

MEXICAN RED CROSS

OUR SELECTED EXPERIENCE

PRACTICAL RESOURCE PACK

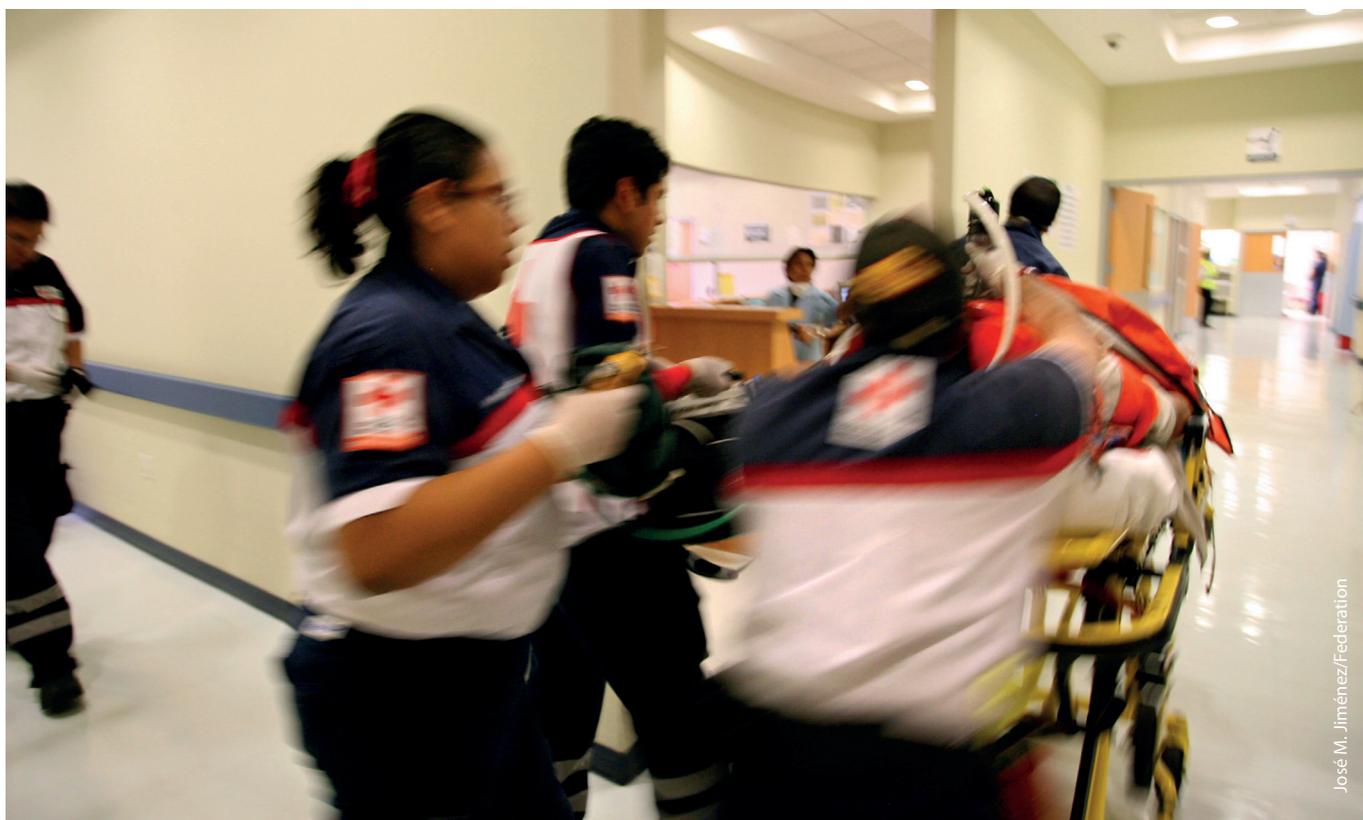
Our context

The Mexican Red Cross was founded in 1910. As an independent humanitarian organization, we rely on donations from all sections of society to support our programmes. We have more than 42,000 volunteers, who carry out a range of activities.

Our National Society's most prominent service is pre-hospital emergency care, which is provided by 528 treatment centres nationwide. We have 1,026 doctors and over

2,400 ambulances. Emergency care is free and available 24/7 all year round. In 2012 the Mexican Red Cross treated 5,371,874 cases and carried out 1,283,284 ambulance journeys for free.

Of the 528 treatment centres, 39 are specialized trauma centres (better known as field hospitals), which provide emergency medical and ambulance services, blood banks, clinical analysis laboratories and trauma surgery, including neurosurgery, orthopaedic surgery and sometimes gynaecological and obstetric surgery.



A patient receives emergency care at a Mexican Red Cross treatment centre.

The Mexican Red Cross is the only non-governmental organization to form part of the National Civil Protection System (Civil Defence) for disaster preparedness and response and the National Health Council.

How our safety and access are affected

The rise in structured and organized violence in Mexico has taken its toll on many parts of society, and the Mexican Red Cross is no exception.

The high levels of violence and growing demands on our emergency teams have posed a challenge for the Mexican Red Cross: how to provide humanitarian assistance to all involved while ensuring that our volunteers continue to enjoy the respect and acceptance of the vast majority of society without putting their physical or mental well-being at risk or compromising the Fundamental Principles.

In the face of the challenges, the commitment of our volunteers and staff to their humanitarian mission has not wavered. On the contrary, they have adopted new ways of reducing the risks faced by the National Society's emergency services nationwide – most importantly, by implementing the Safer Access Framework (SAF) with the technical and financial support of the ICRC.

What we did and learned

We began implementing the SAF in 2008 through workshops that had been attended by over 18,000 volunteers by 2012.

Initially, the SAF was seen only as a tool for volunteers who worked in the ambulance service but, following approval of the

Framework by the National Society leadership in 2012, it is now applied and promoted across all staff levels.

On the basis of the SAF, the Mexican Red Cross took various initiatives, including:

- ▶ Introducing new uniforms that reinforced a common identity.
- ▶ Helping to draft a bill on the use of and respect for the emblem, which was subsequently enacted by parliament.
- ▶ Setting up a nationwide system to log emergency services delivered in high-risk and violent situations.
- ▶ Incorporating the SAF into our training manuals for emergency medical staff.
- ▶ Maintaining a constant dialogue with the ICRC on the situation in Mexico.
- ▶ Making contingency plans for high-risk situations.
- ▶ Training trainers in order to scale up courses on the SAF to cover all 31 Mexican states.
- ▶ Designing, producing and printing over 15,000 manuals on the SAF, which were distributed at all training workshops.
- ▶ Producing a training video for staff on the SAF as applied to its range of operations in situations of violence.

Applying the SAF has enabled the Mexican Red Cross to continue providing emergency humanitarian assistance in all situations, and in particular in situations of high risk and social conflict. This is because we are respected by all those involved, and to such an extent that there are parts of the country which only Mexican Red Cross volunteers can enter thanks to the trust that people place in the National Society's neutrality, impartiality and independence.

