

International Women's Day
GLOW Red Network

Address by Mercedes Babé

March 10th, 2021

Dear friends,

On this important day, the world is celebrating the International Women's Day, I wish I could be with all of you to applaud the achievements that we have accomplished over many years within the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement. Unfortunately, due to agenda issues, I will not be able to attend the webinar today, as this week we are having a regular meeting of the Standing Commission.

However, I do not want to miss this opportunity to share with you a few words of encouragement. I am very proud of be part of the Red Cross Red Crescent Movement and of the GLOW Red network.

In a global and inter-connected society, we still face many challenges to achieve gender equality, one of the Sustainable Development Goals of the 2030 Agenda. It is not only a fundamental human right, but also the necessary foundation for a peaceful, healthy and sustainable world, as suggested in the text of the Fundamental Principle of Humanity:

to prevent and alleviate human suffering wherever it may be found...to protect life and health and to ensure respect for the human being...It promotes mutual understanding, friendship, cooperation and lasting peace amongst all peoples.

Gender equality is essential for this to happen.

The UN Women theme for this year's International Women's Day is "Women leaders: For an equal future in the world of COVID-19".

Women are on the front lines of the pandemic as volunteers, healthcare workers, caregivers, innovators, and community organizers. They are also among the most exemplary and effective national leaders in the fight against the pandemic. The crisis has highlighted both the critical importance of women's contributions, and at the same time the disproportionate burdens they bear.

As you most probably know, the majority of countries that have contained the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and reacted more successfully to its broader health and socioeconomic impacts, are led by women, who have been recognised for their compassion and humanity.

We already know that women did not have the same opportunities as men in numerous areas of the Movement over its long history. But turning again to our Fundamental Principles, our national Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, and by extension, the IFRC and ICRC, must be open to all without discrimination, and reflect the diversity of our

society. There is no place within the Red Cross Red Crescent for discriminatory attitudes and harmful behaviours or actions that fail to respect women's dignity and rights - whether related to receiving assistance in times of crisis, or providing assistance as a volunteer or staff member.

Strong and committed women both at community and governance level are, little by little, making changes to promote greater equality in all areas within the Movement, and the RCRC cannot be left behind in this great worldwide movement for social change.

The Red Cross Red Crescent Movement is full of inspiring and brave female leaders and other women who are addressing humanitarian challenges all over the world, challenges that have been exacerbated in times of COVID.

Therefore, initiatives such as the GLOW Red network are very important because they allow the Movement to make good use of the skills, capacities and knowledge of all the women and men that make up our Movement. I am convinced that now we can achieve much more than what we have achieved in our 158 years of history.

Since 2017, when the IFRC General Assembly decision and subsequent Council of Delegates resolution was adopted, a lot has been done to support and promote women to fill senior leadership positions.

Today, it is more widely recognised than ever before that women bring different experiences, perspectives and skills, thereby making indispensable contribution to the decisions, policies and laws that work better for everyone.

Leadership comes in many forms and women are leading and driving change in their respective areas with passion. Let's not stop supporting those RCRC women who inspire us all! Through their passion, commitment and achievements, women are driving change throughout the Red Cross and Red Crescent network. It is something we can all be proud of.

I want to encourage us all to keep working to achieve real equity and equality. The Movement is much better because of you!

Enjoy our day!

Mercedes Babé
Chair Standing Commission
of the Red Cross and Red Crescent