

How to foster resilience via social entrepreneurship

The entrepreneurial journey of a social organisation



Paris - Vienna | June 2024


AUSTRIAN RED CROSS


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Human beings are multidimensional beings, full of potential and energy. Through entrepreneurship, we can expand this potential.

Prof. Muhammad Yunus
Nobel Peace Prize, 2006



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Pauline Lebas Blanc-Patin

Innovation Director at the French Red Cross

Giulio Zucchini

Head of International Innovation at the French Red Cross

Camille Loiseau

International Innovation Officer at the French Red Cross

Alice Bloomfield

Technical Referent for National Society Development at the International Department of the French Red Cross

Emma Laigaisse

International Innovation Trainee Officer at the French Red Cross

Elin Baranyai-Ulvestad

REDpreneur Program Manager at the Austrian Red Cross

Christian Kloyber

Innovation Facilitator at the Austrian Red Cross

In collaboration with the IFRC and with the support of:

Annette Msabeni, Organisational Transformation Manager at the IFRC

Hayfa Khalidy, Financial Sustainability Senior Officer at the IFRC

Mark Frame, Head at the IFRC Livelihoods Centre

A special thanks for their support and encouragement goes to **Philippe Da Costa**, the President of the French Red Cross, **Gerald Schöpfer**, President of the Austrian Red Cross, **Nathalie Smirnov**, Secretary General of the French Red Cross, **Peter Kaiser**, Deputy Secretary General of the Austrian Red Cross, and **Frank Mohrhauer**, Director, National Society Development Services at International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies.

And a special thanks to **Rosine Zadi**, Editorial Consultant, who supported us in writing the report.

Illustrations: **Alice Piaggio**

Design: **Maja Bialon**

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Introduction

In an era marked by dynamic challenges and evolving community needs, the concept of resilience has become increasingly central to humanitarian and developmental discourse. Against this backdrop, the intersection of social entrepreneurship /social enterprise and resilience emerges as a promising avenue for driving sustainable change.

Since its creation in 1863, the Red Cross Red Crescent Movement is known for being on the frontline of humanitarian crises. Yet, for decades, National Societies (NS) have also been exploring social entrepreneurship to amplify their capacity to empower communities and bolster resilience, building bridges with external actors like governments, businesses, or social entrepreneurs.

Indeed, National Societies are uniquely positioned to catalyse local development and fortify community resilience. By nurturing a culture of social entrepreneurship, NS can harness local talents, resources, and aspirations to effect positive change from within. This necessitates concerted efforts to ensure the resilience of National Societies at the organisational level, enabling them to deliver services that are pertinent, high-quality, and accessible while upholding the 7 fundamental Principles.

Recognising financial sustainability as a linchpin of National Society Development, it is imperative to collectively invest in initiatives that strengthen the autonomy of National Societies with the support of a mix of domestic and international partners. Of particular salience is the imperative to connect and leverage initiatives across the four pillars of National Society Financial Sustainability, with a keen focus on Resource Mobilisation. Within Resource Mobilisation, initiatives pertaining to Income-Generating Activities (IGA), Social Enterprise, and Social Entrepreneurship emerge as pivotal game-changers.

These initiatives mitigate National Societies' reliance on external funding and partners and foster social impact and empowerment at the grassroots level, positioning beneficiaries and volunteers as architects of their own resilience.

By embracing social entrepreneurship as a catalyst for community empowerment, sustainable organisational development, and financial resilience, National Societies can chart a course towards more inclusive, self-reliant, and resilient communities.

In subsequent sections, this report will delve deeper into successful examples of how social entrepreneurship can be operationalised within the NSD and the National Society Financial Sustainability frameworks, spotlighting best practices, case studies, and actionable recommendations for galvanising stakeholders towards collective action.

We hope this report will spark the interest and curiosity of volunteers, employees and partners of National Societies, to improve our capacities and be able to meet the needs of the people we are working for.



The Importance of Social Entrepreneurship and Social Enterprise to Localisation, National Society Development and Financial Sustainability by Annette Msabeni

National Society Development, as an enabler of local action, purposefully contributes to helping the National Society achieve and maintain an accountable and sustainable organisation that delivers – through volunteers and staff – relevant local services to address needs, reduce vulnerabilities and build resilience in the community, in full respect of the Fundamental Principles.

National Society Financial sustainability was identified by the membership as one of the key areas of National Society Development work, which stands out in need of collective investment for improvement.

Specific NSD initiatives related to providing support for strengthening the four pillars of NS financial sustainability, including the Resource Mobilisation pillar (RM), are examples of NSD work fostering localisation.

Initiatives related to Income-Generating Activities (IGA), specifically related to Social Entrepreneurship and Social Enterprise within the RM pillar, are game changers, both:

- at the National Society level, as they help reduce the organisation's dependency on external funding and partners
- and at the community level, as they drive social impact and empowerment, allowing the beneficiaries and volunteers to make their own decisions and to become actors of their own resilience.

IGA for National Societies might include Social Enterprises focused on "traditional" domestic services such as voluntary blood donation, workplace (commercial) first aid, pre-hospital care, such as ambulance services, community-based primary health care, hospitals, clinics, sale of first-aid kits, sale of affordable second-hand clothes and formal and informal education, including for groups with special needs.

IGA might also include entirely new and innovative service and product lines to obtain long-term unearmarked income, which is a very important element of financial sustainability, especially true for branches which, due to their situation, sometimes find it more complicated to develop other sources of income.

Running a Social Enterprise requires a specific mindset and skillset. To be successful, a Social Enterprise needs to leverage expertise and know-how that is often available in commercial or business sectors and adapt it to its social goals, giving

the membership the opportunity to look outside our sector for inspiration, dare to try innovative approaches and generate lessons to be shared widely.

Initiatives, like REDpreneur and the 21 Program, to highlight as examples, are important and timely solutions which aim at developing the business skills, connections and networks needed to set up and manage Social Enterprise. This is a critical and urgent need within a large number of National Societies.

There is also a growing and important need of entrepreneurs from National Societies and Communities to continue and expand the conversation started globally through the Resource Mobilisation Community of Practice (RMC). This is a strategic service developed by the IFRC Secretariat, providing National Societies with a flexible space to connect and collaborate via an agile and efficient way of working within the membership, contributing to the collective investment for improvement on National Society's Financial Sustainability.

Recognising all the above, the IFRC Secretariat reconfirms its commitment to providing leadership and delivering on the coordination and connections among key initiatives across the 4 pillars of National Society Financial Sustainability and, ultimately NSD.

How to foster resilience via social entrepreneurship by the French Red Cross and the Austrian Red Cross

The humanitarian sphere is witnessing an escalation of multiple crises driven by factors such as climate change and widening socioeconomic disparities. These challenges are becoming increasingly intricate and frequent, placing considerable strain on traditional funding channels like institutional support and charitable donations. Furthermore, the shortfall in Sustainable Development Goal funding is widening, with Official Development Assistance (ODA) and philanthropic contributions needing to catch up with rising needs.

In response to these challenges, social entrepreneurship has taken root. Defined as an economic activity designed to create positive social or environmental outcomes, it is now recognised as a viable component of resource mobilisation strategies, programmatic activities, innovation, and advocacy efforts.

National Societies can utilise social entrepreneurship as a key element in resource mobilisation by developing products or services with beneficial social impacts. This approach aims to enhance financial stability and promote greater autonomy through diversifying revenue streams and establishing sustainable services. Moreover, by generating revenue from services that produce re-investable profits, National Societies can engage with repayable finance and impact investments, expanding their access to capital beyond the limits of traditional philanthropic sources.

Given the scale and complexity of our challenges, it's clear that neither individual organisations nor the humanitarian system can address them alone. Collaboration beyond traditional boundaries is essential. Fostering partnerships and viewing social entrepreneurs and social enterprises as allies rather than competitors enables us to leverage diverse strengths and resources towards shared humanitarian goals. Besides collaboration with established social enterprises, investing in the capacity development of local social entrepreneurs strongly aligns with our commitment to community resilience. Local entrepreneurship, especially geared towards vulnerable communities, has the potential to foster social innovation and financial independence of these groups. This is an essential target of many of our livelihood support initiatives.

Finally, scholars and civil society organisations attribute our era's numerous crises to systemic issues deeply embedded within the economic system, stemming from exploiting natural and labour resources for economic profit and growth. By prioritising the development of social entrepreneurship, the Movement can advocate for an economy centred on human needs, including health, education, livelihoods, or ecological regeneration, and demonstrate that such an endeavour is not only impactful but also economically viable.

Christian Kloyber, Innovation Facilitator at the Austrian Red Cross
Giulio Zucchini, Head of International Innovation at the French Red Cross
Pauline Lebas Blanc-Patin, Innovation Director at the French Red Cross

Glossary

Business / Enterprise	<p>An Enterprise/Business sells services or products in a market and generates revenues.</p> <p>An enterprise generally refers to a larger and more established organisation or business entity that has an existing presence in the market.</p> <p><i>Impact Hub Vienna</i></p>
Social Business / Social Enterprise	<p>An organisation that applies business strategies to address social or environmental issues, prioritising positive impact alongside financial sustainability. Profits are reinvested into the social impact project, and the goal is not necessarily profitability but rather creating significant social or environmental benefits.</p> <p>It is managed openly and responsibly, involving employees, consumers, and stakeholders affected by its commercial activities.</p> <p><i>Adapted from European Commission</i></p>
Entrepreneurship / Social Entrepreneurship	<p>Entrepreneurship describes the activity of starting and running a business, typically characterised by innovation, risk-taking, and the pursuit of opportunities.</p> <p>Social Entrepreneurship describes an entrepreneurial action which aims to solve social or environmental challenges while pursuing financial sustainability.</p> <p>These actions could be initiated in the form of a new business (start-up) or in the context of existing organisations (social intrapreneurship).</p> <p>The legal structure can vary: some social enterprises are established as a profit centre within an association, others as a company with limited liability.</p> <p><i>Adapted from Vienna Business University</i></p>
Social Entrepreneur / Social Intrapreneur	<p>A Social entrepreneur establishes and operates a business with the primary goal of addressing social or environmental issues.</p> <p>An intrapreneur applies entrepreneurial skills within a larger organisation to drive innovation.</p> <p><i>Impact Hub Vienna</i></p>
Social enterprise development	<p>The process of establishing and growing organisations that use business principles to tackle social problems and promote positive change.</p> <p><i>Impact Hub Vienna</i></p>
Social Innovation	<p>A novel solution to a social problem that is more effective, efficient, sustainable, or just than present solutions and for which the value created accrues primarily to society rather than private individuals.</p> <p><i>Stanford Business Centre for Social Innovation</i></p>
Income-Generating Activities (IGA)	<p>Actions that produce revenue or income contributing to the financial sustainability of an organisation.</p> <p><i>Impact Hub Vienna</i></p>

Revenue / Revenue Stream	<p>Income generated by an organisation through diverse channels, including product and service sales, membership dues, and donations.</p> <p>A Revenue Stream refers to a single source of income.</p> <p><i>Impact Hub Vienna</i></p>
Earned Income / Contributed Income	<p>Earned income refers to the income from sales of goods or services to customers. Contributed income is the income that a non-profit receives from donations, grants, or gifts from individuals, foundations, corporations, or government agencies.</p> <p><i>Faster Capital - https://fastercapital.com/</i></p>
Financial Sustainability (for National Societies)	<p>A financially sustainable National Society attracts and manages the financial resources it needs to deliver humanitarian services in a transparent and accountable manner.</p> <p>It manages financial risk and opportunities, balancing its strategy to respond to present and emerging needs with the adaptive organisational structure and processes that enable the delivery of that strategy.</p>
Funding / Financing	<p>Funding refers to money which generally does not need to be paid back to the provider if it is used in accordance with its terms (e.g. a grant)</p> <p>Financing refers to money that needs to be paid back to the provider (e.g. loans or equity from the public or private sector). Hence, earned income is needed to engage in financing.</p> <p><i>Adapted from European PPP Center</i></p>
Incubator / Accelerator	<p>Programs or organisations that support and nurture the development of startups by providing resources, mentorship, capacity-building, and sometimes funding.</p> <p><i>Impact Hub Vienna</i></p>
Incubation / Acceleration	<p>The process of supporting and fostering the growth of early-stage businesses (incubation) or rapidly advancing the development and growth of startups (acceleration).</p> <p><i>Impact Hub Vienna</i></p>
Livelihoods	<p>Comprise the capabilities, assets and activities required to generate income and secure a living means. Sustainable livelihoods refer to people's capacity to generate and maintain their means of living and enhance their own well-being and that of future generations.</p> <p><i>IFRC guidelines for livelihoods programming, 2011</i></p>

1. The entrepreneurial journey

What does it mean for National Societies?

Since its emergence in the 1970s, social entrepreneurship has evolved from a fledgling concept to a robust sector within the global economy, pioneered by figures like Bill Drayton of Ashoka and Nobel Peace Prize laureate Muhammad Yunus of Grameen Bank. Their work emphasised using entrepreneurial approaches to tackle social and environmental challenges, paving the way for the concept's widespread recognition and adoption.

By the early 2000s, social entrepreneurship had gained substantial institutional recognition, underscored by initiatives such as the British government's Social Enterprise Coalition and educational programmes at leading global institutions. Amid significant organisations such as Ashoka, the Schwab Foundation, and the Skoll Foundation, the Red Cross Red Crescent's unique approach—rooted in its extensive humanitarian experience—has proved not only relevant but also essential in enhancing the sector.

The field has seen an expansion in the range of business models, moving beyond non-profit organisations to include commercial enterprises aimed at social impact. This diversification and the strategic integration of social entrepreneurship into public policies have significantly enhanced its legitimacy and spurred its growth.

Today, the unique positioning of the Red Cross Red Crescent Movement in social entrepreneurship—primarily known for emergency management—highlights the substantial benefits of its dual capacity as both a crisis responder and a proactive agent of social change.

Building on this, National Societies have embarked on a multifaceted journey to explore how social entrepreneurship can catalyse changes across the Movement. This journey is anchored in five key pillars: impact, economic model, positioning, attractiveness, and innovation.



1.1 Empowering Communities and Crisis Response

While organisations such as Ashoka, Yunus Social Business, and Impact Hub significantly contribute to entrepreneurship support, humanitarian organisations can offer complementary services that leverage their unique capabilities. National Societies, with their unparalleled reach, reputable standing, and deep-rooted community expertise, are distinctively positioned to play a pivotal role in the social entrepreneurship landscape.

From the onset of disasters to the arduous recovery journey, National Societies focus on building resilience and autonomy among the most vulnerable populations. They aim to enhance their ability to anticipate, withstand, and recover from the consequences of these shocks before, during, and after such events.

As one of the most significant humanitarian movements globally, National Societies wield unparalleled strengths that position them as catalysts for change:

- **Understanding and proximity to Vulnerable Populations:** Decades of hands-on experience have given us a profound understanding of vulnerable populations' nuanced needs and challenges. Our continuous engagement and research allow us to stay abreast of evolving vulnerabilities and adapt our strategies accordingly.
- **Local Presence:** With an extensive network of local branches and a 16 million volunteer pool, National Societies can reach even the most vulnerable communities, ensuring inclusivity in our interventions. Establishing strong community ties fosters trust and empowers local leaders, enhancing the sustainability of our efforts.
- **Global Reach:** Our global footprint equips us with the resources and capabilities to mount swift and effective responses to crises on a global scale, leaving no one behind.
- **Trusted Organisation:** The Red Cross Red Crescent emblem is a beacon of trust and reliability, instilling confidence in our interventions and garnering respect worldwide. Our adherence to rigorous standards of accountability and transparency reinforces our credibility and ensures the efficient allocation of resources.
- **Comprehensive Support:** Our holistic approach includes the Red Cross Red Crescent Movement 7 principles and encompasses everything from immediate emergency relief to long-term development programs, offering unwavering support throughout every phase of the recovery journey. By integrating psychosocial support, livelihood assistance, and community-building initiatives, National Societies address the multifaceted needs of affected populations and promote sustainable recovery and resilience-building.



1.2 Building financial sustainability and reaffirming our independence

Financial sustainability is key to supporting and developing National Societies as strong effective local actors. Central to our vision of sustainable impact is a robust economic model designed to reduce our reliance on external funding sources and foster financial independence. The humanitarian sector recognises the need to move beyond grant-based financing, particularly prevalent in Southern National Societies, and break free from this dependency.

This reflection also extends to Northern National Societies, which are facing reduced grants and aid from donors. While not all projects may have viable business models, especially in emergencies, embracing this mindset will enhance sustainability. Through revenue stream diversification and meticulous resource management, National Societies are charting a course toward long-term economic stability, ensuring they can meet future challenges confidently and flexibly.

1.3 Modernising our scope of action and Attracting young Volunteers

In our journey towards evolution, National Societies are modernising their identity by developing new programmes and by leveraging our strengths to attract new partners and reinforce existing relationships. For a National Society, attracting and retaining volunteers is pivotal. Volunteers play a crucial role, blurring lines between benefactors and beneficiaries and fostering community solidarity and self reliance. Recognising these shifts in youth volunteering and commitment, National Societies can explore entrepreneurship as an incentive for engagement.

This shift in funding strategy and their involvement into IGAs may also influence volunteers' perceptions, instilling a sense of ownership and pride in their organisation's financial resilience and self-sufficiency.

1.4 Engaging Our Stakeholders and Partners

Central to National Societies' success is cultivating attractiveness among stakeholders, including volunteers, staff, partners, and funders. Through a culture of excellence, inclusivity, and collaboration, National Societies are fostering a community of passionate advocates dedicated to advancing their mission and driving meaningful change. This commitment to creating an engaging and supportive environment attracts and retains talented individuals and strengthens relationships with partners and funders, enhancing National Societies' initiatives' overall effectiveness and impact.

Initiatives such as 21, the Social Innovation Accelerator of the French Red Cross and REDpreneur by the Austrian Red Cross, are promoting social entrepreneurship among volunteers and staff, exemplifying this commitment to innovation

and empowerment within National Societies. Through programs like these, National Societies harness the creativity and dedication of their members to address societal challenges and create sustainable solutions for communities in need.

Furthermore, these initiatives serve as bridges to ecosystem actors such as Ashoka, Yunus Social Business or the Impact Hub network, and corporations engaging in social entrepreneurship.

1.5 Embracing Innovation

Innovation has always been intrinsic to National Societies, often stemming from the dedication of our volunteers. These innovative projects serve as a hub for collaboration and idea generation, empowering us to stay ahead of the curve in humanitarian innovation. Together, these pillars form the bedrock of our entrepreneurial journey, guiding us toward a future where human suffering is alleviated, dignity is upheld, and hope is restored.

These innovative projects, such as Minutis, serve as a hub for collaboration and idea generation, empowering us to stay ahead of the curve in humanitarian innovation.

Minutis is a sophisticated digital platform developed to enhance emergency operations management. The app addresses critical gaps in communication and coordination during emergencies by enabling real-time data sharing and operational coordination among volunteers. It supports various activities, from emergency plans to social support initiatives. The app's key features include geolocation, secure data exchange, and comprehensive management tools for resources and personnel, significantly optimising response times and operational efficiency.

Initiated by a volunteer from the French Red Cross in response to the communication challenges faced during the 2015 Paris terror attacks, Minutis exemplifies on-the-ground innovation that enhances emergency operation management through real-time data sharing and coordination.

What does accompanying social entrepreneurship look like



The Red Cross Red Crescent's entrepreneurial journey possesses unique characteristics rooted in its humanitarian mission and operational context. Initiatives prioritise addressing humanitarian needs and engaging closely with affected communities. Partnerships with diverse stakeholders are essential, while adaptability and rapid prototyping ensure responsiveness to dynamic situations. Robust impact measurement systems uphold accountability, and ethical considerations adhere to neutrality and impartiality principles. Overall, the entrepreneurial journey within the Red Cross Red Crescent combines innovation with a steadfast commitment to humanitarian values, aiming to deliver impactful solutions to communities in need.

The table below outlines the Red Cross Red Crescent's journey in serving vulnerable communities through social entrepreneurship. With engagement and understanding, individuals are empowered to become entrepreneurs, fostering community resilience and economic stability.

Table 1 Steps towards serving vulnerable communities through social entrepreneurship journey (B2C Approach)

Step	Description
Engagement with Vulnerable Communities	The NS engages with vulnerable communities, listening to their stories, understanding their challenges, and witnessing their resilience.
Capacity Building	Customised training programs and tools are provided to aspiring entrepreneurs, equipping them with the skills and knowledge needed to start and sustain their businesses.
Empowerment and Support	As entrepreneurs flourish, their businesses become pillars of strength and livelihood improvement within their communities, providing employment opportunities, goods, and services to those in need.
Community Resilience	Increased economic stability leads to enhanced social cohesion, reduced vulnerability to shocks, and improved quality of life within communities.
Impact Measurement	Continuous innovation and adaptation ensure the sustainability and growth of social entrepreneurship ventures within National Societies, driving long-term impact and contributing to positive social change.

Below, the evolution of the Red Cross Red Crescent's economic model through social entrepreneurship initiatives within National Societies (NS) is presented. From identifying opportunities to celebrating newfound financial sustainability, this table highlights how NS are empowered to diversify their revenue streams and better serve their communities.

Table 2 Steps towards diversifying National Societies' economic model through Social Enterprise Development (B2B2C Approach)

Step	Description
Identification of Opportunities	National Societies identify opportunities for income generation and diversification, recognising the potential for social entrepreneurship to contribute to the sustainability and resilience of NS operations.
Capacity Development	Intensive capacity-building initiatives and mentorship programs empower NS staff, volunteers, and intrapreneurs to harness their creativity and innovation to drive positive change.
Integration of Social Entrepreneurship	Social entrepreneurship becomes integrated into the fabric of NS operations, with ventures launched and campaigns developed to secure the future and better serve communities' needs.
Financial Autonomy and Resilience	This concept refers to the capacity of National Societies to enhance their operational stability and effectiveness in mission fulfilment. Appreciating the opportunity for greater financial independence, NS benefit from reduced reliance on traditional funding sources. This autonomy enables them to potentially deploy additional resources and concentrate more deeply on their fundamental objectives, bolstering their ability to function and succeed independently.
Organisational Impact	The success of social entrepreneurship initiatives strengthens NS's overall capacity and effectiveness, enabling it to fulfil its mission better and serve the needs of vulnerable communities.
Sustainability and Growth	Continuous innovation and adaptation ensure the sustainability and growth of social entrepreneurship ventures within the Red Cross Red Crescent Movement, driving long-term impact and contributing to positive social change.

Suggestions of how to accompany social entrepreneurship initiatives

Social entrepreneurship is fostered by many National Societies within the Red Cross Red Crescent Movement. Some of them rely on proven Income-Generating Activities such as first-aid training, second-hand shops or commercial ambulances to diversify their revenues at the organisational level. Others have established incubators or acceleration programmes for their staff, volunteers or the Broader community to instigate the development of ideas from the field. Other NS have created self-employment or micro-entrepreneurship support programmes as part of their livelihood activities.



Generally speaking, support could include access to resources like workspace, technology, expert advice or financial support (seed funding). It could also involve facilitating networking opportunities with relevant stakeholders. Additionally, the NS could assist in securing funding through grant applications or connecting entrepreneurs with potential investors.

In terms of technical support, NS can provide training on hard skills such as business planning (including Human-Centred Design and Business Model Canvas methodologies), marketing strategies, book-keeping and financial management, or soft skills such as leadership, decision making or storytelling. Mentor coaching sessions could provide valuable guidance and feedback throughout the entrepreneurship journey.

This approach empowers volunteers and recognises them as potential project leaders within the Movement.

Typical steps of the entrepreneurship journey and how a NS could intervene

To effectively intervene, the National Societies could embrace the traditional stages of the entrepreneurship journey, beginning with Assessment & Analysis, where they evaluate the viability and potential impact of the initiative. This is followed by the Design stage, where NS collaborates with entrepreneurs to formulate a comprehensive business plan and strategy. Implementation comes next, where NS assists entrepreneurs in executing their plans and accessing necessary resources. The process concludes with Monitoring and Evaluation, where NS tracks progress, assesses outcomes, and provides ongoing support and adjustments as needed. This structured approach enables NS to empower social entrepreneurs within their organisations to create lasting solutions that tackle pressing societal issues.

2. How to directly support vulnerable communities

Globally, two billion people work in the informal sector, representing more than 60% of the world's population. One of the key factors affecting informality is education, with people living in rural areas almost twice as likely to be in informal employment than those in urban areas. Because social rights do not protect them, informal workers are more vulnerable to shocks and generally experience more significant losses during crises.



In the following section, we will explore how social entrepreneurship is a key tool for combating poverty and empowering vulnerable communities, especially from the informal sector, including marginalised communities—such as youth, women, migrants, refugees, or individuals with disabilities.

Across the globe, social entrepreneurship has emerged as a potent force, driven by initiatives like Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) and supported by training and capacity-building efforts, tackling diverse global challenges from poverty and hunger to climate change. Social entrepreneurs establish enterprises worldwide, significantly influencing economies and generating millions of jobs.

In recognition of the ever-shifting landscape marked by crises, climate variations, and demographic changes, National Societies have embarked on social entrepreneurship initiatives to integrate local realities and ensure the sustainability of our actions.

We emphasise the empowerment of communities through social entrepreneurship to foster lasting impact and resilience. By enabling innovative solutions and supporting vulnerable groups—women and youth, especially in the informal sector—we aim to create lasting change and secure livelihoods.

2.1 Empower the Communities!

Entrepreneurship empowers individuals to create sustainable income sources, offering a possible pathway out of poverty. Many National Societies have developed programs to integrate entrepreneurship into educational curricula, and provide skills training to change perceptions and encourage vulnerable communities to pursue alternative career paths. Various initiatives focus on skills training, business development, creating an enabling environment for entrepreneurship, empowering vulnerable groups, and fostering community support networks.

2.2 Value Proposition

At the heart of National Societies' approach lies rigorous research and dynamic collaboration with local partners, crafting tailor-made programs to meet specific community needs head-on. We ensure concrete, measurable results through meticulously executed training initiatives and data-driven insights. Community involvement isn't just a checkbox for us—it's the cornerstone of our ethos, fostering a culture of shared values and inclusivity deeply rooted in local contexts.

We understand the power of collaboration and work closely with ecosystems and partners to extend our impact. Together, we drive change on a larger scale, ensuring our solutions reach those who need them most.

Our social enterprise training programs aren't just about learning; they're about empowerment and transformation. By zeroing in on areas with glaring development gaps, we tackle systemic inequalities head-on, fostering inclusive growth in work and economic development, climate action, and gender equality—the critical pillars of a brighter future.



2.3 Best Practices

- › **The Transformative Power of Micro-Entrepreneurship in Building Community Resilience**, an interview of Mark Frame, Head of IFRC Livelihoods Centre
- › **The Women Social Entrepreneurship Institute**: How to support informal entrepreneurs
- › **Bonds of Sisterhood**: Building Resilient Communities through Mothers Clubs
- › **Brewing Confidence**: How Leaps and Grounds Shapes Futures for Refugee Women
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The Transformative Power of Micro-Entrepreneurship in Building Community Resilience, an interview of Mark Frame, Head of IFRC Livelihoods Centre

Interview

In an insightful interview, Mark Frame, Head of the IFRC Livelihoods Centre, sheds light on their pivotal role in advancing economic empowerment. The Centre is dedicated to strengthening the resilience and dignity of communities affected by crises, including chronic crises and structural poverty. Through the development of sustainable livelihood strategies, the Centre aims to enhance the capacities of IFRC members and other stakeholders by disseminating resources, sharing best practices, and providing expert technical guidance. Frame highlights the Centre's commitment to addressing key issues such as migration, climate change, employment, and financial inclusion, underscoring their multifaceted approach which includes knowledge sharing, capacity building, humanitarian diplomacy, and fostering global partnerships.

In your opinion, what role can the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement play in entrepreneurship support?

The Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement can be pivotal in supporting entrepreneurship by leveraging its extensive network, resources, and expertise. Depending on the context, the scope of economic initiatives in which the RC/RC Movement is involved ranges from the primary sector (agriculture, livestock, etc.) to those related to the secondary and tertiary sectors (processing, services, etc.) and labour inclusion.

The role may vary according to the context and modality of entrepreneurship supported:

- Creating and reinforcing knowledge in entrepreneurship management, applicable in primary sector activities and developing small and microenterprises, as well as functional and digital literacy.
- Offering technical skills related to livelihood activities such as agricultural production, processing, sewing, mechanics, etc.
- Providing mentoring and coaching programs to aspiring entrepreneurs and job seekers, equipping them with essential skills and knowledge.

Offering access to financial resources through grants, access to microfinance institutions, or self-managed savings and credit groups to help individuals start or scale their businesses.

Additionally, the Movement can facilitate market linkages and partnerships, enabling entrepreneurs to access broader markets and opportunities. By fostering entrepreneurship, the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement empowers individuals economically and strengthens community resilience and self-reliance in crises.

What evolutions have you observed over the past decades in the humanitarian sector regarding entrepreneurship support programs?

Over the past decades, the humanitarian sector has increasingly recognised the importance of entrepreneurship support for sustainable development and resilience-building. There has been a shift from traditional aid models focused solely on relief efforts towards more holistic approaches, including protection and recovery of livelihood activities, strengthening and diversification, and economic empowerment. The Nexus (and triple-Nexus) approach is the best example of how humanitarian actors (and donors) aim to address crises by linking humanitarian response with resilience and peacebuilding, for which (as mentioned) supporting livelihoods and sustainable economic initiatives play a significant role in enhancing resilience building. This evolution reflects a growing understanding of the interconnectedness of financial stability, social well-being, and disaster resilience. Humanitarian organisations have also become more innovative in their approaches, incorporating business training, access to finance, and market development into their programs. Furthermore, there is a greater emphasis on building local capacity and empowering communities to drive their development agendas rather than relying solely on external assistance.

Can you share one concrete example of a Red Cross Red Crescent micro-entrepreneurship project that has triggered a broader impact within its community?

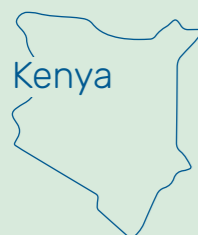
There are several examples of Red Cross and Red Crescent micro-entrepreneurship projects with significant impacts on beneficiaries and communities:

The Gambia RC COVID-19 response program, in partnership with the Spanish RC, supported 393 people in urban and peri-urban areas of The Gambia through 7 tourist associations (craft producers, fruit sellers, birdwatchers, tourist guides, etc.). Activities included training on business management, elaboration of business plans, cash grants distribution, and coaching. At the end of the program, 78% of association members made a profit, and 40% of beneficiaries reinvested income in their productive initiatives (more details: [link](#)).

Another example is the Ethiopia micro-entrepreneurship program carried out by the Ethiopian RC, initiated in 2018 and ongoing with support from the Danish Red Cross and the Livelihoods Centre. More than 1,500 people, both returnees and host communities, have benefited from economic resilient strategies through micro-entrepreneurship support activities, psychosocial support and social cohesion activities. Participants also benefit from participation in VSLA (saving and loans groups).

This initiative gave individuals valuable skills and income to support their families during recovery. Moreover, the project stimulated economic activity within the community, as the wages earned mainly were spent locally, boosting demand for goods and services. Beyond the immediate benefits, the program contributed to long-term resilience by fostering a sense of ownership and self-reliance among participants, who were actively involved in rebuilding their community. Overall, the project demonstrated the transformative potential of micro-entrepreneurship initiatives in facilitating recovery and empowerment at the grassroots level.

The Women Social Entrepreneurship Institute: How to support informal entrepreneurs



"It's very important to show women how important it is to earn a living for themselves."

Jane Njeri Chege, social adviser to people in distress and founder of Artefact & Design house, a boutique selling religious items.

In the coastal city of Mombasa in Kenya, where economic challenges often outweigh opportunities, the Women Social Entrepreneurship Institute (WSEI) is a beacon of hope and empowerment. WSEI provides women entrepreneurs with support, resources, and training to foster a culture of innovation and empowerment. Born from a collaboration between the French Red Cross and the Kenya Red Cross Society (KRCS) with the support of the French Ministry of Europe and Foreign Affairs, WSEI is built upon innovation and community-driven solutions with the goal of uplifting vulnerable communities, particularly women.

Understanding the Landscape

The economic and social landscape in Kenya's coastal region is complex. While the informal sector provides a significant source of employment, high unemployment rates persist, particularly among young people. Women, in particular, face a range of obstacles, including limited access to education and financial resources, as well as the pervasive impact of gender-based violence.

The challenge

In this context, the challenge was to empower women entrepreneurs in Mombasa to overcome these barriers and transition from survival entrepreneurship to community business leaders. The goal was to enhance their economic prospects and foster inclusive development and resilience within their communities.

The Journey of Empowerment

The inaugural cohort of 25 women reflects the rich tapestry of Mombasa's entrepreneurial landscape. Spanning diverse sectors, from farming to logistics, these women showcase resilience and determination in pursuing economic stability. Circular economy initiatives demonstrate innovative waste management approaches, contributing to economic growth and environmental sustainability. Each woman entrepreneur was supported by a coach, with weekly training sessions held every Tuesday at the IOME001 innovation Lab, enriching their journey with qualitative insights and personalised guidance.

WSEI's journey to empowerment consists of three key milestones:

- **Enhancing Business Growth:** Participants undergo tailored training in English and KiSwahili, focusing on business formalisation, procurement processes, and product/service enhancement. Training modules cover essential aspects such as marketing strategies, social media use, and e-commerce, equipping women with tools to expand their businesses' reach and profitability.
- **Improving Financial Management and Access to Capital:** Financial literacy becomes a cornerstone, empowering women with skills for practical accounting, budgeting, and saving. Seed funding is provided for equipment and licences, alongside guidance on separating personal and professional finances to attract external funding opportunities.
- **Fostering Leadership and Community Engagement:** Beyond business acumen, WSEI nurtures women's social capital through peer support, mentorship, and gender-specific education on issues like gender-based violence

and women's rights. Coaches and experienced entrepreneurs guide participants, fostering a mindset shift towards social and environmental impact.

The outcome

The success of WSEI is evidenced through tangible outcomes:

- **Formalisation of Businesses:** By the end of the program, all businesses were registered, and 80% were tax-compliant. On average, almost half of the entrepreneurs had less than 20 monthly clients, but 65% now have between 20 and 50 clients. 85% of respondents mentioned that WSEI allowed them to develop new sales channels (social media, marketplaces..., etc.).
- **Women's income x2 and profit x2.5 after the programme:**
 - The average income has doubled, from 69k KES at the program's commencement to 141k KES upon completion.
 - 16% of participants were unprofitable before joining the program. Only 52% were making a living out of it, compared to 80% by the end of the program: the average profit surged from 26.5k KES at the program's outset to an impressive 66.5k KES upon completion.
- **Enhanced Confidence and Community Outreach:** By the end of the program, the "fear of failure" dropped from 63% to 40%. Filled with newfound confidence, these women have reached out to over 300 individuals, primarily women, to share their business insights, mentor local entrepreneurs, and provide training in diverse practical skills, including bakery, cleaning stitching, and digital competencies. Their contributions extend beyond individual coaching, as they've also become inspirational speakers in various settings, from religious venues, saving groups and schools to community gatherings. On average, one woman supported and empowered 14 other entrepreneurs.
- **Digital Literacy:** 80% of entrepreneurs are comfortable using the digital bookkeeping tool that is tailor-made for them (available in Excel and Google Sheets).



The 25 women entrepreneurs who participated in the Women Social Entrepreneurship Institute in Mombasa in 2023.

Credit: Amiri Asmara

Conclusion

The Women Social Entrepreneurship Institute is a source of hope and resilience in Mombasa, a city with prevalent economic challenges. WSEI empowers women entrepreneurs to uplift their communities through collaboration, innovation, and a commitment to community-driven solutions. As these women take on leadership roles, they catalyse economic growth and foster inclusive development, paving the way for a brighter and more equitable future.

Bonds of Sisterhood: Building Resilient Communities through Mothers Clubs



Mothers Clubs (MCs) have emerged as a powerful tool for pursuing women's empowerment and resilience. The approach is based on three components: a savings and credit component that allows MC members to save and access small credits to develop their Income-Generating Activities or solidarity credits (in case of illness); a community awareness-raising component where women are trained and sensitised on issues of interest for the community (health, wash, nutrition, climate change, etc.); and a third component (optional) of developing a collective Income-Generating Activity.

Understanding the Landscape

The Mothers Club method was developed within the Ghanaian Red Cross in the 1970s. Mothers Clubs are groups of around 20 women who work alongside National Societies team members. MCs are now implemented in Cameroon, Benin, Togo, Chad, Niger and Mauritania by National Societies in partnership with the Livelihoods Resource Centre, the IFRC and the FAO.

A Mothers' Club adheres to the four following pillars:

- The adherence of members to the principles and values of the Red Cross Red Crescent, especially volunteering
- Community activities, mainly awareness
- The contribution to common funds: Health Solidarity Fund (CSS) and Resilience Fund (also known as IGA funds)
- The development of collective economic initiatives (not compulsory)



A group of women involved in a Mothers Club inspiring their community and strengthening group solidarity.

The challenge tackled by Mothers Club in Niger

In Niger, Mothers Clubs (MCs) have emerged in response to the significant challenges faced by vulnerable communities in the Tanout and Kantché areas of the Zinder region. These challenges include limited access to healthcare, education, and economic opportunities, which are compounded by high illiteracy rates, inadequate infrastructure, and deep-seated cultural barriers, disproportionately

affecting women and children. The focus of these clubs has been on improving the socio-economic conditions of rural women, ensuring sustainable food and nutritional security, and preventing gender-based sexual violence through a nutrition-sensitive approach.

Additionally, the MCs are committed to empowering their members through sustainable income-generating activities. This includes the production of peanut oil and the collection and recycling of plastic waste and millet stalk residues into useful objects, with the support of GVD Afrique, a local NGO specialising in community development in the Niger section. These initiatives provide economic benefits and contribute to the region's environmental sustainability.

The Journey of Empowerment

There are 45 Mothers Clubs in Niger in total, with 24 in Tanout and 21 in Kantché, all in the Zinder region. The journey towards Income-Generating Activities began with a thorough assessment of viable business opportunities aligned with MC members' skills and the community's needs. Through collaborative efforts, MCs ventured into B2C enterprises spanning artisanal crafts to locally sourced produce, aiming to engage with consumers and foster sustainable economic growth directly.

Mothers' Club's journey to empowerment can be broken down into four key milestones:

Step 0 – Diagnosis, Studies, Strategy

This step includes diagnostics, feasibility analysis, sector studies, operational strategy definition, and project team formation.

Step 1 – Launching of Community Clubs (6 months)

This step includes social mobilisation and the legal creation of the Community Development Movement (CDM), Training and equipping clubs, initiating activities, psychosocial support activities, etc. The journey towards empowerment begins with grassroots mobilisation and awareness-building efforts. Mothers Clubs (MCs) initiate community dialogues, engage in educational sessions, and raise awareness on pertinent issues such as maternal and child health, hygiene, sanitation, and nutrition. Through these activities, MCs serve as relays of knowledge, imparting crucial information and best practices to their communities. This phase fosters a sense of collective consciousness and underscores the importance of community involvement in addressing shared challenges.

Step 2 – Community Mobilisation and Awareness Building (12 months)

With a solid foundation of community engagement established, MCs transition towards economic empowerment through collective action. Members pool resources into health solidarity and resilience funds, enabling access to credit for Income-Generating Activities (IGA).

Collective economic initiatives, from artisanal crafts to agricultural ventures, are undertaken, leveraging the community's skills and resources. This phase marks a pivotal shift towards economic self-sufficiency as MCs harness entrepreneurship to improve household incomes and enhance livelihoods.

Step 3 – Diversification of Activities (18 months)

The club reaches a certain level of operation without external support and develops its activities. As MCs consolidate their economic ventures and witness tangible improvements in living conditions, they embark on a sustainable growth and expansion journey. With flexibility in club functioning and a growing awareness of their role in community development, MCs strive to extend their impact beyond their immediate surroundings. This phase characterises the creation of networks, the sharing of best practices, and the establishment of new MCs in neighbouring communities. Through ongoing support and capacity-building efforts, MCs continue to empower vulnerable communities, fostering a legacy of resilience and self-reliance.

The outcome

The evaluation of Mothers' Clubs initiatives reveals a tangible impact on household living conditions, with notable improvements in health, education, food security, and productive assets.

1. Through a nutrition-sensitive approach, improved the socio-economic conditions of rural women in the Tanout and Kantché departments in the Zinder region and their communities.
2. Strengthened the capacities of rural communities in the Tanout and Kantché departments (Zinder region, Niger) for the prevention of and response to gender-based violence and malnutrition

Challenges and key learnings

Undoubtedly, the path towards B2C entrepreneurship was fraught with challenges. From logistical hurdles to market competition, MCs encountered setbacks along the way. Limited profitability of activities, reliance on climatic conditions, and the need for capacity-building in management techniques emerged as significant obstacles.

Despite the challenges, MCs' resilience and unwavering commitment propelled them forward. Through strategic interventions such as individual coaching and simplified tools, efforts were made to strengthen the capacities of beneficiaries, ensuring the sustainability of collective economic initiatives.

Conclusion

Mothers' Clubs undergo a holistic empowerment journey, catalysing positive change and sustainable development within vulnerable communities. Integrating B2C entrepreneurship within Mothers Clubs exemplifies a paradigm shift in humanitarian interventions, fostering sustainable empowerment within vulnerable communities. While challenges persist, the data-backed results and enduring commitment of MC members underscore the transformative potential of entrepreneurship in alleviating vulnerabilities. As we navigate the complexities of community development, let us draw inspiration from the journey of Mothers Clubs and strive for a future where empowerment knows no bounds.

Brewing Confidence: How Leaps and Grounds Shapes Futures for Refugee Women



We recently talked with Leora Friedland, Social Enterprise Manager for Leaps and Grounds, to gain insights into the program. The British Red Cross (BRC) recently wrapped up a two-year pilot of Leaps and Grounds, a coffee-based social enterprise designed to train and employ refugee women. Although the initiative has successfully empowered its participants, it encounters challenges in scaling up and assimilating into standard business operations. The initiative has provided valuable insights into developing social enterprises within the Red Cross Red Crescent Movement, highlighting the need for strong leadership commitment to the innovation process, clear communication, and early organisational engagement.

"This has been one of the best experiences of my life. It has made me participate in society with more confidence."

Leaps and Grounds programme participant



What are the objectives and outcomes of the Leaps and Grounds pilot project initiated by the British Red Cross to support refugee women in the UK?

We have run a two-year pilot of Leaps and Grounds, a coffee social enterprise that trains and employs refugee women. We built Leaps and Grounds, knowing that refugee women face some of the highest barriers to employment in the UK, even though it is the most crucial factor for successful integration. We have supported 35 women with professional barista training, paid work experience and 1-2-1 mentoring, equipping them with the skills and confidence to take the next steps in their careers and lives in the UK. This included securing full-time employment in their desired fields and embarking on further training programmes and postgraduate study. The resounding feedback we heard from participants was that after so many years in the asylum and refugee system, "it now feels like my life has begun again". However, as usual, the programme has been difficult to scale and embed into business. We hope that the learnings we gained will better equip innovation teams and social enterprise ventures in the future within the Red Cross Red Crescent movement.

Can you share three key lessons learnt from the project?

Space for testing and piloting:

When creating social ventures, you need space and time to test, iterate, and pivot. Failures will be part of that journey, too. One of the biggest challenges we faced was that there were leadership expectations that there would be profits fast; this pressure limited flexibility and reduced the room needed to understand the right model to achieve both viability and impact. A good example of this is when we tested festivals in 2023. We made an entire year's revenue in 11 days. However, because it was our first time doing a huge festival, it also had significant set-up costs. We broke even but needed more time to run more festivals and events to recoup the investment costs and see a return.

Over Communicate:

This programme's impact and structure was outside the standard British Red Cross models – it was a much smaller commercial venture and designed to have a direct impact. It delivered long-term value for service users and offered an array of benefits for the organisation beyond the core programme, like brand relevance and bringing our work to life for partners and donors. That meant it challenged the way the organisation was used to measuring value. We needed to communicate and communicate again to help the organisation understand why we were doing this and the impact the project could have.

Planning for post-pilot at the start:

Many early decisions for the project were made without engaging all of the right people. This was done to move at pace but sacrificed engagement in the team we needed to integrate with to make the project part of BAU after the pilot. Senior leadership and delivery teams need to feel ownership of solutions and be part of the decision-making process, especially if they are expected to own and run the solution in the future. Getting the right engagement early when working within large organisations can be more important than pace.

IMPULSA: Catalysing Change through Self-Employment and Access to Microcredits



IMPULSA is an initiative within the Spanish Red Cross's employment area that supports individuals facing social vulnerability in creating and consolidating their business projects. Since its inception, IMPULSA has empowered over 16,000 aspiring entrepreneurs and facilitated the establishment of more than 1,700 microenterprises.

Context

In Spain, significant inequalities in the labour market hinder access to stable employment, particularly affecting women, immigrants, older individuals, youth, and the long-term unemployed. Many individuals possess entrepreneurial skills but need help in realising their business ideas. IMPULSA addresses these challenges by providing tailored support to foster self-employment opportunities.

IMPULSA employs a multifaceted approach

- Information and activation for self-employment.
- Diagnosis and strengthening of entrepreneurial skills.
- Definition and development of business ideas and implementation (e.g. business plan)
- Mediation with financial institutions for access to microcredits.
- Personalised business consolidation sessions (business operations, marketing, grant applications)

Deployment & Impact

Since 2007, IMPULSA has made a substantial impact, particularly among women entrepreneurs. In 2022 alone, IMPULSA collaborated with 1,722 individuals, promoting 665 self-employment initiatives, with a majority in sectors such as hospitality, commerce, health, and beauty. The project also emphasises support for entrepreneurship in rural areas and worker cooperatives.

IMPULSA's digital tools, including webinars, infographics, and success story videos, enhance accessibility and engagement. These resources and direct support from technical staff and volunteers ensure that aspiring entrepreneurs receive comprehensive assistance regardless of location or background.

Innovation and Strategic Interest

IMPULSA's innovative B2C approach combines educational and financial support to empower individuals in vulnerable situations, fostering economic resilience and social inclusion. By leveraging replicable methodologies and digital tools, IMPULSA demonstrates a scalable solution to address unemployment and promote sustainable entrepreneurship.

3. Supporting the Economic Model of National Societies



3.1 Income-Generating Activities (IGA) as a strategic lever towards Financial Sustainability

A. Setting the Path for Financial Sustainability

Financial sustainability and local actors' empowerment have emerged as imperatives for the long-term viability of National Societies.

This recognition stems from the collective understanding that financially sustainable National Societies are better equipped to attract and manage resources and thus be more impactful in their humanitarian services.

What's the meaning behind Financial Sustainability when it comes to National Societies?

A financially sustainable National Society attracts and manages the financial resources it needs to deliver humanitarian services transparently and accountable.

It manages financial risk and opportunities, balancing its strategy to respond to present and emerging needs with the adaptive organisational structure and processes that enable the delivery of that strategy.

Exploring new financing opportunities such as IGA at the national and local level (through branches, for example) and reducing reliance on external donors (notably grants and subsidies) can help National Societies strengthen their economic and organisational capabilities to address current and emerging needs more effectively and remain independent and impartial.

This section will set the stage for discussing the role of Income-Generating Activities (IGA), such as how they can help develop services for the community, yield revenues, and increase impact and positive perception from the community.

B. Learning from Experiences and Insights from National Societies

While IGA are developed across the Movement, there's a need for structuration and support to scale, whether locally or internationally. Concerning these limitations, there is an opportunity to learn from experiments conducted by National Societies in France, Guinea, Senegal, Austria, Thailand, Kenya, and elsewhere which have yielded valuable insights.

For example, the Austrian Red Cross¹ has created REDpreneur, which empowers volunteers and employees from various NS to become social entrepreneurs. REDpreneur offers innovative ways to engage NS stakeholders in thinking about new finance models and diversified income sources. Business ideas developed within REDpreneur align with the core expertise of the Austrian Red Cross (water, sanitation, and hygiene, first aid and pre-hospital care, and blood donation) and

¹ In collaboration with the Austrian Development Cooperation

address the five challenges identified in Strategy 2030 (Climate and Environmental Crisis; Evolving Crisis and Disasters; Growing Gaps in Health and well-being; Migration and identity; Values, power, and inclusion).

In Guinea, the Guinean Red Cross (GRC), with support from the French Red Cross and technical expertise from GFARC (Global First Aid Reference Centre), has leveraged its essential know-how in first aid services. With capacity-building backing, staff and volunteers from the GRC have designed a commercial offer of first aid (FA) services as a core revenue stream.

C. Step-by-step Approach for Sustainable IGA Implementation

Launching a qualitative, sustainable, and impactful Income-Generating Activity (IGA) requires prior considerations and planning from a National Society (NS).

Key success factors learned from experiences and feedback collected from National Societies engaged in IGA helped in developing the step-by-step approach proposed below

Table 1. The 6 suggested steps to launch a successful IGA

Step	Action	Success Factor
Leadership Support and strategic thinking	Gain backing and vision from NS leadership to prioritise and support IGA initiatives.	Aligning with NS development strategy with a focus on resource mobilisation strategy.
Financial integrity and adequate financial management systems	<p>Checking that the existing financial management systems are efficient and ensure transparency.</p> <p>Adapting, if necessary, existing systems.</p> <p>This applies at all operations levels, whether the project, NS, or Branch.</p>	<p>Ensure transparency and accountability are prerequisites for public, state, and partner support.</p>
Opportunities identification	<p>Conducting market research to identify potential IGA aligned with mobilisation goals and objectives, NS capabilities (including Asset Management) and resources.</p> <p>If the NS interlocutor already has an idea, confront it to the reality of a market research.</p>	<p>Ensure potential IGA align with NS's mission, goals, and values and maintain/strengthen its perception and public image in the country.</p> <p>Draw lessons from previous IGA: financial performance, profitability, sustainability, and resource requirements.</p> <p>Make sure the person who has the initial idea is ready to adapt or change its initial views to take into account the results of the market research.</p>

Business Planning	<p>Developing a comprehensive business and financial plan outlining</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Objectives 2. Target markets 3. Administrative and legal compliance (e.g. Commercial registration) 4. Resources needed and financial projections. 5. Marketing strategy (4Ps - pricing, product, promotion, place) 6. Key performance indicators 	<p>Ensure all hidden costs and legal environment are known and considered.</p> <p>Make sure the plan clearly outlines the IGA's objectives and targets realistically.</p>
Implementation	<p>Executing the planned IGA, allocating resources, managing operations, and monitoring progress.</p> <p>Set up appropriate and separate business-oriented accounting systems.</p> <p>Establish clear guidelines for allocating profits from IGA, detailing the reinvestment strategy, reserves for sustaining operations during deficits, and the portion used for core organisational costs and humanitarian projects to ensure the long-term sustainability of the project.</p>	<p>Allocate adequate financial and human resources with a commercial mindset.</p> <p>Maintain commitment and perseverance in time, recognising the time required for IGA to yield profits.</p>
Monitoring and Evaluation	Tracking the performance, impact, and sustainability of IGA.	<p>Resource Allocation and Professional Management for effective IGA monitoring.</p> <p>Using data and feedback to adapt strategies and the service or product, address challenges, and continuously improve existing or new IGA.</p>

By following these planning steps, based on insights gained from multiple NS past experiences, and ensuring these key success factors, National Societies can navigate the path towards financial sustainability while remaining true to the Movement's humanitarian mission.

D. Driving Stakeholder Engagement Strategies to foster Income-Generating Activities (IGA)

Effective stakeholder engagement is strategic for implementing and sustaining IGA within NS. By actively involving stakeholders throughout the IGA process, NS can harness a sense of ownership and commitment, catalyse collaboration and ensure that IGA is tailored to address the unique needs and challenges faced by the communities they aim to serve.

That means raising awareness and providing capacity-building opportunities to stakeholders (beneficiaries, volunteers, partners, institutions), ensuring they fully grasp the benefits and potential challenges associated with IGA. Stake-

holder engagement can be done through consultation and participation (e.g. open dialogues, focus group discussions) to solicit stakeholder input and feedback regarding potential IGA projects and strategies or through offering training sessions and capacity-building programs.

3.2 Partnering with the business sector, from philanthropy to impact-driven collaborations

A profound shift is underway in the rapidly evolving corporate landscape as some businesses strategically integrate social impact into their core operations. This transition signifies a pivotal moment, with Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) evolving from a peripheral concern to a central aspect of business strategy.

However, this transformation also highlights the limitations of traditional CSR approaches, which often prioritise risk mitigation over integrated strategic imperatives. Companies are pivoting towards embedding social impact directly into their overarching business strategies to address these challenges.

In this context, companies actively seek partnerships with organisations like the Red Cross to address humanitarian causes. This growing collaboration presents a unique opportunity for impactful synergies. However, as auxiliaries to the public authorities in the humanitarian field and in line with the RCRC fundamental principles, National Societies should carefully choose their partnerships. In defining some red lines, they will ensure these partnerships do not compromise their principles, and image and truly serve the communities and individuals they are accountable to. Furthermore, the spectre of “purpose-washing” remains a concern. Companies must ensure accountability and transparency in their social impact efforts, reflecting genuine commitment rather than superficial gestures.

During the COVID-19 lockdowns, the Spanish Red Cross, the TECSOS Foundation, Accenture and Amazon Spain joined forces to develop a voice assistant to fight loneliness and reduce the stress of people. In its first months of life, the Spanish Red Cross skill was intended for people with an Alexa device who wanted to make a one-time donation to the Red Cross RESPONDE plan to lessen the effects of COVID-19. Subsequently, the capabilities were expanded to include access to microlearning to prevent the spread of the virus, reduce stress, and even receive a basic first aid tutorial.

Businesses are redefining their societal role amid unprecedented global challenges and systemic social issues. Expert organisations, such as Yunus Social Business, share this view. In May 2023, they published a paper offering a ‘Transformation Framework’ for Leaders to transform their businesses into a Force for Good. It notably focused on long-term value creation, lasting commitments, and a holistic systems-thinking approach, commenting on the evolution from a shareholder to a stakeholder. This redefinition emphasises the creation of enduring value and societal well-being alongside financial success. Stakeholder influence emerges as a critical driver, guiding businesses towards sustainable practices and long-term resilience.



3.3 Best Practices

- › **The Intrapreneurship Journey of the French Red Cross**
- › **Blazing New Trails:** How REDpreneur is Shaping Social Entrepreneurship at the Austrian Red Cross
- › **Developing First Aid Services for National Societies Sustainability,** an interview of Piers Flavin, Business Development Advisor for Workplace First Aid at the Netherlands Red Cross
- › **Building on Strengths:** The Strategic Commercialisation of First Aid Services by the Guinean Red Cross
- › **Empowering Nursing Education:** The Centre d'Accueil pour Stagiaires in Senegal
- › **Transforming Communities through Circular Economy:** The Danish Red Cross Thrift Shops
- › **Enhancing Public Health through Innovation:** Snake Farm, Queen Saovabha Memorial Institute

The Intrapreneurship Journey of the French Red Cross



The French Red Cross's resilience and innovation journey, highlighted by initiatives like the 21 Social Innovation Accelerator and the Resilience Lab, underscores the organisation's strategic efforts to adapt and excel in a rapidly evolving socio-economic landscape. These programmes represent a way to promote innovation from within by identifying and supporting promising local initiatives. 21 Social Innovation Accelerator, introduced in May 2019, and the Resilience Lab, established in 2023 as part of its 2030 Strategy. Each initiative has a distinct role in fostering internal and external innovation, engaging the organisation's extensive network of 60,000 volunteers and 18,000 employees.

21 Social Innovation Accelerator: Catalysing Social Entrepreneurship

21 is the Social Innovation Accelerator of the French Red Cross and Nexem, designed to empower employees and volunteers of the French Red Cross and external actors to develop and implement solutions that address complex social challenges. It encompasses:

- Intrapreneurship support programmes: Supporting volunteers, employees and students of the French Red Cross carrying out a social innovation project with its development from prototyping to testing and deployment in real conditions.
- Entrepreneurship support programmes: Supporting a broad range of projects from conceptualisation to implementation, focused on generating positive social outcomes.
- Coworking space: Providing a collaborative environment where innovators can create, share, and refine impactful ideas.

The accelerator emphasises equipping participants with comprehensive resources such as mentorship, training, and access to expert advisors and funding opportunities. It encourages sustainable, community-driven solutions, fostering a participatory approach that leverages direct feedback from the communities served.

The Resilience Lab: Proactive Crisis Management and Innovation

The Resilience Lab's mission is to unleash the energy of volunteers and capitalise on grassroots ideas to strengthen the adaptive capacity of the French Red Cross at all levels and across all its territories. It aligns with the broader strategic goals set out in the French Red Cross's 2030 Strategy, focusing on crisis management, volunteer engagement, addressing new social vulnerabilities, and enhancing climate resilience. Its operations centre around:

- Innovating in crisis preparation: Developing and deploying tools like the "Minutis" system for managing emergency personnel effectively.
- Engaging volunteers: Creating strategies to maintain a robust and skilled volunteer base.
- Addressing emerging social issues: Concentrating on mental health, cybersecurity, and student precarity challenges.
- Climate resilience: Innovating to adapt to and mitigate the impacts of climate change.
- The lab acts as a catalyst for identifying and scaling local innovations, supporting initiatives that can be integrated into national and international strategies for resilience.



The solidarity food truck called "la Petite Cuisine d'Henry" in reference to Henry Dunant near Paris.

Credit: Cindy Bonnaud

The Resilience Lab boasts a strong local presence, enabling it to source and disseminate local initiatives. Complementing the work of programs like 21, which supports a wide array of projects, the Lab focuses on scaling up local volunteer-driven initiatives across broader regions. Due to its established local connections, the Resilience Lab plays a pivotal role in the expanded implementation of the French Red Cross's strategies.

Looking ahead, the Resilience Lab's success will look through several achievements. Innovative volunteer teams will be operational in every region, dedicated to designing and testing new projects, representing the CRF in the innovation ecosystem, and creating new partnership opportunities through innovation. The lab acts as a catalyst for identifying and scaling local innovations, supporting initiatives that can be integrated into national and international strategies for resilience.

On the Road to Inclusion: Antoine Verstraete's Impact through 21

Antoine Verstraete joined the French Red Cross at the launch of 21, its social innovation accelerator. His dedication was particularly evident during the health crisis, where he was actively involved in the "Croix-Rouge chez-vous" initiative. This experience profoundly impacted him, inspiring a deep commitment to the disability sector. Motivated by his transformative journey, Antoine took the initiative to revive 'L'Octobus', a bus designed to travel around the Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur region to engage directly with people with disabilities.

Today, L'Octobus serves as a mobile unit introducing AAC (Alternative and Augmented Communication (AAC) and other innovative solutions to individuals with disabilities, their families, and professionals. It aims to bridge the gap between available solutions and those who need them most, promoting social inclusion, autonomy, and providing essential technical support.

Building Community: The Story of Bricoboutique’s Innovative Approach to DIY and Solidarity

Vincent Hecht, an engineer by training and a volunteer at the French Red Cross since 2001, created Bricoboutique, a solidarity-based DIY store in Voiron, France. This innovative store offers various products, such as tools, building materials, and gardening items, predominantly sourced from donations from businesses and communities. Over 80% of the products are new, and the shop provides affordable building materials while addressing issues like costly materials and over-purchasing.

The initiative has a dual purpose: to offer low-cost materials to help improve housing and to reduce waste volume through reuse, tackling environmental and economic challenges simultaneously. Bricoboutique is open to everyone and operates with the support of a team of volunteers, serving as a warm, inclusive community space where people can socialise and exchange ideas. Financially independent, the store is supported by revenues generated and grants that have funded the shop and vehicle rentals. It has become a hub for community engagement, significantly impacting the local community by attracting between 50 and 60 visitors each day.

Conclusion

The dual approach of the 21 Social Innovation Accelerator and the Resilience Lab exemplifies the French Red Cross’s commitment to innovation and adaptability. By empowering its workforce and focusing on strategic, community-centred, and sustainable solutions, the organisation not only responds effectively to immediate challenges but also builds long-term resilience. These initiatives showcase the organisation’s dedication to continuous improvement and its proactive stance in navigating a complex, ever-changing world.

Blazing New Trails: How REDpreneur is Shaping Social Entrepreneurship at the Austrian Red Cross



The Austrian Red Cross embarked on its journey into social entrepreneurship in 2018, driven by a desire to diversify the income sources of its international department and deepen its understanding of innovative finance, particularly impact bonds, results-based financing, and impact investing. As the exploration progressed, the team tapped into a dynamic ecosystem of impact investors and start-ups dedicated to driving positive social and environmental change through business.

First Findings

However, two significant observations emerged: firstly, there was a clear gap in the market for impactful investable opportunities, especially within the bottom-of-the-pyramid markets where Red Cross and Red Crescent NS operate, which are often deemed too risky for traditional investors. Secondly, unlike traditional donors who provide grants without expecting financial returns, impact investors sought both impact and a full return on their investment, often with a considerable premium.

This highlighted the critical role of revenue generation, not necessarily to engage in impact investing to meet investor expectations but rather to enhance our organisations’ resilience by diversifying income sources and gaining financial independence from single sources of contributed income, such as grants or donations, which may not keep pace with the growing humanitarian needs.

The Solution

Drawing on AutRC’s ongoing involvement in National Society Development (NSD) through international programs and its expertise in running Income-Generating services domestically, the AutRC identified its greatest leverage as facilitator of social entrepreneurship and social enterprise development supporting the development of business skills in its core areas such as WASH, Health, Disaster Risk Reduction, and First Aid and Prehospital Care.

With financial support from the Austrian Development Cooperation and together with implementation partners New Paradigm Ventures and Impact Hub Vienna, the AutRC established the REDpreneur program as a new offer for capacity development. REDpreneur is a global academy for social entrepreneurship that offers training, mentoring and networking both online and in hybrid form. Its participants are volunteers and employees of RC/RC organisations, local NGOs or social entrepreneurs. Through REDpreneur, they gain the knowledge to develop services and products that solve social and/or ecological problems and whose sale generates revenue. In three cohorts that have run until today, REDpreneur participants have learned how to tackle social and environmental challenges with creativity and an entrepreneurial spirit. And they have managed to show their organisations the way to a new source of additional income.

The Main Components

REDpreneur consists of four main components: Inspiration Sessions, an Online Training Academy for Social Entrepreneurship, a hybrid Master Class for social enterprise development and a REDpreneur network.

Igniting the Entrepreneurial Flame

Inspiration Sessions are one-hour webinars to ignite potential participants' interest and entrepreneurial spirit. They facilitate the generation of first business ideas and serve to inform all stakeholders about the design of the REDpreneur programme. The inspiration sessions are free of charge and may also include experts from the Movement.

Developing Skills and Simulating Profitability

The online Training Academy is our basic 8-week course, conducted entirely online. It equips participants with practical tools to develop services or products that address social or environmental challenges through entrepreneurial activities. Its primary tools include a ten-page business plan and a 4-years financial plan with a Profit- and Loss Account and Cashflow Statement: the former guides participants in transforming their existing humanitarian projects into viable social business ideas. At the same time, the latter teaches them to consider both costs and income streams, tailoring revenue sources to different customer groups. It further enables them to simulate the financial viability of their business case. The course culminates in an online pitch event, where participants refine their storytelling skills to present their business ideas to potential funders effectively.

Implementing IGA and Social Enterprises

In contrast, the Master Class offers a hybrid training experience tailored for teams that have already developed impactful, financially sustainable, and scalable business cases. Over a 3-month period, this intensive program aims to prepare participants for the next stage of their journey, with a focus on improving strategy, impact, go-to-market strategies, and financial planning. Participants benefit from extensive mentoring by experts and peer coaching throughout the program. The culmination of the Master Class is a final face-to-face session where graduates come together to pitch their ventures in front of an expert panel.



The global Masterclass 2024 during the REDpreneur Culmination Workshop in Vienna, Austria.

Connecting Changemakers

The REDpreneur network is a long-term support process that enhances knowledge sharing and fosters partnerships. It connects intrapreneurs from the Red Cross/Red Crescent Movement, local CSOs, and social entrepreneurs. This network facilitates peer-to-peer support and serves as a bridge to connect them with additional ecosystem actors, including potential funders or investors.

Moreover, it continuously updates members about funding and capacity-building opportunities through newsletters. The network also hosts regular online town hall meetings, curated 1:1 matchmaking sessions with potential funders, and annual alumni events further to enrich the engagement and collaboration among its members.

Impact achieved: Patient Transport Services in North Macedonia

In the first REDpreneur cohort, the North Macedonian Red Cross participated with a team of intrapreneurs aiming to implement an emergency button service. However, during the REDpreneur Online Training Academy, they also identified Skopje's lack of qualified medical transport services as a social entrepreneurial field. The team developed a first business and financial plan that simulated costs and income and showed the potential to cover costs. To validate this first simulation, the team used the consequent Master Class to refine the plans and develop their go-to-market strategy. Afterwards, with financial support from the Austrian Development Cooperation, the reality check was carried out as a six-month pilot operation, during which the planned calculations proved correct. Thanks to a hybrid business model that combines income from paying customers with municipal cost reimbursement, ongoing operations can be covered from own revenues. People in need can also be offered the same quality of service free of charge.

Developing First Aid Services for National Societies Sustainability, an interview of Piers Flavin, Business Development Advisor for Workplace First Aid at the Netherlands Red Cross

Interview

Piers Flavin is a Business Development Advisor at the Netherlands Red Cross, with over 10 years of experience specialising in workplace first aid. During this time, he has supported National Societies, primarily in Africa, in developing and expanding revenue streams through paid first aid trainings tailored for workplace environments.

Can you briefly overview the NLRC's Workplace First Aid Business Development program? How does advisory work help to enhance workplace safety and financial sustainability of a National Society?

Workplace First Aid is a 'win-win' choice for a National Society looking to expand its service offering and build a sustainable income source. I mean that, as the Red Cross Red Crescent Movement, we are known as First Aid organisations so we have a solid basis on which to start. This means that each National Society usually has experience in this area, has skilled trainers to provide training, and is already the provider of choice for organisations and individuals looking for First Aid training. We also have a great value proposition: we know that teaching people first aid increases the likelihood that an injured person gets the first aid they need and increases people's safety practice as they become more aware of the issues that lead to accidents and injuries. Providing Workplace First Aid can therefore achieve two goals: more funds for the National Society, and more people with lifesaving skills.

Reflecting on the yearlong advisory experience, how does Workplace First Aid contribute to fostering financial independence over the long term? Are there experiences on the growth trajectories of these business lines after 4-5 years, particularly regarding revenue generation?

However, there are caveats: it takes time to build a robust business, and good use of investment is essential to get the business to the size that means it can be profitable and sustainable. This is where the Netherlands Red Cross focuses its technical support. We take an 'accompaniment' approach and come alongside a National Society, working with them as they make strategic decisions, support recruitment, design budgets, advise on investment needs, market campaigns, set targets and monitor progress. Our engagement is as much or as little as is needed as the business is fully led by the National Society. While we might be closely involved in the initial stages of business setup, as the business becomes more successful and local expertise grows, we gradually reduce our involvement.

This is definitely the most exciting part of working on business development! Although I have visited and worked with many National Societies, the best experiences are those where I have been able to witness steady growth over several years. Careful monitoring of data is a vitally important part of the process as measuring business results in the short-term can look very different when you assess it over the longer term, particularly when you think about the disruption that something like the COVID-19 pandemic had on business activity. Sometimes, initial business growth has been difficult to maintain, so we have to recognise that we don't see success everywhere. It is also important to note that most of the time, it takes several years to grow the business to the scale whereby it can be sustained, and also generate funds for the National Society. I can think of two great examples in Africa. The first one is in Zambia, where we've worked together as partners for several years. The business in Zambia became fully profitable in 2022 and business data shows a 25% compound revenue growth rate each year over a 7-year period. We recently worked closely with the Global First Aid Reference Centre (GFARC) on a series of short films to showcase how a WFA business can be established and grown. Each film has a short case study from a different National Society, and there's a great interview moment with the Zambia Red Cross Secretary-General, who states that the WFA business profit has increased from providing 5% to 13% of the core costs of the National Society. I think that is a great testament to how a solid business plan and consistent implementation can deliver results. We've also been working with the Liberia Red Cross for a shorter period in collaboration with the Swedish Red Cross. In Liberia, the business is growing each year and although it is still a net deficit business, the deficit is reducing each year and the business is expected to become profitable in the next 1-2 years. The compound revenue growth rate over the last 4 years was 48% per year. I am sure there are many other stories from across the Movement and as a key priority of the IFRC First Aid Strategy is to grow commercial First Aid, I am hopeful that we will have more of these success stories by 2030!

For a National Society seeking to elevate their Workplace First Aid activities, what strategic advice would you offer to bring them to the next level? And what kind of advice would you give to branches?

It's all about the starting point and the market. There are differences between every market. One of the very first tasks to do when assessing the business

growth potential is to look clearly at what your current business level is, and what you think it could grow to when you calculate the number of customers available to you. A National Society might want the business to be bigger, but this ambition needs to translate into hard facts! It is really important that the business profitability is properly assessed, and this means ensuring all costs are included, even if it shows that it is not yet a profitable business. The second thing I would do is separate the commercial and non-commercial aspects of First Aid. This is easier said than done but is vitally important. The challenge is that we are humanitarians, and we want as many people as possible to know about First Aid, and to be confident to use those skills to act in any emergency. Separating between commercial and non-commercial activities doesn't compromise that ambition, but it ensures that everyone in each team clearly understands what their goal is, and what success looks like. If done well, it actually helps a National Society train more people and generate more funds at the same time. The third thing I would do is fill gaps in the business with people with sales experience, introduce performance-based remuneration, and ensure the business manager has a budget and clear authority to take those decisions that lead to more customers.

For Branches, it is difficult to give a single answer that will be relevant to lots of National Societies. The local Branch is the beating heart of the Red Cross Red Crescent Movement and is where we see humanitarian action in practice, including First Aid training and other services. What I think is also important for us to consider is that the WFA market is national, and the biggest companies that are (or will be) our customers will exist in multiple Branch locations. We also need to remember that if we operate as a business, our customers have business expectations of us. So although some Branches may have trainers, resources, relationships with local customers, and even sales teams, there is a necessity for the business to have some degree of national coordination. This balance of tasks between Headquarters and Branches will vary between different National Societies, but time should be taken to identify clearly the symbiotic relationship between all parts of the National Society, ensuring that we can maintain the level of customer service that customers need and expect.

Workplace First Aid activities are prevalent in numerous National Societies worldwide. In your perspective, what critical steps need to be taken to scale up these activities and leverage synergies effectively? How can collaboration and knowledge-sharing among NSs be optimised to maximise collective impact?

Well, I think you raised two important issues here. The question of how best to scale up a WFA business, and how the RC network can more effectively support National Societies who are working on a business growth plan to achieve better results faster. From my perspective, scaling up a WFA business comes down to two things: making clear strategic choices and ensuring you have a team with the right skills. These can mean tough decisions: the reason we 'rebranded' commercial first aid to Workplace First Aid was that it clarified what the business was, and who it was for. WFA is, at its core, a Business-to-Business sales model, training people who need First Aid in the workplace. We recommend that a National Society should focus on growing this market rather than some of the other activities that are often grouped under commercial First Aid, particularly if there is a lot of growth in the market. This isn't always a popular decision but it is

essential if the primary goal is to achieve a profitable and sustainable business which can rely on income into the future. For some National Societies, it can be hard to let other activities go to focus on the activity that will deliver the best result. Secondly, to grow the business rapidly National Societies need people with relevant skills, in clearly defined roles, and with robust performance management techniques in place. The business needs three clearly separated teams: training; operations coordination; and sales.

To take the second question, peer-to-peer collaboration is an under-explored area. There is great talent in the global RC network, but in business development, we've not found it easy to identify mechanisms for people with experience to work alongside people seeking to learn. What I think would work well is to enable people with direct experience in growing a WFA business to work alongside someone in another National Society where the business is younger. Still, the market is similar, ideally for several months.

What is important in the WFA approach is not just copying and pasting the business model from one context to another but unlocking talent, encouraging creativity, and incentivising success.

Building on Strengths: The Strategic Commercialisation of First Aid Services by the Guinean Red Cross



Introduction to Workplace First Aid Commercialisation

The commercialisation of Workplace First Aid services by National Societies is a strategic approach that harnesses existing expertise within the Movement. This model not only improves workplace safety and public health through educational programmes but also ensures financial sustainability. By differentiating between commercial and non-commercial activities, conducting thorough market assessments, and integrating skilled sales teams, National Societies can effectively meet local demands while maintaining financial health.

Guinea's First Aid Commercialisation Journey

In Guinea, the Guinean Red Cross (GRC) has developed a model for commercialising first aid that underscores the practical and financial benefits of this approach. Launched on June 1, 2009, GRC's Commercial First Aid (CFA) services utilise decades of accumulated first aid experience. The initiative was developed in response to a need for efficient first aid in the wake of socio-political unrest and natural disasters, and as a strategy to reduce the GRC's reliance on external funding.

Achievements and Impact

Since its establishment, the GRC's programme has successfully trained 630 individuals from 18 different organisations, generating substantial revenue. This financial success has allowed the GRC to expand its activities, offering free training to the financially disadvantaged public and enhancing its reputation as a key first aid provider in the region. The programme's focus on sectors prone to accidents, like mining and traffic management, has significantly improved workplace safety and reduced accident-related risks.

Strategic Development and Capacity Building

The GRC's approach to developing its CFA services has been meticulous and phased. The initial phase focused on revising training materials to meet international standards, supported by partnerships with the French Red Cross and GFARC. This phase included training 16 volunteers as first aid instructors, ensuring that quality training was accessible across Guinea.

Market Analysis and Strategic Marketing

The second phase involved a detailed market analysis to understand the competitive landscape and pinpoint the needs of potential clients. This analysis informed the development of specialised marketing strategies aimed at boosting the GRC's visibility and appeal as a premier service provider.

Future Plans and Sustainability

In 2023, the CRG received training requests from 19 mining companies. It trained 355 employees on behalf of these 19 clients for a total amount of 154,340,000 GNF (16 600 euros). Looking ahead to 2024, the GRC plans to implement a comprehensive business strategy. This will involve drafting a detailed business plan that specifies actions and budget allocations for future years, aiming to enhance service quality and expand reach. This strategy is designed to fortify the GRC's position in the market, making it a formidable competitor against private companies.

Enhancing Credibility and Competitive Edge

Through continuous improvement of training techniques and strategic business planning, the GRC is well-equipped to compete with private sector providers. Ongoing dialogues with governmental authorities and collaborations with international partners enhance the GRC's credibility and ensure alignment with both national standards and global best practices.



In the event of a violent situation, Guinean Red Cross volunteers go into the field to assist victims, with logistical support from the ICRC.

Credit: ICRC Archive, by Alyona Synenko

An Inspiration for Others

Guinea's experience with commercialising first aid training serves as an exemplary model for other National Societies aiming to combine humanitarian service with financial independence. By leveraging international support and focusing on strategic market engagement, the GRC has established a sustainable, profitable service that significantly contributes to community safety and public well-being. This case study illustrates the potential of National Societies to use their unique capabilities to create impactful, self-sustaining programmes that align with their broader humanitarian missions.

Empowering Nursing Education: The Centre d'Accueil pour Stagiaires



Understanding the Landscape

Created in 2015 with the support of the FRC, the Senegalese Red Cross Thiès paramedical and first-aid training school serves as a vital component of Health education in Senegal. Located in Thiès (70 km from the capital Dakar), the Centre hosts numerous training courses for SRC first-aiders. In the same location, the Senegalese Red Cross (SRC) runs a fee-based scheme to welcome and support students from the French Red Cross's nursing training institutes (IFSI - Croix Rouge Compétence) in Senegal. The FRC is a major actor in France with a network of 157 training institutes in 60 locations in the medical and social field.

The Challenge

Nursing education requires practical experience in healthcare settings, which poses logistical and support challenges for international students completing internships abroad.

Additionally, generating a sustainable income to support the Centre d'Accueil pour Stagiaires operations is crucial for its long-term viability.

The Journey of Empowerment

The centre has a maximum capacity of 11 students and 6 rooms. Students are looked after from the moment they arrive at the airport and for the duration of their stay - in terms of accommodation, transport and meals. Throughout their stay, the trainees complete their internships in regional hospitals under the supervision of the directors and chief physicians of the Amadou Sahir Ndiouguène, Saint Jean de Dieu and 10th district health centres.

Internships enable students to learn more about the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and:

1. Develop skills in a professional environment,
2. Learn about other cultures and customs,
3. Discover different learning and professional techniques,
4. Evolve in a balanced environment with follow-up, both in terms of training and action and its social impact,
5. Enrich their CV with an internship that demonstrates their adaptability and openness in a Red Cross spirit.

These internships are based on a quadripartite agreement between the SRC, the concerned IFSI, and the hospital and the intern. The SRC is responsible for accommodation, food, and transportation. In 2023, 42 students benefited from this scheme.

The Outcome

The Centre d'Accueil pour Stagiaire enhances nursing education by providing international students with a professional environment and comprehensive support services during their internships abroad.

In 2023, students paid between 200 euros for one week and 1475 euros for two months, providing a regular income for the Senegalese RC. The business is prof-

itable for the National Society, and the students appreciate SRC's hospitality. It's a win-win partnership.

Conclusion

The Centre d'Accueil pour Stagiaire has been a sustainable Income-Generating Activity for almost a decade, providing crucial support to the Thiès branch and the entire National Society. It has become integral to the Senegalese Red Cross's operations, ensuring financial stability and contributing to its overall mission. Through its business model, the Centre empowers nursing and paramedical students while serving as a cornerstone for the long-term sustainability of Red Cross initiatives in Senegal.

This exemplifies effective collaboration between two National Societies to support nursing education and international exchange. By addressing logistical and support challenges through a B2B2C approach, the centre empowers nursing students to develop essential skills, cultural competence, and a global perspective, ultimately advancing nursing education and humanitarian service within the Red Cross network.

Transforming Communities through Circular Economy: The Danish Red Cross Thrift Shops



Introduction

The Danish Red Cross embarked on a pioneering journey in 1975, establishing thrift shops as a sustainable means to self-finance their humanitarian activities. Over the years, this initiative has evolved into a thriving network of 260 thrift shops serving communities across Denmark.

Challenges Faced

With the growing need for self-financing and community engagement, the Danish Red Cross sought innovative solutions to operate their thrift shops and enhance their impact sustainably.

Solution Implemented

Utilising a Business-to-Customer (B2C) model, the Danish Red Cross thrift shops offer a diverse range of second-hand products, attracting customers seeking affordable and unique items. The organisation launched a webshop in 2023 to expand its reach, facilitating online sales and implementing a "click and collect" solution. Additionally, a robust Business-to-Business (B2B) model was established, wherein unsold textiles are exported or repurposed through a mixed B2B/B2C approach, promoting the reuse of textiles.

Key Actors

The thrift shops are primarily operated by 11,000 dedicated volunteers, predominantly pensioners, who contribute to the shops' daily operations and community engagement efforts. Customers, including young individuals drawn to sustainability and affordability, are vital in driving sales and supporting the shops' mission.

Revenue Model

Revenue is generated through direct sales in physical stores, online transactions, and exports of unsold textiles. The innovative mixed B2B/B2C model further enhances revenue streams by promoting bulk sales of sorted textiles to companies, designers, and private buyers interested in upcycling.

Impact Achieved

The Danish Red Cross thrift shops have made significant social, environmental, and organisational contributions. Volunteer engagement fosters community cohesion and purpose among pensioners while promoting economic accessibility through affordable goods. Environmentally, the shops have reduced the carbon footprint by approximately 18,000 tons of CO₂e through item reuse. Financially, the shops generate a net profit exceeding 13 million euros annually, empowering local branches to address social needs.

Conclusion

The Danish Red Cross thrift shops exemplify the transformative potential of circular economy practices, enriching society and the environment. Through innovative business models and community engagement, they continue to drive positive change and inspire sustainable action globally.

Enhancing Public Health through Innovation: Snake Farm, Queen Saovabha Memorial Institute



Snake Farm, QSMI, operated by the Thai Red Cross Society, is a pioneering Asian institution dedicated to snakebite prevention, treatment, and public education. Established in 1923, it is a critical facility for producing antivenom, conducting research, and raising awareness about snake ecology and snakebite management.

Context

In Thailand, where diverse species of venomous snakes pose significant public health risks, snakebite incidents were rampant, and effective treatment options were scarce. Recognising this pressing need, Snake Farm was founded to produce antivenom locally for use in Thai hospitals, utilising venom from indigenous snakes.

Operations & Impact

Snake Farm operates on three fronts:

- **Antivenom Production:** High-quality snake venom is collected from healthy venomous snakes to produce a range of monovalent and polyvalent antivenoms supplied to hospitals and healthcare facilities across Thailand. These business-to-business transactions generate revenue while addressing critical healthcare needs.
- **Education & Awareness:** Through its Snake Museum and educational programs, Snake Farm disseminates accurate information about snakes, snakebite first aid, and conservation efforts. Revenue from museum admissions and educational courses supports outreach initiatives, engaging visitors of all ages.
- **Research & Collaboration:** Collaborations with national and international partners yield scientific advancements in snake ecology, venom pharmacology, and antivenom development. Grant funding and research consultancy contribute to financial sustainability while fostering scientific innovation.

Scientists extracting venom during a presentation at the Snake Farm of Queen Saovabha Memorial Institute (QSMI), Thai Red Cross.



Conclusion

Snake Farm, QSMI, exemplifies the Thai Red Cross Society's commitment to public health, scientific excellence, and community engagement. Through its innovative B2B2C approach, Snake Farm continues to save lives, educate the public, and advance scientific knowledge, serving as a global model for snakebite prevention and management.

4. We tried to answer to push backs on social entrepreneurship



4.1 My country has a robust Social Security System; it doesn't need Social Startups!

Some countries, especially in the global north, have long-standing renowned social security systems. However, to fortify such a system against future challenges, integrating elements from a more sustainable social economy is paramount.

Firstly, even robust social security systems face budget deficits and strains due to demographic trends and global economic forces. Supporting well-established non-profits, currently the primary service deliverers, in developing social enterprise approaches to introduce new revenue streams and diversify funding sources can add resilience to the system. Especially by leveraging a combination of income streams such as service fees, donations, and partnerships with commercial entities, social enterprise approaches can secure the long-term mission of social services. And they contribute to financial sustainability by reducing dependency on a single source of funding, such as traditional government funding.

Moreover, fostering social entrepreneurship can also complement the current social system setup. Social entrepreneurs have the agility and creativity to address gaps in areas where traditional approaches may fall short, as they can serve as catalysts for social innovation and inclusivity.

4.2 Humanitarian Action is not Entrepreneurship

Humanitarian action has traditionally been perceived as providing immediate relief in crisis situations, focusing on alleviating suffering and meeting basic needs. However, in recent years, there has been a significant shift in perspective towards recognising the interconnectedness between humanitarian aid and sustainable development. This evolving understanding acknowledges that long-term solutions to crises often require more than temporary assistance – they demand localised innovation, capacity development, and market-based actions rather than relying solely on external aid.

The missions of humanitarianism and social entrepreneurship converge in their shared goal of addressing societal challenges and improving people's lives. At its core, entrepreneurship involves identifying problems and creating solutions, seizing opportunities where others see obstacles. This alignment underscores the symbiotic relationship between social entrepreneurship and humanitarian action.

Entrepreneurial humanitarianism seeks to redefine the power dynamic by shifting from dependency on grants and donations to creating value through products and services. By leveraging market demand and generating revenue, they can sustain their operations independently, reducing reliance on external fund-

ing sources. Moreover, entrepreneurial humanitarians embrace collaboration and partnership as key drivers of impact. They can pool resources and expertise to tackle complex challenges more effectively by forming alliances with local businesses, governments, and NGOs. This collaborative approach enables them to reach a broader audience and maximise their collective impact.

In essence, while humanitarian action and entrepreneurship may initially seem distinct, they are profoundly intertwined. By embracing social enterprise approaches, humanitarian organisations can enhance their long-term sustainability, and impact.

4.3 For-profit thinking is what destroys healthcare systems

As healthcare becomes increasingly commodified, the pursuit of profit often precedes the primary goal of providing quality patient care. This profit-driven mindset can lead to a range of detrimental outcomes, including prioritising financial gain over patient well-being or exacerbating inequalities in access to healthcare.

However, it is essential to recognise the dual nature of the term "profit" as it embodies two distinct meanings. On the one hand, there's the concept of a reinvestable margin, where profits are reinvested back into the organisation to enhance infrastructure, research, and patient care. This reinvestment is crucial for fostering resilient healthcare businesses capable of adapting to evolving needs and providing sustainable care in the long term. However, there's also the aspect of financial extraction, where profits are maximised to meet the return targets of investors through dividends or exits at the expense of patient care and societal well-being. This profit-taking approach often fosters the need for a relentless pursuit of growth, exacerbating inequalities and perpetuating a system where financial gain supersedes social well-being and environmental conservation. This is why social businesses reinvest their profits primarily to achieve social objectives, resembling Mohammed Yunus' definition of social business – as non-loss, non-dividend cause-driven businesses.

Thus, organisations such as RCRC National Societies, driven by a commitment to serving the public good rather than pursuing profits, are ideally positioned to prioritise patient care, tackle healthcare disparities, and foster long-term financial sustainability. They can achieve this by developing financially resilient social business models, diversifying revenue streams, implementing cross-target group subsidisation, and harnessing the power of volunteerism to provide free access to vulnerable target groups while charging those who can afford it. And they have the structure already in place to reinvest profits beyond investable margin, directly into a humanitarian mission.

In summary, social business approaches underscore that business activities addressing human needs such as health, education, livelihoods, and ecological regeneration can be economically viable. This serves as a reminder to humanitarian organisations that, beyond addressing immediate symptoms, they possess the capacity to play a creative and innovative role by contributing to the development of a future-fit economy focused on well-being rather than on profit.

4.4 Social entrepreneurship is putting the responsibility on individuals to improve their situation and condition

Social entrepreneurship indeed places a significant responsibility on individuals. At its core, it is about agency, courage, and responsibility felt by individuals to substantially change the status quo (depth of impact) and tackle challenges in their natural and social environments that they perceive but affect many more people than themselves (breadth of impact). It's about identifying gaps in the market system and turning them into solutions that benefit society and nature. And most importantly, they must be able to make a living and nurture their families out of their passion (sustainable revenue model). Making big profits is not their aim, so they reinvest profits not used for the financial stability of their organisation into their mission and communities.

This requires a certain set of traits such as idealism, humanitarianism, strategic thinking, innovation, creativity, resilience, and business acumen. While certain personality types may excel in these areas, successfully bearing the risk on their own (social entrepreneurs), others can thrive as employees in an organisation they receive a regular salary from (intrapreneurs).

Regardless of whether they are an intrapreneur or entrepreneur, it's crucial to provide all with a supportive ecosystem spanning from technical, financial, up to psychosocial support. By empowering individuals to earn a living through their passions and skills, social entrepreneurship support fosters agency and reduces dependency on aid. However, social entrepreneurship is not a one-size-fits-all solution that people can simply be trained to lift themselves out of poverty. It is rather one tool among many in a broader toolkit for sustainable self-help, such as unconditional cash, microgrants, or job guarantees to ensure a holistic approach to empowerment.

In conclusion, social entrepreneurs are valuable assets, bringing a visionary and entrepreneurial spirit to address societal challenges. Even those who may not succeed in their ventures long-term can still contribute with insights and an entrepreneurial mindset and thus be a great source of talent to organisations like the RC. Ultimately, social entrepreneurship can drive meaningful change and empower individuals and communities by fostering an environment of support and collaboration.

4.5 National Societies are not there to run business

While the primary mandate of the RCRC is indeed to assist those in need without discrimination, it's crucial to acknowledge that understanding and navigating market systems and businesses are key factors determining the effectiveness of our aid to local communities. The dynamics of market systems significantly influence the context in which the RCRC operates:

In preparedness actions, disaster response, and recovery efforts, there is a recognition that crises often unfold within the framework of local market systems. Building resilience requires understanding these markets to support recovery without disrupting existing supply chains and livelihoods. Therefore, a well-prepared and resilient RCRC organisation must be equipped to engage in market-based actions, as reflected in the strengthening of cash capacities and the utilisation of cash and market-based interventions in the Red Cross Red Crescent Movement. Cash-based interventions, including innovative approaches such as community currencies, operate on the premise that local markets are integral to helping communities satisfy their basic needs through local business engagement.

Furthermore, in development cooperation, market-based approaches like Making Markets Work for the Poor (M4P) have recognised that business and economic growth have lifted many out of poverty, but they do not work equally well for all, especially the poor. Thus, development actors can support local governments in addressing the gaps in existing market systems so that vulnerable parts of the population can better access the services and products they need to cover their needs.

Furthermore, there is a growing academic debate highlighting how economic growth, while having lifted many out of poverty, has also worsened inequalities, concentrated wealth among a privileged few, and contributed to the depletion of natural resources, unsafe water, deteriorating health, loss of biodiversity, and accelerated climate crises. The necessary structural changes and innovations to decouple natural resource consumption and environmental impacts from economic growth have not yet occurred at the scale required to limit global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius (European Environmental Bureau, 2019). Therefore, advocating for an economy that prioritises the growth of the well-being of both people and the planet can be seen as a response to the pressing challenges we face.

In summary, business and markets are intrinsically linked to the humanitarian work of the RCRC Movement. Beyond understanding markets and taking them into account in market-based programming, the RCRC Movement can leverage market mechanisms to address the needs of people. Some call it the "impact economy", others the "well-being economy", and others the "doughnut economy". What these terms have in common is putting forward that the aim of a business activity is not to produce economic profit but to improve the quality of life for all people in the present and future. These include business activities aiming for improved health, education, and natural regeneration for future generations. When advocating for the RC to "do business," we propose embracing responsible business practices under a social entrepreneurship approach. This entails utilising business as a financially sustainable mechanism to deliver long-term impact and address the evolving challenges faced by vulnerable communities. The approach seeks to complement short-term response and project-based humanitarian initiatives, focusing on creating solutions to social and environmental challenges that are financially sustainable, improving the lives of all people.

Call for Actions

Do you run a social enterprise or an Income-Generating Activity(IGA)? Do you want to share your experience? Do you want to connect with other Red Cross Red Crescent peers? Do you want support in developing new or growing your existing IGA? Please check the following resources.

REDpreneur: www.redpreneur.org

Red Social Innovation: <https://red-social-innovation.com/en/>

Resource Mobilization Community (RMC): [RMC @ Communities IFRC](#)

How to foster resilience via social entrepreneurship

Paris - Vienna | June 2024



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