



St Vincent and the Grenadines Red Cross Society

YOUTH POLICY

The purpose of this Policy is to set the standard in working with and for young people throughout the St Vincent and the Grenadines Red Cross Society (SVGRCS). It serves as a national point of reference to ensure consistency in decision-making and builds on the IFRC Youth Policy and IFRC Youth Engagement Strategy. This Policy will be reviewed by the XXXX session of the SVGRCS General Assembly in 20XX.

Introduction

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

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

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

Definitions

While 'Youth' is identified as individuals aged 15-24 by the National Statistical Office, for the sake of this document, it is defined as persons within the ages of 5 years and 24 years of age. This includes children (5 to 11 years old), adolescents (12 to 17 years old), and young adults (18 to 24 years old). In St. Vincent and the Grenadines, primary schooling begins at age 5 while students may continue at the college level to 19 years. During this wide period of time, many social, physical and psychological changes occur. At the NS, it is important for us that everyone be given the opportunity to grow, learn and develop into productive and capable individuals and citizens. Youth are a heterogeneous group with diverse backgrounds, expertise, skillsets, and needs which requires appropriate human development approaches for meaningful engagement.

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

Youth as Leaders

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

To harness positive contributions of young people, SVGRCS must create empowering and stimulating environments that enable participation of youth in decision-making and follow-up action. Allowing young people to self-organise through youth-led structures fosters leadership development and enables youth to have own voice. In addition, nurturing intergenerational cooperation while ensuring equitable participation in governance, management and service delivery on local, regional, and national levels benefits individual development and strengthens the SVGRCS’ operational capacity and institutional growth. Investing in systematic and competency-centred learning for young leaders is key for transformational impact on the quality leadership in the SVGRCS.

Youth as Volunteers

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

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

Youth as Members of Affected Communities

Children, adolescents, and young adults who participate in and benefit from Red Cross programmes and services are not passive recipients of aid. On the contrary, they are involved in the planning, design, delivery and review of programmes and services reaching them. Resilience strengthening is at the core of the SVGRCS’ engagement with young members of affected communities so that they are better able to bounce back, contribute, and take a lead in addressing

humanitarian issues. In the fast-paced world, vulnerabilities are becoming increasingly invisible, therefore the Red Cross programmes and services must also address the hidden vulnerabilities that children, adolescents, and young adults face, including mental health and well-being.

Measuring the Impact

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

- Developing and implementation of a strategic plan on youth engagement
- Number of young people in the Governing board and at all levels of decision making
- Youth-led structures
- Full-time equivalent paid staff dedicated to providing technical support in youth engagement
- Financial resources specifically earmarked for youth engagement
- Frameworks for individual and professional development for young people
- Number of young people working in the National Societies as paid staff
- Approaches to recruit, accompany, and retain young people from marginalised group as their volunteers
- Guidelines on engagement of young people from affected communities
- Participation in the Regional Red Cross Youth Networks

Sharing Roles and Responsibilities

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

Young peoples' roles are to proactively pursue the Youth Policy commitments in the SVGRCS.