ICRC

ICRC EVALUATION STRATEGY

2022–2024
FEBRUARY 2022

ICRC

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FIGURES

ABBREVIATIONS

AAP   Accountability to Affected People

DAC   Development Assistance Committee

EODG   Executive Office of the Director-General (effective 1 July 2022)

ICRC   International Committee of the Red Cross

IFRC   International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

OECD   Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development

PfR   Planning for Results

1. EVALUATION AND THE ICRC

Our vision for the role of evaluation at the ICRC is as follows:

Evaluations at the ICRC help us learn from what we do,
as we work to achieve better outcomes for people affected
by armed conflict and other situations of violence.
We use evaluations to generate evidence and insights
that inform our decision-making.

This statement reflects the ICRC's commitments under strategic orientation 2 of the ICRC Strategy 2019–2024, which is to build relevant and sustainable humanitarian impact with affected people. Specifically, objective 2.7 emphasizes the role of evaluation practice in the ICRC as a learning organization. By the end of 2024, the ICRC will have strengthened its evidence base for decision-making by embedding evaluation practice. This means building on the existing good practices found throughout the organization and expanding skills and confidence in managing and using evaluations. Figure 1 illustrates the main aims of the evaluation strategy. It has been simplified to show the linear progression towards the four key aims set out below; in practice, however, many of the streams are mutually strengthening. The first column explains the 'baseline' for each stream at the end of 2021.

By the end of 2024:
- Our practice of evaluation will have strengthened our evidence base for decision-making.
- Evaluations will help us to better track progress in the implementation of the ICRC Strategy.
- We will have greater skills and confidence to manage and use evaluations.
- We will more systematically plan and budget for evaluations, where appropriate.

The evaluation approaches that programmes, functions and departments already use and have invested in make a substantive contribution to evaluation practice, ensuring that it is tailored to the ICRC's unique mandate. The Evaluation Office will work across the organization to support the further development of tailored approaches to evaluation that are in line with industry standards.

The evaluation guidance and quality criteria to be used when drafting essential documents, such as terms of reference, inception reports and evaluation reports, are already available. As this strategy shows, there are other steps in the evaluation process, for which guidance will be developed and shared. The aim is to increase the skills and confidence for all staff to commission and use evaluations effectively. This will be achieved by providing practical resources and increasing the learning and training offering.

In addition to supporting teams and units across the organization in commissioning and using evaluations, the Evaluation Office will lead on implementing strategically relevant evaluations in partnership with the owners responsible for specific ICRC strategic orientations and other stakeholders. And importantly, internal systems will be adapted to support planning and budgeting for evaluations and to track evaluation practice.

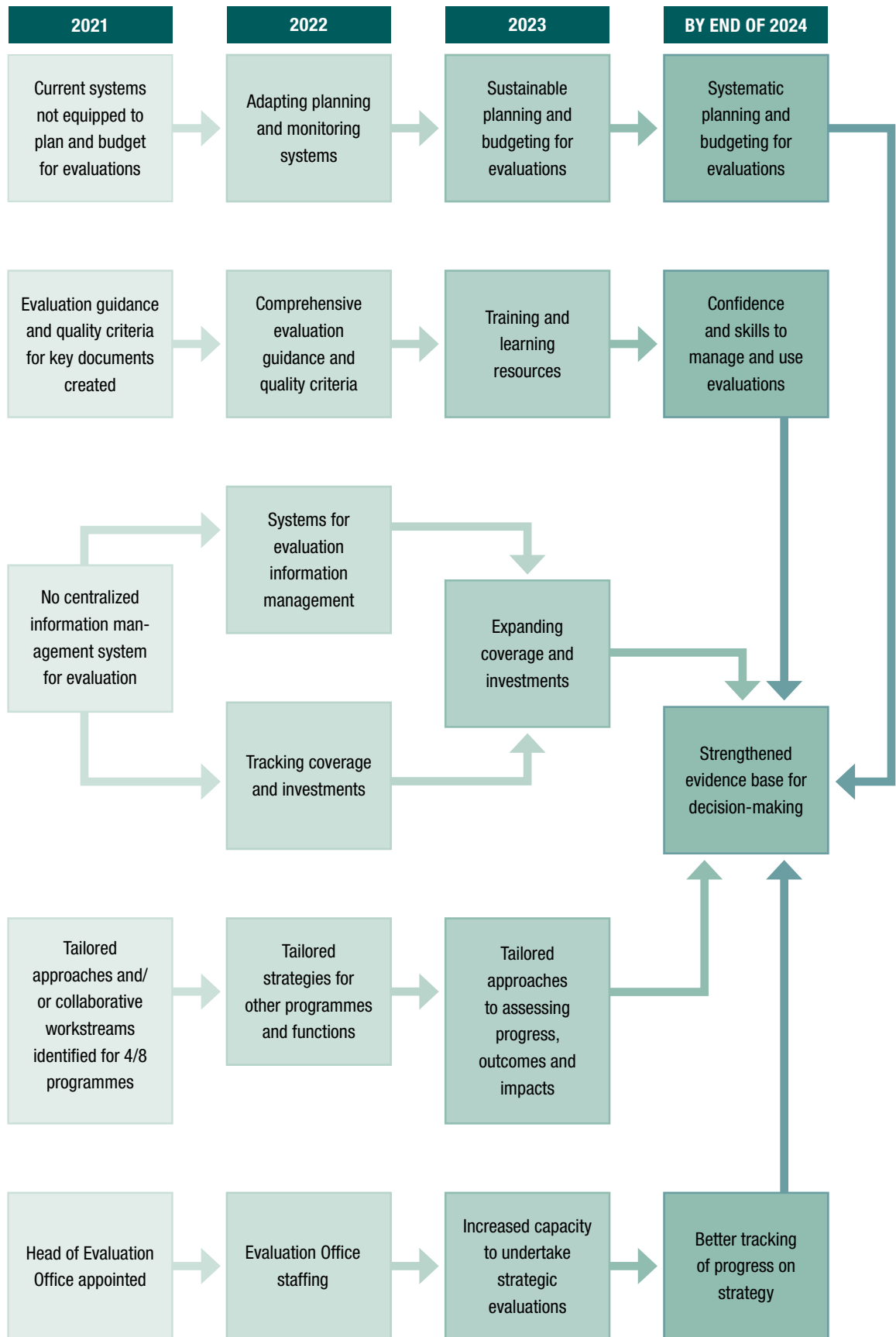| 2021	2022	2023	BY END OF 2024
Current systems not equipped to plan and budget for evaluations	Adapting planning and monitoring systems	Sustainable planning and budgeting for evaluations	Systematic planning and budgeting for evaluations
Evaluation guidance and quality criteria for key documents created	Comprehensive evaluation guidance and quality criteria	Training and learning resources	Confidence and skills to manage and use evaluations
No centralized information management system for evaluation	Systems for evaluation information management / Tracking coverage and investments	Expanding coverage and investments	Strengthened evidence base for decision-making
Tailored approaches and/ or collaborative workstreams identified for 4/8 programmes	Tailored strategies for other programmes and functions	Tailored approaches to assessing progress, outcomes and impacts	
Head of Evaluation Office appointed	Evaluation Office staffing	Increased capacity to undertake strategic evaluations	Better tracking of progress on strategy

Figure 1: Evaluation aims and milestones 2021–2024

2. INTRODUCTION

The ICRC Evaluation Strategy 2022–2024 draws on the recommendations of the 2019 Evaluation Function Assessment and builds on previous strategies.[1] Broad consultations during 2019 identified the priorities for the strategy, which are to provide a common understanding of the purpose of evaluation at the ICRC and provide guidance on how evaluations are planned, managed, conducted and used across the organization.

The strategy is designed to help promote high-quality evaluations that contribute to organizational learning, accountability and the ICRC's mission to protect the lives and dignity of victims of conflict and violence. The content of the strategy is consistent with the Fundamental Principles of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and the ICRC Strategy 2019–2024, and was prepared in accordance with international best practice for evaluations in humanitarian contexts. It aims to align the ICRC's evaluation practice with industry standards, while addressing the ICRC's specific needs as a specialized organization with a unique humanitarian mandate.

The strategy outlines: the guiding principles for evaluation at the ICRC; the framework for evaluation practice and quality; the role and structure of the Evaluation Office; parameters for evaluation staffing and budgeting; and the implementation and review process for the strategy.

Based on these common understandings, the Evaluation Office will collaboratively and constructively support the embedding of evaluation into practice and systems across the organization.

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1   For example, the 2006 ICRC Evaluation Strategy.

3. GUIDING PRINCIPLES OF EVALUATION AT THE ICRC

The following principles guide how evaluations are conducted and used at the ICRC. They contribute to the credibility and legitimacy of ICRC evaluations, taking into account both internationally recognized best practice for humanitarian evaluation and the Fundamental Principles of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement.

3.1. INDEPENDENCE, IMPARTIALITY AND NEUTRALITY

The evaluation framework defines the extent to which evaluations and similar activities are conducted independently. Evaluations are impartial and as **objective** as possible, providing a comprehensive and unbiased assessment that takes into account the views of multiple stakeholders, including external stakeholders and affected populations, where appropriate. Any potential conflict of interests between the evaluators and the evaluand (i.e. the evaluation subject) are identified and appropriately managed. Evaluations are neutral and do not further a particular political objective or act as instruments of external or internal influence. Evaluations and similar activities are conducted independently of line management or those responsible for the design and execution of the work, programmes, strategies and themes being evaluated. The evaluation function is independently positioned and funded.

EXTENT TO WHICH THE ICRC'S EVALUATION FUNCTION IS INDEPENDENT		
Baseline	2022 target	2024 target
Poor practice	Average practice	Good practice

Figure 2: PfR 2022 Evaluation Indicator 1 – Independence of the evaluation function

3.2. ETHICAL AND LEGAL CONDUCT

Evaluations must be conducted in an ethical and legal manner, taking into account the well-being of those involved in and affected by the evaluation and the evaluand. Evaluations must be conducted in accordance with professional ethics and standards to minimize risks to evaluation participants, including the principle of 'do no harm', and a protocol must be in place to ensure that the clearly defined informed consent of all evaluation participants is obtained. Where appropriate, evaluations will therefore require formal ethics review board approval.[2] Evaluators adhere to the ICRC Code of Conduct and relevant policies on ethics and safeguarding. Respondent information is handled with confidentiality and in accordance with the ICRC's Rules on Personal Data Protection and the ICRC's Handbook on Data Protection in Humanitarian Action.

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2   Specific criteria are used to determine whether a particular evaluation or process (i.e. the inception report) is subject to ethics review board approval. The criteria are defined by the Evaluation Office in line with international standards and practice.

3.3. UTILITY AND UTILIZATION

The ICRC ensures that each evaluation is useful and relevant to the needs of the organization (including learning, accountability and decision-making processes). There is a system in place for identifying potential evaluations that the Evaluation Office will lead and/or fund (wholly or in part) and for prioritizing these evaluations based on established selection criteria and in consultation with relevant stakeholders. The needs of stakeholders are identified at the planning stage and addressed throughout the evaluation. The intended use of and follow-up on evaluation findings are determined at the start of the evaluation and documented in the evaluation terms of reference.

3.4. COLLABORATION

ICRC evaluations uphold the ICRC's approach to collaboration with other members of the Movement (e.g. joint implementation with National Societies), with governmental stakeholders and with any international, national or civil society organizations with which it works. Joint evaluations with fellow Movement members or other partners are encouraged in order to build consensus and gain relevant insights that may not have been obtained in a stand-alone evaluation. The ICRC seeks to share information about evaluation plans with National Societies and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) to reduce duplication of efforts and optimize evaluation resources within the Movement.

3.5. TRANSPARENCY

Evaluations are conducted transparently, in accordance with the ninth core principle of the Movement's Code of Conduct. Procedures are established to ensure internal transparency in identifying, commissioning, managing and completing evaluations, as well as in how the ICRC handles competing interests concerning the relevance of the evaluation and differences of opinion concerning the evaluation findings and recommendations. In keeping with the ICRC Access to Information Policy, evaluation reports will be made public and follow a clear internal dissemination procedure. In exceptional cases, the Evaluation Office may make the executive summary of an evaluation report public instead of the full document, if the content threatens the rights and security of individuals or compromises the safety and integrity of ICRC operations. The Evaluation Office will provide annual updates or reports to the Assembly (the ICRC's governing body) to highlight relevant evaluation findings and provide details of the progress made in implementing the evaluation strategy.

3.6. QUALITY FOCUS AND ASSURANCE

Quality assurance is demonstrated through adherence to the evaluation strategy and any evaluation guidelines that are developed. The Evaluation Office is responsible for providing direct quality control on centralized evaluations and establishing a quality assurance process for decentralized evaluations. ICRC staff in the Evaluation Office have the relevant background, qualifications and technical expertise to support and manage evaluations. Consultants hired to conduct evaluations or similar activities have experience and expertise in both the evaluation subject matter and in evaluation methodologies and practice.

4. FRAMEWORK FOR EVALUATION

4.1. DEFINITION AND PURPOSE OF EVALUATION

The ICRC is guided by the OECD Development Assistance Committee's (DAC) definition of evaluation as "an assessment, as systematic and objective as possible, of an on-going or completed programme or policy, its design, implementation and results". In addition to programmes and policies, an evaluation may focus on a strategy, initiative, approach, organizational unit or department, or operational area (e.g. a region, a target group or a specific emergency response).

Evaluations aim to determine whether the evaluand's objectives were relevant and fulfilled and to understand the factors that contributed to its success (or lack of success), using clear lines of inquiry and a robust methodological approach. An evaluation may look at questions of relevance, or respond to questions about how best to design or adapt an intervention in response to a range of contextual factors, and demonstrate the extent to which the intervention or initiative contributed to observed changes or results.

Evaluation as a practice differs from monitoring, which does not offer an independent assessment of an initiative, but rather provides the information needed for ongoing management and decision-making. Monitoring takes place within the implementation of an initiative. It is the ongoing tracking of progress against a set of defined benchmarks or indicators. Monitoring systems are a critical source of information for evaluation and, when brought together, monitoring and evaluation data provide a holistic picture of performance on multiple operational levels.

- *Evaluations* conducted within the ICRC's evaluation framework are an examination of an action, process, policy or strategy aimed at creating an objective evidence base to support important decisions, draw lessons for improvement and enhance organizational accountability (including transparency).
- *Evaluative reviews* are specifically structured to facilitate a critical reflection and enhance internal learning concerning the successes and challenges of a given activity. The aim is to record and share learning outcomes in order to improve future actions, drawing frequently on existing evidence, which is synthesized for the purposes of the review. Evaluative reviews draw on the evaluation guidelines and processes. Evaluative and other types of review may also use other guidelines, such as those developed for research within the ICRC.[3]
- *Lessons-learned* exercises are not included in the evaluation framework. They frequently, but not exclusively, fall within the scope of the Project Management Framework for Geneva-based projects and within the scope of the Security Unit's response protocol for security crisis situations.
- *Assessments* are likewise not considered evaluations. Assessments focus on the collection and analysis of data concerning an ongoing or forecast situation before an action is taken or as part of ongoing monitoring.

Evaluation is an integral part of the ICRC's Planning for Results (PfR) system. A well-functioning approach to results-based management is critical for a successful evaluation function. An evaluation should provide information that is credible, reliable and useful, enabling findings and recommendations to be incorporated into organizational decision-making, strategy development and planning, and accountability mechanisms. In this way, evaluations serve to improve the ICRC's work and further its mission.

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[3] See the guidelines and standards developed by the Centre for Operational Research and Experience.

4.2. CHARACTERISTICS OF ICRC EVALUATIONS

Evaluations are distinguishable from other types of systematic inquiry that also generate evidence for learning and decision-making.

The main characteristics of ICRC evaluations are as follows:
- The principle of objectivity means that the ICRC is required to hire qualified and experienced external evaluators to undertake independent evaluations. External evaluation professionals adhere to ethical codes of conduct as set out by their national or regional evaluation associations, international industry standards and the ICRC.
- An evaluation reference group is established for the duration of each evaluation to provide input and guidance at key points in the process. The reference groups are usually made up of ICRC staff members; external members may be invited to bring specific knowledge or if a strategic partner is involved. Reference groups for joint or multi-partner evaluations include the partners involved.
- Evaluations are frequently based on an inquiry framework of pre-defined criteria that draws on DAC[4] and ALNAP criteria, combined with programme- or organization-specific criteria as required.
- Mixed qualitative and/or quantitative methods are incorporated into the evaluation design so that data sources and methods for evidence analysis can be triangulated. An evaluation matrix included in the evaluation's inception report indicates how evaluation criteria and questions will be addressed using multiple methods and sources.
- Participants in an evaluation include stakeholders who are external to the ICRC and, where appropriate, people affected by conflict and violence.
- Recommendations are developed or refined in consultation with evaluation commissioners to ensure their relevance and to benefit from internal knowledge of systems and opportunities for implementation. This process is managed in a way that does not compromise the independence of the findings and conclusions.
- The quality, rigour and credibility of evaluations are assured by using the evaluation quality assurance mechanism. Feedback is given on the draft terms of reference, draft inception reports and draft evaluation reports to confirm their strengths and identify areas that need to be strengthened in order to meet the quality criteria. The full criteria checklists are made available to evaluators at the start of the evaluation.

4.3. EVALUATION TYPOLOGY

The evaluation typology defines evaluation types according to their origin (centralized or decentralized) and their purpose. Based on these two parameters, standards for who conducts the evaluation (internal team, mixed team or fully external team) and the appropriate lines of inquiry are provided for each evaluation type.

The typology does not include detailed timing-related definitions (e.g. summative evaluations, mid-term evaluations and process evaluations) or methodology-based definition (e.g. impact evaluations and most significant change evaluations). Further information on these two aspects is provided in the ICRC evaluation guidelines.

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4   DAC criteria: relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, coherence, impact and sustainability.

CENTRALIZED EVALUATION		
TYPE	**DESCRIPTION**	**EVALUATION TEAM**
Strategic evaluations	Scope includes thematic questions relating to overall policies or strategies. The primary purpose is learning, with a secondary accountability objective. Can also include methodological development evaluations, such as piloting new measurement techniques with a programme or function or supporting an innovative approach to evaluation.	Commissioned or strongly supported by the Executive Office of the Director-General (EODG) and/or Evaluation Office, in collaboration with stakeholders. Conducted by external consultants.
Institutional evaluations	Primary purpose is to ensure coverage or accountability commitments, donor requirements or risk management parameters for evaluation selection. Learning is a secondary objective. Scope of the exercise can include programmes and functions (e.g. protection, assistance, prevention, cooperation and thematic legal issues), corporate support, donor appeals, or a single (single delegation or multi-delegation regional scope) or specific initiative.	Commissioned by the EODG and/or the Evaluation Office and managed by the Evaluation Office. Conducted by external consultants.
Centralized evaluative reviews	Responds to a specific need within a rapid, flexible timeframe. Scope of the exercise includes institutional level projects or organizational level experiences that would benefit from rapid building on staff learning. An example of this would be the Ebola Lessons-Learned Report.	Commissioned by the Evaluation Office in collaboration with stakeholders. Conducted by a mixed team or fully internal team.
DECENTRALIZED EVALUATIONS		
Decentralized evaluations	Scope includes the main programmes (protection, assistance, prevention, cooperation, thematic legal issues), thematic operational aspects (target population, response type), delegations (single delegation or multi-delegation regional scope) and departmental policies.	Commissioned by delegations, programmes, functions and departments. Conducted by external consultants.
Decentralized evaluative reviews	Scope includes main programmes, delegation-level thematic issues (target population within one delegation, response type within one delegation, etc.). The purpose of reviews is to build on staff learning and facilitate staff reflection.	Commissioned by delegations, programmes, functions or units within departments. Conducted by a mixed team or fully internal team. (Note that any departmental-level review or review on a thematic operational issue cutting across more than one country or context is automatically held at the centralized review level or upgraded to an evaluation).

Table 1: ICRC evaluation typology

4.4. LINES OF INQUIRY

Lines of inquiry are determined based on the type of evaluation. The DAC criteria are frequently used for centralized and decentralized evaluations, going beyond 'effectiveness' to include questions of relevance, efficiency, coherence and, where appropriate, for the length and objective of the intervention, impact and sustainability.

Other frameworks for lines of inquiry may also be used or drawn on.[5] Additional lines of inquiry recognized by the ICRC for their strategic or operational value are consistently used in the evaluation terms of reference. These include questions relating to the Accountability to Affected People (AAP) framework, women and girls, and marginalized and/or underrepresented populations, in line with the ICRC's commitments to inclusion. These may be included in specific lines of inquiry or used as stand-alone questions to be addressed in the evaluation.

In the case of centralized and decentralized reviews, the lines of inquiry include: what did we plan to do? What did we actually do? What were the challenges / obstacles? And what have we learned? DAC or other standardized criteria may be useful but are not required for reviews. Lines of inquiry relating to AAP and protection issues may be incorporated into reviews if they will help to capitalize on staff learning.

4.5. EVALUATION SELECTION CRITERIA

Selection criteria are used to identify evaluations to be included in the organization-wide evaluation plan. These criteria help to determine priority areas of work to evaluate and also help to guide decisions on whether or not the ICRC will pursue an evaluation for a particular action or area of work.

The criteria include:
- **SIGNIFICANCE AND STRATEGIC RELEVANCE:** This relates to issues of importance to the ICRC's strategic and operational plans. It may also include evaluations on new areas of work, such as a flagship programme, a reform process or a new location, innovative practices or ways of operating.

- **UTILITY:** This relates to the usefulness of the evaluation's expected findings. This could be for a cross-cutting issue, a specific learning need within the ICRC or to ensure that organizational practice is documented in an area that is growing in significance for the ICRC or globally. It can also relate to evaluations that will identify and amplify good performance or practice in organizational plans, providing guidance or ensuring a broad uptake of lessons learned across the organization or within a specific department or delegation.

- **ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENTS OR REQUIREMENTS:** This relates to requirements or commitments, such as evaluation coverage commitments established by ICRC accountability objectives, as part of a donor framework agreement or within a partnership, or commitments on risk management and the role of evaluations as a 'second line' of defence. It can also relate to an ICRC commitment to deliver on a particular objective, such as upholding the protection of civilians in situations of armed conflict.

- **EVALUABILITY:** This relates to the feasibility of evaluating a given area. This entails sufficiently defining the evaluand for the purposes of the evaluation; determining the complexity of the analysis required to satisfy the requirements of the evaluation; determining ease of access to documents, datasets, the location or stakeholders; looking at the sensitivity of the subject

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5   For example, principles-based evaluation frameworks, or tailored criteria-based evaluation frameworks.

matter relative to 'do no harm' commitments;[6] and considering the availability of sufficient human and financial resources. This criterion needs be judged by the Evaluation Office to ensure that concerns about evaluability, if present, are valid and not a consequence of staff lacking the technical knowledge on how to navigate challenging evaluation contexts.

- **TIMELINESS:** This relates to whether the timing of the evaluation is aligned with strategic and operational plans. Evaluations should be planned and prioritized based on when their findings will be most useful. For example, evaluation findings that will influence the strategic direction of a delegation should be available and validated before the start of the PfR cycle. Timeliness can also refer to when an evaluation is timed over the period in which the evaluand is being implemented, for instance mid-way in order to ensure space to adjust and adapt before the initiative is completed. It also involves gathering information when it is most readily available, for instance at times when programmes are being wound up or new initiatives are being rolled out, or when results are expected based on the timeline for change (e.g. within six months or six years of the start of the initiative).

- **CONTRIBUTION TO RISK MANAGEMENT:** This relates to the use of evaluations to respond to, mitigate and account for the inherent risks of fulfilling the ICRC's mandate. This can include initiating an evaluation in response to a set of risk criteria, such as the size or budget of an initiative, or in response to known or anticipated performance or efficiency challenges. It can also cover situations where evaluations are commissioned in remote management locations to anticipate or replace third-party monitoring. Evaluations commissioned with a risk management rationale do not replace the ICRC's internal audit function.

4.6. EVALUATION COVERAGE

The ICRC is committed to ensuring that the coverage of evaluations is commensurate with the size and scope of the organization. Coverage parameters include the level of evaluation across geographical, thematic and organizational units and responsibilities for ensuring and enforcing coverage. In the first full year of the strategy (i.e. 2022) coverage will be monitored. Following this, coverage aims will be defined, factoring in the department restructuring (scheduled for July 2022) and incrementally addressed by focusing support on underrepresented areas. Coverage will be identified across the following:
- departments
- programmes and functions
- regions
- delegations
- the ICRC's strategic orientations.

Overlap across the categories will be analysed as part of the coverage tracking, alongside the absolute number of evaluations and the overall expenditure on evaluation.

NUMBER OF EVALUATION CONDUCTED TO SUPPORT ICRC STRATEGY PERFORMANCE TRACKING		
Baseline	2022 target	2024 target
0	2	5

Figure 3: PfR 2022 Evaluation Indicator 2 – Number of ICRC Strategy-related evaluations

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6   For example, evaluations requiring extensive interviews with sexual violence survivors or children would be feasible only if ethics review board conditions are met concerning the safety and protection of the participants.

When determining which evaluations will be included in the annual evaluation plan, evaluation coverage commitments will be considered alongside other learning and accountability commitments, namely planned audits, research and security reviews. For example, a delegation that may require an evaluation based on delegation coverage commitments could be postponed if an internal audit is also planned for that year.

COVERAGE RESPONSIBILITIES AND ENFORCEMENT

Coverage responsibilities lie initially with the commissioning units for centralized and decentralized evaluations and reviews, i.e. delegations, departments, programmes and functions, and the Evaluation Office. They are responsible for identifying the potential for evaluation within the evaluation planning process and reviewing whether the final set of evaluations fully reflects the ICRC's different priorities. Coverage can also be enforced in situations where evaluation is absent. Responsibility for coverage enforcement lies first with the Evaluation Office, which has authority to determine the final evaluation plan and initiate a centralized evaluation on any area of the organization where it is deemed relevant. The Evaluation Office's preference is for constructive and collaborative agreement on approaches to expanding coverage.

4.7. EVALUATION PROCESS REQUIREMENTS

A standardized evaluation process is used for all ICRC evaluations and reviews. There are nine required steps for managing evaluations, with a corresponding set of mandatory deliverables. The depth and detail required for each step vary, however, depending on the evaluation type (e.g. institutional evaluation vs. decentralized review). The specific process for each evaluation type is provided in the ICRC's global evaluation guidelines. The evaluation commissioner does the following:

a. *conducts an evaluability assessment* to identify the feasibility-related strengths and challenges of the proposed evaluation. The Evaluation Office provides a checklist that the commissioner can use to determine the feasibility of the evaluand and the evaluation process. For complex evaluands, the Evaluation Office supports the assessment process by helping the commissioner to conduct a more detailed rapid evaluability inquiry and commissioning a full evaluability assessment by an external evaluation expert.

b. *sets up an evaluation reference group* to shape the evaluation scope and the lines of inquiry, guide the recruitment of the evaluation team, approve the final evaluation methodology and ensure a final set of realistic and implementable recommendations. Each reference group will have a chair and a documented set of roles and responsibilities in the evaluation terms of reference.

c. *develops the evaluation terms of reference* in line with the guidelines and quality criteria defined by the Evaluation Office. As a minimum, the terms of reference sets out the evaluation type based on the evaluation typology presented in this strategy; the evaluation purpose and objectives; the lines of inquiry; the scope (e.g. timeline under evaluation, timing of the evaluation based on the length of the intervention and the aspects of the initiative to be included in the evaluation); any expectations regarding the evaluation methodology or approach; a set of deliverables (including points to be communicated or presented to the reference group); a schedule for the completion of the exercise; and any expectations on the extent to which the evaluation team is external or internal and their areas of expertise. The draft terms of reference will be reviewed using the evaluation quality assurance mechanism. The final terms of reference will be included as an annex to the final evaluation report.

d. *recruits the evaluation team / evaluators* based on the evaluation type and the evaluation terms of reference. The level of independence of the evaluator should be defined (e.g. external to the organization, internal to the organization but external to the action), so as to avoid any potential conflicts of interest and ensure the independence, impartiality and neutrality of the process. The contract with the evaluator(s) must follow the ICRC's procurement guidelines and

procedures and must include a termination clause should the performance be unsatisfactory at the inception phase.

e. *oversees the inception phase* of the evaluation process and its alignment with the guidelines and quality criteria defined by the Evaluation Office. An inception report is produced following the first document review and discussion with the reference group and other evaluation stakeholders. The aim of the inception phase is to secure a consensus about the scope, objectives, methodology and potential limitations/risks of the exercise, and to document any departures from or changes to the terms of reference. The draft inception report is reviewed using the evaluation quality assurance mechanism. The final inception report is validated by the reference group, confirming the common understanding of the assignment.

f. *oversees the evaluation phase,* including data collection, data analysis and the drafting of the report. A draft evaluation report is shared with the evaluation manager, the reference group and other key stakeholders. The evaluation team finalizes the report based on the ICRC's feedback on the draft.

g. *approves the final evaluation report in consultation with the reference group* (in line with the guidelines and quality criteria defined by the Evaluation Office). The draft evaluation report is reviewed using the evaluation quality assurance mechanism. The evaluation management response from the parties responsible for the recommendations is attached to the report. The final report is archived in a centralized report library, with the management response attached and available in the folder to anyone reading the report.

h. *reviews the progress made on implementing the evaluation recommendations,* as aligned with the management response. This role is shared with the Executive Office of the Director General (EODG), in consultation with the Directorate where appropriate, before the annual reporting to the Assembly. It may be included in either an annual evaluation report or annual evaluation learning review. Information is tracked on a centralized platform.

i. *disseminates evaluation reports in accordance with ICRC policies and objectives for evaluation use.* The reports of all externally conducted centralized or decentralized evaluations are shared publicly (on the ICRC website), as per the ICRC's Access to Information Policy. The lessons learned from implementing evaluations as well as the relevant findings from evaluations are included in reports by the Evaluation Office to the EODG (and the Directorate) and to the Assembly once per year.

The Evaluation Office provides a quality assurance service to support the strengthening of evaluation practice within the ICRC. Key products (i.e. terms of reference, inception reports and evaluation reports) must go through the quality assurance process, providing constructive feedback to strengthen the documents in order to achieve the best possible outcomes from the process, and to facilitate learning and strengthen evaluation capabilities.

5. EVALUATION FUNCTION

STRUCTURE, SCOPE AND PURPOSE

The primary role of the Evaluation Office is to provide centralized oversight and develop the ICRC's evaluation strategy, guidelines and systems to ensure the quality and uptake of learning. It has full control over organization-wide evaluation policy and guidelines. These guidelines may be adjusted or deepened for specific programmes or areas of work within the organization, with the approval of the evaluation function.

The Evaluation Office consists of a head of the Evaluation Office, and a team of evaluation officers ranging in experience and seniority, with four staff in total by the end of 2022, and with number projected to reach nine by the end of 2024 across headquarters and the field.

The Evaluation Office works across the organization to collaboratively identify priorities, build on good practices and respond to evaluation planning and management needs.

Evaluation Office staff manage the mechanism for ensuring adherence to quality standards and evaluation utility when working with consultants, academic partners and potentially rosters of staff who conduct evaluations. The function acts as evaluation manager for centralized evaluations and is included in the reference group for centralized evaluations managed by other teams. It can directly commission evaluations that it centrally manages (e.g. such as institutional evaluations). It has the capacity to join evaluation teams or develop methodologies for both centralized and decentralized evaluations. It provides technical guidance for commissioning and managing decentralized evaluations, where requested by the commissioning teams.

The Evaluation Office Steering Committee, established by the Evaluation Office, is made up of ICRC staff members. Its purpose is to provide views from different parts of the organization on the plans and progress of the Evaluation Office during the 2022–2024 strategy period.

The Evaluation Office defines and manages the process for evaluation planning at the central and decentralized levels. This includes cancelling or shifting exercises that are outside the scope of the evaluation. The Evaluation Office has the authority to approve final evaluation plans at both levels and shares these directly with the Directorate and the Assembly. It is responsible for how the organization tracks action on evaluation management responses and leads the process of embedding evaluation into key ICRC systems that support its use. A system for tracking strategic and institutional evaluation recommendations and their implementation will be developed in 2022.

PERCENTAGE OF OVERDUE MANAGEMENT RESPONSES CONCERNING ORGANIZATION-WIDE EVALUATIONS		
Baseline	2022 target	2024 target
-	10%	5%

Figure 4: PfR 2022 Evaluation Indicator 3 – Percentage of management responses overdue

The function has full quality control over centralized evaluations and sets out the quality assurance process for decentralized evaluations.

The Evaluation Office is part of the EODG. The EODG has responsibility for:
- hiring the head of the Evaluation Office
- validating the final evaluation plan and selection criteria used for establishing that plan
- approving the function budget and staffing structure.

The Directorate has responsibility for:
- approving (following presentation) key function products, such as the annual report or review of the learning outcomes or main findings / trends highlighted by evaluations.

The function is situated under the line management of the EODG for all other activities. A process is in place for presenting information from evaluations directly to the Assembly (without EODG involvement), as well as to the EODG and the Directorate.

6. EVALUATION PLAN

An organization-wide evaluation plan covering centralized and decentralized evaluations will be prepared by the Evaluation Office in collaboration with the Directorate, the six headquarters departments and delegations. The plan will be shared with the Assembly for information.

The planning process is embedded in the annual PfR cycle. Evaluations included in the plan will be chosen in accordance with the selection criteria detailed in section 4.5.

7. EVALUATION FUNDING

Evaluation funds are allocated for three purposes:
a. the Evaluation Office's budget for the staffing of the office, providing technical support and quality assurance for both centralized and decentralized evaluations, and for initiatives that promote the embedding of evaluation practice into the organization.

b. centralized evaluations managed and commissioned by the Evaluation Office or jointly commissioned by the Evaluation Office and another department or team.

c. contributing funds for decentralized evaluations across the organization. This contribution fund is intended to stimulate investment in evaluation and incentivize evaluation commissioners by providing financial support, without undermining the imperative to sustainably plan and budget for evaluations as part of regular budgets.[7]

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7   Planning and budgeting for evaluations as part of programme cycles is standard practice for some but not yet all contexts. To make this standard across the organization, a phased approach will be used, with the contribution fund matching or topping up resources allocated for decentralized evaluations where needed. This is subject to funds being available at the central level, and a prioritization process will be developed in 2022 in consultation with directors. Alongside this, internal systems will be adapted to support planning and budgeting for evaluations.

Evaluation funds are ringfenced and cannot be reallocated. The budget amount is determined based on an allocation benchmark, with the ICRC dedicating a set proportion of its total operating budget to evaluation. The amount covers both the costs of staffing and individual evaluations. Allocation levels will be phased in as the function is developed in order to ensure absorption capacity and will range from 0.02% to 0.3% of the ICRC's total operating budget. This is expected to then rise to 1.0%, with the timeframe for reaching this level to be determined within this strategy period.

PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL BUDGET SPENT ANNUALLY ON EVALUATIONS AND STRENGTHENING EVALUATION PRACTICE		
Baseline	2022 target	2024 target
0.02%	0.1%	0.3%

Figure 5: PfR 2022 Evaluation Indicator 4 – Percentage of total budget spent annually on evaluation

8. IMPLEMENTATION AND REVIEW OF THE EVALUATION STRATEGY

Progress on the implementation of the evaluation strategy will be reported to the Directorate and Assembly annually. This may come in the form of a separate presentation and/or as part of an annual evaluation report.

The content of the strategy will be comprehensively reviewed towards the end of the period (i.e. in 2024). It will then be revised to ensure that it remains aligned with the ICRC's strategic direction. Any proposed changes during the strategy period will be submitted to the Directorate to ensure the strategy remains relevant. Such changes may arise, for example, from the forthcoming (July 2022) adjustments to the ICRC's organizational structure.

The ICRC helps people around the world affected by armed conflict and other violence, doing everything it can to protect their lives and dignity and to relieve their suffering, often with its Red Cross and Red Crescent partners. The organization also seeks to prevent hardship by promoting and strengthening humanitarian law and championing universal humanitarian principles.