databank and reporting system \(FDRS\)](#)

³ [IFRC Youth Policy 2017](#)

ABOUT THE STRATEGY



Waiting for headshot



Waiting for headshot

In this section, we explain the purpose and the audience of this strategy and provide examples of how to use this document.

Purpose of this document

This document builds on the previous IFRC Youth Engagement Strategy (YES) endorsed by the IFRC General Assembly in 2013 to provide a “How to...” guidance to meaningful youth engagement practices in the IFRC network.

In line with the IFRC’s Strategy 2030, it aims to help National Societies and the IFRC Secretariat improve national youth engagement strategies and further develop current approaches to working with and for children, adolescents, and young adults.

The YES is not a stand-alone document as it will have a cross-organizational impact on how National Societies’ function and organizational culture. Along with the IFRC Youth Policy, the National Society Development Policy, Child Safeguarding Policy, IFRC Volunteering Policy, and IFRC Community Engagement and Accountability (CEA) framework, it helps establish meaningful youth engagement as a pillar for strengthening both National Society and local community resilience.

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Who is the primary audience?

The main audience of YES comprises young individuals within the Red Cross and Red Crescent, as well as the governance and management of National Societies. It is essential for both groups to be thoroughly informed and adequately equipped to steer strategic decision-making and offer operational guidance to advance youth engagement throughout the National Society structures. National Societies, supported by the IFRC Secretariat, are responsible for making YES accessible and operationally relevant for their own programmes, services, operations, and governance and management structures.

How to use this document

The YES serves as a compass for the development, adaptation, and implementation of national youth engagement strategies and strategic plans. These initiatives must be youth-led, National Society-owned (see “Out approaches”) and implemented comprehensively throughout the organization. National Society leadership will therefore play a critical role in bringing YES to life in their National Society.

At the national and local level, YES can serve as a global knowledge reference document, advocacy document, operational guide and reference to help create checklists, dashboards, and so on.

National Societies can also use it in developing youth-specific tools for volunteering development, establishing local and national youth networks and inter-regional collaboration platforms, and elevating the voice of youth across National Society programmes, services, and institutional decision-making bodies.

INSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT AND KEY DEFINITIONS

In this section, we introduce the “bigger picture”, the building blocks of meaningful youth engagement practice within the IFRC network, and key definitions.

Fundamental Principles and humanitarian values

Our goal is to create a world where every individual is socially included, experiences compassion, and where diversity is embraced and celebrated. Grounded in the Fundamental Principles, we are dedicated to promoting and supporting initiatives that foster more inclusive, equitable, and cohesive societies. Building on the journey from Strategy 2020, IFRC network recommits to promoting a culture of non-violence and peace. Humanitarian values and personal skills, such as empathy, critical thinking, non-judgmental action, and active listening, transform the Fundamental Principles from abstract concepts into actionable principles.

Strategy 2030

Over the past three decades, the IFRC network has been at the forefront of creating engagement pathways tailored for children, adolescents, and young adults. These pathways acknowledge their abilities, rights, and potential, while also addressing their needs and considering their vulnerabilities, including those that are not immediately apparent or are newly emerging. Drawing from this wealth of experience and shaped by the input of approximately 5,000 young individuals, the IFRC Strategy 2030 envisages an IFRC network that recognizes young people as pivotal in the enhancement of people-centred resilience.



© Malaysian Red Crescent

Our aspiration is to become a network rich in skilled, empowered, and protected children, adolescents and young adults able to engage in humanitarian action. We therefore committed in Strategy 2030 to building cultures, creating spaces, and setting up institutions designed for and driven by young people. More specifically, as the IFRC network we are striving for reduced bureaucracy and flatter organizational structures that enable swift action and boost impact. In fostering meaningful youth engagement, we seek to address obstacles to innovation and experimentation within the IFRC network.

Institutionally, the IFRC's approach to youth engagement is grounded in statutory texts and further reinforced and elaborated upon in the IFRC Youth Policy and Youth Engagement Strategy.

IFRC statutory texts

The IFRC Constitution establishes the IFRC Youth Commission as a statutory body directly associated with the IFRC Governing Board. This commission is tasked with specific roles, responsibilities, regional representation, and membership criteria, including an age limit for potential candidates. Additionally, the Constitution outlines the process for electing members to the IFRC Youth Commission, specifying that only youth delegates are eligible to vote. Moreover, it stipulates that the chair of the Youth Commission holds full membership on the IFRC Governing Board.

IFRC Youth Policy

Based on the statutory texts, the IFRC Youth Policy sets the universal standard on working with and for young people applicable across context and cultures. It serves as a global point of reference to ensure consistency and accountability in youth-led and National Society-owned engagement practice. It features the added value of youth for the Red Cross and Red Crescent mission, the three youth engagement pathways (youth as leaders, youth as volunteers, youth as members of affected communities), and a list of success indicators for youth engagement within the IFRC network.

IFRC Youth Engagement Strategy

Complementing the IFRC Youth Policy, the IFRC Youth Engagement Strategy brings together the three youth engagement pathways and the 3Es approach (education, empowerment and enabling environments) and proposes strategic directions and recommended actions for meaningful youth engagement.

Key definitions

YOUTH AND AGE BRACKETS

In the context of youth engagement practice at the global and regional levels, the terms “youth” and “young people” encompass individuals between the ages of 5 and 30 years old. This includes children (5 to 12 years old), adolescents (13 to 17 years old) and young adults (18 to 30 years old).

At national level, National Societies adhere to the IFRC global definitions and if adaptation of global age definitions is necessary, it shall be reasonably guided by legislation of their respective countries (IFRC Youth Policy, 2017).

MEANINGFUL YOUTH ENGAGEMENT

The term “meaningful youth engagement” refers to both youth-led action and youth development, which are mutually reinforcing and should be advanced concurrently. It entails the active and meaningful participation of children, adolescents and young adults ensuring their voices are integrated across humanitarian efforts, including governance, management, programs, and service delivery.

As an approach, meaningful youth engagement within the IFRC network goes beyond symbolic participation and is based on equal partnership in both intergenerational and peer-to-peer contexts.

RED CROSS AND RED CRESCENT VOLUNTEERING

The IFRC’s collective commitment to voluntary service, as a Fundamental Principle of the Movement, is outlined in the IFRC Volunteering Policy. The Strategy 2030 emphasizes that inspiring and mobilizing volunteerism is one of the key transformations required to respond to future challenges.

Attracting young people into Red Cross and Red Crescent voluntary services and programmes is critical because they bring a complex, real-time understanding of the humanitarian crises and disasters in local communities. In addition, Red Cross and Red Crescent volunteering brings together people from diverse backgrounds and creates opportunities for intergenerational decision-making at all levels, thereby fostering institutional continuity and leadership renewal.

HETEROGENEITY AND SAFEGUARDING OF CHILDREN, ADOLESCENTS, AND YOUNG ADULTS

While age, gender and living with a disability are the IFRC network’s key diversity and inclusion criteria, we recognize their intrinsic limitations. The IFRC network looks beyond these criteria, recognizing multilayered identities and youth as a heterogeneous constituency with diverse in-groups.

For example, we consider differences in access to resources and opportunities, such as child- and youth-friendly information, safe spaces, quality education and health care. Additionally, understanding the level of respect for children’s rights and the exposure of children, adolescents and young adults to violence, conflict or protracted crises is important in developing meaningful youth engagement strategies and projects.

By recognizing diversity among children, adolescents, and young adults, we are better able to understand how different youth groups experience the world. This perspective enables us to co-create projects that are responsive and tailored to their actual needs and in line with the duty of [safeguarding](#).

UNDERSTANDING WHAT AND HOW SHAPES THE LIVES OF CHILDREN, ADOLESCENTS, AND YOUNG ADULTS ¹

This section aims to initiate a debate within National Societies on how much we understand the impact of evolving realities that shape the lives of children, adolescents, and young adults.

The up-to-date understanding of our constituencies and communities that we engage is a basis of meaningful youth engagement practice. Therefore, we offer a couple of global realities and trends as inspirations to consider when developing national youth engagement strategies. Only a commitment to continuous learning will in turn help maintain our positions of a local organization of choice for children, adolescents, and young adults and a positive influencer for generations to come.

What we see at global level

Children, adolescents, and young adults are growing up in a world marked by economic instability and escalating environmental challenges. Many are confronted with mental health and well-being concerns, often exacerbated by societal pressures and unrealistic expectations.

During times of shock and stress triggered by exposure to hazards or disasters, people's cognitive abilities and competencies may be temporarily impaired. However, this situation tends to be particularly challenging for children, adolescents, and young adults compared to other age groups. In the aftermath, they may lack the abilities, competencies, or resilience that older generations can typically rely on.

Despite having autonomy and agency, children, adolescents, and young adults can find themselves vulnerable to shocks or hazards during crucial transitions toward adulthood and independence. Additionally, the life trajectories that young people would typically follow in their communities are often disrupted in the aftermath of such events.

Only through continuous data-driven decision making and investment into youth-led action and youth development, we can harness inter-generational knowledge and fuel principled humanitarian action in communities.

¹ Drafted based on internal documents prepared for the IFRC Governing board and National Society-led consultation with young people reports (2018-2003).

More specific influences

1. Within the diverse youth demographic, certain groups, such as unaccompanied child migrants and refugees, young people without a permanent home or legally recognized status, girls and young women, young people from indigenous and ethnic minorities, young people living with disabilities and young people living in informal settlements, that continue to be unseen, too often left behind and unable to bounce forward.
2. Protracted crises have long-lasting effects on the growth and development of the children, adolescents, and young adults. Severe community-wide disruptions that impact livelihoods, access to education, overall safety and physical and mental health and well-being have long-term impact on children, adolescents and young adults and their rights.
3. Extreme weather events and rising temperatures have led to compounded effects, including child labour, severe malnutrition, restricted access to clean water and sanitation facilities, early marriages, and disruptions to education, including reduced school attendance.² These consequences will persist and pose a long-term threat to the well-being and life prospects of children, adolescents, and young adults for years to come.
4. The economic fallout of the recent pandemic pushed millions of children into poverty and put girls at a greater risk of child marriage and adolescent pregnancy. Failure to respect and protect sexual and reproductive rights, exposure to violence and substance abuse causes multi-layered short-term and long-term trauma that affects emotional, physical and mental health.

Furthermore, young adults, as a demographic, often find themselves in poorly paid, unstable jobs. As they have only been on the job market for a limited time, they have little if any savings. Taking advantage of the lack of structural engagement with children, adolescents, and young adults and their need to belong and have a meaningful life, organized criminal groups often seize the opportunity to recruit children into their networks.

² [Geneva Global Hub for Education in Emergencies](#)

Our contributions to security, safety, and well-being

Young people actively engage in their communities, advocate for causes, and effectively instigate positive transformations. The youth are widely regarded as the generation of hope and change in the face of environmental and climate crises, fearlessly embracing lifestyles that prioritize fairness for our planet. They remain curious, leveraging new social media platforms to stay interconnected and are well-versed in their values, which they fervently translate into action through grassroots initiatives, digital campaigns, and community projects aimed at addressing issues such as poverty, inequality, and social injustice, and true representation. Through collective activism, they are reshaping societal norms and advocating for a more sustainable and equitable future.

However, even pro-active and engaged young people may still encounter challenges. These include fear of failure, feeling that their efforts are inadequate, and worrying about disappointing the organization, fellow volunteers, or their community. Without sufficient support, they may perceive themselves as lacking the essential skills, resources, time, or ability to fulfill their duties and safeguard their peers effectively.

In responding to disasters and/or conflicts, volunteers may face high expectation levels from local communities to “save the world” or to “provide solutions quickly” while delivering voluntary services within often complex environments. In conflict situations, these pressures might be coupled with politically charged narratives that can compel individuals to put themselves at high risk. Young volunteers providing services in volatile environments are especially vulnerable to increasing pressure from communities and peers and guilt-or hero-driven propaganda.

This strategy equips the IFRC network with foundational knowledge and tools to adequately support children, adolescents, young adults in their volunteer roles and respect their rights. More specifically, this strategy helps adapt the [IFRC standards for security, safety and well-being of volunteers](#) to support youth volunteer groups. In addition, it allows to go beyond immediate first steps and further incentivizes engagement of young people in cause-driven community resilience strengthening.

How to ensure we thrive together

The principled humanitarian action and development work conducted by the IFRC Network is crucial for preventing future generations from inheriting a less inclusive world. By strengthening social cohesion in communities and enhancing safeguarding measures, the IFRC Network contributes to creating a more equitable future. Equity, as a humanitarian value, will be key for the IFRC Network in providing access to services and humanitarian aid for all, especially when right for equitable access is not guaranteed in national law or is unavailable in practice and real time. As a key player in preparedness, the IFRC Network understands that effective preparedness leads to a successful emergency response only if it is founded on trust-building, equity, and local action. These three success factors are not surprisingly embedded in the humanitarian values.

To ensure the continuous meaningful engagement of children, adolescents, and young adults, it is necessary to understand of today's youth and the factors impacting the incoming young generations.



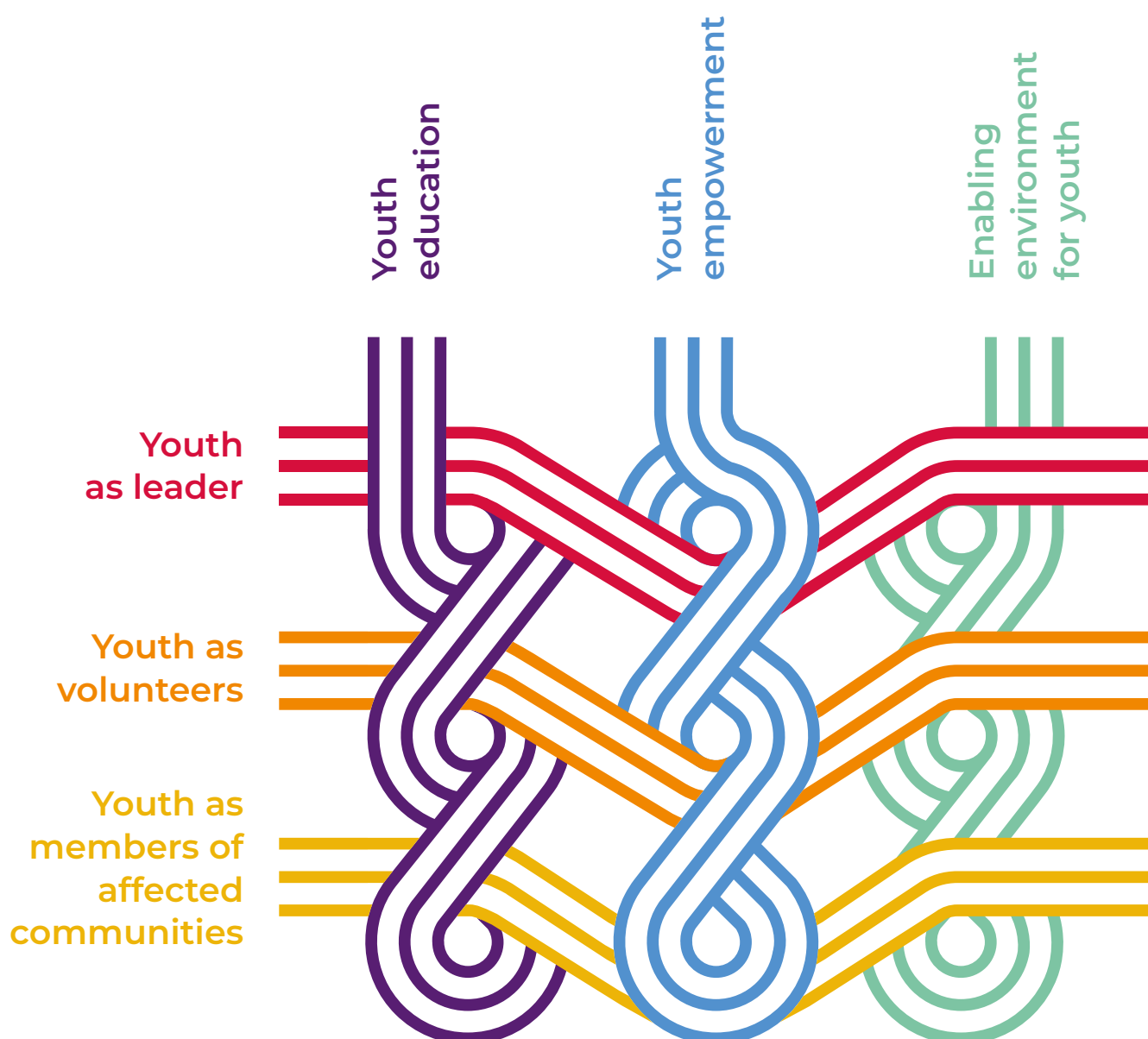
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Therefore, we must ensure that National Societies:

1. **Act and speak out for good and just causes.** Young people are drawn to organizations that speak out and call out things that “are not right.” The IFRC Network can, always in strict compliance with our Fundamental Principles, speak out more and in diverse ways in the interest of those we serve. Our neutrality does not mean silence. Our volunteers, youth, and the communities they come from must be heard on issues that affect their capacity to thrive. Moreover, the ability to create spaces for amplified youth voices a competitive advantage of organizations.
2. **Put sustainability at the front and centre of all we do.** To appeal to the younger generations, the IFRC network may need to reflect critically on its own environmental footprint and communicate in a transparent manner how its environmental policy informs and shapes its operations and programming.
3. **Invest in value-centred branding in online spaces.** The IFRC network can further strengthen its humanitarian brand and online presence to better appeal to young people and cater to their interests and the causes that concern them.
4. **Offer varied and flexible opportunities for impactful volunteering.** The IFRC network must review its traditional approach to accommodate the individual needs of volunteers while keeping the needs of the communities we serve at the centre of how we organise our assistance. In line with the IFRC Volunteering Policy, we must transform and complement the traditional options with more varied forms of volunteering, for example, digital volunteering, spontaneous volunteering, micro-volunteering, online campaigning, skilled/expert volunteering, corporate volunteering, swarm volunteering, self-organizing volunteering, or any combination of them.
5. **Provide an inclusive platform for self-organised social networking.** The IFRC network should strive to foster social safety nets and sense of belonging among children, adolescents, and young adults within the Red Cross and Red Crescent through the programs and initiatives of National Societies. National Societies can do so by promoting meaningful connections across personal, professional, cultural, and social interests.

YOUTH ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY BUILDING BLOCKS

Strong youth
for stronger NSs



OUR APPROACHES



In this section we elaborate on specific approaches the IFRC network applies in meaningful youth engagement practice. These practical approaches are built on the institutional concepts (see “Concepts that matter”) and underpin all the strategic directions and recommended actions across the three youth engagement pathways in the next section.

Youth-led and National Society-owned approach

The IFRC network is not a youth or youth-led network, nor are National Societies traditional youth organizations. Yet young people are a significant constituency within National Societies. This is where the youth-led and National Society-owned approach comes in. It promotes the creation of inter-generational and youth spaces for meaningful engagement in which young people are granted trust and autonomy. This approach also requires National Societies to have both youth-led action and youth development commitments or initiatives. This could involve establishing youth-led decision-making structures, allocating funds for youth-led community-based projects, hiring full-time staff to drive youth engagement, and expanding into new thematic areas of work through youth-led programming.

Through the youth-led and National Society-owned approach, we:

1. Recognize youth engagement practice as a vehicle for strengthening National Societies’ and local communities’ resilience “from within”.
2. Advocate for respectful intergenerational dialogue and collaboration in a climate of trust.
3. Nurture peer to peer self-organization.
4. Acknowledge that children, adolescents, and young adults are not a homogenous group.



Three (3) youth engagement pathways

We recognize three engagement pathways for youth in the IFRC network: youth as leaders, youth as volunteers and youth as members of affected communities. These pathways create an overarching umbrella for strategic directions and recommended actions that help engage children, adolescents and young adults while considering their situation and the primary purpose of their engagement from the National Society's perspective.



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YOUTH AS LEADERS

Children, adolescents, and young adults who take the lead as agents of change are considered young leaders. In their leadership practice, 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. Investing in systematic and competency-based learning and leadership opportunities for young people has a critical impact on the quality of leadership in National Societies and Movement at large.

Allowing young people to self-organize and participate in youth-led structures fosters leadership development. It enables children, adolescents, and young adults to voice their views and practice leadership in peer-to-peer settings.

To benefit from the positive contributions of young people, National Societies must create empowering and enabling environments that encourage the participation of children, adolescents, and young adults in decision-making at all levels of governance, management, and service delivery.

YOUTH AS VOLUNTEERS

Children, adolescents, and young adults who contribute their time and skills to support their communities through their engagement with Red Cross and Red Crescent activities are young volunteers.

Young volunteers are fully covered by the IFRC Volunteering Policy and the volunteering standards (such as Code of conduct, volunteering management procedures and so on) of their National Society in the same way as adult volunteers.

Young volunteers within the IFRC network assess, plan, design, deliver, review, evaluate and innovate in Red Cross and Red Crescent programmes and services. Due to their unique position in society, perspectives, and ways of experiencing the world, they are a source of innovation and pioneers in experimentation, and this enriches the IFRC network's programmes and services.

National Societies must adjust their volunteering development practices, including recruitment, training, motivation, retention, and recognition practices, to the needs, capacities and vulnerabilities of children, adolescents, and young adults. Approaches that involve understanding the motivation and ensuring the well-being of the children, adolescents and young adults engaged as volunteers are particularly critical.

Volunteering by children, adolescents and young adults must not be exclusive. National Societies must ensure that, in their volunteering practices, they engage heterogeneous youth in-groups, including children, adolescents and young adults from affected and marginalized communities. Tailored approaches might be required in situations where youth volunteering could be considered a lifeline or involves providing services on the front lines.



© Haitian Red Cross

National Societies must pay special attention to and prioritize resources and protection for young volunteers serving on the front lines of crises and conflicts, responding to hazards, shocks, and disasters, and putting in long hours.

National Societies are accountable for ensuring [security, safety, protection, safeguarding, physical and mental well-being](#), and adequate youth-friendly training, including the provision of protective equipment, insurance, and safety nets for the children, adolescents and young adults engaged as volunteers before, during and after the voluntary activity they carry out.

YOUTH AS MEMBERS OF AFFECTED COMMUNITIES

Children, adolescents, and young adults who engage in Red Cross and Red Crescent programmes and services are not passive recipients of aid. On the contrary, they must be actively involved in the planning, design, delivery and review of the programmes and services reaching them.

Resilience strengthening (see “Concepts that matter”), is at the core of National Society engagement with children, adolescents and young adults from communities affected by crisis. The primary objective of National Societies is to help them bounce back, building on their skills and capacities, and to support them on their journey to give back to the communities they live in and actively contribute to their reconstruction.

Changes in lifestyles due to technology have made vulnerabilities (see “Glossary”) less apparent in the traditional sense. As a result, the Red Cross and Red Crescent needs to adjust its methods to identify hidden vulnerabilities, especially those related to children, adolescents and young adults and including mental health and overall well-being.

Interplay and fluidity of the three youth engagement pathways

These three pathways are not rigid; they are fluid, and a young person might “belong” to all of them at different stages of their life.

The IFRC network’s approach, based on these three engagement pathways, helps engage young people from affected communities and provide them with humanitarian services along with educational opportunities, including technical knowledge, life skills and interpersonal skills. At the same time, we implement empowerment practices and create enabling environments that allow them to bounce forward after being exposed to a hazard, shock, or disaster.

In this way, we support children, adolescents, and young adults in (re)building capacities. It is an essential step in their journey to recovery and to eventually feel ready to give back to their community.



© Thai Red Cross Society

3Es approach – education, empowerment and enabling environments.

Education, empowerment and enabling environments (3Es) are vital for ensuring meaningful youth engagement within the IFRC network. The 3Es is a practical approach that helps ensure that we equip, empower, and enable children, adolescents, and young adults to participate in strengthening community resilience.

The 3Es are integrated into the strategic directions and recommended actions in the next section and should be integral to every strategic youth engagement plan.

EDUCATION

In the IFRC network, we envision a world where every child, adolescent and young adult can safely, continuously, and equitably access inclusive quality education opportunities so that they are able to help and care for themselves and others and strive for a better future.

In the IFRC network, children, adolescents, and young adults acquire knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values. When volunteering with the Red Cross and Red Crescent education can be provided formally or informally. It aims to equip young people with transferable skills, including life skills, interpersonal skills as well as technical skills.

Humanitarian education is the IFRC network's unique approach to education that enables individuals – especially children, adolescents, and young adults – to interpret situations from a humanitarian perspective and develop the knowledge, values and skills that empower them to act in the spirit of the RCRC Fundamental Principles. This enables them to help and care for themselves and others and so contribute to building resilience, social inclusion and lasting peace in their family, community, and society.

Education in emergencies refers specifically to ensuring children, adolescents, and young adults in crisis situations (for example, conflict, disasters, and epidemics) can access and are provided with quality education, training and learning opportunities, including formal and alternative basic education and vocational skills development, to meet their physical, psychosocial, developmental, and cognitive needs.



EMPOWERMENT

Empowerment is another approach in the IFRC network's duty of care and protection towards children, adolescents, and young adults. The empowerment approach activates autonomy of children, adolescents and young adults in both peer-to-peer contexts and intergenerational spaces.

The empowerment of children, adolescents, and young adults in the IFRC network can be constructed around six pillars or practices that are adaptable and universally applicable:

1. Meaningful participation of children, adolescents, and young adults in decision-making, with encouragement to express their opinions.
2. Creation of a welcoming, safe, enabling, and inclusive environment that values selfless contributions.
3. Assignment of genuine and meaningful individual responsibility, with necessary accompaniment.
4. Equitable power-sharing across different age groups at all levels and according to criteria other than age
5. A sense of community and friendship.
6. Learning opportunities that focus on capacity strengthening and the development of strengths.

ENABLING ENVIRONMENTS


The creation of enabling environments involves removing obstacles to enable and encourage action. This includes addressing unnecessary bureaucracy, hierarchy, and practices that lead to bottlenecks and foster exclusivity at the expense of meaningful and impactful youth-led action. It's about ensuring that a National Society's institutional culture, processes, structures, policies, and regulations support meaningful engagement of children, adolescents, and young adults.

Within the IFRC network, children, adolescents, and young adults should be well-equipped and empowered. They must be provided with trusted, safe, and accessible spaces and granted easy access to equitable and developmentally appropriate resources and support mechanisms. This enables them to become agents of positive change.

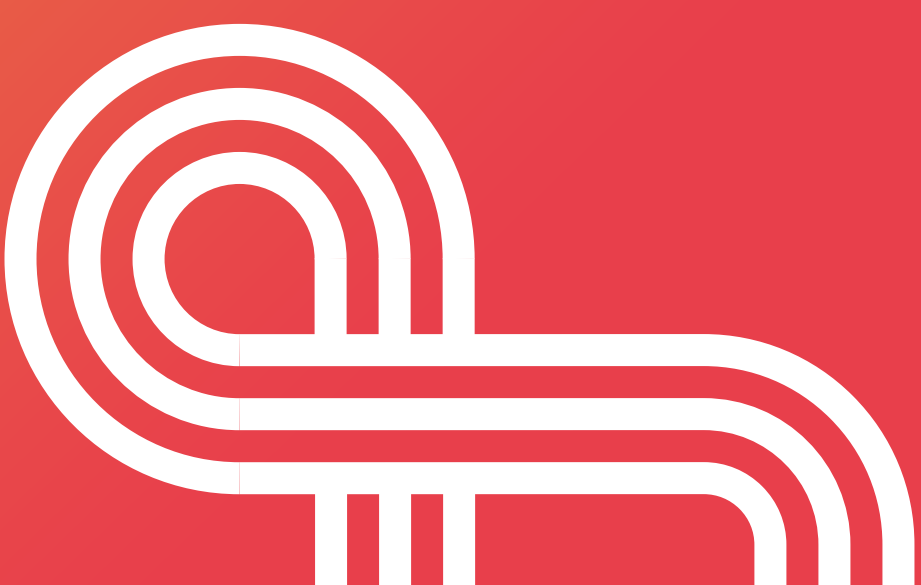


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STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS AND RECOMMENDED ACTIONS FOR MEANINGFUL YOUTH ENGAGEMENT



In this section, we set out specific strategic directions and recommended actions for meaningful youth engagement across the three pathways: youth as leaders, youth as volunteers and youth as members of affected communities.



Youth as leaders engagement pathway

STRATEGIC DIRECTION 1

ENSURING YOUTH PARTICIPATION IN DECISION-MAKING AT ALL LEVELS OF MANAGEMENT, GOVERNANCE, AND SERVICE DELIVERY, (INCLUDING DISASTER PREPAREDNESS, RESPONSE, AND RECOVERY).

Recommended actions:

1. Recognize and utilize the leadership skills of children, adolescents, and young adults by empowering them to take initiative and involving them in setting the direction of the National Society.
2. Create youth-led structures that allow young leaders to represent their peers, and the communities they live in and disseminate relevant information.
3. Ensure a permanent and dedicated seat on the governing board (at National Level and at Branch level), or equivalent, for young people, endorsed by the National Society's youth constituency, with full membership and voting rights.
4. Ensure the diverse representation of young people (for example gender, age, disability and so on.) in National Society decision-making bodies, considering the diversity of volunteers and the communities served.
5. Actively engage young leaders in the planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of programmes and projects.

STRATEGIC DIRECTION 2

STRENGTHENING THE LEADING ROLE OF YOUNG PEOPLE IN ADVOCATING FOR THE NEEDS OF AFFECTED COMMUNITIES.

Recommended actions:

6. Strengthen the capacities of young people to enable them to effectively advocate for diverse communities, guided by our Fundamental Principles and humanitarian values.
7. Ensure that young people and their peers from affected communities have equal opportunities to engage and learn from each other.

STRATEGIC DIRECTION 3

INVESTING IN THE PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF YOUNG PEOPLE FOR LEADERSHIP ROLES TODAY AND IN THE FUTURE.

Recommended actions:

8. Strengthen the capacities of young people and provide opportunities for them to assume and advance in leadership roles and responsibilities.
9. Provide opportunities for intergenerational learning and pathways for the transition towards leadership opportunities within the National Society.
10. Identify and capitalize on the talents of young people engaged with the Red Cross and Red Crescent and promote them into leadership roles.

STRATEGIC DIRECTION 4

STRENGTHENING THE LEADING ROLE OF YOUNG PEOPLE IN PARTNERSHIP DEVELOPMENT AND NETWORKING, WHICH LEAD TO LEARNING AND PROVIDE NATIONAL SOCIETIES WITH MISSING SKILLS AND COMPETENCIES.

Recommended actions:

11. Support the participation of young leaders in external networking platforms (national youth alliances, youth council, and so on) to promote learning, exchanges, and advocacy on youth matters.
12. Appoint young leaders to represent the National Society in different networks within the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and support them in this role.

Youth as volunteers engagement pathway

STRATEGIC DIRECTION 1

INCREASING THE MEANINGFUL ENGAGEMENT OF YOUNG VOLUNTEERS.

Recommended actions:

1. Support the efforts of young volunteers to initiate and engage in the design and implementation of programmes and services delivered by the National Society in their community.
2. Create partnerships to integrate humanitarian education, including international humanitarian law, into formal educational curricula and non-formal educational activities.
3. Offer a wide range of volunteering opportunities for children, adolescents and young adults that will attract members of under-represented groups and reflect the composition of the local community.
4. Complement traditional forms and ways of youth volunteering with innovative ones, including but not limited to shorter-term participation, digital volunteering, and spontaneous volunteering, especially in crisis situations.
5. Create opportunities for intergenerational collaboration and partnerships to address humanitarian challenges.

STRATEGIC DIRECTION 2

MOTIVATING AND RETAINING YOUNG VOLUNTEERS.

Recommended actions:

6. Implement volunteering management practices tailored to young volunteers.
7. Recognize volunteers as a source of knowledge and experience and continue providing opportunities for further skills development that will increase the employability of young volunteers within the National Society and in the labour market.
8. Provide pathways and support for children, adolescents, and young adults across the National Society's range of volunteering opportunities as an effective way of ensuring a smooth and seamless transition into adult volunteering.

STRATEGIC DIRECTION 3

GUARANTEEING THE WELL-BEING, SECURITY, PROTECTION, AND SAFETY OF YOUNG VOLUNTEERS BEFORE, DURING AND AFTER THEIR ENGAGEMENT IN RED CROSS AND RED CRESCENT PROGRAMMES AND SERVICES.

Recommended actions:

9. Provide young volunteers with the necessary information, training, and resources to ensure that they can protect their physical health, mental well-being and personal items while engaged in voluntary programs and services.
10. Adopt institutional approaches to keep children, adolescents, and young adults safe from harm, misuse, abuse, or exploitation, including through youth-friendly mechanisms for reporting such incidents.
11. Ensure young volunteers have access to insurance, other safety nets, and psycho-social support.

STRATEGIC DIRECTION 4

RECOGNIZING AND PROMOTING THE ADDED VALUE THAT YOUNG VOLUNTEERS BRING TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF NATIONAL SOCIETIES AND COMMUNITIES.

Recommended actions:

12. Recognize and promote (internally and externally) best practices, approaches, models, and examples provided by young volunteers, who are addressing humanitarian needs in their communities.
13. Create safe environments where young people can propose innovative approaches to address the needs of people from affected communities and the National Society, building on best practices and lessons learnt.

Youth as members of affected communities engagement pathway



STRATEGIC DIRECTION 1

PROMOTING THE FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES, HUMANITARIAN VALUES, AND HUMANITARIAN EDUCATION AS A MEANS OF STRENGTHENING RESILIENCE.

Recommended actions:

1. Establish the Fundamental Principles and humanitarian values as the foundation for individual ethical behaviour and promote humanitarian education, as the basis for humanitarian diplomacy.
2. Incorporate non-formal methods (including peer-to-peer approaches) for the dissemination of the Fundamental Principles, humanitarian values, and international humanitarian law.
3. Incorporate the concept of community resilience strengthening into all programmes involving children, adolescents, and young adults.

STRATEGIC DIRECTION 2

STRENGTHENING THE PERSONAL CAPACITIES OF YOUNG MEMBERS OF AFFECTED COMMUNITIES, CONSIDERING THEIR NEEDS IN TERMS OF ABILITIES AND PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT.

Recommended actions:

4. Provide training and educational opportunities for staff and volunteers to enhance their capacity to engage young people of all ages, especially those from marginalized communities.
5. Integrate psychosocial support into all programmes with young people, with a focus on the needs of young people in marginalized communities.
6. Strengthen the capacities of children, adolescents, and young adults through their engagement in Red Cross and Red Crescent programmes.
7. Involve children, adolescents and young adults in the design, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of all the programmes they participate in.

STRATEGIC DIRECTION 3

PROVIDING OPPORTUNITIES FOR YOUNG MEMBERS OF AFFECTED COMMUNITIES TO ACT AND GIVE BACK TO THEIR COMMUNITIES.

Recommended actions:

8. Develop specific guidelines for engaging young members of affected communities in programmes and service delivery, bearing their specific needs in mind.
9. Ensure that decision-making processes at all levels are informed by the voices of children, adolescents, and young adults from affected communities.
10. Enhance opportunities for the participation of young members of affected communities at all levels within the National Society.

STRATEGIC DIRECTION 4

MAINTAINING THE RELEVANCE AND RESPONSIVENESS OF ALL RED CROSS AND RED CRESCENT PROGRAMMES AND SERVICES TO THE NEEDS OF YOUNG MEMBERS OF AFFECTED COMMUNITIES.

Recommended actions:

11. Conduct assessments to determine the vulnerability and capacity of children, adolescents and young adults and the National Society's ability to address their needs.
12. Collaborate with experienced stakeholders in our work with young members of affected communities, especially around safeguarding and programming with and for children and adolescents.
13. Uphold the duty of protection and care towards children, adolescents, and young adults, for example, by creating child-friendly spaces, especially in armed conflicts and protracted crises.

ANNEX

CONCEPTS THAT MATTER

As youth engagement is a cross-cutting process in National Societies and cannot be addressed using a stand-alone or silo approach, in this section we provide a list of overarching concepts that underpin all the strategic directions and recommended actions across all three youth engagement pathways. They are complemented by key approaches of a more practical nature.

Community resilience strengthening

Resilience is defined as the ability of individuals, communities, organizations, or countries to anticipate, reduce the impact of, cope with and recover from adversity without compromising their long-term prospects.

It is a bridge built on two pillars – development work and humanitarian aid.

While provision of quality humanitarian aid at scale, in both emergency and non-emergency settings, saves lives of people as per fact, the Red Cross Red Crescent development work represents a toolbox that addresses root causes and promotes sustainable solutions. In the IFRC network, development work and humanitarian aid are critically intertwined.

National Society Development

Development pillars of the resilience strengthening in the IFRC network is also known as the National Society Development (NSD) work. It combines the Organizational development and Capacity strengthening. It is well established that the NSD work is an internal responsibility of each National Society to better itself and its programs and services. However, the primary impact of the NSD work, for both individual National Societies and the IFRC network, is measured externally. Success of our NSD work is ultimately correlated with the lasting effect that National Societies have on strengthening community resilience.

The YES with its recommendations contributes to strengthening the resilience of a vast and critical constituency. The more resilient children, adolescents, and young adults in communities and engaged in our National Societies are, the better they bounce forward, and communities and institutions become more resilient intrinsically. The YES allows for both the Red Cross Red Crescent humanitarian programs and services to reach children, adolescents, and young adults effectively and the NSD work to bank on the unique contributions of children, adolescents, and young adults in advancing the Red Cross Red Crescent mission and sustaining organizational continuity.

National Societies are more likely to succeed in community resilience strengthening through meaningful youth engagement when these four conditions are met:

1. The National Society accepts children, adolescents, and young adults for who they are, and the National Society leadership takes responsibility for creating an institutional culture of trust that is conducive to meaningful youth engagement, including recognition of the unique added value and contributions of children, adolescents, and young adults.
2. All parts of the National Society own and apply the key principles of meaningful youth engagement practice.
3. The National Society develops strategic plans for meaningful youth engagement holistically.
4. The National Society pursues a long-term vision for youth engagement, invests in it and acknowledges it as a catalyst for National Society service and programme delivery, institutional continuity, and leadership renewal.

Enhanced Vulnerability and Capacity Assessment (EVCA)

Vulnerability and Capacity Assessment (VCA), a well-known IFRC approach on how to conduct community risk assessments. It is a participatory investigation process designed to assess and address major risks affecting communities and strengthen community resilience. It aims to determine people's vulnerability to risks and their capacity to cope with them.

Due to its participatory nature, the VCA tools can be effectively adapted to various community constituencies and age groups.

The Enhanced VCA (EVCA) is adapted to better analyze the different characteristics of resilient communities. Thus far, it includes climate change considerations, gender and diversity considerations and guidance on how to conduct EVCA in urban contexts. In future, it will also provide recommendations on how to conduct EVCA in fragile and conflict-affected contexts and will also guide the utilization of digital tools.

While working with and reaching children, adolescents, and young adults, it is extremely important in the VCA to cover the protection, safeguarding, and well-being issues and reflect the findings in our operations, programs, and services.

Vulnerability as a combination of conditions determined by physical, social, economic, environmental, and political factors or processes, which increase risk and people's susceptibility to the impact of hazards or shocks.

Working with children, adolescents, and young adults, it is extremely important to underscore that vulnerability should not be considered as a permanent feature of the identity of a community or individual.

Youth engagement practitioners are encouraged to be aware of superficial ideas related to age, physical size, dependence on others and perceptions of the strength and experience of children, adolescents, and young adults. This awareness is crucial to avoiding situations where young people might be openly treated as unequal.

Community engagement and accountability (CEA)

Meaningful youth engagement is embedded in the IFRC's CEA approach, but evidence-driven and technically savvy approaches are critical in securing the engagement of children, adolescents and young adults and ensuring accountability to them.

Traditionally, CEA practitioners have easily connected with the groups we serve as members of affected communities. Nevertheless, a common observation is that current CEA tools are not designed to gather data specifically on youth. Through YES, we underscore the significance of evidence-based programming rooted in assessments that capture youth-specific information. Furthermore, YES enhances the CEA approach by introducing additional avenues for youth involvement as leaders and volunteers and providing a 3Es engagement framework.

MEASURING SUCCESS AND IMPACT

YES has a ten-year implementation period, with two five-year progress reports. Key milestones include the launch in 2024, the first progress report in 2030 featuring examples of National Society practice, and the second and final report in 2034. The IFRC Youth Commission will coordinate the YES (2024) impact reporting with other statutory obligations, such as the IFRC Youth Policy (2017) review in 2026.

The IFRC Global Youth Engagement Study, conducted biennially, is the primary tool for reporting progress on the implementation of YES. It tracks a set of indicators that determine whether National Societies comply with globally endorsed requirements. Among the full set of indicators, as set out in the IFRC Youth Policy, the following 'six critical elements' guide the National Society to build a solid foundation to secure successful implementation of youth engagement across the organization.

1. Own youth policy in line with the IFRC Youth Policy
2. Own youth engagement strategy in line with the IFRC Youth Engagement Strategy
3. A permanent seat with full voting rights for young people on its governing board
4. A youth-led structure
5. A dedicated budget for youth engagement (youth-led projects and youth development)
6. A dedicated staff member responsible for advancing youth engagement.

At the national level, the [IFRC Youth Engagement Strategy self-assessment tool](#) enables National Societies to assess their own youth engagement practice against the globally endorsed reference documents and commitments.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Achieving success in implementation of the strategic directions and recommended actions of the IFRC Youth Engagement Strategy requires a collective effort. For accountability purpose, this section clarifies primary roles and responsibilities of key stakeholders for advancing youth engagement.

National Societies leadership

NS GOVERNANCE

1. Approve a National Society vision for enhancing service and program delivery, ensuring institutional continuity, and facilitating leadership renewal that will be centred around equal inter-generational collaboration.
2. Initiate and prioritize development of:
 - a. National Society Youth Engagement Strategy (NS YES) by committing the National Society to localising the IFRC Youth Engagement Strategy.
 - b. Youth-led decision-making structure across the National Society.
 - c. Statutory texts such as Youth Statutes, Rules and Procedures, chapters in the National Society Constitution, etc.
3. Identify a set of critical Recommended Actions for IFRC YES to promptly fulfil its commitment to inter-generational collaboration, such as creating a dedicated spaces for young persons at every level of the National Society's decision-making structure.
4. Request a regular update on the status of youth engagement at the Governing board agenda.
5. Advocate for key principles of meaningful youth engagement and safeguarding as "business of everyone" across the National Society (national programs, services, operations, and management and governance structures).

NS MANAGEMENT

1. Disseminate operationally relevant information from the IFRC Youth Engagement Strategy across the National Society in an accessible manner and format (local branches, program and service managers, governance bodies).
2. Drive the NS YES development with young people, including the indicators of success to report on internally.
3. Incorporate the Youth engagement plan of action in National Society's strategic and operational plans.
4. Align existing statutory texts, policies, strategies, and operational practice according to the governance decisions on youth engagement and localised National Society Youth Engagement Strategy implementation.
5. Train staff and governance representatives on the IFRC Youth Engagement Strategy for with a special emphasis on safeguarding and duty of care.
6. Establish processes to consistently acknowledge the collective contributions of young people to the work of the National Society, ensuring that these processes align with the values and priorities of young individuals.
7. Ensure adequate allocation of financial and human resources towards advancing youth engagement, encompassing funding provisions within programs, services, and operational activities.

IFRC YOUTH COMMISSION WITH SUPPORT OF THE IFRC GOVERNING BOARD (BUILT ON THE IFRC STATUTORY TEXTS)

1. Promote the IFRC Youth Policy and YES as institutional tools for National Society Development.
2. Advocate for six critical factors (include a reference) for meaningful youth engagement across the IFRC network.
3. Advise the IFRC Secretary General on advancing youth engagement, as stipulated in the IFRC Constitution.
4. Monitor the progress of National Societies in adapting YES to their specific context and circumstances.
5. Seek youth opinions worldwide and ensure that these opinions are considered in the Movement's statutory bodies.
6. Promote evidence-based practices when it comes to engagement of children, adolescents, and young adults.
7. Represent the interests of regional Red Cross and Red Crescent Youth networks, actively engage them, and support their development.
8. Advocate for equally footed intergenerational collaboration and dialogue.

THE IFRC SECRETARIAT

1. Incorporate the key principles of meaningful youth engagement across its programs, operations, NSD work, and its own managerial structures.
2. Facilitate development of National Society Youth Engagement Strategies as a pillar of National Society Development.
3. Ensure sufficient financial and human resources for advancing youth engagement, especially for IFRC Youth Commission Work-plan implementation and regionally relevant operational priorities.
4. Provide technical support to National Societies, as required and primarily through peer-to-peer learning, for the development of their youth engagement programs, services, and youth-led structures.

REGIONAL YOUTH NETWORKS (BUILT ON THE IFRC GUIDELINES AND TOOLBOX FOR YOUTH NETWORKS, 2023)

1. Coordinate the advocacy efforts and joint initiatives of your members to strengthen cooperation among the members and elevate shared Red Cross and Red Crescent identity at the regional level.
2. Facilitate partnerships and establish recognition mechanisms for innovation and knowledge sharing (collection and featuring of experiences, recording of lessons learnt and best practices).
3. Advocate for and promote leadership development opportunities and leadership responsibilities for young people.
4. Participate in framing global policies and strategies, highlighting regional contexts and voicing subregional priorities.
5. Ensure that global decisions are relevant and applicable at the regional, sub-regional, and national levels.
6. Facilitate communication between the IFRC global level and National Societies – in both directions.

YOUNG PEOPLE IN FORMAL (POSITIONAL) AND NON-FORMAL (NON-POSITIONAL) LEADERSHIP ROLES

1. Lead in disseminating the IFRC Youth Engagement Strategy and developing national youth engagement strategies.
2. Advocate for and lead on implementation of key principles of meaningful youth engagement within the National Society.
3. Collaborate with other National Society youth leaders for policy and strategy formulation and program development, knowledge sharing, and peer to peer support.
4. Participate in and invite for inter-generational collaboration and dialogue on advancing youth engagement.
5. Share inspiring practices and experiences of the youth-led action and youth development, incl. young people's contribution to governance and management of National Societies.
6. Seek information on current developments and emerging needs and opportunities.

GLOSSARY

CAPACITY STRENGTHENING (CS)

Interchangeably referred to also as Capacity enhancement, focuses on improving systems, approaches, procedures, and tools that underpin the existing services, programs, and capacities so that the National Society's work remains impactful, agile, widely accessible, and aligned to the National Society mandate and mission. Compared to the Organizational Development work, the impact of capacity enhancement comes usually rather quickly and is easier to measure.

CHILD SAFEGUARDING

Refers to the broad obligation on IFRC personnel, partners, suppliers, and contractors to ensure that the design and delivery of programs and organizational programs are in the best interests of the child, do not expose children to adverse impacts, including the risk of violence, abuse, exploitation, or neglect and that any concerns about children's safety within the communities where they work are appropriately reported and responded to.

CHILDREN, ADOLESCENTS, YOUNG ADULTS

Children (5 to 12 years old), adolescents (13 to 17 years old) and young adults (18 to 30 years old).

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND ACCOUNTABILITY (CEA)

Is a way of working that recognizes and values all community members as equal partners, whose diverse needs, priorities, and preferences guide everything we do. We achieve this by integrating meaningful community participation, open and honest communication, and mechanisms to listen to and act on feedback, within our programmes and operations.

DISASTER RISKS

Include potential losses in lives, health status, livelihoods, assets and access to services, which could occur to a particular community or a society over some specified future time period.

EDUCATION

When volunteering with the Red Cross and Red Crescent education can be provided formally or informally. It aims to equip young people with transferable skills, including life skills, interpersonal skills as well as technical skills.

EDUCATION IN EMERGENCIES

Refers specifically to ensuring children, adolescents, and young adults in crisis situations (for example, conflict, disasters, and epidemics) can access and are provided with quality education, training and learning opportunities, including formal and alternative basic education and vocational skills development, to meet their physical, psychosocial, developmental, and cognitive needs.

HUMANITARIAN EDUCATION

The IFRC network's unique approach to education that enables individuals – especially children, adolescents, and young adults – to interpret situations from a humanitarian perspective and develop the knowledge, values and skills that empower them to act in the spirit of the RCRC Fundamental Principles. This enables them to help and care for themselves and others and so contribute to building resilience, social inclusion and lasting peace in their family, community, and society.

EMPOWERMENT

An approach which activates autonomy of children, adolescents and young adults in both peer-to-peer contexts and intergenerational spaces.

ENABLING ENVIRONMENT

Involves removing obstacles to enable and encourage action. This includes addressing unnecessary bureaucracy, hierarchy, and practices that lead to bottlenecks and foster exclusivity at the expense of meaningful and impactful youth-led action. It's about ensuring that a National Society's institutional culture, processes, structures, policies, and regulations support meaningful engagement of children, adolescents, and young adults.

YOUTH ENGAGEMENT

Refers to both youth-led action and youth development, which are mutually reinforcing and should be advanced concurrently.

IFRC NETWORK

The collective of the 191 National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies that make up the membership of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC)

IFRC STRATEGY 2030

Strategy 2030 represents the collective ambitions of our 191 National Societies, supported by IFRC, and lays out our vision for the organization of the future.

IFRC YOUTH ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY

Complementing the IFRC Youth Policy, the IFRC Youth Engagement Strategy brings together the three youth engagement pathways and the 3Es approach (education, empowerment and enabling environments) and proposes strategic directions and recommended actions for meaningful youth engagement.

IFRC YOUTH POLICY

Based on the statutory texts, the IFRC Youth Policy sets the universal standard on working with and for young people applicable across context and cultures. It serves as a global point of reference to ensure consistency and accountability in youth-led and National Society-owned engagement practice. It features the added value of youth for the Red Cross and Red Crescent mission, the three youth engagement pathways (youth as leaders, youth as volunteers, youth as members of affected communities), and a list of success indicators for youth engagement within the IFRC network.

LOCALIZATION

There is no single definition of “localization”. In the Grand Bargain, (a 2016 agreement between some of the largest humanitarian donors and agencies,) signatories committed, under the heading of “more support and funding tools to local and national responders,” to “making principled humanitarian action as local as possible and as international as necessary” while continuing to recognize the vital role of international actors, including situations of armed conflict.

The overall objective of localization is improved humanitarian response, ensuring access for all in need to fast, quality, impactful and sustainable humanitarian assistance that is efficient, effective and fit for purpose. Local actors are key for this and have distinct strengths, as they often play a crucial role in ensuring early response and access, acceptance, cost effectiveness, and link with development (i.e. reducing the impact of future crises).

Localization is also about complementarity, which looks to a balance between local and international action in order to maximize the comparative advantages of both and increase effectiveness of the humanitarian response in a given context.

ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT (OD)

Rocuses on fundamentals for a well-functioning organization: mandate, legal base, identity, long-term strategic direction, basic organizational model, leadership drive, capacity to anticipate and adapt, and the relationships between different parts of the organization or between the National Society and its environment, including the auxiliary role to governments. Built on systemic thinking, it is carried out to address complex issues within institutional culture and seeks a creation of environments conducive to quality change.

RED CROSS/RED CRESCENT VOLUNTEER

The IFRC Volunteering Policy defines a Red Cross/Red Crescent volunteer as “a person who carries out volunteering activities for a National Society, occasionally or regularly.”

VOLUNTEER MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS

Systems that effectively mobilize and retain existing volunteers and recruit new ones to engage them in specific programmes and services of National Society that are responsive to local needs of vulnerable communities.

HOW THE STRATEGY WAS DEVELOPED

This annex provides an overview of the YES 2.0 development process, highlighting the key phases, methodologies, and collaborative efforts involved.

CONCEPTUALIZATION

The process was guided by a Concept note with specific stages and expected outcomes approved by the IFRC Youth Commission at the end of 2021. The project was planned to end with the draft document's submission to the General Assembly in 2024. The guiding approaches to the project were "review for impact and revise, if needed" and "refresh vs reinvent." The key aspiration was to run inclusive, holistic, strategic, and developmentally-centred, and youth-led and NSs-owned process.

A Core Team (CT) comprised of young leaders with expertise in youth engagement (both staff and volunteers at their National Society¹) spearheaded the project with the support of three IFRC Secretariat staff members and a recruited consultant. The CT was regionally representative, and gender balanced. The CT worked both online and in-person during four writeshops² following the objectives outlined in the Concept note.

YES 2013 IMPACT EVALUATION

A comprehensive impact evaluation of the YES 2013 implementation by National Societies (NSs) was the foundation for the entire project. 65 NSs participated in an *Impact study* that revealed value-add of the YES 2013 for their operations, decision-making, and community reach. The Impact study was complemented by structured, *in-depth interviews* with over 30 young leaders, senior National Society leaders, and technical experts within the NSs.

NSs across all regions underscored the effectiveness of YES 2013 as a valuable resource, reference document, and advocacy tool. YES 2013 was recognized for its complex, holistic approach to strategic directions and recommended actions conducive to meaningful youth engagement. Its practical applicability by NS (National Society) practitioners was also highly valued.

Given the outcomes of the evaluation phase, YES 2013 with its key building blocks and concepts served as a sturdy structure upon which the revised document was confidently built and expanded.

The key themes that emerged the impact evaluation phase to be further explored in the revised version were: 1.) In-group heterogeneity of children, adolescents, and young adults; 2.) Better understanding and pro-active removal of barriers to meaningful youth engagement at all levels; 3.) The duty of care, safe-guarding, and recognition for the contributions, needs, and rights of young people volunteering at frontlines and / or in protracted crisis.

Findings of the evaluation phase relevant to advancing youth engagement at strategic and policy levels have been included in the IFRC Youth Commission 2024-2028 induction.

DESK RESEARCH

In recognition of the fast-paced changes that influence the world young people live in, a thorough desk research study on emerging internal and external trends and the needs and views of children, adolescents, and young adults was conducted. This study provided several useful insights about our institutional fitness to be the institution of choice for children, adolescents, and young adults, including whether our structures and approaches appeal to the current and upcoming generation of youth.

1. Argentinian RC, Colombian RC, Iranian RC, Lebanese RC, Portuguese RC, Malaysian RC, the Netherlands RC, and Philippines RC.

2. Writeshop #1 co-hosted by the Colombian RC, Cali, August 24-29, 2022; Writeshop #2 co-hosted by the Philippines RC, Manila, May 3 - 6, 2023; Writeshop #3 hosted by the IFRC Secretariat, Geneva, November 10-13, 2023; Writeshop #4 hosted by the IFRC Secretariat, Geneva, April 3-6, 2024

CONSULTATIVE GAP ANALYSIS

Building on the previous phases, the CT continued its work with a visioning exercise that aimed at delineating the scope and direction of the new strategy. Consequently, driven by the project's key principles, many events throughout 2023 were used to solicit additional input around identifying gaps and areas of strategic interest. These events included:

1. European Youth Cooperation Meeting April
2. Global Youth Leadership Academy hosted by Danish Red Cross Youth, May
3. Mediterranean Youth Forum, June
4. IFRC Inter-American Conference, June
5. 5th RCRC Global Youth Networks Meeting, June
6. Pacific Youth Network meeting, June
7. Southern Africa Youth Network meeting, July
8. East Asia Youth Network, July
9. Pan-African Conference, September
10. Joint session of the IFRC Youth Commission and IFRC Governing Board, October
11. Danish Red Cross Youth-hosted Youth Leadership Academies in Africa and Asia Pacific, October, and November

AREAS OF STRATEGIC INTEREST

Combining inputs generated in previous non-linear stages of the project, the strategic areas of interest were further researched. These priority themes included: A.) Safeguarding, protection and safe and child-friendly spaces, B.) Understanding children, adolescents and young adults as a constituency, C.) Heterogeneity of the youth constituency. These themes also overlapped with the findings of the YES 2012 impact evaluation that registered and taken as an independent validation of the direction that the CT embarked on.

TOWARDS THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY ENDORSEMENT

After completing a series of iterative refinements, the first draft of YES 2024 was sent out for substantive consultation. The draft was distributed in English, French, Spanish, Arabic, and Russian and comprehensive feedback was received from 92 NSs. Among the 92 individual contributions, we received responses from a quarter of NSs in the Asia Pacific region. Nearly 70 % of European and Central Asian NSs responded to the survey, and around 50 % of NSs from the regions of MENA, Africa, and Americas provided their views in the consultation. Additionally, regional, and sub-regional networks from Asia Pacific, and Europe Central Asia shared their collective feedback, highlighting the increasing importance of regional and sub-regional identities in youth networks. Overall, the vast majority (over 90 % of NSs) found the draft document as clear and accessible, viewing it as a guidance that will foster increased local youth-led action. They also regarded it as a relevant tool for addressing gaps in NSs' practice and confirming youth engagement as a critical pillar of National Society Development, essential for achieving S2030 aspirations. When it comes to all the inputs for changes and improvements, they were all thoroughly analyzed, clustered, assigned a "frequency weight", and presented to the CT without discrimination. The CT then reviewed them based on agreed principles and made final decisions and agreed on actions for each suggestion. The decisions were documented for accountability purposes and guided the rewriting session towards Draft 2. A Consultation Report detailing next steps was shared with the IFRC network and Secretariat's offices. The CT-signed-off Draft 2 was presented to the IFRC Youth Commission for review and approved by the Commission to be submitted to the IFRC Governing Board as a formal document for the IFRC General Assembly 2024. Following the distribution of official General Assembly materials, NSs had another opportunity to provide additional feedback on the document, with suggestions noted and addressed.

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YOUTH ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY

BUILDING BRIDGES BREAKING BARRIERS