



COOPERATION



Cooperation with National Societies



ICRC



ICRC

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Cooperation

The basis for joint action



Each year over 500,000 people are killed and more than 30 million flee their homes as a result of conflict. Armed violence, and in many cases the refugees it produces, crosses borders. War and insecurity are associated with increasing migration, the spread of HIV/AIDS and other epidemics, the expansion of criminal networks and the proliferation of humanitarian disasters. The victims of conflict are not only soldiers but entire communities.

The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement is present in almost all of the world's conflict zones. Together with the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (International Federation), the Movement is composed of National Societies from almost all countries in the world, with tens of millions of members and volunteers. The specific nature and autonomy of each component of the Movement is an asset because, despite their distinct responsibilities, the components have complementary roles that can – and indeed must – be capitalized upon.

The Movement's components are separate, but inseparable, because they are united by the emblems, the Fundamental Principles and, most importantly, by a common humanitarian mission. The Movement brings together a vast array of resources, making it the world's largest humanitarian network and a unique and independent force for humanitarian action.

Cooperation between the National Societies and the ICRC dates back to the very inception of the Movement. Today, it is one of the ICRC's four main programme areas, together with protection, assistance and preventive action.

The ICRC has a specific mandate and a solid experience of action in conflict situations. It shares its know-how with National Societies and supports many of their activities through cooperation programmes.

The ICRC works with National Societies in their home countries and abroad, especially in regions that are (or are likely to be) affected by armed conflict, internal strife or other situations of violence. However, the ICRC also

cooperates with National Societies in peacetime by providing regular material or financial support to strengthen local capacities to respond to crises, seconding delegates and mobilizing the different components of the Movement to support capacity-building programmes.

The ICRC is responsible for promoting and guiding the contribution and involvement of National Societies working abroad, participating in international relief operations in countries affected by armed conflict.

The objectives of these joint efforts are:

- greater impact in response to humanitarian needs;
- improved management and services;
- greater coherence within the Movement;
- more active use of the Movement's network to address matters of joint concern.

In 2003, the ICRC adopted a cooperation policy that recognized the importance of partnerships with National Societies in enhancing the Movement's work. At the heart of this policy is the strengthening of National Society capacity to protect the lives and dignity of victims of war and internal violence.

Volunteers from the Sri Lankan Red Cross, together with the ICRC, provided a free satellite telephone service to victims of the 26 December 2004 Asian tsunami to get in touch with relatives.



Daniel Gilmoz/ICRC

Building National Society capacities



Rather than mentioning abstractly the nature and scope of capacity-building activities, some examples are described below as illustrations.

Communal violence in Nigeria has killed some thousands of people since 1999. Christians have fought Muslims in the north, Yorubas and Hausas have destroyed each others' property in Lagos, and the Niger Delta tribes have fought for control of local government.

The Nigerian Red Cross has been at the forefront of the humanitarian response during these clashes. Thanks to its effectiveness, credibility and impartiality, the National Society has been allowed by the armed factions to assist victims and cross conflict zones.

The Nigerian Red Cross Society has been able to cope with the challenges posed by the armed clashes in part owing to extensive ICRC cooperation and support. In the area of relief services, ICRC assistance has been essential. According to the National Society, the ICRC has proved to be an invaluable partner in strengthening its capacity to respond to various types of humanitarian needs throughout the territory.

The ICRC stepped up its efforts to help the Bolivian Red Cross enhance its capacity to respond to the situations of violence and unrest in 2005. This is part of a long-term capacity-building programme carried out in

The ICRC provided technical support to the Nigerian Red Cross to strengthen response to armed clashes in the country.



coordination with the International Federation.

The purpose of ICRC cooperation with National Societies, such as those of Nigeria and Bolivia, is to strengthen their capacity to carry out activities aimed at preventing and alleviating human suffering caused by conflict, internal strife and other situations of violence.

In keeping with its mandate and expertise, the ICRC concentrates its efforts on five core areas: the promotion of international humanitarian law and the Fundamental Principles of the Movement, health and relief assistance for victims of armed conflict, the restoration of family links, mine awareness and the development of National Society legal bases and statutes. Within these core areas, the ICRC supports National Society training of personnel, provides financial and material assistance for headquarters

and branch offices and supplies technical expertise that helps with planning and managing activities.

The development of each National Society is guided by its internal plan. The ICRC bases its support on this plan to ensure that capacity-building efforts lead to sustainable and effective programmes and services. Local culture and working methods are respected by the ICRC in each case.

In order to ensure complementarity and avoid duplication, support for a National Society is coordinated with the International Federation and any other National Society working in the same context. Written agreements between each National Society concerned and the ICRC ensure that the objectives to be achieved are clear to all partners and that working relations are based on a common understanding of respective roles and responsibilities.



The ICRC is working with the Bolivian Red Cross to reinforce its first-aid response capacity.



“The purpose of ICRC cooperation with National Societies, such as those of Nigeria and Bolivia, is to strengthen their capacity to carry out activities aimed at preventing and alleviating human suffering caused by conflict, internal strife and other situations of violence.”

The five core areas of ICRC support for National Society capacity building

Promotion of international humanitarian law and the Fundamental Principles

The ICRC supports National Societies in their efforts to promote international humanitarian law and the Movement's activities, Fundamental Principles and ideals among internal and external audiences.

Assistance to conflict victims

The ICRC works with National Societies to provide vital health and relief services for victims of armed conflict. It also helps them to develop working approaches to gain and maintain safer access to people affected by armed conflict.

Restoration of family links

To assist National Societies in carrying out tracing work and distributing Red Cross messages, the ICRC shares its expertise and provides a vital link for the global tracing network through its Central Tracing Agency.

Weapon contamination

The ICRC provides coordination, guidance and support to National Societies as they develop their mine action activities. Mine action operations seek to reduce both the number of victims of mines and explosive remnants of war and their social and economic impact. Operations normally include elements of incident data-gathering and mine risk reduction. Often National Societies will have a key role in such areas as incident data-gathering as an integrated component of a long-term national mine action strategy.

Legal and statutory base

The ICRC, together with the International Federation, helps National Societies with legal issues such as recognition or reconstitution, the drafting or amendment of their statutes, lobbying to change national legislation and preparations for statutory meetings.

ICRC and Nepal Red Cross teams jointly repaired a water-supply system for the village of Haku in the Tila valley.



Nepal Red Cross Society

“We never thought that conflict would affect our entire country. We had a very good disaster-response system within the Nepal Red Cross Society and thought that we were prepared for any emergency. However, it became dangerously apparent that working in a conflict environment was very different from coping with a natural disaster and we realized that we had to make drastic changes in our approach if we wanted to be able to work in all kinds of hostile situations. Our efforts alone would not have been enough, but working closely with the ICRC has enabled us to reposition our National Society so that our work is accepted by all stakeholders in the conflict. This has helped to reduce security incidents and increase our access to all those in need of help.”

Dev Ratna Dhakhwa, Secretary General, Nepal Red Cross Society



“The joint efforts of the ICRC and the Afghan Red Crescent Society are but one example of operational partnerships in action.”

Operational partnerships

Joining forces to benefit people affected by conflict, internal strife or other situations of violence



The ICRC works closely with the Afghan Red Crescent Society to get assistance to people in some of the remote parts of the country.

More than two decades of war and several years of serious drought have ravaged Afghanistan and brought widespread hardship to its people. Today this poor, landlocked country is struggling to improve the population's living conditions, which are among the lowest in the world. Housing, clean water, electricity, medical care and jobs all remain in short supply.

In this fragile environment, humanitarian aid remains a matter of life and death. The ICRC, present in the country since 1986, is working with the Afghan Red Crescent Society to reach out to the thousands of victims. From medical support to health facilities to mine awareness and relief distributions, the operational partnership between the two organizations has allowed aid to reach people in some of the most remote parts of the country.

The joint efforts of the ICRC and the Afghan Red Crescent Society are but one example of operational partnerships in action. The global and local reach of the Red Cross and Red Crescent network, the speed with which National Societies can mobilize staff and volunteers, and their intimate

knowledge of local conditions are all key assets in planning and carrying out such operations in many countries around the world.

To capitalize on such local capacities and knowledge, the ICRC often works together with the National Society of the country in which it is operating. The overall objective of these joint partnerships is to bring the victims the aid they need, impartially, efficiently and rapidly. The degree of cooperation between the ICRC and the National Society may vary from one to context to another.

A National Society's mandate is not limited to the activities it carries out together with the ICRC. National Societies have their own specific tasks, some of which they perform in peacetime and others which are carried out during armed conflict, internal strife or other situations of violence. The ICRC, as well, has its own mandate and tasks that may be accomplished outside of cooperation. The areas of joint action are therefore those in which the ICRC and the National Societies have converging responsibilities and common concerns.

Operational cooperation focuses on areas such as:

- implementing a relief operation in the event of armed conflict, internal strife or other situations of violence and, where necessary, conducting joint activities to assist the victims, such as providing first aid and other health services, evacuating the war-wounded, disposing of mortal remains, ensuring access to safe water and distributing food or other supplies;
- ensuring the efficient organization and operation of tracing services: gathering information on missing persons, arranging for the exchange of messages between separated relatives and bringing dispersed family members together again.

The main difference between the two types of cooperation is the focus of cooperation work. In capacity building endeavours, the ICRC will put a stronger focus on strengthening working processes and management issues of the National Societies, while in operational partnerships, the main focus is on service delivery. Obviously this is carried out in a complementary manner.

The objective is to link such operational partnerships as closely as possible with capacity-building efforts and thereby help the National Society substantially strengthen its network and structures so that it can provide adequate and sustainable services which meet the humanitarian challenges faced within its country.

Volunteers from the Somali Red Crescent Society distribute food parcels.



Somali Red Crescent Society

“Since 1991, the Somali Red Crescent Society and the ICRC have been working together to meet the needs of the victims of the longstanding conflict in Somalia and to build up the National Society’s overall capacity to function well and deliver quality services to the population. Operational partnerships have been effective in strengthening programmes to provide emergency medical and surgical care for the war wounded, support health facilities, improve sanitation, disseminate humanitarian law and trace missing persons. Joint efforts have also helped strengthen the National Society in line with its strategic plan and priorities. Both types of cooperation are part of a dynamic and participatory process from which the two organizations have benefited.”

Dr Ahmed Hassan, President, Somali Red Crescent Society



“The ICRC and the Lebanese Red Cross Society were on the front line, working together to help civilian victims of the month-long conflict in 2006.”

Movement coordination



ICRC together with the Lebanese Red Cross distribute plastic sheeting and sleeping mats to IDPs living out in the open in a public park in Beirut.

In situations of armed conflict, internal strife or other situations of violence, the ICRC assumes the role of lead agency for the Movement. As such, it implements its own activities, coordinates its work with that of the National Society and promotes or guides the involvement of other National Societies and their International Federation taking part in relief operations. Indeed, many Societies provide aid and assistance for their sister Societies in other countries and/or participate in ICRC operations abroad through direct contributions such as cash, staff on loan, supplies and equipment.

The ICRC's role as lead agency in situations of conflict and internal strife is enshrined in the Seville Agreement and its Supplementary Measures, which is the Movement's guiding framework for coordination. In this role, the ICRC, together with the host National Society, is responsible for setting the broad objectives of the Movement's response to humanitarian needs, maintaining contacts with the parties in conflict so as to ensure access to the population and providing guidelines for security and communication.

In the summer of 2006, a month-long conflict raged between Hezbollah and Israel in southern Lebanon. The ICRC and the Lebanese Red Cross Society (LRCS) were on the front line, working together to help civilian victims. The LRCS organized a massive response, mobilizing 5,000 volunteers, evacuating the wounded and distributing food and water to displaced people. The LRCS's wide network and extensive knowledge of the region were essential assets to the ICRC in the planning and conduct of its operations.

Present in Lebanon for the past 40 years, the ICRC took the lead role in coordinating Movement response in close collaboration with the LRCS. Coordination was needed to ensure optimal use of the important volume of relief goods mobilized by donor National Societies and to manage field operations. The ICRC organized weekly meetings in Beirut between Movement partners working in Lebanon and brought together the 20 main donor National Societies for a meeting in Geneva to discuss strategy and resource mobilization. The Lebanese Red Cross Society and the Magen David Adom presented their

activities and outstanding needs. Neighbouring National Societies, such as the Syrian Arab Red Crescent and the Palestine Red Crescent Society also participated in the meeting. Regular coordination meetings take place in any major operation with all the Movement actors involved to ensure progress of the operation in a coordinated manner.

The ICRC and its partners within the Movement can draw up country-level memoranda of understanding. These serve to ensure consistent working practices, define the respective roles and responsibilities of each partner in normal situations and during crisis periods when the lead agency role is activated.

As ICRC activities in Lebanon highlight, in order to facilitate the delivery of services, and subject to its capacity to do so, the ICRC may provide logistical and other support for National Societies.



Christopher Blackw/ICRC

An essential partner: the International Federation

“Indonesia is a good example of success in building a common Red Cross and Red Crescent approach. The ICRC and the International Federation have focused their joint efforts on organizational development and capacity-building for local branches of the Indonesian Red Cross, support for the National Society’s strategic planning process and active participation in drawing up and implementing the Cooperation Agreement Strategy, which provides the overall framework for cooperation between the Indonesian Red Cross and its Movement partners. Increased cooperation within the Movement is the best way to maximize the impact of our collective resources and assist vulnerable people.”

John Gwynn, Asia Pacific OD Coordinator, Federation

An ICRC cooperation delegate, together with the International Federation and a National Society volunteer, work to prepare joint logistic operations.

Cooperation for the elaboration of Movement policies

As the founder of the Movement, the ICRC participates actively in policy-making and, together with the International Federation, prepares the Movement's statutory meetings.

The ICRC takes part in the development and adoption of Movement policies across many sectors that are submitted to the Council of Delegates and the International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent. These universal statutory bodies of the Movement provide important opportunities to address pressing humanitarian challenges. The ICRC is particularly involved in issues relating to humanitarian action in situations of conflict.

The International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent

The International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent is one of the most important humanitarian forums in the world. Every four years, this unique gathering brings together all the Movement's components with all the States party to the Geneva Conventions. It provides an opportunity

to discuss humanitarian issues of common concern, inform and update States on Movement policies and, where appropriate, include them in their implementation. The debates of the International Conference and the resolutions it adopts often pave the way for developments in the field of international humanitarian law promoted by the international community of States.

The Council of Delegates

The Council of Delegates is a universal deliberative body that usually meets every two years to discuss and adopt resolutions concerning all the Movement's components. These resolutions may endorse Movement positions or policies that provide important frameworks for strengthening cooperation among its components with regard to organizational matters (e.g., Seville Agreement, 1997) or to specific fields of action (e.g., Plan of Action for Children Affected by Armed Conflict, 1995; Movement Strategy on Landmines, 1999 and 2003). The Council of Delegates also adopts the agenda of the International Conference.

International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement

The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement is made up of the International Committee of the Red Cross, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, and National Societies in more than 180 countries around the world.



ICRC

International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)

The ICRC is an impartial, neutral and independent organization whose exclusively humanitarian mission is to protect the lives and dignity of victims of armed conflict and other situations of violence and to provide them with assistance. 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. It directs and coordinates the international relief activities conducted by the Movement in armed conflicts and other situations of violence.



International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (International Federation)

The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies is the world's largest humanitarian organization. It comprises 186 National Societies and is supported by 100 million volunteers and members worldwide. The International Federation and its member National Societies work to reduce the impact of disasters and disease through relief and development activities. The organization's work is guided by seven Fundamental Principles: humanity, impartiality, neutrality, independence, voluntary service, unity and universality. Over the next five years, the International Federation's collective focus will be on its Global Agenda working towards the achievements of the Millennium Development Goals.



National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

There is a National Red Cross or Red Crescent Society in almost every country in the world. These Societies embody the work and principles of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement. They act as auxiliaries to the public authorities of their own countries in the humanitarian field and provide a wide range of services in the areas of disaster relief, health care and social welfare. In wartime, National Societies assist the civilian population and support the armed forces medical services where appropriate.



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