Dissemination of international humanitarian law (IHL) aimed at limiting damage caused by armed conflicts has always been one of the most important activities of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). All the ICRC educational programmes developed for secondary schools in the Russian Federation, Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan, as well as in some countries of Central Asia serve this purpose. Integrated in the programmes of various disciplines (Literature, History, Foreign Languages, Social Science, etc.), they provide pupils with information on Henri Dunant, the founder of the ICRC, the history of the organisation creation and its emblem, provisions of the Geneva Conventions, and the work of national Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies.

In the Russian Federation such a programme elaborated jointly with the Russian Ministry of Education and the Russian Red Cross (RRC) covers pupils of the 5th through 8th forms and those of the senior forms. The set of books for teachers and pupils A World around You has been officially approved by the Federal Expert Council of the Ministry of Education of the Russian Federation and is used at Literature lessons in the 5th through 8th forms. Senior forms pupils study the basics of IHL in the course of Social Science and Basic Survival Skills.

At Home Reading lessons, pupils of the 5th and 8th forms use A World around You books to study some of the best Russian and world literary texts, such as extracts from L. Tolstoy, A. Kuprin, A. Platonov, I. Bunin, R. Kipling, O. Henry, R. Sheckley, etc. They also absorb such ethical notions underpinning the principles of IHL, as humanity, responsibility, respect for dignity, active compassion, etc. Lessons

MISSION STATEMENT

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) is an impartial, neutral and independent organisation. Its exclusively humanitarian goals and objectives consist in helping the victims of war and internal violence and protecting their life and dignity. It directs and co-ordinates international humanitarian assistance carried out by the Movement in conflict situations. It strives to prevent human suffering by promoting and upholding humanitarian law and universal humanitarian principles. Founded in 1863, the ICRC is at the origin of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement.
based upon *A World around You* aim to introduce to schoolchildren international humanitarian law and its main rules, the provisions of the Geneva Conventions, etc. In some regions (Chelyabinsk Oblast, Jewish Autonomous Oblast, and Primorye Kray) this manual is obligatory. Teachers in most of the regions include *A World around You* lessons into the core course of Literature.

In 1998 the concept of international humanitarian law was introduced into the Temporary Requirements for the Obligatory Minimum of the Content of Education for the Social Science Course of the 9th form. And in 1999, some practical IHL aspects were included into the Temporary Requirements for the Basic Survival Skills Course of the 9th and 11th forms.

Besides designing the programme, the ICRC publishes and delivers the manuals to all Russian regions free of charge. For example, in 2002 36,489 copies of the set *A World around You* and 1,830 copies of the teachers’ book were sent to the Irkutsk Oblast. Schools received the same number of sets for the 6th and 7th forms. And 9-form pupils of the Irkutsk Oblast study IHL as part of the Social Science and Law courses using teaching and methodological materials specially worked out by the ICRC for these disciplines.

**DO AS YOU WOULD BE DONE BY**

In June 2002, the last manual under the project *A World around You* was published. It is designed for the 8th form. The publication, printed in 1,840,000 copies, will become a gift teachers and pupils will get on the eve of the coming school year. As shown by monitoring carried out annually by the ICRC and RRC, in the Russian Federation more than 60% of pupils and teachers have already started working with the set *A World around You*, and 40% of the respondents use it systematically.

The course as a whole and each manual in particular are centred round literary, ethical and legal issues. It is these three elements that shape the structure of a Literature lesson. “Do as you would be done by” is the ethical message of the following stories: *The Ultimate Weapon* by R. Sheckley, *The Smile* by R. Bradbury, *The Fate of a Man* by M. Sholokhov, *The Revenge* by F. Iskander, etc.

The basis for the texts selection is the main theme of the manual: responsibility for the choice of means and methods to attain one's goal.

The manual for the 8th form has got numerous reviews from the Russian Ministry of Education, various institutes and teachers themselves. For instance, G.V. Klyonova, a teacher of school No. 19 in the city of Vladimir, writes in her review: “Present-day political realities give rise to problem situations very similar to those presented in the texts of the manual. This encourages pupils’ interest, a wish to read and discuss literary works not only in class, but also at home, with their parents. In this sense, the manual is especially relevant.” The review also mentions the fact that the 8th form manual develops the basis laid by the previous publications studied in the 5th, 6th and 7th forms. This is especially true about the main idea of the course and the problems it raises, approaches to the text interpretation and the teaching techniques.
S.M. Bondarenko, a research fellow of the Russian Academy of Education Psychology Institute, believes that *A World around You* is a timely and necessary response of the authors to the burning issues of modern life. For the world in which our children are going to live is a world of violent social conflicts, terrorism and ruthless competition. To understand the realities of this world, children need to know that there are international rules that prescribe a limit to cruelty in a situation of armed conflict.

**FUTURE SOLDIERS ARE DETERMINED TO WIN**

The summer of 2002 was a very important time for the members of children’s military-patriotic and military athletic clubs and associations, the winners of national and regional rallies. This year two major events have already taken place under the State Programme *Patriotic Education of Russian Nationals for 2001-2005* approved by a regulation of the Russian Government and an order of the Education Ministry. From 20 to 30 June 2002, children took part in the finals of the *Pobeda (Victory)* military athletic game in Novorossiysk. And from 25 July to 4 August, the *Ravneniye na Pobedu (Eyes Victory!)* national rally of young patriots was held in St. Petersburg. For the first time, cadets of the Nakhimov Naval School and Suvorov military schools took part in the competition.

In accordance with the co-operation agreement between the ICRC, the Ministry of Education and the Russian Red Cross, a competition on international humanitarian law was included into the programme. This has already become a good tradition. In the autumn of 2001 at the national rally in Volgograd, young military club members had an opportunity to take part in such an event for the first time. It is these children that will join the military in future, therefore it is especially important that they should know IHL. It should be noted that unlike other competitions held by the ICRC, this one has some distinctive features. Children don’t have to undergo any special training to qualify for the competition. After they are registered as participants, they attend consultations by the Education Programmes Department experts who introduce them to IHL in an easy-to-understand form and provide with books for independent work.

The programme of the rally is varied. Every team has the right to choose events, which include competitions in history, legal basis of military service, IHL, music, physical training, swimming, hand-to-hand fighting, making sea-knots, and many others. Those who chose IHL (there were 42 such teams in St. Petersburg) had to analyse a historical text, an extract from a film, popular songs about war, posters, reproductions of famous battle-piece painters and stage a Geneva Convention article in such a way that the spectators could understand which particular article is meant. In conclusion they answered the questions of a test on IHL.

Every participant fulfilled both individual and team tasks. The winners were identified on the basis of the personal and team scores. In Novorossiysk, the Kaskad team from the town of Barabinsk, Novosibirsk Oblast, was the best one. And in St. Petersburg the winner was the St. Petersburg Suvorov Military School.
EXTRACTS FROM CHILDREN’S ESSAYS

My arguments in support of the need to protect civilian objects in time of an armed conflict:

The Second World War has long become a thing of the past. The wounds of the earth have healed. But in our allegedly peaceful time strife may flare up between peoples, strife referred to as an armed conflict. Representatives of the belligerent parties fail to achieve their goals by peaceful means. As a result, whole nations get drawn into a war and it is the peaceful population that bears the brunt of the conflict... Ordinary people – children, old people, women who would work and earn their living are left homeless and destitute.

I don’t think that peaceful people and their property should suffer during armed conflicts. Let soldiers smash only military objectives, and leave civilian objects alone. Why should peaceful people be deprived of water, electricity, heating and food because of some armed strife fans? Let the military mind their wars.

I think that our ancestors were right – armed warriors engaged the enemy outside the village.

(An extract from an essay by Alexey Ruban, a pupil of the 8"A" form, Secondary School No. 1, the town of Abinsk).

I think that respect for the fallen enemy is a value which has not become obsolete to this day. I would like to give just one example of this:  

The grandfather of the famous scientist V.I. Vernadsky was a military surgeon. He took part in A.V. Suvorov’s famous Swiss campaign. After the storm of Pont du Diable, Suvorov had to leave the wounded behind. It was Vernadsky who stayed to care for them. Some time later this hospital was captured by a French marshal who was very much surprised to learn that Vernadsky had collected all the wounded after the battle, no matter if they were friendly or enemy wounded. For such a humane attitude to people, Venradsky was decorated with an order. French representatives presented it to him, though the country was at war with Russia at the time.

A lot of time has passed since then, and international treaties currently in force make it obligatory for the victors to take care of all those killed in fighting, even if they belong to the adverse party. I believe that this is a highest expression of humanity.

(An extract from an essay by Mariya Karmanayeva, a pupil of the 6 “A” form, Secondary School No. 1279, Moscow)

The drawing illustrating R. Sheckley’s story The Ultimate Weapon is by Yekaterina Vysotskaya, a schoolgirl.

Facts given in children's essays are not verified.