



**Canadian Red Cross
Croix-Rouge canadienne**

Youth Engagement Strategy

Background

This Youth Engagement Strategy is based on the Canadian Red Cross Youth Symposium held in St. John's, Newfoundland on June 14 – 17, 2007 and the resulting Youth Symposium Report.

The symposium was the first step in developing this strategy, a proposal for how to improve youth engagement in the Society. This event had 57 participants representing all four zones and a broad range of programs including Humanitarian Issues Program (HIP), Disaster Management (DM), RespectED and First Aid / CPR. The symposium had three general themes: 'Sharing', 'Learning' and 'Creating'.

Youth participants were asked to 'share' their experiences as volunteers - the strengths as well as areas of improvement. This involved a series of round table and plenary discussions, as well as brainstorming sessions. Youth also 'learned' – new skills, about themselves, each other, and about the Red Cross through youth facilitated workshops. Lastly, youth 'created' ideas for how to improve youth engagement in the Society - the building blocks of this youth strategy. Collectively, youth prioritized their ideas and agreed upon a Goal, Objectives and Outcomes. It is their ideas that provide the basis for this document.

The members of the Youth Task Force (YTF), responsible for the design and execution of the youth symposium, are the authors of this Youth Engagement Strategy. YTF is made up of youth and non-youth (both volunteers and staff representatives) from all zones, as well as national office. A youth volunteer nominated by his/her zone and the National Volunteer Resource Committee chairs the Task Force. It is a sub-group of the Volunteer Resource Committee and is supported by the Director of National Volunteer Resource Management.

Goal

The Goal of the Canadian Red Cross Youth Engagement Strategy is:

To create a fun, inclusive and healthy environment that promotes, supports and encourages youth engagement as global citizens and leaders in the Red Cross and their local community.

Objectives

This Youth Engagement Strategy sets out the direction for youth engagement in the Canadian Red Cross for the years 2010-2015. There are three priority areas of focus set out by youth:

- **Leadership Skill Development**
- **Engagement**
- **Opportunities for Action**

The objective of “Leadership Skill Development” is to provide youth with the tools, training, support, and guidance needed to become leaders and humanitarian global citizens.

“Engagement” aims to encourage youth as leaders in the Canadian Red Cross and in the Movement at every level and in every aspect.

“Opportunities for Action” aims to encourage youth to be leaders in their communities and in all Canadian Red Cross programs.

No individual area is more important than the others, and they must be implemented together to improve youth engagement as whole within the Canadian Red Cross. It is expected that all zones will integrate this strategy into their operations through the implementation of these Objectives, based on local needs and capacity. National office will be responsible for: supporting all stakeholders; ensuring cross-geography and program communication; and the on going planning, monitoring and evaluation of this strategy. This combined effort ensures that youth engagement will be enhanced throughout the Canadian Red Cross - now and in the future.

Outcomes and Success Indicators

Outcomes are tangible demonstrations of the change that is taking place as we move towards achieving our Objectives and our Goal. We want to know that the investments we are making are having the intended impact. For our Outcomes, we have identified key Success Indicators. While not a list of all the Outcomes and Indicators possible, they are what are identified as the priorities for each area.

LEADERSHIP SKILL DEVELOPMENT

To provide youth with the tools, training, support, and guidance needed to become leaders and humanitarian global citizens

Our Outcomes:

- All youth volunteers feel that they are recognized and are invested in (materially and emotionally) by the Canadian Red Cross.
- The Canadian Red Cross offers consistent quality training for youth across Canada.
- Youth have access to all the information, tools, training etc. that is needed for them to carry out their leadership roles.
- Youth have common places (virtual & physical) to connect with each other locally and nationally.

Success Indicators for these Outcomes include:

- Zones implement plan for increasing type and reach of youth recognition and include youth in the design and implementation of these plans.

- All youth volunteers are tracked through Raiser’s Edge (VR module) to ensure youth activities and accomplishments are tracked.
- Youth are nominated for *all* Society awards for which they meet the criteria, not just youth-specific awards.
- A formal evaluation strategy is developed and implemented to understand the effectiveness, impact and reach of Red Cross leadership training for youth.
- The Canadian Red Cross is recognized as a leader in youth leadership development by the Red Cross Movement.
- All youth leadership training resources (workshops, handbooks, tool kits, as well as regional training schedules, skills etc.) are catalogued, made electronic, and are available to be accessed from anywhere in the country. A communication strategy is developed to ensure staff and volunteers are made aware of this repository.
- Internal youth website, which includes communication tools (blogs, newsgroups etc.) is created and operational.
- Process is developed at every office whereby youth groups can sign up to use meeting rooms, work spaces etc.
- Each zone organizes regular youth forums (face-to-face, electronic over email/blog, conference call etc.) where youth can connect with each other, make presentations about their own work, give updates, as well as learn about opportunities and new initiatives.
- Plan is developed at the national level to organize additional national youth symposiums in 2010, 2012 and 2015. These symposiums would be additional opportunities for youth to “share, learn and create”, as well as to kick-off, monitor and evaluate the progress of the Youth Engagement Strategy and recommend improvements where needed.

ENGAGEMENT

To encourage youth as leaders in the Canadian Red Cross and in the Movement at every level and in every aspect

Our Outcomes:

- Larger scope and variety in youth roles available.
- Clear paths for involvement available for youth of all ages to encourage growth within the Canadian Red Cross and the Movement.
- A bi-directional forum is in place through which youth can participate actively in the Society’s decision-making process on a regular basis.
- Increased youth representation in governance.

Success Indicators for these Outcomes include:

- Based on the national Youth Engagement Strategy, each program has its own youth plan customized to its unique needs, which attempts to:
 - increase youth participation
 - encourage youth to take on roles not traditionally taken on by youth, or where youth are underrepresented

- create mentorship opportunities that will help youth to prepare for enhanced volunteer roles.
- Career/volunteer path resources (including key positions and individual career profiles of current Red Cross staff/volunteers) are created and made available to youth.
- Each zone creates mentorship, job shadowing and career presentation opportunities for its youth to utilize.
- An online forum is created for youth to communicate about issues relevant to them. This forum is to be accessible by all youth, staff and governance members.
- Process and mechanism designed whereby the National Youth Representative can get feedback from the youth for communication to the National Volunteer Resource Committee and can provide feedback from the Committee back to Canadian Red Cross youth.
- Programs that have youth clientele consult with youth during program design and evaluation.
- Governance workshop created and available to all youth to encourage and prepare youth for participation in any/all governance structures.
- Continuing role of National Youth Representative, with the Youth Task Force as a formalized sub-group of the National Volunteer Resource Committee.
- Increased youth representation at all levels of governance, either as youth representatives or councilors-at-large/program representatives who happen to be youth.
- Youth are invited to present at staff meetings, regional/zone councils, and Board meetings on issues important to youth.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR ACTION

To encourage youth to be leaders in their communities and in all Canadian Red Cross programs

Our Outcomes:

- Youth are trainers for other youth and non-youth, volunteers and clients (regardless of age).
- Canadian Red Cross youth are ambassadors contributing to a global youth network and representing the Society at international fora.
- Programs have unified and focused Canada-wide standards, which are able to be modified to fit all needs (ex. urban and rural communities, diversity of cultures etc.)
- Increased international and domestic internships for youth.

Success Indicators for these Outcomes include:

- Building out of the national Youth Engagement Strategy, each program has its own youth plan customized to its unique needs, which attempts to:
 - increase youth participation
 - encourage youth to take on roles not traditionally taken on by youth, or where youth are underrepresented
 - create mentorship opportunities that will help youth to prepare for enhanced volunteer roles.
- Efforts made to identify and eliminate systemic barriers and attitudes against youth in greater leadership and decision-making roles.
- All youth wishing to be trainers have access to training and mentorship opportunities that enhance their facilitation skills.

- Strategy created whereby the profile and participation of Canadian Red Cross youth is increased in the Federation youth network, and where Canadian Red Cross youth increase their communication with other Red Cross youth internationally.
- Canadian Red Cross programs – especially those given by or for youth, are customized, within stated parameters, to meet the needs of the local community.
- Mechanism in place which identifies internal/external funding for youth internships or other international experiences.
- Plan created and implemented for facilitating international and domestic youth experiences.
- All international roles for youth would be connected to their roles domestically with Canadian Red Cross, whereby youth accepted for internships are already part of the Canadian Red Cross before and after their internship.

Way Forward

The next steps for the Youth Engagement Strategy will be ensuring that our zones can effectively operationalize this plan within their respective geographies and programs. Working Groups, made up of mostly youth volunteers, will be formed to assist in this process. These groups will focus on the areas of communication, leadership resource database and tool kit creation, career and volunteer pathing, youth in governance and funding research. Working closely with the zones, these volunteer groups will help to operationalize the Youth Engagement Strategy. A National Operations Plan will be completed to guide, monitor and evaluate implementation.