



ICRC STRATEGY 2007-2010

Committed to meeting new challenges through action



ICRC

THE CURRENT CHALLENGES

Armed conflicts vary over time and in intensity and are devastating for the millions of people affected worldwide. In recent years, the ICRC has been confronted with and has responded to a growing variety of crisis situations, including:

- a) The emergence following the 11 September attacks of a confrontation of global dimensions that is being played out not only in Afghanistan, Iraq and other parts of the Middle East, but also in Africa and Asia. The terrorist activity that has been one of the features of this confrontation, and measures taken to counter such activity, often have tragic consequences for the civilian population.
- b) Numerous drawn-out armed conflicts that vary in intensity and are essentially driven by regional and local factors. Fragile transitions from war to peace are marked by repeated outbreaks of armed violence and insecurity that hamper reconstruction and development efforts.
- c) A wide variety of situations of internal violence with serious humanitarian consequences, in particular in States that are highly unstable politically and have a weak capacity for governance. In such contexts, poverty, growing socio-economic inequality, strong demographic growth and increasing urbanization have given rise to new forms of armed violence, especially in urban areas, and to heavier migratory flows.
- d) Natural disasters and pandemics which have a stronger impact in situations of instability and armed conflict (where the ICRC is already operational).

The challenge for the ICRC is to develop the most relevant and effective response possible. When planning and conducting its operations and public communication, it must take into account the degree to which local, regional and global issues increasingly overlap.

In recent years, international humanitarian law has repeatedly been flouted and called into question. This body of law is also arousing increasing interest among the media and among governments and pressure groups, especially with respect to its applicability in non-international armed conflicts. This has been illustrated in the high-profile debates concerning people detained in connection with the “post-9/11” confrontation in facilities such as Abu Ghraib or the methods used in the conduct of hostilities, especially in civil wars.

Problems of access in the field are a key challenge for humanitarian work. An increasingly polarized world – or one that is perceived as such – and the fragmentation of non-State armed groups have tended to exacerbate these problems. Furthermore, humanitarian action is sometimes used for political or military ends. This can undermine the legitimacy of humanitarian action by calling into question its strictly humanitarian, neutral and independent character.

The humanitarian world has changed in the past years. An increasing number of players with differing objectives, activities and principles work side by side in the same context. The United Nations has embarked on a process of reform. The main donor governments have started a process of collective reflection. As a result, humanitarian organizations are increasingly expected to show accountability towards both donors and beneficiaries, professionalism, coordination and results.

THE ICRC'S AMBITIONS

The ICRC is determined to pursue its universal humanitarian work to protect the lives and dignity of all persons affected by armed conflict and other situations of armed violence – no matter what form those situations take or what stage they have reached.

The ICRC stands resolutely by the victims. It works closely with people affected by violence and armed conflict, listens to and respects them, empathizes with their plight and is determined to act for their benefit.

The ICRC's primary ambition is to conduct relevant, professional and high-quality activities. The ICRC will remain a reliable, predictable and coherent organization whose work is underpinned by a strong culture of accountability and focused on the results and impact of its action. It will also seek to strengthen its ability to learn from its own experience and that of other organizations.

The ICRC will strive to remain the standard-setting organization in the field of international humanitarian law. It intends to promote the law and to have it recognized and applied as the relevant law in any armed conflict. It will continue to clarify and develop the law taking into account the real nature of conflicts in today's world and working to prevent any erosion of the protection afforded to civilians and persons who are no longer fighting.

To achieve these goals, the ICRC will pursue and strengthen its dialogue with all State and non-State actors that have an influence on armed conflicts.

The ICRC will also continue to promote its identity as an impartial, neutral and independent organization. These principles will be central to both its activities and its dialogue with beneficiaries, governments, donors, parties to conflicts and other stakeholders.

THE ICRC'S STRATEGY: A DYNAMIC APPROACH

The scope of the ICRC's work stems from the mission conferred on it by States and from the organization's commitment to act on behalf of those affected by armed conflict.

The ICRC's mandate is essentially based on international humanitarian law. The ICRC remains convinced of the importance and relevance of this body of law which provides a legal response to today's challenges. Promoting humanitarian law and any measures needed to obtain full compliance with it in armed conflict are at the heart of the organization's operational objectives.

The ICRC will give priority to the tasks relating to its core mission, while also responding to humanitarian needs in other situations where its expertise is of value.

- As its core mission, the ICRC will continue developing an "all-victims approach" covering all the humanitarian needs that arise during armed conflict. The ICRC's ambition is to be able to respond in a swift, relevant and efficient manner as soon as a conflict breaks out. Meanwhile, it will continue to work on behalf of victims in long-standing armed conflicts, as well as during transition periods supposed to lead from the end of hostilities to consolidated peace.
- In addition, the ICRC will assist and strive to protect people affected by internal violence when it can provide added value as an independent humanitarian organization and a neutral intermediary. It will do this regardless of the causes of such violence. In doing so, it will cooperate with other humanitarian actors, in particular the National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies.
- Where it already has a presence, the ICRC will provide assistance and protection to people affected by natural or technological disasters or by epidemics in situations of armed conflict, internal violence or transition.
- It will also offer help in its specific areas of expertise, such as tracing missing persons and reuniting families to help improve the overall humanitarian situation.

A RANGE OF ACTIVITIES ADDRESSING A VARIETY OF NEEDS

The ICRC seeks to respond to all the humanitarian needs of people affected by armed conflict or internal violence. In so doing it must take a multidisciplinary approach in order to assess those needs and plan and manage the appropriate response. The ICRC is determined to build on its capacity to perform a wide range of activities. It will also further enhance

its ability to provide an effective, efficient and rapid response suited to the specific nature of each operational context.

The ICRC is determined to strengthen its management capacity, notably by developing the expertise for evaluating the quality and impact of all its work. This will enhance its accountability towards beneficiaries and donors.

In particular, the ICRC will invest in protection and assistance activities, focusing on the following skills:

- a) Taking timely and relevant protective action in an effort to prevent or stop abuses against the civilian population or people deprived of their freedom or *hors de combat*. To do this, the ICRC relies on its ability to produce a thorough legal analysis of a situation rapidly. Moreover, the ICRC will help to strengthen worldwide efforts to restore family links and to obtain reliable information on missing persons, including in the event of natural or technological disaster.
- b) Providing quality health assistance in general, and medical assistance in particular. In addition to the skills it has acquired in emergency situations, the ICRC will improve its expertise in public health in prisons, its understanding of health systems and epidemiological analysis and its support for hospital management and basic health care services such as immunization.

COOPERATION AND COORDINATION WITH HUMANITARIAN ACTORS

Many actors with different objectives and principles respond to humanitarian emergencies. Among these various actors, the ICRC will seek to maintain its distinct identity as a strictly humanitarian, neutral, impartial and independent organization.

The contributions of a broad range of humanitarian organizations can help to alleviate suffering if their activities are complementary, based on their respective operational abilities and relevant to the situation. The ICRC will therefore participate in coordination and cooperation initiatives with other such organizations by focusing on concrete actions in line with the real needs in the situations in which they operate.

The ICRC will focus in particular on establishing closer ties with its natural partners, the National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, in countries affected by armed conflict or internal violence. The ICRC will invest in these relationships with a view to building up its own capacity for action and that of its partner National Societies. It will also work closely with National Societies participating in relief operations in accordance with the rules and agreements of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement.

MISSION

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) is an impartial, neutral and independent organization whose exclusively humanitarian mission is to protect the lives and dignity of victims of war and internal violence and to provide them with assistance. It directs and coordinates the international relief activities conducted by the Movement in situations of conflict. It also endeavours to prevent suffering by promoting and strengthening humanitarian law and universal humanitarian principles. Established in 1863, the ICRC is at the origin of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement.

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