

# RCRC

Red Cross | Red Crescent

ISSUE 1 · 2013 | [www.redcross.int](http://www.redcross.int)

## 'The humanitarian adventure'

The vision behind the Movement's newly reopened museum

## From horror to hope

A child refugee turned author takes on humanity

## Voices for humanity

Red Cross Red Crescent magazine wants your views

# A journey into the heart of humanity



THE MAGAZINE OF THE 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 (ICRC), the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) and the National Societies.



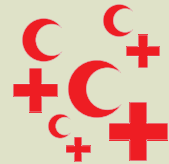
**ICRC**

**The International Committee of the Red Cross** 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. The ICRC 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 Geneva Conventions and the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement. It directs and coordinates the international activities conducted by the Movement in armed conflicts and other situations of violence.



International Federation of  
Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

**The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC)** is the world's largest volunteer-based humanitarian network, reaching 150 million people each year through its 187 member National Societies. Together, the IFRC acts before, during and after disasters and health emergencies to meet the needs and improve the lives of vulnerable people. It does so with impartiality as to nationality, race, gender, religious beliefs, class and political opinions. Guided by Strategy 2020 — a collective plan of action to tackle the major humanitarian and development challenges of this decade — the IFRC is committed to 'saving lives and changing minds'.



**National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies** embody the work and principles of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement in more than 188 countries. National Societies act as auxiliaries to the public authorities of their own countries in the humanitarian field and provide a range of services including disaster relief, health and social programmes. During wartime, National Societies assist the affected civilian population and support the army medical services where appropriate.

## **The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement**

is guided by seven Fundamental Principles:

**humanity, impartiality, neutrality, independence, voluntary service, unity and universality.**

All Red Cross and Red Crescent activities have one central purpose:

**to help without discrimination those who suffer and thus contribute to peace in the world.**



# Echoes from the past, glimpses of the future

**I**N LATE AUGUST 1945, a young man named Fritz Bilfinger was the first ICRC delegate to reach Hiroshima after the city was devastated by an atomic bomb. “Conditions appalling,” he wrote in his first telegram to the ICRC’s representative in Tokyo, Marcel Junod. “City wiped out. Eighty per cent of all hospitals destroyed or seriously damaged... Effect of bomb mysteriously serious...”

Just as Japanese Red Cross Society nurses and doctors were dealing with a horror beyond their imagination, Bilfinger had come face to face with the unknown, a situation far beyond any of his previous experiences.

The archives of the ICRC, the IFRC and many National Societies are full of stories that echo Bilfinger’s struggles. Artefacts, letters, photos and drawings reveal an ongoing effort to find solutions in extreme, often hostile conditions.

Thanks to the courage, hard work and humanity of those volunteers, delegates and staff over the last 150 years, the humanitarian of the 21st century has a worldwide network of colleagues and a body of knowledge and law that now backs up and protects (albeit imperfectly) their efforts.

But even in today’s world, which boasts a vast humanitarian sector, we still face many unknowns. The need for courage, humanity and innovation is as great as ever. Just as Movement founder Louis Appia drew meticulous sketches of rolling stretchers and ambulance wagons (above) in order to share best practices with fledgling relief societies, today’s delegates and volunteers are solving complex problems with new ideas and the creative use of the latest technology. Movement efforts to share evidence-based first-aid procedures and best surgical practices, develop early warning systems and track disease via cell phone networks are just a few examples.

## A special edition

This edition of *Red Cross Red Crescent* magazine, which commemorates 150 years since the official creation of the ICRC, is dedicated to these humanitarian innovators: volunteers,

delegates and staff who have worked tirelessly to make the world a more humane place. They come from all walks of life, but their common humanity has compelled them to act even in the face of grave challenges.

We mark 150 Years of Humanitarian Action with a historical timeline, accompanied by current-day stories that reflect many of the same challenges our predecessors had to tackle. Our feature focus is the conflict in Afghanistan, which in many ways is emblematic of the problems faced by humanitarians today. The series on Movement history will continue throughout the year as we look at the evolution of National Societies and the 150th anniversary of the first National Societies. Then, in early 2014, we will commemorate the 150th anniversary of the first Geneva Convention by analysing the historic, current-day and future challenges for international humanitarian law.

In a world where neutral and impartial humanitarian action is still not universally understood or respected, these anniversaries remind everyone that humanitarianism has endured, and that the values espoused by both Henry Dunant and today’s humanitarian ambassadors represent norms of behaviour that must be respected.

These milestones are also a chance to reflect on the key questions facing humanitarian action. We hope the stories in this issue will help inspire this examination and, on page 28, we describe how to contribute your voice to the discussion. How should the Movement adapt? What have we learned? What are the most inspiring trends? The most threatening? Given what has been achieved — starting from scratch — in the last 150 years, what can we and must we achieve with the tools we now have before the Movement’s 200th anniversary? It’s your future. Now it’s your move. Let’s write history, together.

Sincerely,

**Malcolm Lucard**

Editor, *Red Cross Red Crescent* magazine



One of the first ICRC delegates, Louis Appia, used sketches to share humanitarian innovations.

Photo: ICRC archives



That spirit of courage and invention in the face of hardship continued when ICRC teams performed surgery in a remote Yemeni desert in the 1960s.

Photo: ICRC archives



Today, the Movement uses technology to reconnect families, send out storm warnings and sanitation messages during natural disasters or, as pictured in the IFRC project above, track the spread and treatment of infectious disease.

Photo: Benoit Matsha-Carpentier/IFRC

# In brief...

## Poverty rises in Europe

Since the 2008 global economic crisis hit, National Societies in Europe have been reaching out to what many are calling Europe's 'new poor' — men and women who have lost jobs, homes and life savings. In Milan, the Italian Red Cross helps roughly 50,000 people each month, about a third of those who need help. In Athens, homelessness has increased by an estimated 20 to 25 per cent. "What I need is to find a job, make some money, rent an apartment and live a decent life," says one 60-year-old mechanic in Athens. "This all seems very hard to achieve." Late last year, the Spanish Red Cross also launched a major campaign to assist Spaniards after unemployment hit 25 per cent. The IFRC, meanwhile, is working to expand the humanitarian response across Europe and Central Asia.

## Kicking out violence with football

With an unemployment rate of 50 per cent, the township of Khayelitsha in Cape Town, South Africa has high levels of violence and crime, as young people are easily lured into joining gangs. That's why the ICRC has partnered with Amandla EduFootball, a Cape Town organization that uses football to help young people avoid violence and crime. With a fusion of football and education, the organization creates safe spaces for learning and equipping young people with skills, tools and positive attitudes. "I feel safe at the field," says 14-year-old Kwanele. "There are no drugs and knives here at the field, but outside there are gangsters who say to me, 'Come, you must smoke'. But I say, 'No, you must come and play football!'"



Photo: Patrick Fuller/IFRC

## Typhoon Bopha slams Philippines

When Typhoon Bopha hit the Philippines in December 2012, it left scenes of massive destruction. More than 6 million people were affected and 216,000 homes damaged or totally destroyed. Months later, 95 per cent of affected families continue to live in makeshift shelters. "We worry that the floods will come again," says 63-year-old Rodrigo Palaga, who has been trying to salvage wood from the debris to make repairs to his house in San Roque, New Bataan. The Philippine Red Cross distributed household items and tarpaulins, one of which Palaga used to make a tent at the bottom of his land. "We have been given some food supplies and household items but what I really need is plywood and roofing sheets. We can't live like this without walls or doors."

## Reuniting families

When conflict, disasters and violence strike, families and loved ones often find themselves separated, with little or no information as to each other's whereabouts. Now a new global tool can help: the ICRC's Restoring Family Links web site ([www.familylinks.icrc.org](http://www.familylinks.icrc.org)) was launched in November 2012.

"The Movement has a grass-roots network of volunteers already on the ground, in virtually every corner of the world, who actively search for missing persons," says Olivier Dubois, deputy head of the ICRC's Central Tracing Agency and Protection Division. "No other organization in the world can provide such a service."



Photo: Polish Red Cross

## Voices

*"If it wasn't for the help of the Red Cross, I would still be in the camp living in a tent — not because I wanted to, but because I had no choice. The Red Cross gave me a choice."*

Mother-of-two **Rozette Roseau** lived in a camp for two years after the 2010 Haiti earthquake; she now lives in a rented apartment.

*"I am now another person, not the Niloufar of before. I can do anything. I am strong, I am powerful."*

19-year-old **Niloufar** from Kabul, Afghanistan is wheelchair-bound since a gunshot wound injured her spinal cord (see page 20).

## A camp for Simon

The week begins as a young volunteer camp counsellor from the Polish Red Cross leads Simon, a young disabled man, from the bus to a small cabin in the leafy, forested campsite. Each morning, the counsellor wakes Simon up, helps him wash his face, brush his teeth and get dressed before heading out for a day of activities, from singing to painting or making costumes. One of several dozen children at a camp for disabled youth run by the Leszno district branch, Simon is the focus of a short documentary film, *14 days*, which depicts the everyday needs, difficulties and joys of disabled young people and their parents. See: [www.redcross.int](http://www.redcross.int) for a link to the video.

## Humanitarian index

**16:** Number of states that signed the original 1864 Geneva Convention for the Amelioration of the Condition of the Wounded in Armies in the Field. Today, 166 countries have ratified the Geneva Convention of 1949 and both Additional Protocols of 1977.

**18:** Number of media workers killed in Somalia during 2012, according to the National Union of Somali Journalists, based in Mogadishu. This is three times the number killed when this magazine published its cover story, *Protecting the witnesses*, in August 2012.

**31:** The average number of small or medium-sized disasters or health emergencies that Red Cross Red Crescent Societies around the world respond to each month.\*

**9,500:** Number of Red Cross messages the ICRC and the Sudanese Red Crescent collected and delivered to family members in 2012.\*\*

**160 million:** Number of tons of supplies delivered to European victims of the Second World War between 1941 and 1946 by the Joint Relief Commission formed by the ICRC and the League of Red Cross Societies, now the IFRC.\*\*\*

**209 million:** Approximate number of people affected by natural disasters in 2011, of which 206 million were affected by climate-related disasters.\*

**375 million:** Number of people who, by 2015, are expected to be affected annually by climate-related disasters.\*

Sources: \*IFRC, \*\*ICRC, \*\*\*Beyond conflict, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies 1919-1994.



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**On the cover:** Mah Bibi was 10 years old when photographer Nick Danziger documented her story in 2001. After losing her parents, she was taking care of her two younger brothers in central Afghanistan's Gohr province. "People tell me there is war but I only think about hunger," she said.

Photo: Nick Danziger. Photos this page, from top: ICRC archives; Nick Danziger; Nick Danziger; Alain Germond; Nick Danziger.



## 4. 150 years of action



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# “We would have died”

**In many ways, the Movement’s efforts in Afghanistan are emblematic of the gains and challenges faced by humanitarians today, 150 years after the creation of the ICRC. We asked photo-journalist Nick Danziger, who has reported on conflict in Afghanistan for three decades, to return and talk to people about what it means ‘to prevent and alleviate human suffering’ on the battlefields and disaster zones of the 21st century.**

**L**IKE MANY IN THE VILLAGE OF HAZAR BAGH, in the far north of Afghanistan, Qualam was a farm labourer, working in cotton and wheat fields, when her village came under attack during a Taliban offensive not long before 11 September 2001.

In the panic that gripped the village, Qualam (pictured right) could not find all of her five children. She made the difficult decision to save the sons already with her rather than search for the others in case they should all perish in the bombardment.

“We knew the danger, that it could happen at any time as it had happened to neighbouring villages,” says Qualam. She walked with her children for two days and three nights, their stomachs aching from hunger, their bodies shivering from cold before finding shelter at a camp for the displaced in Khoja Bahauddin.

It was at this camp that Qualam first heard of the Afghanistan Red Crescent, the ICRC and other humanitarian organizations such as Médecins sans Frontières (MSF), which provided blankets, soap, tarpaulins, sugar and food. “Without ICRC’s intervention, we would have died of hunger,” she recalls.

It was also Qualam’s first encounter with organized humanitarian groups and the notion that

civilians have rights under international law. “I didn’t know there were laws to protect civilians who are not part of the hostilities,” she says.

“At the camp, through MSF, I followed a course on hygiene. I became a hygiene trainer... Now that I am back home, I do the same thing, it’s my public duty.”

More than 11 years after I first met Qualam at the Khoja Bahauddin refugee camp, the story of her desperate flight on that night in 2001 has haunted me. Meeting her again, most recently a few months ago, reminds us how Dunant’s vision continues to save and change lives.

In fact, many of those helped here in Afghanistan have been empowered with the health, energy and expertise to help others, be they friends, neighbours or strangers. Tens of thousands of people have had their lives changed for the better. They’ve been sheltered and fed, received news from loved ones via Red Cross messages or had their story heard while in detention. They drink clean water or can walk and work more easily due to a prosthetic limb.

But even with all that’s been learned and achieved, the challenges are still daunting. What is now a diverse humanitarian sector does not have all the answers, resources or access it needs to alleviate the underlying poverty and violence. Health and aid workers face threats to their safety and security, humanitarian work is sometimes confused with political aims and, despite the Movement’s global scope, many combatants and civilians have little notion of the ICRC, humanitarian law or the red cross and red crescent emblems. We have come a long way in 150 years, especially in recent decades. But sadly, our story is in many ways similar to what Dunant witnessed on the battlefield at Solferino. ■

## • 150 years of humanitarian action • 150 years of hum

**1850s:** The conditions are ripe for organized international humanitarian action. The movement against slavery intensifies while awareness about the plight of prisoners and psychiatric patients grows. Military forces are creating better systems for medical treatment during conflict although they often prove woefully inadequate despite advances in medical knowledge. Leading medical

Photo: ICRC archives



minds advocate for new systems, including volunteer networks for treating the war wounded. Press reports about wartime conditions for wounded soldiers shock the public and shame some governments into action.

**■ November 1854:** Florence Nightingale arrives in Turkey with 38 nurses from England to care for soldiers wounded in the Crimean war. Even though

conditions in war hospitals are atrocious, the volunteer nurses are not at first welcomed by military medical staff. Injured soldiers suffer in overcrowded, dirty rooms without blankets. Many die from typhus, cholera and dysentery.

**24 June 1859:** The armies of France and Sardinia clash with Austrian forces near the north Italian village of Solferino. Swiss





Photo: Nick Danziger

## Sanitarian action • 150 years of humanitarian action •



Photo: ICRC archives

businessman Henry Dunant witnesses the bloody aftermath, helps organize aid to wounded soldiers and returns to Geneva deeply moved and committed to improving the lot of people injured in battle.

**1861:** Clara Barton becomes one of the first volunteers at the Washington Infirmary at the outbreak of the US Civil War. She would later become a

key ally of ICRC founders Henry Dunant and Gustave Moynier and went on to found the American Red Cross.

**1862:** Using his own money, Dunant publishes 1,600 copies of *A Memory of Solferino* and begins an intensive lobbying campaign to gain support for his idea of an international volunteer corps to assist wounded soldiers in war.



Photo: ICRC archives

**17 February 1863:** Creation of the International Committee for the Relief of Wounded in the Event of War, precursor to the ICRC and the Red Cross Red Crescent Movement.

**November 1863:** The first Red Cross National Society is founded in Stuttgart, then part of the Kingdom of Württemberg. The Württemberg Red Cross would become part of the German Red Cross in 1921.



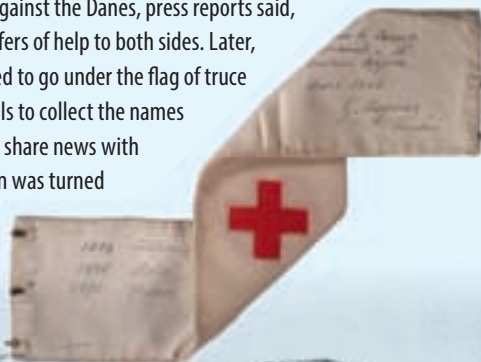
1864

## "Almost asphyxiated by the cold"

These are the words of Charles Van de Velde, describing the conditions as he journeyed north to Denmark as part of the Committee's first-ever delegation to an international conflict. The mission would influence the future of humanitarian

action and the budding efforts to create an international convention. It also marked the first use of the red cross emblem. Van de Velde and Louis Appia set out in the winter of 1864 to observe, meet with and help organize assistance on each side of a conflict between Danish and Austro-Prussian forces. Freezing temperatures were not the only hardship. Danish authorities, press and military officials were openly critical and sceptical of this 'neutral' mission in which the Danes were attacked by a far superior fighting force. This new 'committee' should be condemning the aggression against the Danes, press reports said, not sending offers of help to both sides. Later, Van de Velde asked to go under the flag of truce

to the Prussian hospitals to collect the names of Danish prisoners and wounded, and share news with anguished Danish families. The mission was turned down as 'communication with the enemy'. "Surely this illustrates," he wrote, "the need to ensure that the resolution concerning the neutrality of volunteer aides is put into effect."



Photos: ICRC archives

# "I couldn't"

"HAD NOTHING," says Shahnaz of the day not long after her husband disappeared that she first went to live at the *marastoon* ('place of assistance' in Pashto), an asylum for destitute, widowed and mentally challenged women provided by the Afghanistan Red Crescent. "I couldn't turn to my family, they didn't have anything to spare, they were living off the land in Nejrab. Like my husband, one of my two brothers disappeared at the same time. With nowhere to go and unable to support myself, I moved to the *marastoon*, where I lived for five years."

Today, Shahnaz (pictured right), at 54, is one of two women at the Kabul *marastoon* in charge of helping those with mental health problems. There is no task too difficult or too degrading for Shahnaz. She cares for these women and children who have been abandoned or whose parents are imprisoned as if they were her own, cleaning, consoling, cajoling them through their moods, which in the blink of an eye can turn as quickly to violence as to docility.

The workers in Afghanistan's *marastoons* (first set up by the government in the 1930s, and then given over to the Afghanistan Red Crescent to run in 1964) are an example of how time-honoured, local systems of protection and assistance have been built up and supported by Movement efforts and investment. Other National Societies have supported the *marastoons* and, in 1994, the ICRC intervened to rescue people at the Kabul *marastoon*, when it was the front line in the country's civil war.

In 2001, while I was working on a story for this magazine, Shahnaz talked about those days, when her daily commute had become a matter of life and death. "I was terrified of the bombing. But I couldn't

## • 150 years of humanitarian action •

➔ **1864:** The Committee's first delegation helps shape the course for the Geneva Conventions and the future of neutral humanitarian field work.

**150 years**  
of humanitarian action

See an interactive timeline of ICRC history at:  
[www.icrc.org/eng/who-we-are/history](http://www.icrc.org/eng/who-we-are/history)

Photo: ICRC archives



**August 1864:** First Geneva Convention signed by 16 states. Officially named the *Convention for the Amelioration of the Condition of the Wounded in Armies in the Field*, the document's ten articles laid the foundation for neutral humanitarian action and called on warring parties to respect medical personnel in the field.

"Finally, all Europe had united to study the means of putting a curb on the brutalities of war, and to create instead a striving among the nations, the peoples, the races, to vie with each other in dedication to humanity." From the memoirs of **Henry Dunant**

➔ **1864:** By the end of 1864, there are already 11 National Societies for the care of war wounded in Europe.

Photo: ICRC archives





# t leave these women"



Photo: Nick Danziger

leave these women on their own. There would have been no one else to look after them."

Speaking a few months ago, during my most recent visit, the memories are still fresh. "I would leave my home and cross the city and the front line and barricades that were not far from the *marastoon*. I knew it was dangerous and I was scared. When I couldn't leave my children at home, I brought them with me to work. One day Basir, my oldest son, and one of my daughters, 7 at the time, were injured. I was also hit by shrapnel. I still feel pain in my arm

and hand when I raise it." Shahnaz even brought orphans and women to her own house when, at one point, the *marastoon* became unsafe.

Shahnaz's story is an example of the transformative nature of humanitarian action. Today, she sees herself as one of the fortunate ones, able to work and make a difference in the lives of others during a time of relative peace. "I am a lucky mother, my children are all happily married, the orphaned children I looked after have been adopted... I have a good life that makes me think I am a very successful woman." ■

## humanitarian action • 150 years of humanitarian action •



Photo: ICRC archives

📍 **1866:** The Geneva Convention is first applied in the war between Prussia and Austria.

### History in the making

Starting 8 May, the IFRC will launch an interactive, online historical timeline showing the creation and evolution of National Societies. Go to: [www.ifrc.org/8May](http://www.ifrc.org/8May)

### 📍 Fast forward

In 2012, the Republic of South Sudan, the world's newest country with one of the Movement's newest National Societies, ratified the 1949 Geneva Conventions and their Additional Protocols. Today, 166 countries have signed the Conventions and both 1977 Protocols, which trace directly back to the Convention created by the founders of the Red Cross Red Crescent Movement.



Photo: Conor Ashleigh/IFRC

1870

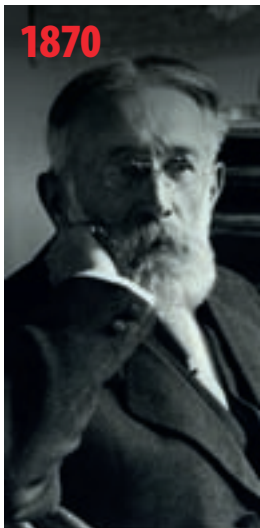


Photo: ICRC archives

*"To set off alone, or almost alone, without any technical knowledge and not knowing the German language, or at least speaking it very badly, to lay myself, fresh from the family hearth, open to all the hazards of camp life and to do it of my own free will was madness."*

22-year-old medical student **Frédéric Ferrière**, writing about his mission to the Franco-Prussian war in 1870. There, working in horrendous circumstances, he is treated with suspicion, taken prisoner and accused of being a spy. He also narrowly escapes execution. Many years later, he becomes vice president of the ICRC.

Photo: Nick Danziger



## • 150 years of humanitarian action • 150 years of hum

**1870:** Britain's National Society for Aid to the Sick and Wounded in War sends aid to both sides in the Franco-Prussian war, just one example of efforts by early National Societies to begin relief work abroad. During the siege of Paris by the Prussians, Henry Dunant works with volunteers under fire to distribute food and clothing. Meanwhile, the Prussians use hospital trains for the first time.

**July 1870:** The Basel Agency is set up to provide first-ever tracing services and other aid for sick and wounded soldiers.

➔ **1875:** Gustave Moynier speaks of four basic working 'principles' which the Movement's Societies must observe: "Foresight, which means that preparations should be made in advance, in peacetime, to provide

assistance should war break out; solidarity, whereby the Societies undertake to establish mutual ties and to help each other; centralization, which implies that there is only one Society in each country, but whose activities extend throughout the entire national territory; and mutuality, in the sense that care is given to all the wounded and the sick irrespective of their nationality."



Photo: ICRC archives

**1875:** The International Committee sends its first operational mission. The mission to Montenegro marked the first time that the ICRC assisted displaced populations and also helped establish a National Society.

**1876:** During its conflict with Russia, the Ottoman Empire relief society adopts the red crescent as emblem for first-aid workers, sets up field



# The impulse to help

**S**INCE THE MOVEMENT'S EARLIEST DAYS, the impulse to help others has led ICRC, IFRC and National Society delegates to head off, often by themselves, to struggle in complex and sometimes dangerous situations.

Today, humanitarians have an advantage over their pioneering colleagues of earlier eras: the red cross and red crescent emblems are now widely known and respected, the rules of war at least nominally protect humanitarian action, delegates receive formalized professional training before heading to the field and humanitarianism has evolved into a profession. At the same time, local staff with impressive humanitarian credentials offer a mix of local knowledge and technical expertise that greatly improves the effectiveness, safety and reach of operations.

Still, like early delegates such as Van de Velde, Appia and Ferrière, today's aid workers still deal with many unknowns, dangers and new frontiers. The ICRC's head of office in Kunduz, northern Afghanistan, Nicolas Lambert (pictured left), had a long history of working in conflict zones prior to joining the ICRC. But that doesn't make the job any more predictable.

"The intensity, duration and organization of [actions by] armed groups fluctuates and it's not easy to keep up with the shifting alliances," says Lambert. "The needs are there but potential operations are hampered by the security situation. Even if we have good contacts with an armed opposition group and receive the green light [to go ahead with an operation], there are so many groups, one commander cannot often speak for the others."

***"The ICRC continues to solidify its reputation even if we have limited access. We should be optimistic."***

**Sayed Sarajuddin Sadat,**  
ICRC staff member in Kunduz,  
Afghanistan

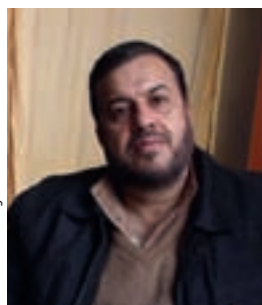


Photo: Nick Danziger

## **"We should be optimistic"**

Sayed Sarajuddin Sadat is an Afghan local staff member at the Kunduz office, where he runs economic security programmes. He began working with the ICRC in the 1990s and has extensive experience with a variety of agencies. "National staff have the skills to work in this environment, but even with increased responsibilities we need expatriates for credibility," he says.

The proliferation of armed groups means working more "indirectly", he says, with local partners such as the Afghanistan Red Crescent or community groups in water and sanitation projects, for example.

Despite the changes in humanitarian access over the years, Sarajuddin says the ICRC's commitment to enduring principles means it has maintained its effectiveness and credibility. "There have been many changes [in Afghanistan] over the years, especially political, but ICRC policies haven't changed. Its neutrality, independence and impartiality are accepted by the majority, even the Taliban. I would say the ICRC continues to solidify its reputation even if we have limited access. We should be optimistic."

For Lambert, the long days of work far from home are well worth it. "The work is rewarding, I always wanted to travel, discover new countries, but then I wanted to give something back to the communities I visited, so it's become my chosen career, my passion. Even though I am far from my family and my girlfriend, here we can really have an impact." ■

## humanitarian action • 150 years of humanitarian action •

hospitals and converts ferries to hospital ships.

**1880s:** National Societies begin to expand peacetime actions in response to disasters: the Japanese Red Cross Society to the slopes of Mount Bandai after its eruption in 1888; the American Red Cross to forest fires, cyclones and floods; the French Red Cross to floods in Paris and cholera in Marseilles.

**1901:** The first Nobel Peace Prize was awarded to Henry Dunant and Frédéric Passy, honouring two different aspects of the struggle against war: the endeavour to limit the suffering of war victims through humanitarian action; and the fight against war itself, or pacifism.

➤ **Fast forward**  
Today, there are more than 13 million volunteers worldwide and many National Societies themselves are important international humanitarian actors.

Photo: Ibrahim Malla/Syrian Arab Red Crescent



# “He did not forget”

**T**HE IDEA WAS THERE AT THE INCEPTION, at the battle of Solferino, when Movement founder Henry Dunant came across a dying soldier who wanted to send a message to his parents. “A young corporal named Claudius Mazuet, some 20 years old, with gentle expressive features, had a bullet in his left side,” Dunant wrote in *A Memory of Solferino*.

Dunant promised to contact his parents and after returning to Geneva, “he did not forget the young man who died in his arms,” wrote Caroline Moorehead in her book, *Dunant’s Dream*. “[He] traced his parents to Lyon, to number 3 Rue d’Alger, and told them what had happened to their only son.”

Just over a decade later, the idea was institutionalized when ICRC created the Basel Agency to provide tracing services and other aid for sick and wounded soldiers. At the outbreak of the First World War, the ICRC created the International Prisoner of War Agency in Geneva to help restore contact between people separated by war. A year later in 1915, the ICRC conducted its first-ever visit by a delegate to a prisoner of war camp.

Almost 100 years later, mobile phone and internet technology have revolutionized family tracing. Today, delegates and volunteers help people search for loved ones using mobile phones, satellite links



Photo: Nick Danziger

## • 150 years of humanitarian action • 150 years of hum

**1906:** The San Francisco earthquake proves the value of American Red Cross trained personnel during peacetime. The Japanese Red Cross sends US\$ 152,000 to help quake victims.

### **Movement grows**

National Societies continue to expand disaster response activities during peacetime. By 1913, the British Red Cross had trained some 57,000 people in

first aid. The Empress of Japan, an early patron of the Japan Red Cross, creates the Empress Shōken Fund to support National Societies around the world.

**1914:** First World War begins. The so-called ‘War to End All Wars’ engulfs Europe and parts of Africa. The Movement responds to the first global conflict with humanitarian action on many new fronts. Roughly 10 million

soldiers, and an equal number of civilians, are killed.

**August 1914:** The ICRC creates the International Prisoner of War Agency in Geneva’s Musée Rath. More than 1,200 volunteers work to restore contact between people separated by war, including prisoners of war, civilian internees and civilians in occupied territories.



Photo: ICRC archives



and the internet while a new ICRC Restoring Family Links website ([www.familylinks.icrc.org](http://www.familylinks.icrc.org)) now helps people initiate their own searches.

Still, most Red Cross messages are written on paper and hand delivered, carried into neighbourhoods on foot or bicycle by ICRC delegates or Red Cross Red Crescent volunteers. A volunteer for the Afghanistan Red Crescent, Saddiqa (left, photo page 10) reads messages with Mohammed Ali Hakim, the ICRC tracing officer, to make sure they contain nothing that would compromise the ICRC's neutrality, independence and impartiality. Most of the letters are in Pashto, others are in Dari, Urdu or even English. "Some have fine drawings, they're quite remarkable because they have been drawn with a biro [ballpoint pen]," notes Saddiqa. Messages like these are then delivered by volunteers or staff such as Abdul Razaq, who has worked for many years on the front line of Afghanistan's conflicts including the civil war in Kabul in the 1990s. "Rockets were falling everywhere, it was very dangerous. Every day I was picking the dead and injured fighters and civilians off the streets."

Today, Abdul says delivering Red Cross messages is one of his favourite duties. "It's often overwhelming, people are so happy to receive news from a loved one. Sometimes they have gone missing, they do not know what has happened to a son or a brother... and then you bring a message."

Nothing replaces face-to-face contact, however. In Afghanistan, for example, the ICRC organizes bus trips to Bagram Air Force Base for relatives of people detained there and sets up video links to other US military facilities such as the US Naval Base in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba.

The ICRC's work on behalf of people deprived of liberty has also evolved dramatically. In places such as Takhar prison, a tough, basic facility in Afghanistan's Taloqan province, the ICRC helps prison officials make basic conditions of detention more humane. The population of 527 detainees is nearly four times



Photo: Nick Danziger

## 'At all times humanely treated'

War is hell. But as the above phrase from the 1929 Geneva Convention on the Treatment of Prisoners of War implies, humanity can be maintained in the way those who are detained are treated by their captors. In this practice exercise by Afghan authorities recently, the ICRC was invited to observe and make comments relative to international humanitarian law. It is part of the comprehensive efforts the ICRC has been making during this conflict, as in many others, to dialogue with all parties to the conflict on issues of proper treatment of detainees, protection of civilian populations, use of weapons that could cause indiscriminate death to civilians and many other issues.

what the prison was built to hold, so half of them live in makeshift tents in the main courtyard. In addition to meeting with detainees and delivering messages, the ICRC has helped improve the prison's health clinic, upgraded latrines, installed a water tower and begun a shelter that will cover part of the courtyard and protect detainees from strong sunlight and rain. Abdulrab Motmaen, the prison director, says the ICRC's help has transformed the quality of life in a way that the government cannot. Detainee Mohammed Hakim agrees, "Clean drinking water and the clinic have made an enormous difference to our lives." ■

### Nick Danziger

Nick Danziger is a freelance journalist and photographer based in Monaco.

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**January 1915:** First-ever visit by an ICRC delegate to prisoners of war in Gardelegen camp, Germany. More than 10 million prisoners of war are held during the war.

**1915:** Poison gas used in trenches.

### Wartime mobilization

National Societies expand dramatically. In Germany, 250,000 men and women enrolled to provide

care for the wounded in 84 hospital trains and more than 3,000 hospitals. Some 63,000 French personnel served in hospitals, motorized surgical units and kitchens. When the US entered the war in 1917, Red Cross membership jumped from 300,000 to 20 million and the National Society recruited 20,000 nurses to serve with American forces.

**1917:** The ICRC receives the first of three Nobel Peace Prizes for

its work during the First World War.

**February 1918:** The ICRC appeals to all warring countries to renounce the use of chemical weapons.

**April 1919:** First ICRC visit to civilian detainees in Hungary.

### New roles for women during war

The conscription of young men in many

countries created opportunities and roles for women in Red Cross relief work, such as this ambulance driver evacuating the wounded from the front lines.

**1919:** Marguerite Cramer becomes the Committee's first woman member. Pauline Chaponnière-Chaix, Suzanne Ferrière and Zénaïde Dessonnaz are the first female delegates.

**Fast forward**  
In 2011, roughly 46 per cent of newly recruited ICRC delegates were women.



Photo: ICRC archives

# Silent killers

**T**HE IDEA OF 'SILENT' OR 'FORGOTTEN' DISASTERS is not entirely new. Such terms were used as early as the 1930s when an increasingly globalized League of Red Cross Societies (now IFRC) began coping with more and more natural disasters around the globe.

Today, global awareness about major disasters is almost instantaneous. In some cases, the people affected use Skype, YouTube, Facebook or Twitter to report as events unfold.

But because the majority of the earth's population does not have smart phones and good internet connections, the so-called 'CNN effect' still applies: events receiving sustained coverage with powerful images get attention; the others fall off the radar to become silent disasters.

But 'silent disaster' is a strange term. Winds tearing the sheeting off a roof or water washing away an entire house are anything but quiet to those affected. The silence is about what is heard — or not heard — in donor countries, especially in hard economic times.

Given that reality, some donors and humanitarian organizations consider that the way forward in addressing these disasters is to invest in making vulnerable people less so when the next storm, quake or drought hits.

"This is a substantial shift in mentality and practice, from distributing aid to drought-affected people in order to survive until the next drought, to investing

in the long run — building irrigation systems, promoting more resistant crops, helping pastoralists manage their livestock," write two European Union (EU) commissioners, Kristalina Georgieva and Andris Piebalgs (representing EU humanitarian assistance and development agencies respectively), in a joint editorial written for the *Red Cross Red Crescent* magazine web site: [www.redcross.int](http://www.redcross.int)

Today, with funding from the European Commission's Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection department (ECHO), the IFRC and 11 EU National Societies are carrying out 55 disaster preparedness projects in partnership with host National Societies in 36 countries. They also jointly launched a public awareness campaign about silent disasters, along with ten National Societies, in February ([www.ifrc.org/silentdisasters](http://www.ifrc.org/silentdisasters)).

It's a natural progression. In the 1970s and 1980s, many donor nations and humanitarians began feeling frustrated by the cyclical repetition of disasters in vulnerable areas. Many realized that natural disasters have as much to do with human development patterns as weather patterns. "Some critics of relief operations claim that their main goal is to return victims to the status quo," concluded one 1984 article entitled *Natural Disasters, Acts of god, or acts of man?* "Yet it is the status quo that makes them disaster-prone and vulnerable."

Some fear the humanitarian mandate could be diluted or compromised if emergency relief organizations take on too much or are aligned too closely with government or development agendas. Others argue that disaster preparedness must be a key part of local, community development in a world where not all disasters are treated equally.

Sometimes that unequal treatment plays out within one disaster. Take the case of Hurricane Sandy, (see graphic) which slammed into the east coast of the United States in November, causing widespread destruction and the death of 131 people. Coming

Hurricane Sandy in the Caribbean  
6.76%

Dengue outbreak in El Salvador  
0.05%

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**November 1918:** Armistice is declared in the wake of war. Many parts of Europe are plagued with hunger and diseases such as typhus and influenza. As powers meet in Versailles for treaties of peace and armies are decommissioned, many ask what should be done with the relief organizations. Should they be decommissioned or built up to meet post-war suffering? The chairman of the War Council of

the American Red Cross, Henry Davison, leads an ambitious drive to unite post-war National Societies in allied countries. ICRC President Gustave Ador objects that principles of universality and neutrality require that National Societies in defeated countries must be included in the League.

**May 1919:** Leaders from National Societies from the Allied Powers meet at the Regina Hotel in

Paris and sign the Articles of Association for a League of Red Cross Societies, which would later become the IFRC. The effort to create the League leads to the inclusion of the National Red Cross Societies in the Covenant of the League of Nations, which comes into force in January 1920. In just a few years, the League of Red Cross Societies would include National Societies from the countries defeated in the war.

**February 1921:** The American Red Cross reports that approximately 20,000 children die every year in road accidents in the United States.

**Fast forward**  
**In 1999, the IFRC's World Disasters Report ranks road crashes as a major humanitarian crisis, claiming 1.2 million lives per year. Eleven years later, the IFRC and its hosted project, the**

**Global Road Safety Partnership, are key players in the United Nations Decade of Action for Road Safety, 2011–2020.**

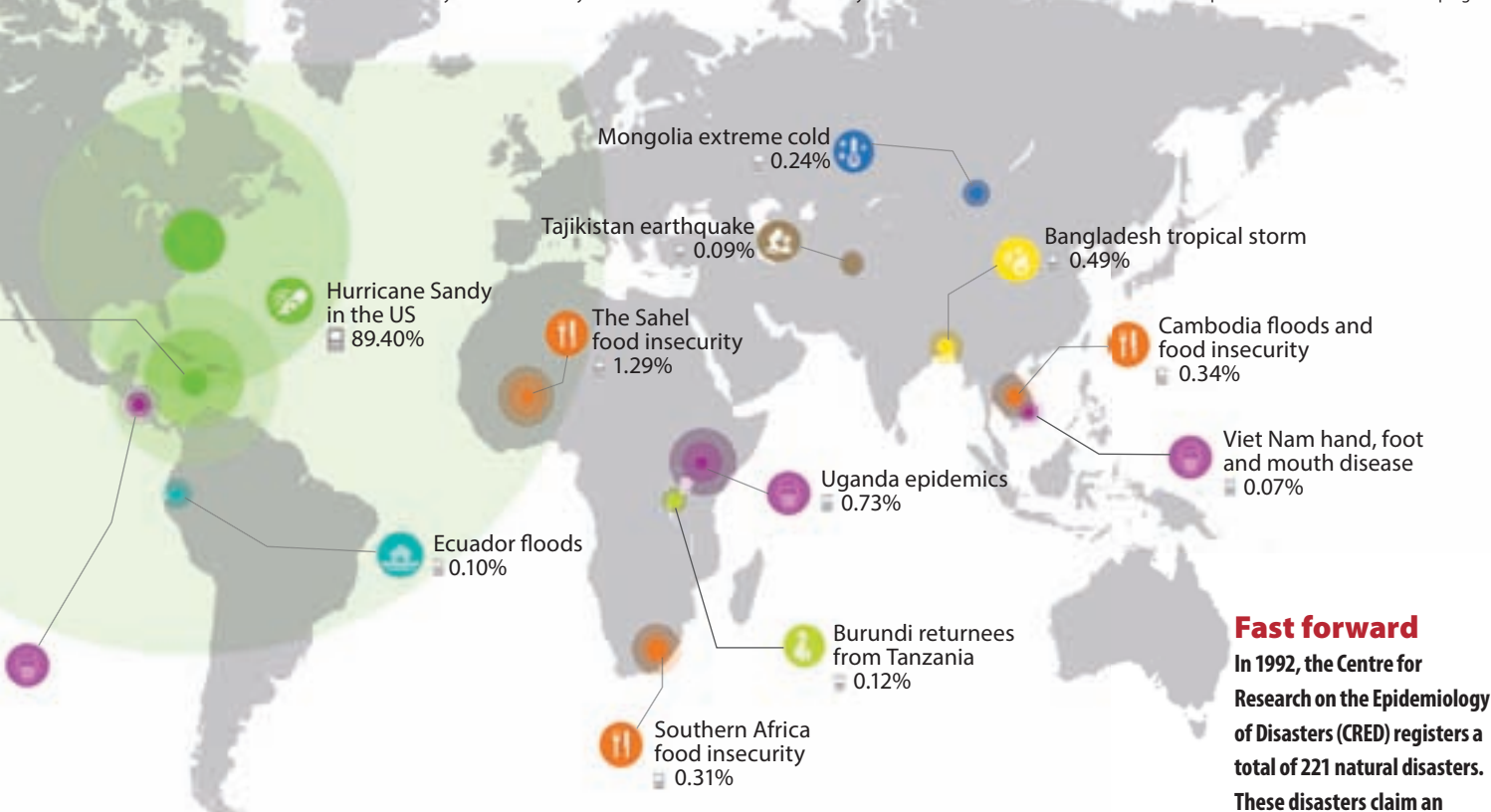
**1921:** The Leipzig War Crimes Trials are held before Germany's Supreme Court to prosecute crimes committed during the First World War. The trials' scope was limited but they set the stage for later international war crimes tribunals.

Photo: ICRC archives



## Hurricane Sandy in the USA received nine times the media coverage of 12 silent disasters combined

Percentage of total media coverage of 13 disasters around the world in late 2012 and early 2013.  
Source: A study commissioned by the IFRC and ECHO and conducted by Montreal-based Influence Communications as part of the Silent Disasters campaign.



### Fast forward

In 1992, the Centre for Research on the Epidemiology of Disasters (CRED) registers a total of 221 natural disasters. These disasters claim an estimated 14,811 lives, affect 78 million people and cause economic losses totalling nearly US\$ 70 billion. In 2011, CRED registers a total of 336 natural disasters. These disasters claim an estimated 31,105 lives, affect 209 million people and cause record-breaking economic losses totalling nearly US\$ 366 billion.

at the tail of a presidential election in which climate change suddenly became an important issue, media attention was intense. Coverage of the hurricane's impact in the Bahamas, Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Haiti and Jamaica was minimal, though the storm was just as devastating (an estimated 137 people killed or missing; massive damage to crops and homes). "We know our early warning systems are very good and they allow us to be well prepared, but we are simply not used to this loss of life," said Luis Foyo Ceballos, secretary general of the Cuban Red Cross.

Similarly, 'Super' Typhoon Bopha killed more than

1,000 people and damaged or destroyed more than 216,000 homes on the island of Mindanao in the Philippines. The IFRC, the Philippine Red Cross and the ICRC provided relief to thousands. But the IFRC's US\$ 17 million appeal for Bopha was still just 30 per cent funded in February, meaning it could provide shelter repair materials to only 5,000 of the 15,000 families targeted. "This was a category 5 storm, the largest on the scale," says Necephor Mghendi, IFRC head of operations in the Philippines. "If this disaster does not warrant donor attention, the future for survivors looks bleak." ■

## Sanitarian action • 150 years of humanitarian action •



**August 1922:** China is hit by a typhoon and some 60,000 people die.

**September 1923:** The Japanese cities of Tokyo and Yokohama are devastated by the Great Kanto earthquake which claims 99,000–143,000 lives.

**October 1929:** The US stock market crashes, causing financial collapse in institutions

in many countries and worldwide economic hardship for many years. The United States withdraws all overseas aid, crippling many Red Cross overseas relief efforts.

**1931:** The Huang He River (also known as the Huang Ho or Yellow River) in China floods some 104,000 square km (40,000 square miles) and more than a million people are killed.

Photo: ICRC archives



**F**ROM THE OUTSET of the Second World War, the Movement began a mobilization to match the scale of the conflict. The first major initiative came on behalf of hundreds of thousands of refugees who fled the German invasion of Poland and the Russian invasion of Finland in 1939. As more countries fell to the Axis powers, the challenge became how to get aid to populations under occupation.

With their Geneva secretariats in neutral Switzerland, the ICRC and the League (now IFRC) negotiated complex deals to get scarce supplies from Switzerland or various seaports to people in desperate need. In 1940, the ICRC and League formed a Joint Relief Commission, which delivered more than 160 million tons of supplies between 1941 and 1946. Building on its tracing work in the First World War, the ICRC created the Central Prisoner of War Agency, which delivered some 36 million parcels and exchanged roughly 130 million letters between prisoners of war and their families.

Despite the heroic scale and the personal bravery of thousands of Movement workers, it was also a dark time for humanitarianism. Nazi authorities denied, limited or allowed extremely controlled access to prisoner of war camps, Jewish ghettos and concentration camps. The ICRC debated whether or not to issue a public denunciation based on what delegates were learning at the camps. But given the attitude of German authorities, they risked

# March to the brink

➔ The Second World War provoked the largest Red Cross Red Crescent mobilization up to that time. Switzerland's neutrality was critical in allowing massive shipments of aid, such as the supplies stockpiled at a warehouse in Geneva, throughout the conflict. However, the country's neutrality was one reason the ICRC did not adequately condemn German atrocities in concentration camps such as Auschwitz, pictured below in 1947.

losing the chance to save any lives at all. The German Red Cross, meanwhile, had fallen completely under Nazi control. It was one of the greatest tests of the Movement's application of neutrality during conflict and, by most accounts, it was its greatest failure. In response, the German Red Cross has launched extensive public research of its wartime history and the ICRC would also open its war-era records to independent historians. In 1997, it formally apologized. One of the ICRC's most eminent historians, François Bugnion, concluded that the record reflects the organization's "failure to assert its right of humanitarian action on behalf of civilians in the occupied areas or those deported to the death camps".

"Its failure as an institution to firmly oppose Nazi persecution was only slightly mitigated by the heroic actions of some of its delegates who helped

Photo: Karen Margrethe Sommer/ICRC



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**1936 The Spanish Civil War:** The ICRC opens offices in both nationalist and republican strongholds. During much of the conflict, the distinction between combatants and non-combatants is ignored and civilians bear the brunt of reprisals and bombardments. The air raid on Guernica marks the beginning of a new era of aerial bombardment that presages the indiscriminate use

of bombing in cities during the Second World War.

➔ **1939 Second World War:** This truly global conflict takes humanitarian assistance to an entirely new level, bringing the number of people helped into millions. The conflict also produces the greatest threats to humanitarian principles and the greatest losses of civilian life: the genocide perpetrated

by Nazi Germany; the abuse of prisoners in prisoner of war camps in Europe and the Pacific; mass aerial bombardment; and, finally, the first use of nuclear weapons. In total, by 1945, some 50 million people are estimated to have died due to the war.



Photo: ICRC archives

### Disaster relief continues:

Even though much of Europe and the Pacific was in the grip of war, large-scale relief efforts continue for victims of natural disaster, including earthquakes in Chile and Turkey.

**1943:** Switzerland maintains a precarious neutrality, with German troops stationed in the French mountains close to Geneva.





## A report from hell

"In spite of the working outside, the people all have a pallid, ashen complexion. . . Each internee in KZ [a unit within the camp], man or woman, is wearing canvas with big, faded blue-grey stripes. The number is marked on the right arm. All the shaven heads give the impression from a distance of an astonishing similarity. Seen up close, bare-headed or with a beret tipped toward the front, they have remarkable intelligence. Without moving their heads, their eyes regard us with curiosity."

— From the mission report of an ICRC delegate who visited camps and ghettos during the Second World War. In one chilling report, he describes hearing of shower rooms being used to gas internees. But this fact could not be proven, he reported.

those facing extermination," he wrote, adding that ICRC historical documents of the time reflect "an impression of helplessness". "Even the members of the Committee who declared themselves most clearly in favour of an appeal recognized that it would change nothing, that the ICRC would be unable to stop the march to the brink."

From the ruins of this first truly global conflict came a ray of hope: the creation of the Fourth Geneva Convention in 1949, which the ICRC helped to write and which, for the first time, protected civilians during conflict. The ICRC has made numerous appeals during conflicts for the protection of civilians based on both the 1949 Conventions and the two new protocols added in 1977. Today, the Movement plays a leading role in global efforts for a treaty banning the use of nuclear weapons based on the Conventions' call to protect civilian populations. The German Red Cross was re-established as an independent entity after the Second World War and this year also celebrates its 150th anniversary. ■

## Sanitarian action • 150 years of humanitarian action •

➔ **August 1945:** Atomic bombs drop on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Japan Red Cross doctors and nurses respond; first ICRC delegate in Hiroshima, Fritz Bilfinger, reports, "Conditions appalling...city wiped out." Marcel Junod, a medical doctor and ICRC delegate already on a relief mission, is one of the first foreigners to travel to Hiroshima after the atom bomb was dropped.

Photo: ICRC archives



**November 1945:** The trials of leading Nazi figures begin in Nuremberg. They are followed by similar tribunals in Europe and East Asia that set the stage for the International Criminal Court and the *ad hoc* war crimes tribunals in the 1990s.

**1946:** The board of governors of the League of Red Cross Societies (now IFRC) confirms four Fundamental Principles.

**1949:** The experience of the Second World War brings about the Geneva Conventions of 1949, of which the fourth convention stipulates, for the first time, specific protections for civilians during international conflict.

# A humanitarian adventure

**I**T'S A STARTLING SIGHT. A massive foot seems to descend from a darkened sky, stepping over images of people affected by disaster and conflict that are projected on the floor below. Around the room, small plaques display humanity's attempts through time to rein in oppression, help the destitute or enforce honourable conduct during war: from Babylon's Code of Hammurabi (circa 1750 BC) to the 1949 Geneva Conventions and their Additional Protocols of 1977.

This bold, monumental image is one of many evocative scenes featured in the newly reopened International Red Cross and Red Crescent Museum, where the many, often conflicting sides of human nature are on display.

The giant foot, for example, could symbolize many things: the power of oppression or of the enduring strength of humanity. "A huge foot could be one that crushes others, or one that runs, fragile and barefoot, for survival," says Gringo Cardia, one of three architects chosen to create the museum's three new spaces.

Under the banner, 'The humanitarian adventure', the new exhibits are an initiation into contemporary humanitarian action intended to instil a sense of hope and human resilience and a feeling that even small actions can make a difference. Indeed, the museum experience is anything

but static. Visitors will have a chance to engage with many exhibits: in one case, they can play an interactive game that simulates the complexities of a natural disaster response. Faced with various scenarios, players make choices, take action and see the potential results.

A walk through the museum will also bring visitors face to face — quite literally — with people affected by conflict and natural disaster. In the Hall of Witnesses, life-sized projections of real people touched by conflict, natural disaster or humanitarian intervention tell their stories.

One of them is a former child soldier from Sudan, Emmanuel Jal, who speaks of how at first he wanted to avenge the violence perpetrated against his family. Then a humanitarian worker sent him to school and he regained some of his forgotten humanity, he tells visitors. "I started rapping and starting taking songs very seriously. Finally, the sky seemed less dark and I could rediscover a little of my childhood."

Along the way, visitors will also meet a war crimes prosecutor, a landmine victim who runs ICRC's orthopaedic centre in Kabul, an economic migrant struggling to feed her family, a journalist detained for six years at the US Naval Station at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba and a young woman orphaned by the genocide in Rwanda, among others.

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**April 1950:** The ICRC issues a statement urging countries to prohibit the use of nuclear energy for purposes of warfare: "The protection of the human person against mass destruction is intimately bound up with the principle which gave rise to the Red Cross: the individual who takes no part in fighting, or who is put 'hors de combat', must be respected and protected."

Photo: ICRC archives



**1950-1953 The Korean war:** The first major conflict of the cold war also heralds an era of nuclear standoff between superpowers.

**1954 The war of Algeria:** During this war of decolonization, the ICRC makes contact with national liberation movements while the IFRC launches two appeals, in 1956 and 1957, for

100,000 people who fled to neighbouring countries.

**1955:** Jean Pictet, a key author and architect for ICRC's work on the 1949 Geneva Conventions, defines and analyses the values and principles that define the Red Cross Red Crescent Movement. His commentary still shapes how the Fundamental Principles are applied today.





Photo: Alain Germond

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Photo: ICRC archives

### Fast forward

**A light moment from a key drafter of the 1949 Geneva Conventions:**

**“I was once accused of drawing up conventions that were too long. So I said, all right, I’ll do it in two articles. Article one: in case of war, all men will behave like angels.**

**Article two: this convention only has one article.”**

**Jean Pictet**, lead author of the Geneva Conventions for the ICRC, quoted in *The Guardian* newspaper in 1999.

### 1955 The Viet Nam war:

What begins as a colonial war for independence from France later becomes a proxy war between the Soviet Union and the United States that escalates in the 1960s and ends with US withdrawal and a peace treaty in 1973. The Viet Nam war would become the longest lasting and deadliest cold war-era conflict.

**1956:** The Soviet Union crushes an uprising in Hungary. The League (now IFRC) responds as Hungarian refugees flee into Austria and Yugoslavia. Within a year it is managing 50,000 refugees in 44 camps. Meanwhile, National Societies in the Middle East respond to the Arab–Israeli war while a period of decolonization in the post Second World War

era leads to the creation of many new National Societies, with the League (now IFRC) expanding to 100 members.

### Test your knowledge

Take the Red Cross Red Crescent Movement history quiz at: [www.redcross.int](http://www.redcross.int)



Some of the museum's new exhibits put visitors in the middle of humanitarian action. Here, museum visitors can play a game in which they make decisions in response to a complex natural disaster.

Photo: Alain Germond

## Exhibition of humanity

The radical rethinking of the museum began in 2006. Museum director Roger Mayou and his staff brought people throughout the Red Cross Red Crescent Movement together with leading thinkers in the museum field to explore ideas and identify key themes. Ultimately, they would select three architects from three continents (Africa, South America and Asia) to design the three main thematic spaces: To Defend Human Dignity, Restoring Family Links and Reducing Natural Risks. Meanwhile, the museum chose a leading Swiss architecture firm, atelier oï, to coordinate and collaborate with the museum on several of the key common spaces.

The museum's architecture is itself an engaging experience. Though not everything in the museum has changed (long-time patrons will remember many of the same artifacts and some well-loved elements), a new organic touch has been added to the powerful concrete-based, 1980s design of architect

Pierre Zoelly. Narrow, vertical blades of wood line up along the curving walls to create a ribbon of 'living matter' which threads through corridors and rooms that contain few right angles or straight lines.

Each thematic area, meanwhile, has a unique feel. Japanese architect Shigeru Ban, who has used tough, recycled paper tubing to build everything from bridges to short-term emergency shelters was chosen to design the exhibit Reducing Natural Risks.

"We have built temporary lodgings, some schools and churches in the refugee camps in Africa and in the zones stricken by natural disasters using recycled tubes of paper," he says. "In the museum, the tubes are arranged in organic curves and waves reminiscent of a forest or wetlands — it gives a sense of organic flexibility, of strength and resilience.

"We used these same paper tubes to construct the walls and ceiling, to create a space that is warm and organic," says Ban. "We hope that this will allow

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## 1962 Conflict in Yemen:

Armed conflict breaks out after the overthrow of the Imamate in the north of the country. The ICRC responds and, over the years, delegates provide medical assistance, visit prisoners of war on both sides and act as a neutral intermediary.

Photo: ICRC archives



**1963:** The Movement celebrates its 100th anniversary. The Nobel Peace Prize is awarded to the IFRC and ICRC on the occasion of the Movement's centenary.

**1965:** The Movement's seven Fundamental Principles as they stand today are unanimously adopted in 1965 by the 20th International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent.

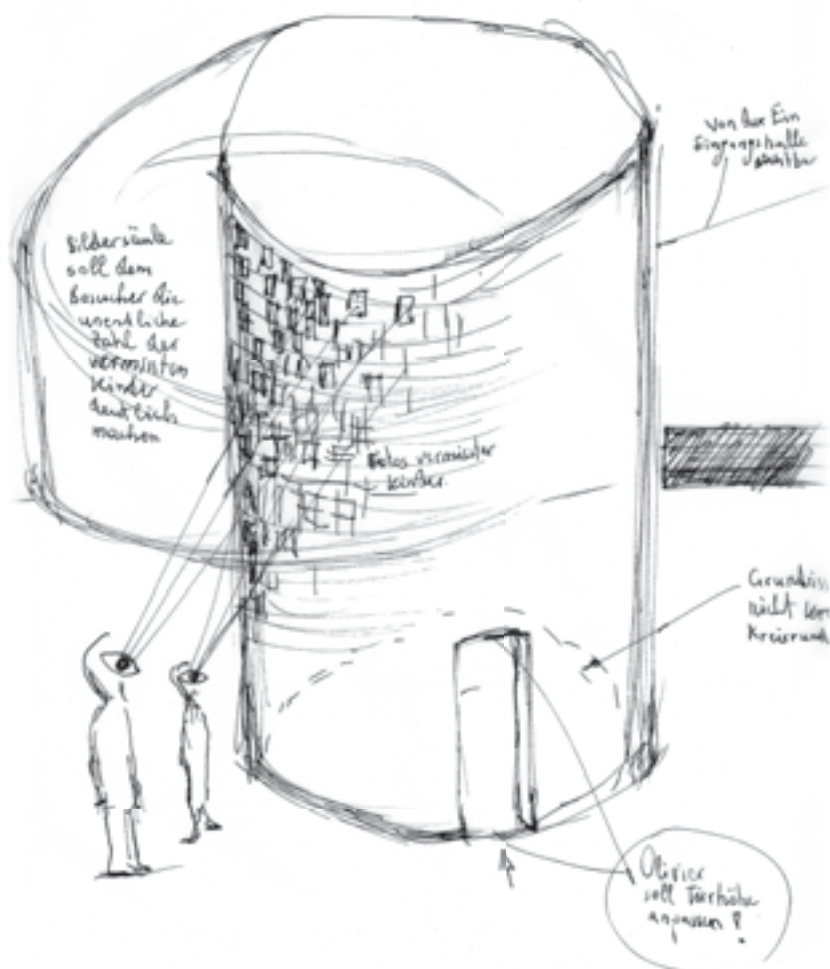
**1967:** The Arab-Israeli Six-Day war brings about the first permanent delegation of the ICRC in the Middle East and its role of neutral intermediary in hostage negotiations emerges.

**1968:** The ICRC founds first orthopaedic facility in the Yemeni city of Sana'a. This later expands to five facilities, subsequently handed over to Yemeni authorities.

## 1968 The Biafran war:

International media put the spotlight on the Biafran war and the Movement launches into action as the conflict becomes a turning point in the evolution of humanitarian aid delivery. Largely due to the Biafran experience, some ICRC staff leave in subsequent years to create Médecins sans Frontières.





➤ A sketch by architect Diébédo Francis Kéré shows his vision to create a tower, made from concrete and hemp fibres to evoke the feel of a traditional hut used in central Africa. The tower walls are used to show photographs of children orphaned during the Rwandan genocide.

Illustration: © Diébédo Francis Kéré

➤ Kéré also used support pylons to display Red Cross messages from around the world.

Photo: Alain Germond



us to sweep away the prejudice that says paper is a weak material."

In *Restoring Family Links*, architect Diébédo Francis Kéré from Burkina Faso uses metal and concrete to create natural forms that evoke the human need to stay connected to our roots in the midst of events that tear us from the family and natural world. The intrinsic link between the family, the roots and the natural elements are underlined throughout the exposition," he says. One example are the tree-like structures that display Red Cross messages: from the trunk of a concrete pylon, branch-like metal pipes support frames displaying hand-written notes or pictures drawn with ballpoint pens.

Elsewhere, the sense of the organic and the human touch is expressed in the technicolour of the digital age. A collaboration between the museum, the École polytechnique fédérale de Lausanne and the École cantonale d'art de Lausanne, the exhibit *Colours of Dignity*, is a wall-sized, interactive touch screen of sorts that shows how even small actions, in this case the simple human touch, can create spectacular reactions. To the architect Cardia, who created the space where *Colours of Dignity* is displayed, the exhibit will "make people reflect on how they act in the world and how they can help others". ■

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**The Biafran war** is "often presented as the opening moment of a new phase in the history of humanitarianism", writes Marie-Luce Desgrandschamps in a special edition of the *International Review of the Red Cross* dedicated to 150 years of humanitarian action. The post-colonial civil war raises a number of challenges for the ICRC, an organization still rebuilding itself after the Second World War and not fully prepared to mount a massive and complex operation, she writes. Problems with logistics, an insufficient number of adequately trained delegates and problems communicating with other organizations, governments and armed groups lead to numerous lessons learnt and reforms. One overall result is increased professionalization and greater efforts to better coordinate humanitarian aid delivery.



Photo: ICRC archives

"The modern ICRC was precisely born in Africa, at the end of the 1960s, on the smoking ruins of Biafra," says ICRC delegate Jean-Marc Bornet in *Between Enemy Lines, Delegate of the ICRC, 1972-2003*. "It was there that the new ICRC was carried from the baptismal font to a new humanitarian era on the occasion of putting into action a gigantic operation to save hundreds of thousands of victims of the civil war in Nigeria."



# “I can do anything”

**F**OR MANY WOMEN injured or widowed during war, the physical wounds are only one part in a cascading series of consequences that affect the survival of entire families. In the case of Wahida (pictured right in black), a blast

from a suicide bomb left her partially blinded and without arms, and without a husband. The loss of a breadwinner means she's unable to provide for her family. “It's not enough, but I cope with the many difficulties,” she says of the money and clothes

## • 150 years of humanitarian action • 150 years of hum

➔ **1975:** ICRC begins its first actions in Latin America during an era of dictatorship and conflict. Over the next decade, ICRC would work with National Societies to bring health care to remote communities, make regular representations to authorities concerning more than 2,000 ‘disappeared’ in Argentina, visit thousands of political detainees in Bolivia and Chile, and take on a greater



Photo: IFRC

role as neutral intermediary between government forces and armed groups. Meanwhile, the region's National Societies, some of which were founded within decades of the Movement's inception (Peru in 1879; Argentina in 1881, for example) built their competencies and played a critical role in responding to the needs of disaster- and conflict-affected communities.

### Trends

Internal debate among National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies begins to question what they see as an antiquated model of humanitarian assistance based on European attitudes of paternal charity rather than partnership with affected populations, according to *Beyond conflict*, a history of the IFRC.

### Frequent disasters

“The 1970s was a decade of frequent disasters with the League [now IFRC] issuing over 200 appeals, more than it had done in the entire period from 1945 to 1969. In 1970, there were 16 international appeals”, according to *Beyond conflict*.



she receives from the ICRC orthopaedic centre. "Without the 3,000 afghanis [US\$ 60], my children wouldn't go to school, we wouldn't be able to eat or buy clothes."

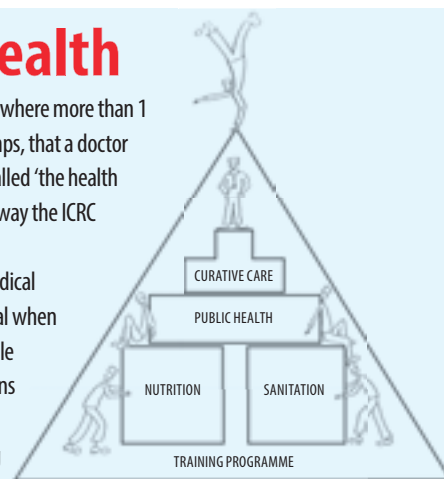
For young women and girls, a war injury can affect everything — education, prospects for marriage, their ability to work or contribute to their households. "I was 17, feeling depressed," says Farzana, who lost her leg when she was 3 years old. "I stayed at home." When she learned about ICRC vocational training in tailoring, she signed up and then qualified for an ICRC micro-loan through which she received 15,000 afghanis (US\$ 300). "I bought a sewing machine for 10,000 afghanis and paid for a desk and some cloth. I paid the loan back in 18 months and then applied for a second loan." Today, Farzana trains other women starting out in the tailoring trade and she owns the shop where she works. "I don't pay rent! I support my whole family."

The path to recovery is often long, painful and arduous. The gentle yet confident gestures of Karima and Rahima, physiotherapists in the women's side of the ICRC orthopaedic centre, help many clients take important steps back towards normalcy. Karima has a special reason to be empathetic. She was 12 years old when four bullets pierced

## A pyramid of health

It was at the Thai-Cambodian border in 1979, where more than 1 million refugees had gathered in refugee camps, that a doctor named Pierre Perrin came up with what he called 'the health pyramid' — an idea that helped change the way the ICRC responds to emergencies.

At the top of the pyramid are 'curative' medical interventions generally done at a field hospital when people are already sick or injured. In the middle are public health measures such as vaccinations or distribution of medicines, while the foundation of the pyramid is two key building blocks: nutrition and sanitation.



A persistent advocate whose mission reports were often adorned with humorous cartoons and detailed, hand-drawn charts, Perrin wrote that the sanitation situation in the camps was precarious and that medical interventions would not save lives on their own. "It is hopeless to take care only of sick people if nothing else is done for the sanitation in a camp at the same time," Perrin wrote in one of his many reports at the time.

The health pyramid was part of shift in thinking that helped move emergency aid response in the 1980s towards a broader public health orientation. It also set the stage for the creation, 30 years ago this June, of a small team that would become ICRC's water and habitat unit, now an integral part of ICRC operations. Impressed by the work of water engineers working along the Thai-Cambodian border — from the Australian and New Zealand Red Cross Societies in particular — the head of ICRC's medical operations at the time would hire, for the first time, a sanitation engineer and a nutritionist to be part of future medical interventions. For more, see [www.redcross.int](http://www.redcross.int).



Photo: Nick Danziger

her knee, requiring immediate amputation and a prosthesis.

But it is not just about physical and economic self-reliance. It's helping people get back the power to live their lives — even with limitations. "I was so surprised when I reached the centre to see so many disabled people living normally," says 19-year-old Niloufar (opposite page left), paralysed due to a gunshot wound. "Up to then, I was depressed," she recalls. "I am now another person, not the Niloufar of before. I can do anything. I am strong, I am powerful." ■

## sanitarian action • 150 years of humanitarian action •

➔ **1975:** Civil war breaks out in Lebanon. Lasting until 1990, the war has a devastating humanitarian and economic impact. Around 200,000 people die and 1 million are wounded.

### Fast forward

In 2012, a joint report by the Lebanese Red Cross, ICRC and British Red Cross concludes the Lebanese Red Cross has over time successfully built

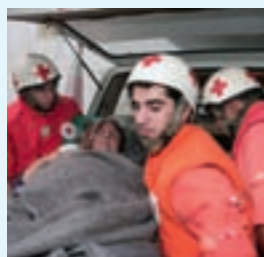


Photo: Marko Kokic/ICRC

a reputation of impartiality and neutrality despite a very fractured society. "Historically, the personal acceptance of individuals has

been challenged by different actors, usually on the basis of religion but at times due to the profile of an individual volunteer," the report states. "However, after years of these volunteers demonstrating their adherence to the Fundamental Principles, they appear to have contributed significantly to the [Lebanese Red Cross'] reputation of neutrality and impartiality."

**1977:** Governments adopt Protocols I and II additional to the Geneva Conventions, which include provisions to protect civilians from indiscriminate attacks and which extend protections under international humanitarian law during non-international civil conflicts.

**1979:** The ICRC creates its physical rehabilitation programme, a commitment

to rehabilitation of those wounded by war that would grow throughout the 1980s. In 1983, the Special Fund for the Disabled extends the work to post-conflict or non-conflict settings.

**December 1979:** The Soviet Union invades Afghanistan.

# "If we have water, we have everything"

**D**ELICATELY BALANCED on the top rungs of a rickety bamboo ladder, Abdul Hamid (left) grapples with electric wires that will supply Seh Darak with energy and bring power to pumps providing critically needed clean water.

The head of the community development council, Hamid also donated a parcel of land so that the ICRC could drill the last of five boreholes to bring water to this neighbourhood on the outskirts of Kunduz, a city of some 250,000 people in the far north of Afghanistan.

It's vital work as more than two-thirds of the wells feeding Kunduz are in Seh Darak. But it's precarious. Here at the edge of town, the last mud-brick homes meet fields (known as the 'badlands') that extend to the horizon. Beyond, it's too dangerous for humanitarian workers to venture.

Years of insecurity have meant four generators, necessary to draw water, have stood idle. Eventually the community came to the ICRC, which agreed to repair

Photo: Nick Danziger

## • 150 years of humanitarian action • 150 years of hum

**September 1980:** The Iran-Iraq war begins. Later to become the 20th century's longest conventional war, the conflict is compared to the First World War. It is marked by trench warfare, hand-to-hand combat with bayonets, human waves across the 'no-man's land' separating forces, use of mustard gas and chemical weapons, and the death of at least half a million combatants.

**May 1985:** A major cyclone hits the Bay of Bengal and almost 1 million people lose their homes. Then Mexico City is rocked by a major earthquake, which kills more than 600 people. And in November, the Nevado del Ruiz volcano in Colombia erupts, entombing 23,000 people in mud and debris and turning a once fertile valley into a lunar landscape.

Photo: Catherine Peduzzi/ICRC



**1984:** A BBC report shocks the world with devastating pictures of people, including many children, starving to death in Ethiopia. Describing the situation as an "apocalypse", the report leads to a storm of media interest and an unprecedented global humanitarian response to famine in Africa, including a concert organized by rock musician Bob Geldof. Turnover of aid at the League of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (now IFRC) doubles as operations and delegations expand dramatically. Despite enormous logistics problems and the lack of capacity to coordinate operations of this magnitude, the ICRC, the League and National Societies saved many lives through large-scale food distribution, health services and water delivery, among other



the generators and made provisions to protect them. The new boreholes and electrical connections — along with 12 kilometres of new pipe — will benefit around 11,000 people.

### Spare parts and expertise

In many parts of Afghanistan, water is pumped by hand. But when pumps break, local communities don't always have the parts they need and it's too dangerous for staff with expertise and tools to go out to repair them. In this case, the ICRC invites local engineers to its office in Kunduz for training and help in finding the spare parts.

"We have had a water pump on the corner of our street for 20 years, but it has broken 20 times," says Abdul Hakim, a truck driver, mechanic and water committee member in Ze Khel, Kunduz. "It gets used so heavily, it's not surprising."

Now a local engineer has fixed the pump in Ze Khel with spare parts and additional training from the ICRC. In this way, nearly a third of 430 scheduled hand-pump repairs have been carried out, an example of the ways humanitarians sometimes must use 'indirect' or 'remote' assistance with local partners in areas where access is not possible.

### Essential to survival

Because water is essential to survival, access to water is afforded special protection under international humanitarian law. But when fighting destroys water systems — or renders the construction and repair too costly or risky — the consequences are serious.

The village of Deh Bala is a good example. Halfway up a rocky mountainside, more than two kilometres of pipe brings clean water from a spring to a cement and stone water tank, where, on a recent afternoon, exuberant girls, boys and men have beaming smiles. "Water is our biggest problem: we need our health first and foremost," one of them says. "If we have [clean] water we have everything." A quick survey reveals

## Water for all

Access to water is not only protected under international humanitarian law. Along with sanitation, it's also a fundamental human right, according to a United Nations resolution adopted in 2010. Still, roughly 1 billion people lack access to safe water and more than 3 billion — nearly half of the world's population — do not have adequate sanitation.

When a storm, flood or earthquake breaks up water and sanitation systems, this deficiency can be even more deadly. Starting in the early 1990s, the IFRC began deploying Emergency Response Units — teams of people with the expertise and equipment needed to serve various levels of need (from 15,000 people in rural areas to 50,000 people in urban settings). The IFRC and National Societies have also been working with global partners, as well as local and national authorities, to expand access to sanitation and safe water for vulnerable communities — before disaster strikes.

While progress is being made, there are still massive gaps. In 2012, a Joint Monitoring Project by the World Health Organization and UNICEF reported that a Millennium Development Goal to increase people's access to improved water sources is on course to be met by 2015. But the goal of reducing by half the number of people without basic sanitation will fall short, largely because sanitation projects are not as enthusiastically funded as water supply projects. "Governments, donors and humanitarian actors must all ensure sanitation activities are at least as well funded as water supply," says IFRC Secretary General Bekele Geleeta. "We must get the balance right."



every child has suffered serious stomach pains and diarrhoea.

Now, trenches are being dug for pipes that will bring water directly to the village below. "There are no clinics, no doctors and no [pharmacies]," says Bashir, an ICRC engineer running the project. "So protecting a natural source, rather than letting people drink directly from open water channels, immediately alters their standard and quality of life." ■

For displaced populations during emergencies, such as those living in this camp in Myanmar, clean water is critical to survival. Movement workers and volunteers built safe toilets, dug new wells and created water distribution systems that provide more than 8,000 litres a day to the camp's population.

Photo: Andreas von Weissenberg/IFRC

## Sanitarian action • 150 years of humanitarian action •

things. The global outpouring of support and media coverage are followed by intense scrutiny of the overall humanitarian response. Much of the aid, channelled through the Ethiopian government, did not reach starving people in rebel territory and some argued the aid prolonged the war by bolstering the government. In 1986, an independent inquiry found that the League did better than most organizations and "many who are alive today would have perished without the Red Cross Red Crescent interventions". But it also concluded that the League, already overwhelmed with disaster operations in the early 1980s, was overextended and needed to focus on building its capacity for multiple large-scale interventions.

**April 1986:** The Chernobyl nuclear power plant in Ukraine, then part of the Soviet Union, melts down, releasing radioactive particles that spread over much of western USSR and Europe.

**October 1986:** The International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent votes to suspend the South African government delegation (but not the South

African Red Cross) as a protest against apartheid. The decision is derided by some as a weakening of the principles of universality and neutrality, while applauded by others.

**May 1988:** The Soviet Union begins its withdrawal from Afghanistan.

**October 1988:** The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Museum opens in Geneva.

**1989:** The Berlin Wall comes down and the Soviet Union collapses. Many in the West are optimistic that the end of the cold war will lead to a 'peace dividend'.

# Horror to hope



A child refugee during the Biafran war, Okey Ndibe (right) is now a novelist and a writer on African affairs. He offers his views on humanity as part of the *Red Cross Red Crescent's* ongoing series on the seven Fundamental Principles.

Photo: Okey Ndibe

**A**S A PRECOCIOUS CHILD OF 7 at the start of the Nigerian civil war in the late 1960s, I became, like my father, obsessed with radio news. Each morning, as Papa shaved, he set his transistor radio to Radio Biafra. I was supposed to be engaged in some chore, like washing plates, minding my ever-crying baby brother or sweeping the compound. Instead, I always installed myself near Papa and his radio.

## • 150 years of humanitarian action • 150 years of hum

### ➔ War in Europe

The fall of the Berlin Wall, the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the cold war lead to new conflicts. After 45 years of peace in Europe, war breaks out in the Balkans. Movement efforts focus on assisting those affected by war and economic collapse in many former Eastern Bloc countries.

Photo: Reuters/Chris Helgren, courtesy www.alternet.org



### 1991 Second Gulf War:

The United Nations authorizes a coalition of 34 nations, led by the United States, to go to war against Iraq in response to its

annexation of Kuwait.

**1991:** Somalia's civil war breaks out after the fall of its military government. As armed groups

vie for control, the population suffers displacement and famine. In 1992, the United States leads a coalition of peacekeepers to restore order and bring humanitarian relief — one of the first times an international military intervention was so closely linked with humanitarian ends.

**November 1991:** Birth of the IFRC. The League of Red Cross and

Red Crescent Societies meets in Budapest, Hungary and decides to become the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC).

**1993:** The International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY) is founded by the United Nations to deal with war crimes that took place during the conflicts in the Balkans.





Photo: H.D. Finck/ICRC

Much of the bulletin of Radio Biafra was fevered propaganda delivered in impassioned language. It often reported how “gallant Biafran soldiers” had “wiped off” or “vanquished enemy forces”.

Sadly for my father, and for me, Radio Biafra did not enjoy a monopoly. The British Broadcasting Corporation, Voice of America and, on occasion, Radio Nigeria had few if any accounts of Biafran soldiers’ gallant exploits. They brought instead constant news about “Federal troops” dislodging “rebel soldiers”.

Wars are a menace to truth and they discount any shared sense of humanity. The cruellest thing about war is not the number of the dead or injured. Far more grievous is the certainty in the mind of a people at war that their very human identity is under siege. It’s my hunch that my parents and many other Biafrans had come to believe that, in the eyes of the ‘enemy’, they had ceased to be human.

It’s also natural that besieged Biafrans began to view the ‘enemy’ as less than human. The men who dropped huge, exploding metallic eggs at us from swift, low-flying jets (or who blocked access to food and medicine) could not be human.

In 1994, much of the world stood awestruck as 800,000 Rwandans perished in a few months — in one of the gravest genocidal rages of recent times. As in Nigeria, the Rwandan media helped shape — and escalate — the tragedy.

The subsequent trial and conviction by an international tribunal of two owners of Radio Télévision Libre des Mille Collines, as well as other media owners who incited hatred and violence, is a verdict on the media’s ability to disfigure the ‘other’, whether on ethnic, religious or some other grounds. Such disfigurement must be challenged, for it often precedes, intensifies or encourages the deployment of violence against marked victims.

Rwanda’s three-month orgy of killings produced another infamous subtext: the understanding that memory, the act of remembering, can be turned into the deepest cut. Some exterminators often killed members of a family save one. The spared woman or man, girl or boy was then told that he or she was deliberately allowed to live in order to bear the burden of remembering.

A few years ago, I saw a TV documentary that focused on the plight of women in the perennial crisis in the [Democratic Republic of the] Congo. Witness after witness shared horror stories of how she was raped, by government soldiers or rebel forces — and often by both.

There was no question that the savage experience tormented them. Perhaps it had disfigured their psyches the same way that hunger misshaped the physique of millions of Biafran children, their legs like fleshless spikes, stomachs distended, necks thin, the hair on their big, veined heads discoloured and flimsy. Their violators had counted these women as less than human — and these have perhaps also concluded that these men were no more than beasts.

## New challenges

Warring parties and governments increasingly seek to win ‘the hearts and minds’ of local populations through development and humanitarian assistance. In working closely with those agencies, some humanitarian actors in a sense become instruments for the agenda of politicians and military forces, rather than neutral and independent humanitarian actors. Meanwhile, military forces in some cases begin direct humanitarian assistance. As distinctions between relief and politics become blurred, new problems related to security arise as belligerents increasingly see humanitarians as agents of the opposing forces.

# Humanitarian action • 150 years of humanitarian action •

## July 1994 Rwandan genocide:

Over the course of roughly 100 days, somewhere between 500,000 and 1 million people, mostly ethnic Tutsis, are killed — almost 20 per cent of the country’s population.

**November 1994:** The United Nations Security Council creates an international tribunal for judging people presumed responsible for acts of genocide

and other violations of international humanitarian and human rights law in Rwanda and neighbouring countries.

**1994:** The IFRC obtains international observer status at the United Nations.

**1996:** The ICTY hands down its first judgment, against a soldier in the Bosnian Serb army who participated in mass executions

following the takeover of the Srebrenica enclave by the Bosnian Serb army in July 1995.

## Fast forward

**Since 1996, the ICTY has indicted 161 people. ICRC lawyers believe that tribunals such as those set up for the former Yugoslavia herald a major step in the implementation of international humanitarian law.**

➔ **1997:** Rwanda’s invasion of Zaire in search of Hutu militias, boosts Congolese rebels who then capture Kinshasa and install Laurent Kabila as president. The country is renamed the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Civil war follows with each side backed by different neighbouring countries.



Photo: IFRC

# Humanity

The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, born of a desire to bring assistance without discrimination to the wounded on the battlefield, endeavours, in its international and national capacity, to prevent and alleviate human suffering wherever it may be found. Its purpose is to protect life and health and to ensure respect for the human being. It promotes mutual understanding, friendship, cooperation and lasting peace amongst all peoples.

Prosecution of sexual crimes as war crimes or acts of genocide in the tribunals set up to deal with atrocities in Yugoslavia and Rwanda have brought some measure of hope towards holding genocide instigators and perpetrators to account. These trials and the precedents they set constitute a different, salutary form of memory. The legal principles that mandate civilized, life-respecting standards, and the international tribunals that enforce them, are an essential part of retributive or restorative remembering.

This is the paradox of human history: on the one hand, the arc has been towards enlightenment, freedom, the evolution of humanitarian principles and technical wizardry. On the other, it has arced toward oppression, violence, xenophobia, the stigmatization of the 'other' and ever-more efficient and clever means of killing. In the last 20 years, for example, the world has witnessed costly conflicts in such locations as Bosnia, Lebanon, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Sudan and Syria. Some have been sectarian wars, pitting one faith against another. Some have been driven by ethnic jingoism, ideological fanaticism or crude nationalist passions. Others have occasioned the dehumanization of minorities or mutual degradation by combatants.

And even in times of peace, our sense of common humanity can be shattered. A few months ago, a well-armed young man walked into an elementary [primary] school in Newtown, Connecticut, in the

United States, and killed 20 children, some teachers and a principal. The sickening event took place 35 minutes from my own home, also in Connecticut. Even this survivor of war was left speechless, my emotions topsy-turvy.

## A vital force

The human capacity for being inhumane — compounded by nature's fecundity in spawning disasters — points to one implication: the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement will always be a busy and vital force.

As a child during the Biafran war, I saw that Red Cross ideal of basic humanity at work when I accompanied my parents to relief centres in search of food, medicines, clothes and other items. Sometimes, the number of the needy was so vast that we went away empty-handed. On such occasions, my parents' grief was palpable. It meant that they and their five children would face days, even weeks, of hunger. Even so, there was always a sense of undying hope — and it was tied to the presence of the Red Cross and other relief agencies.

Today, the Nigerian Red Cross Society still brings succour to the suffering, be it first aid in villages beset with inter-tribal violence or tending to victims of car crashes. And the dastardly acts of shooting children at a school in Connecticut or a camp in Norway continue to activate a deeply human, noble and beautiful response. It's what this principle is about — a veritable way of waging beauty in the midst of a war. And it's a first step towards giving all victims of war, violence or natural woes a restored sense of their human dignity. ■

## Okey Ndibe

Okey Ndibe is a writer and professor of literature at Trinity College in Hartford, Connecticut, USA.

## Your turn

What does the principle of humanity mean to you? What are the biggest threats and challenges facing this principle today? Write a 400-word story or essay. We will consider your response for our series. Submit at: [rcrc@ifrc.org](mailto:rcrc@ifrc.org)

## • 150 years of humanitarian action • 150 years of hum

**1997:** To improve coordination and cooperation, the Movement signs the Seville Agreement to specify who takes the lead (IFRC, ICRC or National Societies) in various types of field operations.

**1997:** After years of work by the ICRC, Movement partners and other organizations, the Ottawa Treaty (which prohibits the use, stockpiling, production

and transfer of anti-personnel mines) is adopted.

**September 2001:** In a coordinated set of attacks, a group calling itself al-Qaeda hijacks four planes, flying them into New York's World Trade Towers and the Pentagon in Washington DC. Another plane crashes in Pennsylvania. In response, the United States administration announces a global 'war on terror'.

### October 2001 War in Afghanistan:

The United States, United Kingdom and France join the Afghan group Northern Alliance to topple the Taliban regime that is believed to have hosted al-Qaeda training camps initiating the '9-11' attacks.

**January 2002:** The first detainees arrive at the detention facility established by the United States

at the Guantanamo Bay Naval Base in Cuba. ICRC delegates begin visiting detainees.

**February 2003:** War in Darfur begins as two armed groups seek independence from Sudan, leading to massive civilian casualties, displacement and chronic food insecurity.

**March 2003:** War in Iraq is launched to topple the regime

of Saddam Hussein, which the United States contends has developed weapons of mass destruction.

### New awareness

In the early 2000s, the ICRC begins paying more attention to those targeted by sexual violence during armed conflicts.

➔ **December 2004:** An earthquake off the western coast

Photo: IFRC





Myanmar Red Cross volunteers came from around the country to provide neutral and impartial assistance in communities affected by violence with teams working in medical clinics, building toilets and wells, and distributing drinking water, food, blankets and hygiene kits. Their efforts were supported by the IFRC, the ICRC and various National Societies.

Photo: Andreas von Weissenberg/IFRC

***"I became a Red Cross volunteer just after the crisis here. People lost everything. I knew I wanted to help and so did my friends; now we are all volunteers."***

Myat Sanda Khine, 19, speaking about how she and others mobilized after inter-communal violence tore through her home city.

## Movement in Myanmar

Nineteen-year-old Myat Sanda Khine had just enrolled at Sittwe University when inter-communal violence tore through her home city, leaving dozens dead, thousands injured and entire villages burnt to the ground. The violence, between Rakhine and Muslim communities, left more than 100,000 people displaced in Rakhine state. To read more about Sanda's story, recent advances in humanitarian access in Myanmar, and how the Movement is facing the challenge of bringing impartial assistance to all, see our web site: [www.redcross.int](http://www.redcross.int).



Photo: Andreas von Weissenberg/IFRC

## Humanitarian action • 150 years of humanitarian action •



of Sumatra, Indonesia causes a tsunami that kills more than 230,000 people in 13 countries. The humanitarian response is immediate and massive. The scale, and the diversity of groups and agencies coming to help, also leads to many problems with coordination and allegations of waste.

**August 2005:** Hurricane Katrina slams into the US Gulf Coast,

killing 1,800 people and causing more than US\$ 80 billion in damage.

**June 2007:** ICRC President Jakob Kellenberger issues a rare public denunciation of the government of Myanmar for violations of international humanitarian law against detainees and civilians.

**Fast forward**  
New ICRC President Peter Maurer becomes the first ICRC president to visit Myanmar. He said the visit, along with government commitments to allow greater access to detainees and communities affected by fighting, offers "a new chapter in both our relationship with Myanmar government and in our

humanitarian activities here".

**May 2008:** The Convention on Cluster Munitions is adopted. It prohibits the use, transfer and stockpiling of cluster bombs, which scatter small 'bomblets' over a wide area, often injuring civilians for years to come.

**Globalization** **Innovation**  
The future of humanitarian action

**Resilience** Humanitarian industry

# Your future, your move

**Climate change**  
**Automated weaponry**  
**Infectious diseases**  
**Remote control**  
**Challenges**  
**Fundamental principles**  
**Social media**  
**The responsibility to protect**  
**Opportunities and challenges**  
**Population growth**  
**Forced migration**  
**Remote control humanitarian action**  
**Diverse humanitarian sector**  
**Crisis mapping**  
**Cyber warfare**  
**Hearts and minds**

**Armed groups**  
**Evidence-based medicine**  
**Instrumentalization**  
**Urbanization**  
**Proliferation of small arms**  
**Your voice**  
**Crowdsourcing**

**P**REDICTING THE FUTURE is a precarious business. But thinking about and preparing for what is likely — or possible — can greatly reduce risks and save lives. Recent wars and disasters, from the ongoing conflict in Mali to floods in Mozambique, show the importance of looking ahead, pre-positioning stocks, getting ready.

The same could be said for the long term.

What do we need to be doing now to prepare for the disasters and conflicts of the next 20, 50 or 150 years? What will the Movement look like in 50 years, at its 200th birthday? Is the world becoming a more humane place due to the growth of humanitarianism? Or are we becoming

less humane — surrounded by technology that can improve life and yet can destroy it ever more efficiently?

What have we learned in the last century and a half?

With these questions in mind, we want to engage you, our readers, in a call for submissions — short essays, works of art, letters, poems, comic strips, photographs — that address these questions. Submissions will be judged by the *Red Cross Red Crescent* editorial board and published in upcoming editions. Those selected will receive a gift pack of Movement memorabilia and souvenirs. Please visit our web site: [www.redcross.int](http://www.redcross.int) for details. ■

## • 150 years of humanitarian action • 150 years of hum



Photo: Tania Franke/American Red Cross

**January 2010:** A major earthquake hits Haiti, destroying much of Port-au-Prince, killing more than 300,000 people and leaving more than 1 million people without homes. A major relief effort is launched and some US\$ 4 billion pledged for reconstruction. Dubbed the first 'digital disaster', internet and mobile phone technology are used to recover victims

and help target food, water and shelter relief. The IFRC and Haitian Red Cross team up with mobile phone providers to issue hurricane warnings and sanitation messages to thousands of people.

**January 2011:** A campaign of protest and civil disobedience, fuelled by social media, leads to the ouster of Tunisia's president, sparking what

becomes known as the 'Arab Spring' uprisings that lead to revolution in Egypt and conflicts in Libya and Syria.

**March 2011:** An earthquake off the coast of Japan's north-east Tohoku region creates a tsunami that wipes out several coastal cities and claims more than 15,000 lives. The tsunami breaches the Fukushima nuclear plant,

leading to an explosion that causes the heaviest level of nuclear contamination since the Chernobyl disaster.

**17 February 2013:** The Movement celebrates the 150th anniversary of the creation of the ICRC and the official birth of the Red Cross Red Crescent Movement.



## PUBLICATIONS



### Building resilient communities in a changing climate IFRC 2012

Climate change poses formidable challenges to the humanitarian community. This brochure highlights key facts and principles of the IFRC's and National Societies' responses to this changing situation.

Available in Arabic, English, French and Spanish

### Principles in action in Lebanon ICRC 2013

Using examples provided by the Lebanese Red Cross, this case study demonstrates how crucial the application of the Fundamental Principles, in tandem with uniform strategies based on the Safer Access Framework, has been in making it safer for the National Society to provide emergency



medical services throughout Lebanon — in circumstances complicated by armed conflict, internal disturbances and other emergencies, and by the existence of groups with a broad range of religious affiliations.

Available in English

### Haiti earthquake Three-year progress report IFRC 2013

Millions of lives were shattered by the 2010 earthquake but the Haitian population has shown incredible resilience. This report spans Red Cross Red Crescent operations from January 2010 to November 2012, with a focus on the third year of operations. During the past 12 months, programmes have continued to help people to leave camps and regain their independence and the Red Cross Red Crescent has worked hand in hand with local communities.

Available in English, French and Spanish



### Investing in Africa African solutions to Africa's challenges IFRC 2012

At a time when Africa has become synonymous with growth and opportunity, leaders of the Red Cross Red Crescent in Africa met in Addis Ababa to promote investing in the continent and its people. African National Societies are eager to look beyond dependency on foreign aid and take control of their own development.

Available in English and French

## MEDIA

### 150 Years of humanitarian action

Movement celebrations of the ICRC's 150th anniversary do not just focus on the past. In fact, the ICRC is using the occasion to spark a global conversation about present and future humanitarian challenges. To help get the discussion going, the ICRC is offering conversation points via a new internet resource at [www.icrc.org](http://www.icrc.org). Among other things, the 150 Years of Humanitarian Action campaign site includes an interactive historical timeline, links to recordings of debates and discussions about humanitarian challenges, and an archive room where photos, letters, videos and audio interviews from past actions around the world can be seen, listened to or downloaded.

Available in Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Portuguese and Spanish

### DR Congo: war surgery — healing the horror ICRC 2013

In the Kivus, the ICRC is evacuating war wounded and helping with heavy surgical operations. Emergency treatment is restricted by limited access to conflict zones, a devastated primary health-care network and direct threats to both wounded and medical staff. Despite these challenges, more than 200 war wounded have received treatment by ICRC surgical teams in

Goma since mid-November 2012. Second in our four-part series on DR Congo.

Available in English and French

### Silent disasters IFRC 2013

A comfortable, happy family eats dinner while in the corner of the dining room, a woman stands shivering and wet. The woman cries out for help but the family continues to eat, not hearing her pleas. This provocative image comes from a new video and TV spot that is part of IFRC's campaign — with 11 European National Societies and the European Union — to bring attention to so called silent or under-reported disasters. To see the full range of videos in the silent disasters campaign, visit the IFRC's YouTube channel.

### Treaties and commentaries database and national implementation database — December 2012 ICRC 2013

This CD version includes two databases. The database of national implementation measures provides examples of legislation and jurisprudence from countries around the world. The other database is a compilation of international humanitarian law treaties and documents showing the current status of signatures and ratifications. The CD is updated periodically for the databases.

Available in English

### Maternal, newborn and child health framework IFRC 2013

This framework provides guidance and direction to National Societies, their programme managers and all other parties involved in the planning, design and implementation of programmes and interventions in maternal, reproductive, newborn and child health.

Available in English

### Summary of the Geneva Conventions of August 1949 and their Additional Protocols ICRC 2012

This summary for all categories of readers offers a straightforward, concise explanation of the Geneva Conventions of August 1949 and their Additional Protocols of 1977 and 2005. The summary also includes reference to all relevant articles.

Available in Arabic, English, French, Portuguese and Spanish



## 'The Tree of Humanity'

This colorful engraving created for an exposition in Berne, Switzerland in 1914 depicts three main branches in the evolution of the Movement's humanitarian action at the time: The signatories of the Geneva Convention are shown on the left branch, the work of the ICRC is described on the middle branch, and the creation of National Societies is shown on the right.

From the ICRC archives.