

# ICRC PREVENTION POLICY



ICRC



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# INTRODUCTION

Together with *protection, assistance and cooperation, prevention* is a central component of the ICRC's work. It constitutes one of the four *approaches* that the ICRC has devised for reaching its overall and fundamental goal of ensuring respect for the lives, dignity and physical and mental well-being of persons affected by armed conflict and other situations of violence.<sup>1</sup>

In line with its mission statement,<sup>2</sup> the ICRC endeavours to prevent suffering, in particular by “promoting and strengthening international humanitarian law and universal humanitarian principles.” This is also a key element of the mandate conferred upon the ICRC by States and the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and confirmed by them. The Statutes of the Movement specifically entrust the ICRC with the responsibility to work for the faithful application of international humanitarian law (IHL) and for its understanding, dissemination and development, and to maintain and disseminate the Fundamental Principles.<sup>3</sup> The ICRC has been doing this since its inception.

Given the complex environment in which the ICRC operates, as well as its growth, diversification and specialization, the organization needs to adopt a policy for prevention that is based on a common perception of what its prevention approach should encompass, which principles should guide it and how it should be implemented. This policy will enhance the effectiveness of the ICRC's prevention approach and activities, and ensure that they are understood. More generally, it will contribute to the ICRC's ambitions to remain the standard-setting organization in the field of IHL, to continue to promote its identity as an exclusively

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1 ICRC policy, “The ICRC: Its mission and work,” 2008.

2 The ICRC's mission statement explicitly covers “armed conflicts and other situations of violence.”

3 Art. 5(2), Statutes of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, adopted by the 25th International Conference of the Red Cross, Geneva, 23-31 October 1986, amended in 1995 and 2006. See also Res. 21, “Dissemination of knowledge of international humanitarian law applicable in armed conflicts,” Diplomatic Conference on the Reaffirmation and Development of International Humanitarian Law Applicable in Armed Conflicts, 7 June 1977, which was adopted in the framework of negotiations on the Additional Protocols. Numerous resolutions adopted during the International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent further elaborate upon the ICRC's responsibility.

humanitarian, impartial, neutral and independent organization and to remain a reliable, predictable and coherent organization whose work is underpinned by a strong culture of accountability and focuses on the results and impact of its action.<sup>4</sup>

This policy document is organized as follows:

- Section I defines the notion of prevention as understood within the ICRC;
- Section II explains how the ICRC seeks to foster an environment that is conducive to respect for life and dignity and for the ICRC's work;
- Section III outlines the guiding principles that enable the ICRC to ensure the relevance, efficiency and impact of its prevention approach;
- Section IV lists the criteria that have to be assessed when deciding whether to engage in prevention activities;
- and Section V outlines different considerations to bear in mind when developing strategies for prevention activities.

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4 ICRC Strategy 2007-2010, "Committed to meeting new challenges through action."

# 1. DEFINITION OF PREVENTION

Prevention literally means “the action of stopping something from happening or arising.”<sup>5</sup> At the most general level, all ICRC activities aim to prevent human suffering caused by armed conflict and other situations of violence. Therefore, working “to prevent” problems of humanitarian concern is a perspective common to the organization’s different domains of activity.<sup>6</sup> However, within the ICRC, “prevention” has also become associated with a particular *approach* to such problems, as distinct from the organization’s protection, assistance, and cooperation approaches.<sup>7</sup>

Pursuant to its prevention approach, the ICRC seeks to avert human suffering by fostering an environment conducive to: (1) respect for the life and dignity of persons affected by armed conflict and other situations of violence; and (2) respect for the ICRC’s work. This approach entails taking action to prevent suffering by influencing those who can determine — directly or indirectly — the fate of those affected and generally implies a medium- or long-term perspective. It encompasses efforts to communicate, develop, clarify and promote the implementation of IHL and other relevant bodies of law, as well as efforts to facilitate acceptance of the ICRC’s work.<sup>8</sup>

This policy presents the ICRC’s prevention approach and the different activities that it comprises.<sup>9</sup> Particular activities fall within the ICRC’s prevention approach provided that they aim to foster an environment conducive to respect for the life and dignity of persons affected by armed conflict and other situations of

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<sup>5</sup> *Oxford Dictionary of English*, 2nd edition, Oxford University Press, 2006.

<sup>6</sup> See Jean-Luc Blondel, “The role of the ICRC in preventing armed conflict: its possibilities and limitations,” *International Review of the Red Cross*, Vol. 83, No. 844, December 2001, pp. 923 - 45. Blondel notes that all ICRC activities contribute to three different objectives, albeit in varying degrees: (1) a normative and educative objective; (2) a corrective and curative objective; and (3) a forward-looking and preventive objective. *Ibid.*, p. 936.

<sup>7</sup> “The ICRC: Its mission and work,” *supra* note 1.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> Approaches are distinct from activities or programmes. They are defined according to the specific aim which they pursue. *Ibid.*

violence and for the ICRC's work. Thus, protection, assistance and cooperation activities may all be part of this approach.<sup>10</sup> Similarly, prevention activities may also contribute to the ICRC's protection, assistance and cooperation approaches.<sup>11</sup> Although prevention activities may contribute to preventing armed conflict or to preventing its resurgence, this aspect of the organization's work falls outside the scope of this policy.<sup>12</sup>

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10 For example, a prevention approach that aims to limit or put a stop to the use of cluster munitions and thus to the suffering caused by their use may include a range of activities: promoting the adoption of a new treaty (prevention activity); preparing reports about the consequences of cluster munitions on people not or no longer participating in the fighting (protection activity); compiling descriptions of the wounds caused by cluster munitions based on the ICRC's first-hand medical experience (assistance activity); and organizing a seminar for National Societies to strengthen the Movement's public communication on the issue of cluster munitions (cooperation activity). At the same time, certain protection, assistance and cooperation activities which have a broad preventive character (e.g., vaccination campaigns, prison visits, strengthening the capacity of National Societies in the field of restoring family links), do not fall within the scope of the present policy.

11 For example, a protection approach that aims to put a stop to and prevent the recurrence of sexual violence may include promoting the enactment of domestic legislation prohibiting sexual violence (prevention activity). This prevention activity may concurrently fall within a prevention approach.

12 See Blondel, *supra* note 6. See also "Fundamental Guidelines for the Contribution of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement to a True Peace in the World," adopted by the Second World Red Cross and Red Crescent Conference on Peace, Aaland, Stockholm, 2-7 September, 1984.

## 2. ENVIRONMENT BUILDING

The ICRC's prevention approach follows a particular logic based on an understanding of why people behave the way they do and how to influence them. Behaviour is shaped in part by specific environmental factors. Acting upon these factors may thus have an effect on behaviour. Clarifying the characteristics of "an environment conducive to respect" is a necessary step. As the ICRC shares responsibility in this domain with other actors, it must also recognize its limits.

### 2.1 Underlying logic of prevention

As problems of humanitarian concern are in part a product of their environment, the ICRC needs to understand the complex environmental factors influencing the likelihood that life and dignity or its own work may be affected.<sup>13</sup> These environmental factors relate, in particular, to context-specific and deeply interconnected political, cultural, social and economic characteristics.<sup>14</sup> Once it understands these factors, the ICRC can determine how best to act upon them.

Recognizing the limitations involved in influencing individual behaviour (e.g. the behaviour of an individual arms carrier or a prison guard) and the limitations of related efforts, the organization sets out to establish the conditions that would make the environment in which problems of humanitarian concern arise more "conducive to respect." To do this, the ICRC works with those actors that have a significant capacity to influence the structures or systems (e.g. legislation, military doctrine and

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<sup>13</sup> Estimating the likelihood does not necessarily require measuring it precisely. When confronted with highly complex problems, the most realistic and viable option may be to resort to approximations (e.g. low, high, very high likelihood) comparisons (i.e. more or less probable) or judgements based on past experience.

<sup>14</sup> The ICRC's *Roots of Behaviour in War* study highlighted the main environmental factors that influence the behaviour of arms carriers and lead them either to respect or to violate IHL in a given situation. It stressed, in particular, the role played by manhood and culture (pp. 18-25), ethnicity and the sense of belonging to a group (pp. 46-49), military training, orders and sanctions (pp. 50-54 and 68-86), the phenomenon of progressive moral disengagement under the pressure of dehumanization and justifications (pp. 88-94) and the influence of "bystanders" (pp. 65-66). J.J. Frésard, *The Roots of Behaviour in War: A Survey of the Literature*, ICRC, Geneva, 2004. See also D. Muñoz-Rojas, J.J. Frésard, *The Roots of Behaviour in War: Understanding and Preventing IHL Violations*, ICRC, Geneva, 2004.

training, disciplinary and penal sanctions) associated with the actual or potential problem identified. These actors include: political authorities and parties, the judiciary, arms carriers, National Societies, the media, the private sector, religious groups, academic circles, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and international organizations. Such actors may have a positive (or negative) impact on the lives and dignity of persons affected by armed conflict and other situations of violence, and they may be in a position to facilitate (or hamper) the ICRC's access to concerned populations. Influencing them requires identifying key individuals who – because of their power or hierarchical position – have the capacity to bring about the intended change.

The focus on influencing structures and systems explains why the ICRC's prevention approach generally spans a medium- to long-term time frame. Provided that the ICRC's prevention work is successful, it is likely to have a wide and lasting impact on the lives and dignity of people affected by armed conflict and other situations of violence.

Two broad assumptions underlie the ICRC's prevention approach:

- behaviour is more effectively changed by modifying the environmental conditions that influence it than by directly trying to alter people's opinions, attitudes or outlooks;<sup>15</sup>
- prevention is a continuing process over the medium to long term that is worth launching early and is potentially more effective and efficient than taking action after negative consequences have already occurred.

These assumptions are based on solid operational experience, research and lessons learned through reviews and evaluations. The ICRC must nevertheless regularly assess their relevance and validity in the different contexts in which it operates in order to improve the effectiveness of its prevention approach.

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<sup>15</sup> This was one of the main conclusions of the ICRC's *Roots of Behaviour in War* study and is consistent with findings by social scientists and prevention experts as well as with lessons learned by other organizations. See J.J. Frésard, *ibid.*, pp. 98-112; D. Muñoz-Rojas, J.J. Frésard, *ibid.*, pp. 11-16. See also A. Bandura, *Social Foundations of Thought and Action: A Social Cognitive Theory*, Prentice Hall Inc., New Jersey, 1986, pp. 1-46; R. Moran, C. de Moura Castro, *Street-children and the Inter-American Development Bank: Lessons from Brazil*, Inter-American Development Bank, Washington D.C., 1997.

## 2.2 Goals pursued

An environment conducive to respect for life and dignity and for the ICRC's work would include the following conditions:

- international law (IHL and other fundamental rules protecting persons in situations of violence) that is clear and comprehensive, that adequately addresses contemporary problems and that is universally accepted and, in case of treaties, ratified;
- national legislation and administrative measures incorporating the law;
- national and international mechanisms permitting violations of the law to be sanctioned and providing reparation for victims;
- arms carriers' commitment and capacity (e.g. structure, resources, effective chain of command) to respect the law and the ICRC's work, in particular through integration of the law into doctrine, education, training and sanctions systems;
- appropriate knowledge, understanding and acceptance of the law and of the ICRC by government officials, academics, members of civil society, the media and the general public;
- public discourse devoid of language aimed at dehumanizing ethnic, racial, religious or political groups or discriminating on the basis of gender/sex; and
- alternatives to risk-taking behaviour available to vulnerable populations (i.e. populations at risk).

## 2.3 Recognizing limits

Fostering an environment conducive to respect is a responsibility that is shared with a variety of actors. Although States play a key role in this regard, the ICRC must also take into account the role of armed groups and of other actors exerting significant influence. The chances that the ICRC's endeavours will be successful crucially depend on these different actors' commitment and capacity to assume their responsibilities. The ICRC's specific mandate and fields of competence further define the organization's capacity to contribute to fostering these favourable environmental conditions. In addition, the ICRC has to set priorities based on the principles guiding its prevention approach and establish partnerships with other actors, in particular with National Societies.



## 3. GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The following principles guide the ICRC's prevention approach and cover all activities that fall within it. They are interrelated and must all be taken into account when developing and implementing a prevention approach. They ensure that the ICRC's work in this area is relevant and efficient and that it generates impact.

### 3.1 Contextualization

Concrete realities on the ground shape the ICRC's prevention approach. A prevention response should be developed in light of the particular problems anticipated or encountered and in line with an analysis of the specific environmental factors making the occurrence of such problems more or less likely.

This analysis must take into account the interplay among the global, regional and local levels of the environment.<sup>16</sup> In certain contexts, the environmental factors involved may be essentially local. In others, regional or global factors may play a significant role (e.g. global and/or regional implications of some conflicts). In addition, the prevalence across countries of some specific issues of humanitarian concern may also give them regional or global relevance (e.g. urban violence, cluster munitions, the missing and their families, women and war, child soldiers, challenges to neutral and independent humanitarian action). Such problems may become regional or global issues.

The growing mutual influences among the global, regional and local levels – facilitated by the development of information technology and exchanges of knowledge and ideas fostered by globalization – are particularly relevant for the ICRC's prevention approach. For example, challenges to IHL, ICRC neutrality or the Red Cross emblem in a given context may influence perceptions, policies and behaviour in other parts of the world.

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<sup>16</sup> In this sense "local" covers the community level up to the country level.

The ICRC adapts its response to its analysis of a particular problem across different levels of the environment. At the local level, it develops a context-specific and problem-focused approach. At the global and regional levels, it pursues a cross-contextual prevention approach. Some problems may merit a response at the local level only. Other problems may not require a particular effort at the local level, but may warrant a global or regional response. For others, a response may be justified at all three levels.

### 3.2 Multidimensional

In light of the often complex environmental factors that contribute to problems of humanitarian concern, the prevention approach designed by the ICRC should reflect their multidimensional nature. Focusing on only one environmental level or one actor may have a limited effect on the lives and dignity of people affected by armed conflict or other situations of violence. In order to enhance its impact, the ICRC may need to engage – simultaneously or successively – a variety of stakeholders situated at different levels of the environment. The choice of stakeholders will be guided by the contextual analysis of the particular problem at issue. Therefore, activities may have to be developed not only in countries experiencing armed conflict or other situations of violence but also in countries at peace.

For example, a prevention approach aimed at promoting respect for IHL and other relevant bodies of law in multinational military operations might include a range of activities:<sup>17</sup>

- identifying and analysing the problems of humanitarian concern encountered;
- consulting with legal and military experts to clarify the applicable law;
- obtaining the commitment of troop-contributing countries to respect the law;
- encouraging arms carriers from troop-contributing countries to integrate the relevant law into their doctrine, education, training and sanctions systems;
- promoting national implementation of the law in troop-contributing countries and in the countries of deployment;
- giving pre-deployment briefings;

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<sup>17</sup> Some of these activities may fall concurrently within another ICRC approach.

- sustaining a dialogue with arms carriers in the countries of deployment;
- communicating the ICRC's positions on the military operations to the media; and
- discussing challenges to the Movement's impartial, neutral and independent humanitarian action with the International Federation and National Societies.

The advantages of working with multiple actors across different levels of the environment must be weighed against the complexity and cost of doing so. Some of these activities also show the importance of starting prevention work in anticipation of potential problems.

### 3.3 Coherence

To increase the likelihood of making a difference for people affected by armed conflict and other situations of violence, the ICRC must achieve coherence at the operational level in the following domains:

- *within each prevention activity*, i.e. through the elaboration of specific guidelines and the provision of training and support to field activities by relevant ICRC services at headquarters;
- *within an ICRC delegation's and/or a region's prevention approach*, i.e. the synergies among prevention activities and between them and the protection, assistance and cooperation activities of a delegation or region that fall within the prevention approach must be identified, taken advantage of and built upon;<sup>18</sup>
- *across geographical and organizational levels*, i.e. global, regional and local prevention efforts must be consistent, complementary and mutually reinforcing (e.g. coherent approaches towards the armed forces of a particular country and towards a multinational force in which that country participates); and
- *among prevention, protection, assistance and cooperation approaches*, in order to ensure a consistent, unified ICRC response to a given problem based on a joint analysis of the problem (e.g. response to internally displaced persons,

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<sup>18</sup> In the field, this process takes place within each ICRC delegation. At headquarters, it is carried out through regional coordination teams and other forums that bring together different areas of expertise.

women and sexual violence, civilians and the effects of landmines). Capitalizing on synergies between different approaches strengthens the cohesiveness of the ICRC's work. In this regard, the relationship between the prevention and protection approaches is particularly close, with prevention efforts feeding into protection efforts and vice versa.

Achieving coherence requires effective coordination between different experts and organizational levels, from problem analysis to implementation and evaluation.

### **3.4 Results oriented**

States and the Movement have formally confirmed the ICRC's responsibility to strengthen and promote IHL and the Fundamental Principles. As a result, the ICRC must build and maintain the necessary fields of competence to this end. However, the human and financial resources at its disposal are not unlimited. If the ICRC wants to fulfil its obligations and ambitions regarding accountability (i.e. to report to stakeholders on the intended and effective use of resources and on the achievement of results), it must set clear priorities and develop context-specific responses.<sup>19</sup> There is indeed a certain tension between fulfilling mandated or statutory responsibilities and the necessity to make a significant difference for people affected by armed conflict and other situations of violence. Striking a careful balance between the two is crucial.

The mid- to long-term character of prevention and its focus on influencing a multiplicity of environmental factors pose significant challenges in terms of accountability. Determining which objectives the ICRC can realistically achieve with each set of stakeholders in a given context is essential. The soundness of the logic underlying the ICRC's prevention approach and activities is crucial for setting realistic objectives, as well as for monitoring and evaluation.<sup>20</sup> The criteria guiding the implementation of the ICRC's prevention activities addressing arms carriers, universities and youth are illustrative. They emphasize fostering a positive

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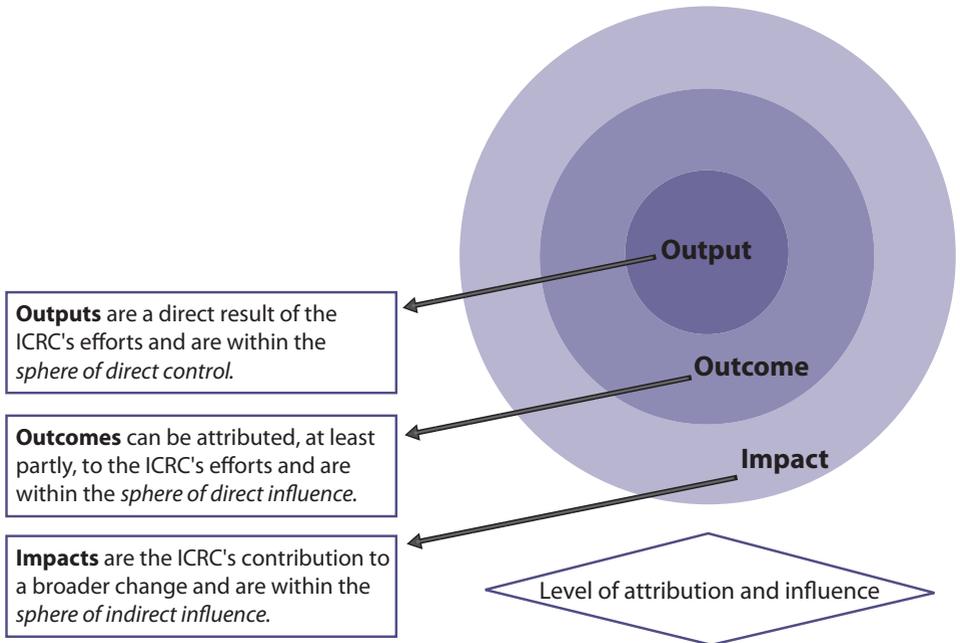
<sup>19</sup> Accountability goes beyond the implementation of activities and implies the possibility of attributing results to the organization.

<sup>20</sup> This is usually clarified in related policy or guidelines documents.

attitude towards the ICRC, other components of the Movement and the law (acceptance), obtaining the commitment of key stakeholders in this respect (ownership) and strengthening their capacity to assume their responsibilities over time (sustainability). Acceptance and ownership are generally preconditions for sustainability.

Three levels of results are usually identified within the ICRC: specific objectives (outputs), general objectives (outcomes) and desired humanitarian impact (impact or goal). These three levels are related to receding spheres of influence and to the decreasing possibility to attribute their achievement to the ICRC's prevention approach.

**Figure: Spheres of influence**



The further out from the centre of the concentric circles a particular result is, the weaker the level of ICRC control and the possibility of attributing the result to its prevention approach are. The ICRC can only be held accountable for the achievement of those results that are within its spheres of influence, i.e. those conditions in its operating environment that it sets out to foster.

## 4. DECIDING ON ENGAGEMENT<sup>21</sup>

Regardless of the approach being pursued, the decision to engage in prevention activities should be based on an assessment of three specific criteria, all of which must be met.

- *There must be an actual or potential problem of humanitarian concern (at the global, regional or local level).* In the case of actual problems, the ICRC's prevention activities aim to avoid or reduce their recurrence by acting on associated structural factors. Prevention activities also imply the necessity to try to predict and anticipate the occurrence of certain problems. On the grounds of evidence-based predictions related to its risk analysis, the ICRC may engage in prevention activities long before a certain problem has arisen.
- *The problem must fall within the ICRC's mandate.* The ICRC's specific mandate in the area of IHL and the related expectations of key actors must be considered. The ICRC's statutory right of initiative is also relevant, as are specific resolutions, declarations or pledges of the International Conference. The ICRC's policy documents clarifying the organization's role in situations not amounting to armed conflict must be taken into consideration as well.
- *The prevention activity must have potential added value within the framework of the organization's overall response to the problem at issue.* The ICRC must assess the relevance and possible added value of its prevention response to the particular problem identified. This requires determining possible synergies with other ICRC approaches and the search for complementarity with activities of other actors. It also requires considering the ICRC's specific fields of competence and available human resources. The further away a particular problem and the ICRC's response to it are from the organization's core mandate, the greater the necessity for the ICRC to assess the added value of its prevention activities.

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<sup>21</sup> In this context, engagement implies a certain level of investment (e.g. engaging human and financial resources, defining objectives, devising tailor-made responses, planning for a mid- to long-term strategy).

In addition to deciding whether to engage, the ICRC needs to determine the extent of its engagement in prevention activities. Its effort can be proactive but can also remain reactive. This decision is guided by balancing a number of additional considerations:

- *Likelihood, severity and scope of the problem of humanitarian concern.* Assessing the actual or potential problem in relation to the environment in which it has arisen or may arise is essential in determining the extent to which the organization engages in prevention activities.<sup>22</sup> The decision will be based on the balance between the likelihood of the problem at issue and its severity and scope.
- *Opportunities.* Prevention activities may also seize on particular opportunities at the global, regional or local level. These opportunities can emerge in countries in conflict or at peace. They are generated by a concurrence of events and usually build on increased attention given by international organizations, States and civil society to a specific problem (e.g. the circumstances that led the ICRC to strengthen its efforts related to anti-personnel mines and cluster munitions).
- *Geopolitical importance.* The regional or global influence of specific stakeholders in a particular country in the political, military, economic or cultural fields (e.g. shaping military doctrines in other countries, contribution to multinational military operations, political or legal leadership in certain domains) may justify putting an emphasis on prevention activities there.

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<sup>22</sup> There are tools at the ICRC's disposal to facilitate its understanding of problems of humanitarian concern in context (e.g. stakeholder mapping). The organization's environment-scanning efforts strengthen its analysis at each organizational level.

# 5. STRATEGIES FOR PREVENTION ACTIVITIES

The ICRC develops different strategies for prevention activities, depending on the problem at issue, the approach that comprises such activities and the particular objective being pursued. These considerations determine the focus, scope and time frame of prevention activities. They also orient the choice of modes of action and the decision to establish partnerships. Monitoring and evaluation help the organization to take stock of its performance and to improve the effectiveness of its prevention endeavours.

## 5.1 Identifying key stakeholders

Prevention activities require the ICRC to analyse the impact that different actors are having or could have on the particular problem anticipated or encountered. The ICRC also takes into account the mutual influences existing between them. This context-specific analysis should reveal the most relevant stakeholders for the ICRC and allow it to tailor its strategy accordingly.

The capacity of key stakeholders to influence the structures or systems associated with specific problems of humanitarian concern and their commitment to do so are crucial for the success of prevention activities. In particular, the assessment of key actors' capacity and commitment will determine the problem- and context-specific combination of prevention activities, the objectives pursued and the relevant mix of modes of action.

The ICRC seeks to develop and maintain a dialogue with national and international political authorities, as well as with State and non-State arms carriers, as actors that have a direct impact on the fate of victims.<sup>23</sup> The ICRC also works with those actors that have an indirect influence on the fate of victims, i.e. those that can be important vehicles for influencing political authorities and arms carriers. Under this logic, the ICRC focuses on mobilizing

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<sup>23</sup> The category of political authorities covers international authorities such as the UN, regional and supra-regional organizations, national authorities at the various levels (including all branches of government), and other political actors such as political opposition groups and traditional leaders. The category of arms carriers includes military and armed forces, police and security forces, non-State armed groups, private military companies and private security companies.

regional and/or global players (e.g. political authorities and arms carriers) that have an influence on local actors, as well as certain elements of civil society, including NGOs, academic circles, religious groups, the private sector, National Societies and the media.

There is a forward-looking perspective to the ICRC's environment-building efforts. The organization also works with those actors that could in the future exert an influence on the fate of victims – hence its efforts to promote IHL and other relevant bodies of law, as well as humanitarian principles and ideals, among young people and university students.

## **5.2 Combining activities to reach objectives**

Each prevention activity has a specific focus and scope (e.g. the ratification or implementation of specific treaties, the integration of IHL into military doctrine or into university curriculum). Taken separately, each such activity may have a limited influence on the environmental conditions bringing about a given problem, whether actual or potential. Taken together, however, they contribute to fostering an environment conducive to respect for life and dignity and for the ICRC's work. It is therefore crucial that activities be combined in a coherent, overall strategy spanning the relevant levels of the environment and that synergies with protection, assistance and cooperation activities be identified and built upon.

The decision to pursue a certain objective through a particular set of activities will depend on an analysis of the problem at issue. Over the years, the ICRC has developed three different sets of prevention activities pursuing different goals: prevention-development, prevention-dissemination and prevention-implementation. These three categories respond to different logics.

One set of activities focuses on the development of IHL and other rules of international law applicable in armed conflict or in other situations of violence. This work aims to strengthen the

legal protection afforded to persons affected by armed conflict or other situations of violence. It generally has a global dimension but may also have a regional dimension. In addition to the preparation of new treaty law, this work may also entail a variety of other activities, such as the identification of customary rules of IHL, the clarification of legal notions and the development of guidelines for their interpretation in line with current legal and operational realities (e.g. clarification of the notion of direct participation in hostilities), and activities aimed at defending the integrity of the law (e.g. IHL and terrorism).

Another set of activities aims at fostering understanding and acceptance of the ICRC's work and/or IHL and other relevant bodies of law. These activities are required wherever the ICRC conducts or wishes to conduct operations. Within protection and assistance approaches, they play a particularly important role (e.g. helping the organization to guarantee security and access to victims of armed conflict and other situations of violence). While dissemination of the applicable law and of the ICRC's impartial, neutral and independent humanitarian action remains central, the organization has increasingly emphasized the importance of developing two-way communication: listening to stakeholders' opinions and concerns and taking these into account when promoting the ICRC and/or the law. The ICRC also endeavours to engage certain stakeholders, where appropriate, as vehicles for the delivery of key messages. These activities generally have a shorter lifespan than other prevention activities. However, the necessity of establishing trust with individual stakeholders through lasting working relationships has also been recognized.

A third set of activities focuses on developing and strengthening the environmental conditions conducive to respect for IHL and other relevant bodies of law. This is usually done through the incorporation of the applicable law into the relevant structures or systems (e.g. national legislation; military doctrine, education, training and sanctions systems; curricula of universities or

secondary schools). These activities entail providing support to those in a position to bring about such incorporation and establish or develop the means and mechanisms to that end. This top-down approach presupposes a certain degree of organization within the public targeted as well as the capacity and will to respect the law. It poses significant challenges in relation to armed groups, although these may be partly overcome by adapting the approach to their structures. Commitment – if not present at the outset – needs to be secured early if these activities are to have a lasting effect.

The design of activities includes viable entry and exit strategies, i.e. a starting point and an end. When objectives have been realized, the ICRC concludes related activities or transforms them in line with new objectives. When objectives are not being met, the ICRC considers interrupting activities or transforming them in line with new objectives.

### **5.3 Developing partnerships**

The ICRC is limited in what it can achieve alone in fostering an environment conducive to respect for life and dignity and for its own work. To enhance the impact and chances of success of its prevention activities, the organization devises prevention strategies based on the utility and feasibility of developing partnerships with key actors.

Whenever appropriate, the ICRC seeks to develop partnerships, in line with the particular objectives it has set. Such partnerships can be established with a variety of actors, including States, international and regional organizations, National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and their International Federation, academic institutions, NGOs and civil society. The nature of these partnerships can vary from loose, often event- or theme-based cooperative arrangements to more formal, long-term strategic associations.

The ICRC prioritizes partnerships with National Societies. Within the Movement, National Societies are tasked with promoting IHL and assisting their governments in this respect.<sup>24</sup> The Seville Agreement confirms the ICRC's lead role in promoting IHL and in providing support to National Societies in matters falling within the organization's statutory core competencies.<sup>25</sup> It is thus the ICRC's responsibility, viewed as a long-term commitment, to help build up the local capacity of National Societies in the area of prevention.

When developing strategies for prevention activities that include a partnership dimension, the ICRC considers the following factors:

- role of National Societies as preferred partners;
- added value and impact of partnerships;
- chances of success, including setting good examples and possible multiplier effects in other States;
- capacity and commitment of the partner organization;
- partnerships must not jeopardize the ICRC's impartial, neutral and independent humanitarian action;
- durability of the relationship; and
- physical proximity of the partner organization and possibility of meaningful long-term follow-up.

## 5.4 Combining appropriate modes of action

Selecting the appropriate mix of modes of action for prevention activities is an important strategic consideration for the ICRC. The choice will depend on an analysis of stakeholders' influences, commitment and capacities, as well as on considerations related to the ICRC's security and acceptance of its work. For

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<sup>24</sup> Art. 3(2), Statutes of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement. Article 3(2) further provides: "They disseminate the principles and ideals of the Movement and assist those governments which also disseminate them. They also cooperate with their governments to ensure respect for international humanitarian law and to protect the distinctive emblems recognized by the Geneva Conventions and their Additional Protocols."

<sup>25</sup> The Seville Agreement (Council of Delegates, Seville, 25-27 November 1997, Article 7.2.2) provides that "The ICRC shall contribute to the development of the National Societies in the following matters, in coordination with the Federation: [...] b) support of the National Societies' programmes for disseminating knowledge of international humanitarian law and the Fundamental Principles; c) involvement of the National Societies in measures taken to promote international humanitarian law and ensure its implementation; d) preparation of the National Societies for their activities in the event of conflict."

the ICRC, the preferred modes of action for prevention activities are persuasion, mobilization and support.<sup>26</sup> In the context of prevention activities, persuasion entails convincing relevant actors to take action to prevent suffering and to respect the ICRC's work. Mobilization involves raising a third party's awareness of and interest in the problem at issue in an effort to prevail upon those responsible to prevent suffering and to respect the ICRC's work. Support entails cooperating with stakeholders to develop, maintain or strengthen their capacity to prevent suffering and to respect the ICRC's work. In the context of prevention, the ICRC uses substitution on a limited basis.<sup>27</sup> The organization may occasionally resort to substitution to kick-start other modes of action. However, this should be limited in time as the long-term use of substitution may indicate a lack of ownership and may thus have a limited impact. Denunciation is generally not an appropriate mode of action for prevention activities.<sup>28</sup>

## 5.5 Monitoring and evaluating results

Monitoring and evaluation are an essential component of any ICRC prevention strategy. Indeed, the focus of the ICRC's prevention approach on achieving medium- to long-term structural change requires the consistent and professional application of results-based management techniques. In order to take stock of its performance in this field, orient its decision-making and report to stakeholders as appropriate, the ICRC places particular emphasis on monitoring and evaluating its prevention activities.

Monitoring is an integral part of ICRC prevention activities. It allows the organization to regularly assess progress, or the lack thereof, in the achievement of results (mainly outputs and, where feasible and appropriate, outcomes) and to adjust its strategies accordingly. This is particularly important given the complex and changing nature of the environment. Indicators providing simple and reliable quantitative and/or qualitative information must be set to measure progress towards results.

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<sup>26</sup> The ICRC has identified modes of action related to raising awareness of responsibility (persuasion, mobilization and denunciation), support and direct provision of services (substitution). "The ICRC: Its mission and work," *supra* note 1.

<sup>27</sup> Substitution entails taking action in the place of the target public to create an environment conducive to respect (e.g. directly teaching IHL within academic circles).

<sup>28</sup> However, the possibility that the ICRC may resort to denunciation under certain circumstances may itself contribute to the organization's prevention effort.

The information provided by monitoring is useful for the daily management of ICRC prevention activities, but it provides limited analytical depth. In particular, monitoring alone does not allow for assessing the extent to which progress towards results can be attributed to the ICRC or to other environmental factors or actors. It must therefore be complemented by ad hoc or periodic reviews and evaluations. Their scope and depth will vary according to circumstances, needs and available resources. Their conclusions should inform strategic and operational decision-making, improve the effectiveness of the ICRC's prevention activities through organizational learning and support accountability and transparency through the provision of in-depth information to key stakeholders.

Both results-based management functions are closely linked. On the one hand, without the information provided by monitoring, reviews and evaluations would be less able to deliver relevant and comprehensive findings and recommendations. On the other hand, lessons learned through reviews and evaluations feed into decision-making and may help refine monitoring tools.



## **MISSION**

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) is an impartial, neutral and independent organization whose exclusively humanitarian mission is to protect the lives and dignity of victims of 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.



ICRC