

## V. Conclusion

Henry Dunant hailed the Italian women who provided succor to the wounded and dying soldiers in 1859: "All honor to these compassionate women, to these girls of Castiglione! Imperturbable, unwearying, unfaltering, their quiet self-sacrifice made little of fatigue and horrors, and of their own devotion (34). Well over a century later, women in the Red Cross/ Red Crescent inspire similar accolades. An Argentine Red Cross worker effused: "The warmth of women, put into practice...is the best way of relating to children, ill people and the elderly. It is significant that during the Malvinas War, groups of women appeared almost spontaneously to make coats for the soldiers. Women could not help but to answer the feminine appeal to bring warmth and protection." In the words of a Thai respondent, the Red Cross needs "the woman's hand because there are certain fields in which women can do much better...the Red Cross needs the sweetness of female volunteers." A senior ICRC official suggested that in intense conflict situations in the field, "women are more flexible. It is easier for them to win the confidence of the population. Somehow there are not the same kind of power-struggles as with male delegates."

These characterizations of a special "female style" should not be used to elevate or stereotype women. Nonetheless, they illustrate a very common conceptualization of gender roles in the Red Cross/Red Crescent context. Women have been identified as the primary caregivers in their families, in their communities, and in the Red Cross/Red Crescent, from the Plains of Solferino to the present day. However, many women now insist that they can contribute more to the Movement's humanitarian mission than their female intuition. The challenge of propelling the world's largest humanitarian organization into the

next century will require far more than sewing skills and "sweetness". If the Red Cross/Red Crescent is unable to successfully tap the multi-faceted talents of women at its upper organizational levels, it will squander some of its most important assets. In an era of intense competition among relief and development organizations, the Red Cross/Red Crescent cannot afford to stereotype and frustrate its own female personnel.

There are signs that this frustration already exists. A Nordic Seminar on Women in Development held in June, 1989 assembled over 40 participants from around the world to examine the issue of women in development in the Red Cross/Red Crescent context and to generate policy guidelines (35). According to seminar participants, women face a great number of obstacles, particularly in the Movement's upper organizational levels, by virtue of gender. Women's self-perceptions, perceptions of women held by male managers, and the difficulties in juggling multiple roles were among the many issues emphasized. Some of the obstacles cited included: Women's "lack of self-confidence"; "Women's qualifications are not recognized"; "women do not know the rules of the games that men play"; "women's performance is judged by male standards and criteria"; a "lack of women's networks and support"; and a "lack of education/training for leadership." In short, many of the seminar participants expressed alienation of women from the Movement's managerial and governing structures.

While "impartiality" is heralded as one of the Movement's fundamental principles, women and men have not achieved sociocultural, political, or economic equality in any society. If National Societies, the League Secretariat and the ICRC seek to improve female participation within their own staff structures as well as to ensure optimal service delivery to female beneficiaries, these gender-based inequalities must be taken into consideration. Designing programs based on an assumption of equal access can

result in unintentional discrimination. To use a simple example, if emergency feeding programs are staffed by males and/or food is distributed through male heads of household, women and children - and particularly female headed households - could suffer from reduced access.

Gender-based divisions of labor are found in all Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies. Comparatively few women occupy the upper levels of Red Cross/Red Crescent staffing hierarchies, a pattern that cuts across cultural and geographic barriers. Furthermore, Red Cross/Red Crescent activities reflect the gender-based occupational preferences and patterns of the societies in which they operate. For example, questionnaire data confirmed that women play a comparatively minimal role in emergency and disaster relief services, while they are heavily involved in health and social/psychological support activities.

This leads to a fundamental question: To what extent do these gender-based divisions of labor pose a policy problem? Are they embedded in sociocultural settings in which the Red Cross/Red Crescent cannot or should not meddle? Some of the Movement's voices recommended a cautious approach. As one National Society's questionnaire response asserted, "In order to continue to enjoy the confidence of all, the Movement may not take sides in hostilities or engage at any time in controversies of a political, racial, religious or ideological nature." According to this view, promoting the participation of women into non-traditional fields and managerial positions could mean crossing the line from impartiality to advocacy.

This line has, at least in part, already been crossed. According to Resolutions passed by the VIth and VIIth General Assemblies, the relevance of gender in the Red Cross/Red Crescent has been unambiguously proclaimed. Nonetheless, while the Plan of Action on Women in Red Cross/Red Crescent Development was widely heralded and unanimously passed, it received

support for several very different reasons. The issue of gender continues to be controversial. For some, the Red Cross/Red Crescent has a moral duty to champion the cause of Society's most disadvantaged members. According to one spokesperson, "Advocacy for the cause of women and assigning them more important roles has not received the attention that it deserves." For others, increased female participation is endorsed in order to achieve broad programmatic goals - for example, the need to enlist women in efforts to improve child nutrition. Yet for others, gender issues have personal significance. The perceived lack of promotional opportunities and gender-biased attitudes of male managers has bred frustration and impatience.

Although women have played an important role in the Red Cross/Red Crescent since the Movement's founding, the organization is just now identifying the myriad ways in which their needs concerns as participants and beneficiaries can be addressed in a changing world. This report has sought to inform this process of change by presenting information on the role of women at all levels of the Movement, from program beneficiaries to grassroots volunteers to senior level management. The data collected in the course of this study, and the voices of women that give real shape and meaning to the numbers, have demonstrated the need for more effective utilization of women's resources and more effective planning based on women's needs.

It is vital that policy makers continue the process begun at the VIth General Assembly. The long-term success of this initiative now depends on the Movement's leadership and commitment to implementing the Plan of Action in order to ensure that the "resources and potential of women can be fully utilized to the benefit of development work in the Red Cross/Red Crescent." Few would question that the Movement has a responsibility to aid women, to the extent that they number among the most vulnerable and the most victimized - the priority groups

that it is the Movement's mandate to assist. To the extent that male-oriented staffing structures and institutional ignorance of the gender dynamics of economic and social systems impede the delivery of services, the Movement will be hampered in fulfilling its humanitarian mandate.

## ANNEX 1: QUESTIONNAIRE RESPONDENTS

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The National Societies of the following countries contributed to the Study on Women in the Red Cross and Red Crescent:

### AFRICA

Botswana	Lesotho	Rwanda
Burkina Faso	Liberia	Senegal
Cameroon	Malawi	Sierra Leone
Cape Verde	Mauritania	Sudan
Congo	Mauritius	Tanzania
Ethiopia	Mozambique	Togo
Gambia	Namibia	Uganda
Ghana	Niger	Zambia
Kenya	Nigeria	Zimbabwe

### THE AMERICAS

Argentina	Costa Rica	Nicaragua
Bahamas	Dominica	Panama
Belize	Ecuador	Paraguay
Brazil	El Salvador	St. Vincent and the Grenadines
Canada	Grenada	United States
Chile	Honduras	Uruguay
Colombia	Mexico	

### ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

China	Myanmar (Burma)	Singapore
Fiji	New Zealand	Solomon Islands
India	Pakistan	Thailand
Indonesia	Papua New Guinea	Tonga
Kiribati	Philippines	Vanuatu
Malaysia	Republic of Korea	Western Samoa

## EUROPE

Andorra	Iceland
Austria	Italy
Belgium (Flemish Section)	Liechtenstein
Belgium (French Section)	Luxemburg
Bulgaria	Monaco
Cyprus	Netherlands
Czechoslovakia	Norway
Denmark	Poland
Federal Republic of Germany	Portugal
Finland	Sweden
France	Switzerland
German Democratic Republic	Turkey
Great Britain	USSR
Greece	

## MIDDLE EAST/NORTH AFRICA

Afghanistan	Morocco
Algeria	Qatar
Egypt	Syria
Iran	Tunisia
Libya	United Arab Emirates
	Yemen Arab Republic

Questionnaire responses were received from 96 recognized National Societies and 7 Societies in formation, a total of 103, (36) By region, the numbers and percentages of responding National Societies and Societies in formation:

	Number of Responses	Regional Totals	Regional Resp. Rates
Africa	27	47	57.4%
Asia/Pacific	18	29	62.1%
Americas	20	35	57.1%
Middle East/ North Africa	11	18	61.1%
Europe	27	34	79.4%
TOTAL	103	163	63.4%

Of the 92 signed questionnaires (37), 37 were signed by a woman, 32 by a man, and 23 by a group including at least one woman.

In the course of the study, a global network of consultants conducted field research and assisted National Societies in the completion of their questionnaire responses. The following National Society and League officials participated as consultants and contact persons:

Iris Aslaksen (Norway)  
Christina Baikousi (Greece)  
Comfort Blay (Ghana)  
Gustavo Carmiol (Costa Rica)  
Lily Cherkasskaya (USSR)  
Quamar Choura (Syria)  
Mireille Desrez (France)  
Mirta Dobson (Colombia)  
Najwan El-Houni (Libya)  
Fatima Hassar (Morocco)  
Anne Herin (Belgium)  
Linda Hoffman (USA)  
Omaran Issa (Senegal)  
Chris Jackson (Malawi)  
Margaret Jenkins (Uganda)  
Elizabeth Kassaye (Ethiopia)

Manmohan Kaur (India)  
Gunilla Kullberg (El Salvador and Honduras)  
Alina Kusmierczyk (Poland)  
Julianna Laszlo-Horvarth (Hungary)  
Chipo Lungu (Zambia)  
Janet Mondlane (Mozambique)  
Audrey Mullings (Antigua)  
Amal Osman (Egypt)  
Datin Paduka Ruby Lee (Malaysia)  
Elizabeth Perz (Canada)  
Silvia Petrova (Czechoslovakia)  
Stan Piedford (Bangladesh)  
Sahar Raouas (Jordan)  
Norma Rumano (Zimbabwe)  
Nada Salim (Lebanon)  
Gloria Senador (Philippines)  
Sandra Singer (U.K.)  
Jane Smith (New Zealand)  
Runar Soerensen (Uganda)  
Hanne Thorup (Denmark)  
Orawan Utaisen (Thailand)  
Bashaan Vuyk (Sri Lanka)

## ANNEX 2: NOTES

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1. Quoted in Red Cross International and the Strategy of Peace by James Avery Joyce (New York: Oceania Publications 1959) P. 25.
2. Davison, Henry The American Red Cross in the Great War (New York: MacMillan 1919) P. 19.
3. Quoted in To All Men: The Story of the Canadian Red Cross by McKenzie Porter (McLelland and Stewart, Ltd. 1960).
4. Plan of Action: Women in Red Cross/Red Crescent Development (Geneva: VIIth Session of the General Assembly of the League of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies 1989).
5. Ibid., pp. 1-2.
6. For an analysis of Henry Dunant's views on the role of women in the Red Cross, see "Henry Dunant Feministe" by Roger Durand (Henry Dunant Bulletin, No. 2 1977). For a description of the first Red Cross Conferences and the Movement's early history, see From Solferino to Tsushima by Pierre Bossier (Geneva: Henry Dunant Institute 1985).
7. The average was derived from the questionnaire responses of 100 National Societies and Societies in formation. "Executive bodies" refers to executive councils, national boards, and the equivalent. Terminology varies among National Societies.
8. It should be noted that there is a tendency to recruit senior management from outside the League. Of the 21 male senior managers, 16 were hired at their current position titles and only five were promoted from mid-level positions from within the Secretariat.

9. Questionnaire responses were received from 38 staff members. For detailed information on the questionnaire results, refer to the memorandum, "Questionnaire on the Secretariat and Equal Opportunities", September 1989.

10. For further information on this evaluation, refer to The Situation of Women at the ICRC (May, 1989).

11. All statistics reflect the staff situation as of March 1989.

12. In order to accomplish this objective, ICRC policy now holds that, "when a particular post can be filled either by a man or a woman, and a male and female candidate are both considered suitable, preference should be given to the woman, as a temporary measure." The organization has not yet set specific female "targets", although this possibility may be considered in the future if results are not otherwise achieved.

13. Grown, Caren A. and Sebstad, Jennefer "Introduction: Toward a Wider Perspective on Women's Employment" World Development (Vol. 17, No. 7, July 1989) p. 937.

14. Cited by Joan Kuriansky, Executive Director of the Older Women's League, Washington D.C., November 1989.

15. Chowdhury, Mohiuddin "Adjusting to Circumstances" Red Cross, Red Crescent, April/May 1987.

16. D'Souza, Lena "Role Taking of Women Managers: Implications for Training" (Bombay: S.N.D.T. Women's University, Department of Education Management, 1989).

17. "There is Another Way" by Jean Lockley and Judy Fawcett in Community Care (31 August 1989), p. vi.

18. For example, see Women's Role in Economic Development by Ester Boserup (New York: St. Martins Press 1970); Gender Roles in Development Projects by Catherine Overholt (et. al.) (West Hartford CT: Kumanian Press 1985); "Feminizing Development: For Growth with Equity" by Irene Tinker in CARE Briefs on Development Issues (No. 6, 1987); "Women in Development Cooperation, A Human Rights Perspective" by Katarina Tomasevski in Netherlands Quarterly of Human Rights (No. 4, 1988); and Women in Developing Countries: A Select Annotated Bibliography for Development Organizations edited by Janet Townsend (Sussex: Institute of Development Studies 1988).

20. For example, see: Women in Development: Guidelines and Procedures (Australian Development Assistance Bureau, 1984); Women in Development: CIDA Action Plan (Canadian International Development Agency, 1986); Plan of Action for Assistance to Women: Sector Plan (Denmark: DANIDA, 1988); Women in Development in Aid Review 1986 (Netherlands, Ministry of Development Cooperation, 1987); Norway's Strategy for Assistance to Women in Development (Royal Norwegian Ministry of Development Cooperation, 1985); The Women's Dimension in Development Assistance: SIDA's Plan of Action (Swedish International Development Authority, 1985); Women in Development: AID's Experience 1973-1985 (United States Agency for international Development, 1987).

21. See Effective Mobilization and Integration of Women in Development: Plans and Programs of the organizations of the United Nations system to implement the system-wide medium term plan (E/1989/16).

22. For additional information, see: Women Health and Development (Geneva: World Health Organization, 1985); Note on Refugee Women (Geneva: High Commissioner for Refugees, 1988); Women in Development: Guidelines by Sector New York: United Nations Development Programme, 1989); Updated Guidelines for UNFPA Policies and Support to Special Programmes in

the Field of Women, Population and Development (New York: United Nations Fund for Population Activities, 1988).

23. Tinker, Irene "Feminizing Development: For Growth with Equity" Care Briefs on Development Issues (No. 6, 1987) p. 10.

24. See Hagman, Gunnar (et. al.) From Disaster Relief to Development (Geneva: Henry Dunant Institute 1988) and Anderson, Mary and Woodrow, Peter Rising From the Ashes: Development Strategies in Times of Disaster (Boulder: Westview Press 1989)

25. Cornia, Giovanni et. al. Adjustment with a Human Face: Protecting the Vulnerable and Promoting Youth (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987).

26. Ibid., p. 938.

27. Tinker, Irene, Op. Cit. p. 3.

28. Buvinic, Mayra "Investing in Poor Women: The Psychology of Donor Support" World Development (Vol. 17, No. 7, July 1989).

29. See Rural Development: Putting the First Last by Robert Chambers (London: Longman 1983) p. 80.

30. World Bank, Women in Development Division Women in Development: Issues for Economic and Sector Analysis (Policy, Planning and Research Working Papers, August 1989) p. 27.

31. Sivard, Ruth Leger Women... A World Survey (Washington D.C.: World Priorities 1985) p. 27.

32. Ibid., p. 27.

33. World Bank, Op. Cit. pp. 18-19.

34. A Memory of Solferino by Henry Dunant (Geneva: International Committee of the Red Cross, 1986) p.72.

35. For further information on the seminar, held in Sundvollen Norway in June 1989, see Nordic Seminar on "Women in Development" (Oslo: Norwegian Red Cross 1989).

36. This total includes seven National Societies that did not complete questionnaires but did provide information to regional consultants or to the Henry Dunant Institute directly. The Belgian Red Cross Flemish Section and French Section have been counted as separate responses.

37. Eleven questionnaires were signed by the name of the National Society only, rather than specific individuals.

While the first Red Cross Conference, convened in 1863, marked the “birth of the Red Cross”, it was a birth that no women attended. And well over a century later, no women have ascended to the highest levels of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement’s power structure.

This book examines the implications of introducing gender as a relevant criterion in program planning, addressing two dimensions of Women in Development: women as participants and women as beneficiaries.

The findings indicate that appropriate programming must be based on women’s needs and participation and to achieve this requires their integration into the male dominated decision-making structures of the Movement. Hopefully, a process of institutional self-assessment has been set in motion that will continue for many years to come.

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