

RCRC

Red Cross Red Crescent

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Forgotten ferries

The little-known story of the ill-fated Madjiriha

A site for sore feet

Reaching out with healing hands to migrants in Mexico

Unforgettable storms

Learning from history: Galveston's forgotten recovery



Emergency
Medical Services

Humanity Inc.

Generating
profit for care



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.



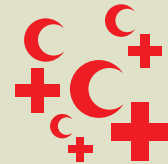
ICRC

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.

Donors need transparency, not tactics

THE GLOBAL FINANCIAL CRISIS has brought hard times for many. Households and governments alike are finding themselves in reduced circumstances. After a decade of growth in aid budgets, some donors have begun making cuts.

The situation hit a significant low point last year, when the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria — one of the most important sources of funding for medical programmes in developing countries — said it would not be able to consider new grant applications due to lack of funds. Political leaders had not fulfilled their pledges; they had in effect broken their promises. Thousands of people in low- and middle-income countries were denied the life-saving treatment they needed.

The Global Fund's immediate crisis is over, thankfully, but it sounded an alarm for aid programmes of all kinds.

Médecins sans Frontières (MSF) will continue to put pressure on governments to meet their obligations, fulfil their commitments and fund humanitarian programmes. But humanitarian action is a shared responsibility: the new economic powers also have the means to provide more assistance, and those governments that receive aid must step up and shoulder their responsibilities, too.

Needs-driven or funding-driven?

Donations from the general public have seen a decline as well. MSF felt this in 2009, when funding from private donors fell by 3 per cent. This year, too, we are feeling an impact in some countries, such as Greece, Italy and Spain.

Individual donors seem to be responding more readily to particular emergencies. MSF saw significant increases in private donations following the 2010 earthquake in Haiti and, in 2011, the malnutrition crisis in Somalia. In an uncertain climate for private donations, where fund-raisers are looking for ways to sustain funding,

this has highlighted the contrast between needs-driven and funding-driven approaches to raising money. Should an appeal for a particular emergency accept donations only for activities related to that emergency or for wider activities?

MSF depends heavily on private funding; in 2011, almost 90 per cent of our income came from private donors. This support — from more than 4.5 million people — is first and foremost testimony to the hard work of MSF staff in the field, who are recognized for saving lives and restoring health the world over. But our dependence on private

Transparency improves accountability and demonstrates integrity. It creates a space for engagement, builds trust and increases understanding.

funds is also deliberate; it strengthens MSF as a humanitarian movement in a way that public institutional funding cannot. Each private donation is an expression of solidarity and it helps to guarantee the independence and impartiality of our action.

Given this situation, the need to sustain private funding is particularly resonant at MSF. We have chosen to take the route of needs-driven funding. We prioritize unrestricted funding, so that we can exercise independence, using money where it is most needed and reacting immediately to emergencies. When we accept donations for particular emergencies, we do our best to accept funds commensurate with our estimated needs, which are



Photo: Médecins sans Frontières

restricted to activities where we have expertise and can provide greatest assistance.

After the tsunami hit South Asia in 2004, we received more funds than were necessary for our programmes in the region. We stopped accepting contributions to our tsunami response and asked people who had al-

ready made donations if we could redirect the funds to our other programmes. The vast majority agreed.

Engaging with donors

Overcoming funding challenges is perhaps less about tactics and markets, and more about donors' belief in what is being done: how effectively is their money going to be spent?

Most donors are interested in what is being done with their money, how and why. Going beyond simple messages of crisis and emergency is not easy: talking about the difficult choices that have to be made in humanitarian response raises questions and invites even closer scrutiny. But MSF is trying to be more transparent. And where we have succeeded in doing so, we have learned that the vast majority of our donors appreciate our openness.

Transparency improves accountability and demonstrates integrity. And it goes even further. It creates a space for engagement, builds trust and increases understanding.

To sustain funding, we should go beyond simple appeals for money. We need to allow for engagement in an honest dialogue about exactly what humanitarian assistance is all about, what it can and cannot achieve.

By **Unni Karunakara**

Unni Karunakara is the international president of Médecins sans Frontières.

In brief...

More money needed to save lives in Mali

As people in the north of Mali continue to be hit hard by the effects of the armed conflict and the ongoing food crisis, the ICRC appealed to donors for US\$ 28 million, making the Mali operation ICRC's fourth largest in budgetary terms.

"In the north of the country, the situation is becoming more and more alarming," said Yasmine Praz Dessimoz, the ICRC's head of operations for North and West Africa. Along with the Mali Red Cross, the ICRC had already provided 160,000 people with food. With the extra funds, the ICRC will reach a total of 500,000 people and continue supporting a hospital in the city of Gao, as well as other health centres in northern Mali.

The IFRC has also launched an appeal for food security assistance of US\$ 2.7 million of cash, in-kind or other services to support the Mali Red Cross and help more than 142,000 affected people. The IFRC had already allocated US\$ 278,000 from its Disaster Relief Emergency Fund to initiate actions in Mali.

Quake hits remote China region

Rescue teams from the Red Cross Society of China struggled through rugged terrain and precipitous mountain roads to bring help to survivors of a series of earthquakes that struck a remote part of Yunnan province in south-western China in September.

Crossing these mountains is difficult even in normal times. But rockfalls and landslides following the earthquakes added to the logistical difficulties.

Voices

"Who would have ever imagined that three goats would be the window of greater cohesion for a community with such a dark past of division and the curse of poverty?"

Habonimana Floride, volunteer speaking about livelihoods programmes supported by Burundi Red Cross volunteers. See page 10.

The earthquakes — the strongest of which was magnitude 5.7 — left more than 80 people dead and approximately 800 injured in one of China's poorest areas. Some 200,000 people were evacuated.

Thousands of quilts and warm jackets, and hundreds of tents have been distributed to the worst-hit areas, which are more than six hours by road from the provincial capital, Kunming. An emergency response team from the Yunnan Red Cross was deployed to provide latrines in one of the main camps for the displaced.

ICRC pushes for greater protection in Syria

ICRC President Peter Maurer concluded a three-day visit to Syria in early September, during which he held talks with Bashar al-Assad, the Syrian president, and several ministers. He urged all parties to the conflict to respect humanitarian law relating to the treatment of detainees and called for greater



Photo: REUTERS/Khaled Al Hariri, courtesy www.alermet.org

humanitarian access and protection.

He also visited areas affected by the fighting to see first hand how civilians are coping. "I was shocked by the immense destruction of infrastructure and homes in several areas," he said. "And I was deeply moved by the stories of distraught children who had lost their parents in the fighting."

He also visited several medical posts. "Health workers face tremendous difficulties in performing their duties," he added. "Many men, women and children who could be saved are dying on a daily basis because they lack access to medical care."

Thousands still displaced by Manila flooding

By mid-September, almost a month after monsoon floods swamped Manila and nearby provinces, thousands of people in low-lying



Photo: REUTERS/Akhtar Soomro, courtesy www.alermet.org

Volunteers of Pakistan Red Crescent Society (PRCS) light candles during a vigil for the victims of a garment factory fire in Karachi in September. One of the first responders was a PRCS Emergency Response Unit, which gave first aid and transferred survivors to local hospitals. At least 314 people burned to death as fire swept through factories in two cities in Pakistan, raising questions about industrial safety in the South Asian nation.

areas around the Philippine capital were still unable to return home. Unlike Metro Manila, where flood waters receded and people have started rebuilding their lives, the surrounding provinces of Laguna and Rizal remained inundated.

Reilyn Sembrano, 25, and her family were among the people now living in a makeshift camp. The youngest of her three children had rashes caused by mosquito bites and bathing in unsafe water. "It pains me to see my baby going through this at an early age," she said.

How to say "I'm feeling dizzy" in 51 languages

As more than 2 million people flocked to London from all over the world for the Olympic and Paralympic Games, British Red Cross volunteers and staff provided first-aid training sessions to residents in the host Olympic boroughs and

worked with emergency services to provide first aid at events and transportation hubs near the Olympic venues.

The teams didn't just carry first-aid kits. They were also equipped with multilingual, Red Cross phrase books that contained 62 questions and phrases related to first aid and emergencies, translated into 51 languages.

During the events, the teams helped dozens of people, many of whom suffered from dehydration or heat stroke. Red Cross volunteers such as Dane Smith and Darren Oldham responded on bicycles equipped as mini ambulances, complete with oxygen, defibrillators and items for treating cuts and sprains.

"We might not be as fast as [Olympic cyclists] Mark Cavendish and Bradley Wiggins," said Smith, "but we can cut through the crowds to provide help wherever it's needed."

Humanitarian index

51: Percentage of National Society non-emergency revenue that comes from fee-based services (blood banks, first-aid training) and enterprises (hospitals, retail stores, etc).*

98: Percentage of *collines* or communities in Burundi that have Burundi Red Cross volunteer groups, each with 50 to 500 volunteers.** See page 10.

2,850: Number of *collines* in Burundi.**

6,000: Number of people who died in the United States' worst catastrophe, known as the Great

Storm of 1900, in Galveston, Texas. See page 22.

40,000: Number of Central American migrants reportedly sent home by Mexican authorities last year.***

70,000,000: Number of people worldwide who are forced migrants, according to the IFRC's *World Disasters Report 2012*.

8,000,000,000: Estimated cost of all forms of forced migration to global economy, expressed in US dollars.

* IFRC ** Burundi Red Cross ***ICRC

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The ICRC and the Mexican Red Cross work together to bring medical help to Central Americans on their way north. It's one example of how the Movement reaches a healing hand to migrants when they are at their most vulnerable.
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Galveston, Texas is the home of the United States' deadliest-ever natural disaster: the 1900 hurricane that claimed more than 6,000 lives. Today, this city built on an island still suffers successive hurricanes. In the wake of hurricanes Katrina and Ike, is the city's much-needed recovery being overlooked?
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When the massive Italian cruise ship Costa Concordia capsized off the coast of Italy in January 2012, killing more than 30 people, the world's media responded. In other parts of the world, maritime disasters are claiming many more lives but few of those stories are told. Here is one of them: the tragedy of the Madjirih.
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On the cover: Mable Nakweya, a paramedic with the Emergency Plus Medical Services, an independent ambulance company owned by the Kenya Red Cross Society, lifts a young girl with a broken arm onto a stretcher before being taken to the hospital.

Photo: Claire Doole/IFRC; photo treatment Ian Nixon/New Internationalist. Photos this page, from top: Claire Doole/IFRC; Nancy Okwengu/IFRC; REUTERS/Ceerwan Aziz, courtesy www.alertnet.org; REUTERS/Daniel LeClair, courtesy www.alertnet.org; Comoros Red Crescent.



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Disasters, violence and displacement are stretching aid groups to their limits. Funds, meanwhile, are tight. What's a humanitarian to do? One option is to open up for business.

Humanity

IT'S AN OVERCAST AFTERNOON in traffic-clogged Nairobi as the ambulance navigates among the vehicles, sometimes taking to the wrong side of the road with its horn blaring to warn oncoming cars. Time is precious: the team is responding to an emergency call from a school where an 8-year-old has fractured her arm in the playground.

Arriving at the scene, paramedic Mable Nakweya cradles the young girl in her arms and gently puts her on the stretcher in the ambulance. It is one of many calls that Nakweya and her colleague Jamal Abdi receive every day in their work for Emergency Plus (E-Plus) Medical Services, an independent ambulance company owned by the Kenya Red Cross Society.

It's a for-profit enterprise with a humanitarian purpose. In a country where access to health care is limited, it was conceived as a way to provide a local, sustainable source of income while building on the National Society's competence and reputation as a leading provider of first aid and medical assistance. In this case, people subscribe to the service like buying into an insurance policy.

"We never turn anyone away. At the end of the day, we are all about saving lives."

Mable Nakweya, Emergency Plus Medical Services paramedic

Your turn

What do you think about the risks and benefits of commercial enterprises owned or managed by Red Cross and Red Crescent National Societies? Email your comments to: ccrc@ifrc.org

"We work in teams of two," explains Abdi. "At the scene, one of us tends to the patient and the other checks that the finances are in order."

On today's visit to the school where Nyakio has broken her arm, there's no need to deal with finances. The school is a member of the insurance scheme. Sometimes, however, the paramedics have to assess on the spot if a patient can pay or contribute to the cost of medical treatment and transport.

That assessment does not affect the care, however. It often happens that they forgo payment altogether or the patient makes a contribution once he or she has recovered.

Nakweya and Abdi stress that the patient's health always comes first and that the service's financial arrangement does not mean they avoid poor areas or shy away from the most vulnerable during catastrophe.

Indeed, E-Plus crews are often side-by-side with volunteers as first responders on everything from car crashes in central Nairobi to inter-communal violence in rural provinces. They also work among the



refugees in and around the Dadaab refugee camps, where two ambulances are permanently stationed. Those ambulances were critical in saving lives after an attack on a church in Garissa in July 2012 and during recent clashes in the Tana River region.

"We never turn anyone away," stresses Nakweya. "At the end of the day, we [Red Cross] are all about saving lives."

The road to sustainability

For many in the Red Cross Red Crescent Movement, the idea that first responders are checking bank accounts along with vital signs seems anathema to the humanitarian mission of unconditional assistance to the most vulnerable.

But it is important to note that in Kenya, the E-Plus ambulances are offering a service that would otherwise not exist. There are no state ambulance services and few private ones. Health insurance policies are not widely used. So whatever services are provided often come at a cost to the patient.

In the case of E-Plus, each member pays 2,500 Kenyan shillings (US\$ 30) a year to be part of the

📍 The Kenya Red Cross's E-Plus ambulance service was established as a way to generate revenue for National Society operations while also providing desperately needed emergency medical services. Here paramedics attend to victims of a road crash in Nairobi.

Photo: Kenya Red Cross Society

service. According to a May 2011 report, some 7,800 people were members and that number is increasing. E-Plus aims to provide 80 per cent of its services to paying members and offer 20 per cent as a free service to people who cannot afford to pay.

Now, with 29 ambulances equipped with advanced life-saving equipment and highly qualified paramedics, E-Plus is Kenya's foremost ambulance service provider. But, after two years of existence, it is not yet making a profit.

The company's managing director, Yusuf Nyakinda, is confident, however, that the lack of state-run services and other private providers means that E-Plus has considerable business potential. The idea is that over time, the company will turn a profit and a portion of the proceeds will provide some financial stability to the core operating budget of the Kenya Red Cross.

The main sources of funding for the Kenya Red Cross come from local and international donors and participating Red Cross Red Crescent National Societies. Given the current economic situation and



greater competition from non-governmental organizations (NGOs), contributions are on the decline.

At the same time, the National Society and its volunteers are dealing with a number of chronic issues and complex emergencies in which vulnerable people and aid projects are reliant on external funding from international donors.

The time is ripe

Known as an innovator in trying to change that paradigm, the Kenya Red Cross is engaged in a variety of income-generating and food security activities that use donor funding as seed money for home-grown agrarian enterprise rather than simply delivering food aid or supporting a short-term emergency response (see *Red Cross Red Crescent* magazine, Issue 2-2012).

The time may be ripe for such an approach. Kenya's economy is booming in some sectors and a burgeoning high-tech sector is opening new ways for people to do business, share ideas and respond to emergencies. In Kenya, some 70 per cent of the adult population uses cell phones for banking, paying bills and borrowing cash — a phenomenon that many economists say is increasing local investment and savings, as well as offering a safe and fast way to make humanitarian contributions.

A case in point is the National Society's 'Kenya for Kenyans' appeal, which raised US\$ 10 million over five weeks at the height of the Horn of Africa drought in 2011. The donations came from individuals and the corporate sector — mainly from individual bank accounts via cell phones.

Kenya Red Cross Secretary General Abbas Gullet cautions this was a one-off due to the extreme nature of the emergency. But the response was an

🔗 National Society enterprises around the world take many shapes and sizes. The Thai Red Cross Society, for example, raises snakes to produce anti-venom for people bitten by poisonous snakes. The snake farm is also a colourful attraction for tourists.

To read more about the Thai Red Cross snake farm and other National Society ventures, please see our additional coverage at www.redcross.int.

Photo: The Thai Red Cross Society

“We are aiming for sustainability but our immediate goal is to cover our core costs, which donors are reluctant to pay. That is why we are investing heavily in business ventures.”

Abbas Gullet, secretary general of the Kenya Red Cross Society

indication of Kenya's growing interest and capability in finding local contributors and solutions.

“We are aiming for sustainability but our immediate goal is to cover our core costs, which donors are reluctant to pay,” says Gullet. “That is why we are investing heavily in business ventures so that we generate enough profit to pay our operational costs at the end of every year.”

Free enterprise

It is also a question of freedom — of raising funds that do not come with restrictions. Donors often earmark funds to specific projects and they often put a cap on the percentage of their grants that can be used cover basic administrative overhead. The challenge for humanitarian organizations, therefore, is to avoid being overstretched or becoming mere implementers of the donors' agendas.

Could enterprises such as E-Plus be part of the solution? If so, what does this mean for the humanitarian mission? Does the need to turn a profit compromise the humanitarian imperative to help the most vulnerable? If so, is this any worse than over-reliance on donors or governments who may also have agendas other than humanitarian? These are just some of the questions facing National Societies as they look to diversify revenue streams in a tough economic climate.

These questions are not new to Red Cross and Red Crescent National Societies: revenue-generating operations — from small retail shops to major nationwide contracts with government or even manufacturing plants — have been part of the humanitarian landscape for decades.

The Turkish Red Crescent Society, for example, has been producing and selling bottled water since 1926, when the founder of modern Turkey, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, offered the National Society a bottled water factory provided that revenues are spent on humanitarian aid activities. Today, the plant's assembly line produces up to 160,000 bottles per hour and the product line includes not only plain natural mineral water but also water with aromas or natural fruit juice mixed in.

Indeed, the types of businesses found among National Societies are as diverse as they are colourful. A factory run by the Thai Red Cross Society raises snakes to produce and market anti-venom treatment; a snack bar run by the Belize Red Cross Society offers breakfast and lunch next door to the capital's central hospital; a chic vintage clothing store run by the Swedish Red Cross is attracting a hip crowd interested in older fashions.

Sometimes one National Society will be engaged in diverse markets. Redmo Holdings, the commercial arm of the Sri Lanka Red Cross Society, is a major construction contractor that also leases heavy ma-

chinery, offers water filtration systems, as well as travel and tourism services and insurance plans. It even operates fuel stations.

Many Red Cross and Red Crescent enterprises have little or no direct connection with their humanitarian mission other than offering affordable goods or services to the public — and raising money for the National Society. Others are more directly linked to the humanitarian mission: swimming lessons, first-aid courses, blood collection or contractual arrangements with governments to run hospitals, ambulances or home health care are a few examples.

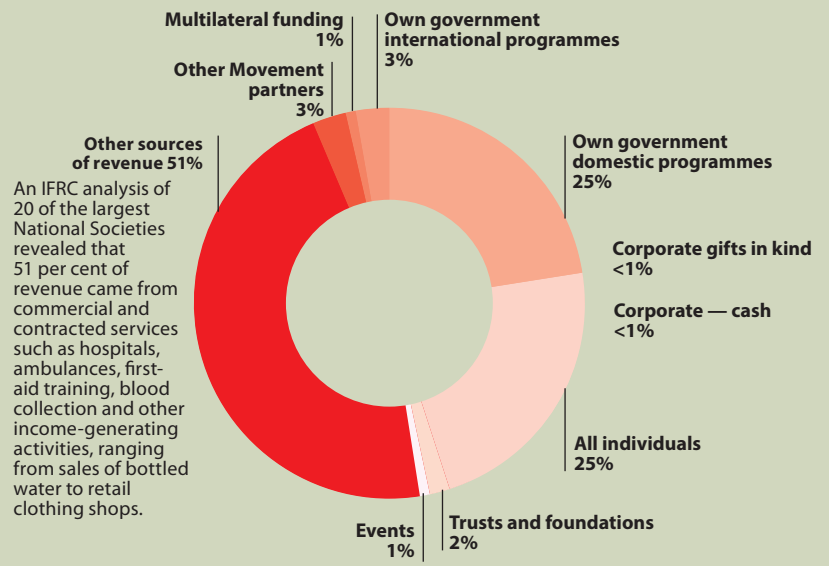
Combined, these fee-based services or enterprises are the largest source of non-emergency National Society income globally, accounting for 51 per cent of revenue (see chart right), according to the IFRC's 2011 Federation-Wide Resource Mobilization Strategy.

"Some of these businesses raise significant funds for the National Society," says Andrew Rizk, IFRC's chief financial officer and head of its Finance Department. "Others are essentially subsidized by the National Society but because it is mission-related — for example, fee-based blood services — it is viewed as worth the investment."

Sometimes, the income provided does not make up a great percentage of overall revenue, but it does provide a financial buffer. "The more streams of income you have, the less of a shock it will be if one of these streams dries up," Rizk notes.

The IFRC has supported these operations in various ways over the years. The ambulances used by the Kenya Red Cross and some other National Societies, for example, are leased from the IFRC as part of a deal with the auto manufacturer Toyota. After being outfitted with medical equipment in Dubai,

National Society non-emergency funding streams



Note: The percentages in this graph add up to more than 100 per cent due to some revenue being counted in more than one category.

➤ E-Plus ambulance paramedics respond to all types of emergencies, from natural disasters to urban fires, inter-communal violence and everyday minor injuries. Here a young girl with a broken arm is transported from a school that is part of E-Plus ambulance's membership plan.

Photo: Claire Doole/IFRC

the ambulances are leased to National Societies for periods of five years.

This arrangement helped the Kenya Red Cross keep the up-front start-up costs low. Indeed, many National Societies that have launched major businesses were able to do so because land, buildings or services were donated, reducing the amount of capital that had to be raised or borrowed.

To better understand the potential and risks involved in these businesses, the IFRC has engaged the global accounting firm KPMG to conduct a study of National Society commercial and contracted ventures in 20 to 25 countries. The idea of the study, to be done by KPMG on a pro bono basis, is to share insight that could help National Societies make sound decisions, avoid pitfalls, share innovations, and minimise the risks associated with operating a business. The study is intended to highlight this important yet often misunderstood aspect of National Society financing.

Managing risk is critical for any business. In the case of contracted services for government, some of the financial and legal liability is sometimes taken on by the state. But that does not leave National Societies invulnerable. In strictly private ventures, National Societies in some cases establish limited liability partnerships or holding companies that shield them from financial and legal risks. It could be argued, therefore, that these ventures are no more risky than placing National Society funds in a high-yield investment portfolio.

A manageable risk?

Perhaps the greatest risk has to do with reputation. Because many of these businesses carry the Red





Cross or Red Crescent brand, any problems with the business might not only affect the reputation of one National Society, but of a global, humanitarian emblem.

When the IFRC announced it was considering a hotel and conference centre on part of the ground it had bought in the Haitian capital Port-au-Prince following the January 2010 earthquake, there was considerable debate about whether a humanitarian organization associated with first aid, shelter and food distribution should be going into the hotel business.

The idea was that the hotel would provide revenue for Haiti Red Cross Society operations as well as new operating facilities for the National Society, which had its headquarters and many of its facilities destroyed by the quake.

But according to Daniel Borochoff, president of Charity Watch, an organization that evaluates non-profit organizations, the plan is controversial as it raises the question of whether land, purchased with disaster-relief funds, should be used for a commercial venture that caters to NGOs and tourists in a city where thousands are still living in makeshift tents.

This is why communication about these ventures is vital, says Danya Brown from CDA Collaborative Learning Projects, a US-based non-profit that conducts research and offers advice for improving humanitarian response. Brown cites a survey CDA conducted of 600 aid beneficiaries in 20 countries that showed most people were extremely suspicious of aid agencies and how they used the money. It is crucial, she says, that organizations listen to users and donors and explain how the money being spent is to their benefit.

🔗 Retail clothing stores are a time-honoured way for National Societies to raise money. This trendy and profitable boutique run by the Swedish Red Cross carries vintage clothing and targets Stockholm's youth market.

Photo: Peters Bilder/Swedish Red Cross

"We are judged by business criteria and that can be a challenge as traditionally we are used to receiving donations and not making money."

Walter Cotte, national executive director of the Colombian Red Cross Society

Similarly, an independent study by Global Humanitarian Assistance on the Kenya Red Cross Society's resource flows advised that high-profile, income-generating schemes such as hotels could create the perception that the National Society is wealthy and therefore doesn't need support. That could result in reluctance among some to make contributions, be they financial, material or volunteer labour.

That said, there is ample precedent for National Societies running hotels without compromising the brand or their reputation. The Palestine Red Crescent Society has run a hotel near Ramallah in the West Bank for many years and the Red Cross Society of China owns a three-star business hotel in Beijing.

However, others have opted out of hotels and conference centres. The Swedish Red Cross closed its conference centre in 2010 as it had failed to turn a profit and survive in a very competitive market. "We could see no end to the continual deficits we were running up," says Tord Pettersson, senior adviser on business development at the Swedish Red Cross. "Many also felt that we should not be running a business we didn't know enough about."

Open for business

Given the risks of the events and hospitality sector, no wonder then that retail shops, mostly second-hand clothing stores, are viewed by National Societies as a profitable and low-risk option. While not strictly in line with the Red Cross Red Crescent mission, they do offer low-price goods to people with low incomes and the proceeds serve a good cause.

"We don't see ourselves running hotels and conference centres in the UK market," says Rebecca Mauger, head of high-value giving and events at the British Red Cross. "But retail shops work well for us."

Income from the British Red Cross's 60 second-hand shops across the United Kingdom topped £26 million in 2011 with a £5.6 million profit. "This is a respectable margin compared to commercial retailers," she adds.

While retail shops account for just 12 per cent of the British Red Cross fund-raising income, it is more than double in Sweden where selling second-hand clothes in its 274 shops is big business.

In June, the Swedish Red Cross opened a vintage and designer store in the centre of Stockholm as part of its strategy to market clothing to different segments of the population. According to Martina Bozic, the Swedish Red Cross business development manager, clothes, shoes and handbags from the store literally flew off the shelves in the first two weeks of opening, making more than US\$ 28,000.

The Colombian Red Cross Society, meanwhile, augments its donations with revenue from renting

ambulances, blood bank services, training centres and gift shops. It has also ventured into the construction business — winning government funding to build homes last year.

Such contracts, says Walter Cotte, national executive director of the Colombian Red Cross Society, are tricky because they can put the National Society in competition with private companies that may neither be able nor want to offer the service for the same price.

The bottom line, says Cotte, is that whatever product or service is offered, people will have high

expectations of anything associated with the Red Cross Red Crescent brand.

“Whenever we sell a product, we need to ensure that it is a quality product and that it is competitively priced,” says Cotte. “We are judged by business criteria, which can be a challenge as traditionally we are used to receiving donations and not making money.” ■

By **Claire Doole**

Claire Doole is a freelance writer based in Geneva, Switzerland.

Hospitality with a conscience

When the five-star Boma Nairobi hotel opened its doors in June 2012, the modern, glass-faced upscale hotel offered businesspeople and tourists a menu of amenities: a rooftop swimming pool, a spa and gym, as well as international cuisine, individually designed rooms and a massive ballroom.

One in a growing chain of Boma hotels and conference centres being built around the country, the 150-room hotel is part of the Kenya Red Cross’s most ambitious business venture yet.

“Our principal business is the humanitarian business,” says Abbas Gullet, secretary general of the Kenya Red Cross, “but the hotel business is purely commercial with its own board and management who have hired some of the best hospitality professionals in East Africa.”

Unlike the E-Plus Medical Services, the hotel venture is purely business. Their sole function is to run a profit and provide a stable funding source to the Kenya Red Cross.

“Guests at the Boma can eat, drink and, at the end of the day, sleep well knowing that they are supporting a good cause.”

Mugo Maringa, newly appointed managing director of the Kenya Red Cross’s Boma hotel chain.

Also unlike E-Plus ambulance service, which is still relatively new and has not yet posted a profit, the National Society’s hotel operations show a track record of earnings. The Kenya Red Cross’s conference centre and three-star Red Court hotel, built in Nairobi on land given to the National Society by the government, began to generate profits 18 months after opening in 2007. Revenues from the hotel currently cover roughly 6 per cent of the National Society’s core costs.

The new Boma hotel, also built on land donated to the Kenya Red Cross, required significant borrowing. The Kenya Red Cross is confident, however, that income will rise substantially not only from the Red Court, which has been upgraded to a four-star hotel and re-branded as the Boma Inn, but also as a result of its growing property portfolio.

Later this year, the four-star Boma Inn in Eldoret in western Kenya will be completed and there are plans to add rooms to a conference facility in Nyeri and to build hotels in other towns such as Kisumu, Malindi and Nakuru.

The newly appointed managing director of the Boma chain, Mugo Maringa, who has 30 years’ experience in the industry, says that “hospitality with a conscience” is a winning combination. “Guests at the Boma can eat, drink and, at the end of the day, sleep well knowing that they are supporting a good cause,” he says.

📍 The new five-star Boma Hotel in Nairobi as it nears completion in June 2012. Photo: Claire Doole/IFRC





Investing in humanity

In Burundi, the power of volunteering is helping many communities out of poverty, aid dependence and food insecurity.

ONE OF THE AREAS most affected by the 1993 ethnic violence and the subsequent years of civil strife in Burundi was the north-western province of Bubanza. The area's proximity to Kibira forest — a source of food and a good hiding place for the warring parties — exposed many people here to painful times that they wish to forget.

"Utter pain and desperation," is how 30-year-old Habonimana Floride sums up life in Bubanza during the years of fighting.

Now a Red Cross volunteer in the Munanira local unit of Bubanza province, Floride works with 51 other volunteers to bring back a measure of hope and food security to a countryside that was once one of Burundi's breadbaskets. "We realized that we could not moan over our losses forever and had to pull our collective efforts together for a greater impact," she says.

With the help of National Society's provincial staff, they formed a Red Cross unit and started planting cassava on farmland donated by one of the staff members. They sold the first harvest and from the proceeds bought three goats. "Who

67-year old Nzinizirira Angeline hugs her granddaughter Habineza Agnes outside her new home, which was built by volunteers of the Burundi Red Cross when Angeline's old house was near collapse. Photo: Nancy Okwengu/IFRC

"Who would have ever imagined that three goats would be the window of greater cohesion for a community with such a dark past of division and the curse of poverty?"

Habonimana Floride,
Burundi Red Cross volunteer

would have ever imagined that three goats would be the window of greater cohesion for a community with such a dark past of division and the curse of poverty?" asks Floride.

From those first three goats, another 16 soon arrived. Impressed by the commitment and volunteer structures put in place by the Munanira unit, Burundi Red Cross headquarters donated another three. "This gesture encouraged us to start an income-generating initiative," says Floride.

The group then began leasing land where it now farms pineapples on a larger scale. "The manure from the goats also came in handy in improving the quality of the pineapples," she adds. "The land in Bubanza is not very productive and needs manure in order to obtain a good harvest."

Sales of pineapple have led to better nutrition for families. And the venture's economic benefits have meant that parents can afford school fees and materials, and can therefore send their children to school. "We are proud because we started with three goats and now have 36," says Everiste Shaban, vice president of the Munanira Red Cross unit,

which now donates goats to other Red Cross units.

The fruit products, meanwhile, are sold in local markets. "We sell more than 500 pineapples at 2,500 Burundi francs [US\$ 1.7] each," Shaban says. "With the proceeds, we can assist the most vulnerable in our community and improve the living conditions of our units' volunteers. We also have plans to buy more goats so that everyone can get their own."

There is still much to do, such as lobbying for the donation of more goats or cows to provide milk for children and manure for the farms. But hope and social cohesion have sprung up along with the crops.

The heart of change

Though the steps may be small, they are significant economic and social achievements for communities struggling to recover from conflict, drought and long-term poverty. And these successes didn't come about by accident.

In the absence of any large-scale international or government funding, the Burundi Red Cross and its partners have made the development of local, community-based volunteering a key priority. Now, the Burundi Red Cross has more than 300,000 volunteers in all regions of the country and is being recognized internationally as a leader in volunteer development as a means to build up community resilience.

This is a huge achievement for a National Society that eight years ago employed only four people at the national level and had very limited reach at the *colline* or community level. There are roughly 2,850 *collines* (hilltop communities) in Burundi, each with about 2,000 to 3,000 residents. Today, roughly 98 per cent of *collines* have Burundi Red Cross volunteer groups made up of 50 to 500 volunteers, according to a 2011 IFRC report that evaluated the National Society's efforts to build its capacity at the branch level.

"At the heart of this change is a belief that poverty and vulnerability are not a barrier to hundreds of thousands of Burundians organizing themselves to address the needs of the most vulnerable," the report points out.

Although Burundi has a rich tradition of neighbours helping neighbours and community volunteering, a culture of aid dependence developed in the country during and after the years of fighting. "Initially identified as 'another NGO' come to hand things out, the National Society has succeeded in becoming identified as an organization that catalyses and supports locally owned community action rather than a provider of external resource," the report concludes.

With 300,000 Swiss francs (US\$ 320,000) of seed funding from the IFRC's Capacity Building Fund, the



National Society signed on to an entrepreneurial approach being piloted by the IFRC. Instead of following a top-down model, the project focused on local traditions, as well as community ownership and leadership of the process.

The challenge now, according to the report's authors, is how to attract financial support so that this network can grow, while maintaining "the approach of local self-help and local resource mobilization in the long run". In other words, is it possible to manage "external financial investment in ways that do not damage this spirit of community ownership and enterprise?"

Volunteerism in Burundi may also be bringing some new social cohesion to a country with deep ethnic divisions, which in recent history led to two events (in 1972 and 1993) that were later classified as genocides by United Nations inquiries. Today, the local Burundi Red Cross groups attract both Hutu and Tutsi men and women, young and old. "As the groups got used to working together, a level of social cohesion began to return to communities which had been destroyed during the civil war, rebuilding links between members of Hutu and Tutsi communities," according to the IFRC report.

All smiles

As humanitarian organizations and donors look to develop and support locally owned solutions, the Burundi example could serve as a model. In many of the *collines* now, some volunteers who were once vulnerable people themselves are now in a position to help others.

"I have seen hard times but now there is a ray of hope for the future," says Ngerageze Judith, a volunteer with the Burundi Red Cross who, along with 21 other women, has helped create a vegetable farm as an income-generating initiative.

The volunteer group has hired a piece of land where they grow vegetables. After harvesting, they divide the vegetables into two portions: one for their own use and the other to sell the rest. "We always have a ready market and in a good harvest we can get more than US\$ 400," she says. "We use the money to buy seeds and fertilizer for the next planting seasons and share the remaining profits.

"I can now support those who can't support themselves especially through training them," she says. "I owe this to the many training courses conducted by the Red Cross; they have made me food secure; I eat healthy food and have the strength to work. This has alleviated dire poverty from my family." ■

By **Nancy Okwengu**

Nancy Okwengu is an IFRC communications delegate.

Web extra!

From refugee to life-saver

How Burundi Red Cross volunteers helped Biriho Edward find a home in helping others: "For a country with an ugly past of division, Red Cross principles have found favour among us... These principles unite us," he says.

www.redcross.int



The grey zone

The practice of paying for military or security services is as old as war itself. Today, rapid growth and change in the for-profit military and security industry poses major challenges for those concerned about enforcement of human rights and humanitarian law.

IN SEPTEMBER 2007, employees of a US-based private military and security company named Blackwater Security Consulting were working their way through the crowded Nisour square in downtown Baghdad, clearing the way for a US State Department diplomatic convoy.

What happened next is still in dispute. The guards hired by Blackwater say they came under attack and fired back at their attackers in self-defence. Witnesses in the market that day said the Blackwater employees opened fire without provocation and continued to shoot at civilians trying to flee.

A few things about the incident are certain, however. When the firing ended, a total of 17 civilians lay dead, and at least 20 more were injured. The Iraqi public was outraged and a major diplomatic rift had been created between the US and the fledgling Iraqi government.

The episode also marked a turning point in the debate over the increased use of private military and

security companies (PMSCs) in the prosecution of war. Taken along with the implication of private contractors in the scandal at Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq in 2004 — in which prisoners were subject to various forms of abuse and torture — the Blackwater episode heightened debate about whether basic functions of war should be outsourced to private enterprise.

Subsequent legal obstacles to prosecution and obtaining redress for victims further raised the question of whether the rise of PMSCs was creating a growing class of military personnel who were effectively operating outside the standard rules of war. Even many experts didn't have answers to some fundamental questions: What is the status of private contractors under international humanitarian law (IHL)? Are they combatants, civilians, mercenaries or something entirely new? And what rules are they bound by?

Not above the law

In 2008, a total of 17 states signed a statement that, in essence, answered the above question with a firm “no” — private contractors are not above the law and do not operate in a legal vacuum.

Now signed by 42 states and the European Union, the statement (known as the Montreux Document) reaffirms that international humanitarian law and human rights law do apply to private contractors. States, meanwhile, are obliged to ensure that contractors comply with these laws.

While not trying to legitimize the PMSC industry, or take a position on whether the use of private contractors is good or bad, the Montreux Document takes on questions such as the status of PMSC personnel under the 1949 Geneva Conventions and the ways to ensure individual accountability for misconduct in different jurisdictions.

A joint project of the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs and the ICRC, the Montreux Document encourages states to develop regulations aimed at preventing and prosecuting abuses. It also offers a catalogue of good practices to help governments implement these obligations in the field.

The problem is that the regulation is not keeping up with the industry. Many states still do not have sufficient domestic laws, regulations or practices in place to oversee the rapidly changing industry, which has experienced explosive growth in recent decades and is now estimated to be worth more than US\$ 100 billion.

Explosive growth

How quickly has it grown? After the US invasion and subsequent occupation of Iraq in 2003, it is estimated that more than 100,000 private contractors were employed in functions ranging from guarding convoys to logistics support, intelligence analysis, checkpoint duty, among many other duties. This was a tenfold

“The private security genie is out of the bottle. At the moment, however, states are largely letting the genie do what it wants and then disciplining it for going too far, rather than setting the parameters for action from the beginning.”

Sarah Percy, Oxford University, writing in an upcoming edition of the *International Review of the Red Cross* entitled “Business, Violence and Conflict”

increase over the previous Iraq war. Meanwhile, in Afghanistan, the number peaked at around 20,000.

Why this growth? In the years leading up to the attacks on New York and Washington DC in September 2001, the US military had been going through a period of downsizing. With two major ground wars launched in Afghanistan and Iraq, US military leaders felt they had to augment their forces. At the time, there was also a trend favouring the privatization of government services, from prisons to hospitals and schools.

The trend goes well beyond the US military. “Most people think of PMSCs and they think of Iraq and Afghanistan,” notes Faiza Patel, chair-rapporteur of the United Nations Working Group on the Use of Mercenaries. “But in fact they are used in many spheres. They are used for example to provide security for extractive industries or as part of drug eradication efforts in Latin America.”

Indeed, the vast majority of the work being done by this sector occurs in situations that are not considered areas of armed conflict and are outside the scope of IHL. They are nonetheless often operating in volatile areas with violent crime or civil strife where kidnappings, assassination and other attacks are a daily risk of doing business.

Given the complexities, how should this massive new industry be regulated? In situations of armed conflict, who will ensure that they respect the norms of IHL and who will prosecute contractors if they violate those laws?

The cases of abuse at Abu Ghraib offer an example of the challenges being faced. While there have been numerous prosecutions of low-level military personnel on a variety of charges related to the abuse of detainees, none of the private contractors connected to the Abu Ghraib abuses have been brought to court on criminal charges. In some cases, contractors were also granted immunity from prosecution under Iraqi law.



📍 A foreign security contractor stands guard near the scene of a bomb attack in Baghdad, Iraq, in October 2007. Photo: REUTERS/Ceerwan Aziz, courtesy www.alertnet.org

👉 A woman whose husband was killed during a shooting by employees of US security firm Blackwater sits next to her daughter while attending a meeting with prosecutors and US investigators in Baghdad in December 2008. Photo: REUTERS/Atef Hassan, courtesy www.alertnet.org

Subsequent civil lawsuits by former detainees under US law, meanwhile, have been blocked or delayed by arguments that the contractors should either enjoy the same immunity from lawsuit as soldiers during combat or that they should be given a 'battlefield exemption.' This exemption would allow civil cases to be dismissed on the basis that courts should not second-guess decisions made in detention facilities during the heat of battle.

"These cases have been going on for many years without even getting to the point of looking at the merits of the case," notes Katherine Gallagher, a senior lawyer for the Center for Constitutional Rights, based in New York, which has filed lawsuits against two military contractors on behalf of 330 Iraqi detainees held at Abu Ghraib in 2004.

The challenge of regulation

Whatever the outcome of cases such as these, the focus of many working in the field today is to prevent future abuses and provide clarity about the rights and duties of private contractors, who are considered as civilians and protected from attack under IHL unless they directly participate in hostilities. (It is worth noting, however, that these protections, and what constitutes 'participation in hostilities,' are difficult to broadly define as they depend on the context and the circumstances.)

A clear understanding about their status and obligations is critical as contractors often work in extremely volatile situations. In Iraq, numerous PMSC personnel (including from Blackwater) were

killed while performing a wide range of duties (both security and non-security related) for the United States government.

At the same time, the status of contractors as civilians means they would not have to be treated as prisoners of war if captured, and would not have the same immunity from criminal prosecution in civilian courts for acts committed as part of combat operations.

Attempts by states to grant immunity from domestic law to private contractors during specific conflicts (as was often the case during the 2003 Iraq war), while at the same time blocking civil or criminal cases on grounds that contractors are effectively acting as soldiers, highlight the need for greater clarity.

The Montreux Document offers guidance to help states sort out complex legal issues. But it is now up to states that have signed the document to follow up, says Marie-Louise Tougas, a legal adviser for the ICRC who specializes on how IHL interacts with private military and security companies.

"The challenge now is for states to implement their obligations under IHL in this regard," says Tougas. "What we are doing is assisting states in developing the tools to implement the obligations described in the Montreux Document — enacting national legislation, establishing the oversight mechanisms and creating licensing controls."

Voluntary enforcement

But legislative reform takes time and each country will likely take its own approach. For these reasons, some key efforts at reform are happening outside

Not all private security contractors are foreigners. Here, an Afghan security contractor checks teenagers looking for work at a US military combat outpost in eastern Afghanistan in September 2011. Photo: REUTERS/Erik De Castro, courtesy www.alertnet.org



the legal system. A case in point is a recently created International Code of Conduct (ICoC), which is being championed by the Swiss government and many in the industry, that would establish a system by which companies voluntarily agree to be regulated by a multi-sector panel of experts.

Governments, meanwhile, are encouraged to consider the company's standing vis-à-vis this code when they award security contracts. The United Kingdom, which is home to many of the world's largest private security firms, has already agreed to award contracts only to companies in compliance with the code.

As of August 2012, a total of 464 companies in 60 states had signed up to the ICoC, which was developed by members of industry associations, security experts, legal scholars, governments and corporate leaders.

Advocates of the code argue that this type of requirement, which could affect a company's survival, offers sufficient incentive for companies to maintain high standards in training, carefully vet employees and adhere to principles of IHL and human rights law.

The code itself is rooted in IHL and human rights law, says Anne-Marie Buzato of the Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces, which is spearheading the effort.

"The use of force, for example, should not exceed beyond what strictly necessary — it should be proportionate," Buzato told a recent gathering of experts at the International Institute of Humanitarian Law in San Remo, Italy. "Contractors should not use firearms against persons unless in self-defence or in defence of others against imminent threat of death or to prevent a serious crime involving grave threat to life."

Some experts in the field are sceptical of what they see as industry 'self-regulation' over critical life-and-death matters and they note that some key aspects regarding the code's enforcement are still unresolved. But Buzato argues the model is more one of 'co-regulation' given that experts from government and civil society would be members of panels conducting audits and reviewing compliance with the code.

A call for a new convention

For some, the code is at least a positive step while binding laws or agreements are developed. But for others, neither the ICoC nor domestic regulation would be enough to control companies operating in multiple jurisdictions — often in places where investigation of allegations would be challenging at best. What is needed, some argue, is a binding international treaty.

At the United Nations, the Working Group on the Use of Mercenaries is developing a draft convention that would require states to regulate the export of security services much more stringently. Among

"To allow private military and security companies to operate [without regulation] in volatile environments with sophisticated firepower ... seems to me an abdication of basic due diligence."

Faiza Patel, chair-rapporteur of the United Nations Working Group on the Use of Mercenaries

other measures, the convention would limit the range of activities that governments can outsource to private contractors and require signatory states to develop licensing schemes similar to what is in force regarding the export of weapons.

"The idea is to not just regulate the export of arms, but also of armed men and women," the Working Group's Faiza Patel told the San Remo gathering.

Many countries, says Patel, have stringent laws and licensing schemes for domestic security companies, but lax controls for companies working abroad. "To allow PMSCs to operate [without regulation] in volatile environments with sophisticated firepower, with all the risks to human rights and humanitarian law that such operations entail, seems to me an abdication of basic due diligence," says Patel.

At the moment, however, there is not sufficient support among key states, where many PMSCs are based, for a new international treaty to be adopted.

A moving target

One of the key challenges facing all these efforts is that the industry itself is a moving target. In the Autumn 2012 issue of the *International Review of the Red Cross*, an edition dedicated to exploring ways in which business impact conflict, Sarah Percy of Oxford University writes that while the PMSC industry is evolving quickly to meet new market and political demands, the process of developing international regulations is moving much more slowly.

As the 'gold rush' of the Iraq and Afghanistan wars has settled down, the industry has already adapted to new markets, namely protection of maritime trade against piracy, protection of humanitarian aid delivery and even delivery of aid itself.

To Percy, the current approaches toward regulation are still too much geared towards an older model of PMSCs as mercenary, or as companies providing services in an international armed conflict as in Iraq. "As a result, regulators at all levels have often been stuck in lengthy negotiating processes while the target of their regulation is rapidly changing form," she argues.

"The private security genie is out of the bottle," she writes. "At the moment, however, states are largely letting the genie do what it wants and then disciplining it for going too far, rather than setting the parameters for action from the beginning.

"A discussion about the appropriate role of private force might be difficult, and it might need to begin domestically, but it is perhaps the best chance of regulating an industry which is always likely to change faster than regulators can respond," says Percy. ■

By **Malcolm Lucard**

Malcolm Lucard, editor, *Red Cross Red Crescent*.



“I am very pleased with the way the seed bank has changed my life and the lives of my fellow villagers,” says Fati Hassane, president of a committee that oversees a seed bank in a small village near Tillabéry, north-western Niger. “We used to have to travel far to buy rice. Now we have it here in our village.” Photo: Mari Aftret/Norwegian Red Cross

In a small village near Tillabéry in north-western Niger, 61-year-old Fati Hassane sells 1-kilogram bags of rice from a new seed bank set up by the Niger Red Cross and the IFRC. Part of Hassane’s job as president of a committee overseeing the seedbank is to ration rice and crop seeds so there’s enough for all, while keeping prices down. Meanwhile, 20 kilometres into the hills from the remote mountain hamlet of Las Joyas, Honduras, a young man named Wilmer navigates steep, slippery and rocky terrain on horseback. Wilmer is no ordinary horseman. In 2010, he lost both his legs and an arm when he fell from a freight train headed towards the United States. After receiving new prosthetic legs from the ICRC, Wilmer is able to make a modest income working on his family’s small banana and coffee plantation. These are just two of many examples of how the Movement helps people and communities regain independence and restore their resilience in the face of economic, physical or environmental hardship.

Faces of resilience

“People can learn to overcome anything, if they take it one step at a time,” says Wilmer, a Honduran plantation worker who received two artificial legs from the ICRC. “Even though I fall down — and I fall down a lot — I keep trying until I succeed.” After crossing Guatemala, he climbed onto a train in Tenosique, in southern Mexico in an effort to reach the United States. Photo: Olivier Moeckli/ICRC





With the help of cash grant from the Pakistan Red Crescent Society and the IFRC, Aziz Ullah was able to open a shop where he repairs punctured tyres for people in his village, located in Sindh Province. The grant was part of a livelihoods project for families affected by Pakistan's 2010 monsoon floods. Photo: Usman Ghani/IFRC



"They are always pushing and helping me to move forward and change the way I look upon life," says 37-year-old Jackeline Erazo, referring to volunteers with the Colombian Red Cross's Panica programme, which reaches out to vulnerable families in Cali's impoverished El Calvario neighbourhood. "They also help with food and education, and they are teaching my children in order to prevent them from engaging in criminal activity. When they come I feel happy — more protected and not so alone."

Photo: Rene Diaz Helkin/IFRC

A question posed to aid worker Sarah Bailey in 2005 illustrates how far the thinking about cash as aid has come in just a few short years: “If a beneficiary runs away with the cash, should we chase him?”

A LOCAL AID WORKER asked me the question above in 2005 as we prepared to distribute US\$ 70 to people affected by disaster and fighting in Kindu, Democratic Republic of the Congo. The cash grants were part of a study to see if those affected would rather buy household goods in a local market than receive a standard package of commonly needed items. Every single person preferred the cash, and they mainly chose things it had never occurred to us to provide: bicycle parts, mattresses and radios to keep up on election news.

The ‘chasing’ question has stayed with me over the years. We laughed about it at the time, but it also embodied the scepticism and discomfort many of our team members felt about trying this new approach.

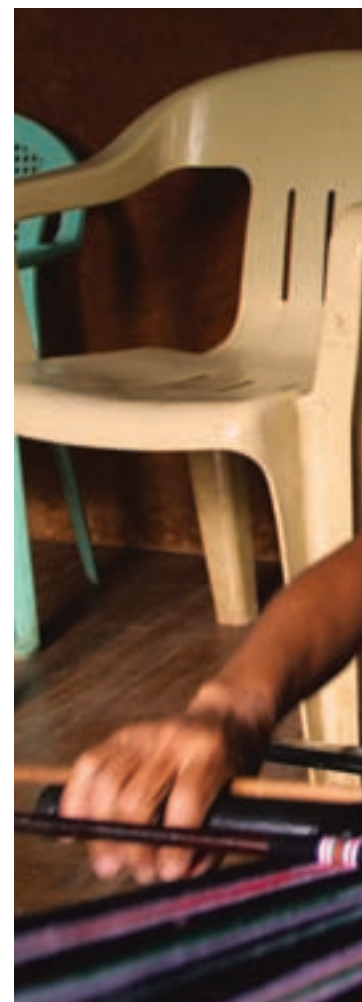
Today, cash transfers are accepted as an integral part of emergency operations and evidence is mounting that cash transfers, properly handled, work. It is simple economics and human nature. Aid agencies tend to provide people affected by disaster with the goods and services they need. But where these are available locally, why not give people money instead? From paying school fees to choosing their preferred foods, cash enables people to respond to their own priorities. For aid agencies, cash transfer programming reduces the costs and logistics of storing and transporting tents, rice and other commodities. The potential advantages are obvious.

Giving people money is a straightforward solution, but still a divisive one. Cash transfer programming challenges traditional ways of delivering and organizing humanitarian response. The inherent power associated with cash turns notions of charity on their head. Most aid agencies would not hesitate to deliver large quantities of food. However, the notion of delivering large quantities of cash raises a series of questions about the opportunities, consequences and risks of giving money to vulnerable people during times of crisis.

An (almost) new approach

Cash as a form of relief is actually not a recent innovation. Among other historical examples, Clara Barton, one of the founding figures of the American Red Cross, organized cash relief in the 1870–1871 Franco–Prussian war. Numerous governments rou-

Cash in hand



tinely provide cash to poor people as a form of social protection and also to people affected by disasters. In 2005, the government of Pakistan gave cash to 270,000 families devastated by the Kashmir earthquake, and partnered with the credit card company Visa to reach nearly 2 million families hit by floods in 2010. The United States government provided US\$ 7 billion to people affected by hurricanes Rita and Katrina to cover losses and expenses.

Cash transfer programming is, however, relatively new to most humanitarian agencies, donors and Red Cross Red Crescent societies. The response to the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami included several small projects giving cash instead of food, sparking substantial discussion on cash in emergencies. Much of the debate focused on risks: would cash be embezzled, cause inflation and put people in danger? Some were concerned that affected people might spend cash on frivolous, and even harmful, products like alcohol and cigarettes, and that women might be disadvantaged if men controlled their money. One donor summed up fears about negative press if a cash intervention went awry: “I can just imagine the headline, ‘Aid groups throwing away cash.’”

No evidence of more corruption

These are valid worries. But in fact, numerous pilot projects, studies and evaluations since then have all



respond to their own priorities in a flexible and dignified way. Cash also means that people do not sell aid to buy the things that they need most.

Raising the bar

Aid agencies are using more in-depth analysis to justify cash — both to themselves and to donors — compared to other responses. They are looking at markets, what affected people prefer and how families make decisions in times of crisis. These are important issues that they do not always consider when providing other forms of aid. Responses using cash have also been subject to intensive monitoring in terms of how the money is spent and its impact. In short, cash transfers are more scrutinized than more traditional ways of helping people.

This could be seen as an ‘unfair’ double standard, but it’s a good thing. The scrutiny given to cash transfers actually might raise the bar for how humanitarians plan, implement and monitor their responses — regardless of the type of assistance provided. The very fact that cash exists as an option encourages analysis of the likely impact of different responses, rather than automatically opting for tents or food aid.

A change of mind

In-kind assistance remains by far the dominant form of humanitarian aid. However, it is difficult to find any recent major disaster response where cash transfers have not been used by aid agencies. No crystal ball is needed to know that the rapid increase in cash transfer programming will continue. Aid agencies therefore need the skills and systems to routinely consider and deliver cash responses when they are appropriate. This includes having the skills, and incentive, to better understand markets. Achieving this is not overly difficult: aid agencies have tools and experiences to share and resources on cash programming and market analysis abound. Perhaps most importantly, a change in mindset is also required, whereby those providing assistance give some of their control to people affected by disaster and crisis.

In less than ten years, humanitarians have moved far beyond ‘testing’ cash to reaching hundreds of thousands of people annually. They are even using new technologies like mobile phone transfers in places where banks do not exist. Cash programming is arguably one of the most radical, yet simple, developments in humanitarian aid in decades. Change is happening — and in this case, it’s change we should keep. ■

By Sarah Bailey

Sarah Bailey is an experienced humanitarian aid worker and an expert on cash transfer programming.

generally concluded the same thing: that cash poses different — but not necessarily more or less — risks than in-kind assistance.

In Somalia and the Russian republic of Chechnya, some aid agencies found cash to be safer than food aid, as cash can be delivered more discreetly and can disappear into a person’s pocket once received. Also, there is no evidence that cash is more prone to corruption or that it results in unmanageable targeting challenges because it is so desirable. (Is it not a good thing to provide desirable assistance?)

Fears that women would be disadvantaged by cash — along with hopes that they would be empowered — have little evidence to back them up. After all, the roles of men and women are deeply embedded in our cultures, and cash alone is unlikely to change them.

People receiving money by and large spend it responsibly. Concerns that they would not reveals some troubling biases about how aid agencies perceive those they assist. There will always be a small number of people who are irresponsible; disaster does not eradicate human failings that can be found anywhere. But how can humanitarians support the dignity of vulnerable people if they do not trust them to look after their own needs?

Countless interventions have confirmed the main advantage of cash: that people affected by crisis can

🔗 45-year-old Aurenia Bando used a cash grant from the IFRC and Philippine Red Cross as part of a typhoon recovery programme to buy new sets of thread, which enabled her to produce and earn more. Photo: Afrhill Rances/IFRC



A site for sore feet

The ICRC and the Mexican Red Cross work together to bring medical help to Central Americans on their way north. It's one example of how the Movement reaches out to help migrants when they are at their most vulnerable.

ONE MORNING RECENTLY, Juan Carlos, a young, black-haired Honduran, rested under a tree that gave some shade from the hot sun. He had just crossed the wide, brown Suchiate River and Mexico's southern border, and had settled for a moment near the small agricultural town of Tenosique. After four nights of walking through the Guatemalan hills and jungle to get here, he was one less border away from the United States — and exhausted.

Soon, the next phase of Juan Carlos' journey would begin. With little warning, a freight train would move through Tenosique, along the rail tracks where Juan Carlos now rested. He would sprint and try to grab a freight wagon's metal ladders, hoist himself aboard and head further north.

Catching the train was one worry. But there was something more pressing. The soles of Juan Carlos' shoes — the critical synthetic cushion separating his

flesh from the rocky earth — were thinning. Blisters ready to burst signalled trouble.

"I had a feeling this would happen," he said. "I'm trying to ignore the pain. Not think about it."

So, Juan Carlos took notice when a white truck pulled up alongside the train tracks. Other migrants, those more experienced with this trek, quickly jumped to their feet and began lining up.

Basic needs

Operated by the Mexican Red Cross, recently in partnership with the ICRC, the truck was a mobile medical unit stocked with supplies needed to treat people bound for the United States.

Mostly, the needs are basic: treating lacerations caused by falls over rocks or barbed wire, intestinal infections from drinking river or lake water, dehydration and severe blistering. But such ailments can go

📍 A migrant jumps a moving freight train outside Tenosique, Mexico. Each year, thousands of US-bound illegal immigrants are hurt or killed as they head north through thick jungles controlled by violent drug gangs. Photo: REUTERS/Daniel LeClair, courtesy www.alertnet.org

untreated as migrants tend to remain underground during their trek and simple remedies, from bandages to aspirin, are often out of reach. By mid-journey, migrants like Juan Carlos, who asked that only his first name be used to protect his identity, usually have only a few pesos to spare if any at all.

In April, a Pew Hispanic Center report showed the number of Mexicans migrating into the United States is slowing due to a weak American economy and a tighter border. But Central Americans continue to make the crossing. The economies in countries like Honduras and Guatemala remain very weak and violence is rampant. Although precise figures for the number of Central Americans moving through Mexico are not available, Mexican migration authorities last year deported some 40,000 Central Americans.

The number of church-supported migrants' shelters set up throughout Mexico and along the routes used by Central Americans is also increasing. There are now more than 60 refuges to help satisfy the demand for food, clothing and safe haven.

Juan Carlos waited for about 20 minutes until it was his turn to enter the medical trailer. When he stepped inside, Oswaldo Bello Lovato, the clinic's 25-year-old doctor, asked basic questions: name, age and his country. He also asked how Juan Carlos felt.

"Look," Juan Carlos said, taking off his shoes to show a series of puffy sores on the bottom of his feet. His ankles were swollen from overheating and fluid retention.

"How long have your feet been like that?" Bello asked.

"Since yesterday," said Juan Carlos.

Bello handed him a tube of anti-blister cream. "Keep applying it for at least a week even if the blisters go away," he said.

"Anything else?" Bello asked. "How are you feeling today? Headaches? Fever?"

Juan Carlos complained of stomach pains, although he wasn't suffering from diarrhoea, a typical ailment among migrants triggered by drinking contaminated water.

Bello handed him a few anti-parasitic tablets in case things worsened.

Unexpected attention

Juan Carlos took his medicine and stepped down from the trailer. He applied the blister cream and it was cool and soothing. His spirits seemed up.

"I see their mental health improve with just the most basic consultation," said Bello. "The idea that someone is willing to pay attention to them is unexpected."

That morning, Bello would see about 50 men like Juan Carlos. In the afternoon, more women and men would appear when the clinic arrived at a migrants' shelter just up the road. Bello prescribed anti-rash and anti-diarrhoea medicine, offered adhesive bandages, aspirin and other medicine to

"We've heard that there's a spot where people will come out with guns to rob us. I've already been robbed though, in Guatemala. I gave all the money I had. I'm not sure what else they can get from me."

Juan Carlos, Honduran migrant

lower fevers. Some migrants were sent to a small private room inside the trailer for antibiotic injections. Bello would also ask about conditions — diabetes, asthma and hypertension — that could flare up during the trip.

A dangerous road

María Canchola, working for ICRC's migration project in Mexico, said that the migrants' needs are enormous. "Right now, our focus is on treating those who may be sick," she said. More extensive medical attention can include the need for artificial limbs for migrants left maimed after falling off a train. But although the ICRC's mission in Mexico centres on immediate medical treatment, it also aims to address other humanitarian consequences of migration. The group supports coordinated work among forensic experts in both Mexico and Central America to identify human remains found in Mexico — a growing problem as migration becomes increasingly dangerous.

The trip is no longer about sneaking past Mexican migration authorities or the US Border Patrol. Migrants face organized criminal groups who may kidnap them and demand ransoms from their relatives living in the United States. In 2010, and in what appeared to be a botched mass kidnapping, 72 Central American migrants were massacred in northern Mexico, near an area that Juan Carlos may have to travel through. Such killings are now routine in Mexico and it is common that bodies remain unidentified.

"Already been robbed"

Back at the clinic, a sense of calm surrounded the area. Although the migrants enter Mexico illegally, the Mexican government supports the Mexican Red Cross's mission of responding to health-care needs without distinction of a person's legal status. Local migration officials are not allowed to seize migrants drawn to the clinics.

After his consultation, Juan Carlos chatted with some of his fellow travellers. As he moved north, Juan Carlos had met others like him. They felt some safety in numbers against the threat of gangs who rob them of their cash, cell phones and anything else considered valuable.

But whatever calm he felt began to disappear as talk turned to the journey ahead. "Up there," said Juan Carlos, pointing north along the tracks. "We've heard that there's a spot where people will come out with guns to rob us. I've already been robbed though, in Guatemala. I gave all the money I had. I'm not sure what else they can get from me." ■

By **Monica Campbell**

Monica Campbell is a freelance journalist based in San Francisco. This article first appeared in *InterCross*, the ICRC's blog based in Washington DC (<http://intercrossblog.icrc.org/>).

Web extra!

For more links and stories related to migration, including the IFRC's *World Disasters Report 2012, Focus on Forced Migration and Displacement*, please visit our website at www.redcross.int.

Unforgettable storms

Galveston, Texas is the home of America's deadliest natural disaster: the hurricane of 1900 that claimed more than 6,000 lives. Today, this city built on an island still suffers successive hurricanes. In the wake of hurricanes Katrina and Ike, is the city's much-needed recovery being forgotten?



ON 12 SEPTEMBER 2008 — exactly 108 years and five days after the unnamed ‘Great Storm’ of 1900 — Galveston Island, off the Texas coast near Houston, was hit head-on by Hurricane Ike. The 966-kilometre (600-mile) wide Category 2 storm (on a scale that counts five, with Category 5 being the most severe) crossed the Gulf of Mexico on a trajectory hauntingly similar to its historic predecessor. Ike left 75 per cent of the island’s buildings and streets buried under several metres of brown, churning salt water and the city’s electric, gas, water and sewage systems inoperable.

The situation was dire. The city of Galveston, Texas’s oldest port city, was devastated physically and psychologically, its economic engine ground to a sudden halt.

For a few days, at least in Houston and the immediate surrounding environs, a 24-hour news cycle churned visuals of the flooded island, its homes afire, its seaside structures thrown up onto the streets in piles of splintered lumber. Some 40,000 evacuated residents watched from motel rooms, shelters and family homes on the mainland, looking for sparks of life and waiting to hear when they would be allowed to return to their sodden residences to begin mitigation efforts.

Nearby, the Bolivar peninsula, home to some 30,000 residents at high season, was almost swept clean of buildings and trees, its bridges wiped out and the ferry connecting it to Galveston Island out of commission. Small inland communities along the canals and rivers splintering off Galveston Bay also saw massive home losses and flooding.

America’s eyes were on the Hurricane Ike disaster for a brief few days, bringing back memories of Hurricane Katrina and its crushing landfall on New Orleans and the Mississippi Gulf coast just three years before. US President George W. Bush and former Presidents George H.W. Bush and Bill Clinton visited the island to survey the damage alongside eager camera crews. But media attention quickly turned to a different kind of disaster on 15 September when Lehman Brothers bank collapsed leaving the US banking and investment system on life support and the economy in a prolonged state of emergency.

Galveston became old news fast and was left to recover out of sight and out of the minds of the vast majority of Americans. At stake were billions of dollars in damages, uncertainty about the survival of the city’s key employers and an ongoing internal battle over what kind of city Galveston would become once the flood waters receded and recovery began. This historic seaport, home to rich architectural treasures and a world-class medical research



📍 A photo taken after the ‘Great Storm’ of 1900, which destroyed much of Galveston, Texas and took the lives of roughly 6,000 people.

📍 A Galveston resident surveys what is left of the trailer that he lived in before it was destroyed by Hurricane Ike in September 2008.

Photo: REUTERS/Carlos Barria, courtesy www.alertnet.org

“[The Red Cross] had shelter agreements with 12 buildings in the city. The day after the storm, not one of them was usable.”

Mari Berend, executive director of the American Red Cross’s Galveston County branch

and teaching school, has a reputation for pugnacious survival in the face of adversity. It now faced rebuilding and redefining itself for the second time in just over a century.

Local Red Cross goes into action

Among the buildings swamped in Ike’s flood waters was the Galveston County Red Cross branch headquarters. American Red Cross staff there had hastily piled items on top of furniture, expecting a few centimetres of standing water — not an unusual circumstance on this low-lying barrier island — and evacuated to wait out the storm at Houston.

Before leaving, they helped with evacuation efforts, directing island residents to buses headed for shelters in San Antonio and Houston. When they returned, everything in their building, including a carefully preserved letter from American Red Cross founder Clara Barton, was under 1.2 metres of water. Late summer heat and closed, wet buildings produced a pervasive mould that destroyed the contents of many ground floors across Galveston, including those at the Red Cross.

Undeterred, Galveston County Red Cross executive director Mari Berend, who had taken up her post just six weeks before, went to work with a staff of four, a handful of local volunteers and a welcome crew of hundreds of volunteers from the surrounding region and across the country. They handed out emergency food packets and water, and began the tedious task of checking every street on the island, looking for survivors and assessing the damage.

“[The Red Cross] had shelter agreements with 12 buildings in the city,” said Berend. “The day after the storm, not one of them was usable.” Some 15,000 inhabitants of the island had ignored the then Mayor Lyda Ann Thomas’s orders to evacuate or were un-

able to leave the island for lack of transportation. Shelter was desperately needed.

Berend and her staff took shelter in an old school building and in cooperation with the Texas task force (made up of volunteers from the Salvation Army, Red Cross and a Southern Baptist church men's group) provided food to stranded islanders from 400 mobile feeding units across the community.

A tent shelter erected on the grounds of an elementary school in central Galveston, run by the city authorities, the Galveston County Red Cross branch and the American Red Cross, became a temporary home to more than 800 people.

"We directed and referred people to services, and continued providing food and shelter," said Berend, until a federal emergency declaration brought in the United States's Federal Emergency Management Agency, to take over disaster relief and move the community towards recovery. Berend's efforts are focused now on rebuilding her volunteer corps which, she says, went from 447 trained and certified volunteers to 39 post-Ike, a decline due to the swift depopulation of the island after the storm.

A page from the past

The American Red Cross looms large in Galveston's history, owing to its extensive relief efforts following the great storm of 1900, when Clara Barton, aged 78, travelled to Galveston from Washington DC, to head relief distribution. Operating out of a four-storey warehouse that still stands, Barton was shocked by what she found on the stricken island — more than 6,000 people dead, wagonloads of corpses being buried at sea only to wash ashore again, countless orphans and homeless men and women, and residential areas reduced to rubble. To this day, the Great Storm remains the single most deadly natural disaster in American history.

Barton wrote: "The sea, with its fury spent, had sullenly retired. The strongest buildings, half stand-



"The sea, with its fury spent, had sullenly retired. The strongest buildings, half standing roofless and tottering, told what had once been the make-up of a thriving city."

Clara Barton, founder of the American Red Cross

This map shows the path of Hurricane Ike and many other storms that have slammed Caribbean nations and the Gulf Coast of the United States.



ing roofless and tottering, told what had once been the make-up of a thriving city."

With Barton's help, the attention of generous philanthropists across the country brought in large donations of cash and supplies. Local women, inspired by Barton, became involved in shaping public policy and public health issues. The island had lost 12,000 people or 32 per cent of its population, but the city quickly repaired its deep-water harbour and embarked on one of the United States's most successful building projects. The US Army Corps of Engineers elevated every surviving building on the island, raised the ground itself with infill and erected a 27-kilometre (17-mile) concrete seawall to protect the island from future storms. The recovery of a city nearly completely destroyed was nothing short of miraculous.

Reclaiming their future

Forty months after Hurricane Ike, Galveston Island has recovered to a degree but has a long way to go. Gone are the mountains of debris collected from city streets and hauled off the island, truckload by truckload. Insured homeowners have rebuilt their flood-ravaged homes and businesses have reopened their doors. Gentle sea breezes still wash the island, hefting wings of seagulls and pelicans, and the grand old houses on the island's East End, many of them survivors of the 1900 storm, still stand, witnesses to fickle turns of weather and the brutal force of nature.

The University of Texas Medical Branch was heavily damaged by the storm and at risk of being closed after more than half its workforce was let go. But it was rescued after a political fight between the university's board of regents and a determined island politician, State Representative Craig Eiland, which returned full state funding to the institution and guaranteed its presence on the island for the foreseeable future.

But the island's low-income residents haven't fared so well. When all four public housing projects were ruined by Ike, the city made the decision to bulldoze them rather than rebuild. Thousands of workers and elderly people who had evacuated their houses, the majority African-American, had no homes to return to. And while the city received more than adequate federal funding to replace housing according to the directives of the 1968 Fair Housing Act, Galveston's housing authority and city council have locked horns and failed to decide how, where and when to rebuild.

Galveston Mayor Joe Jaworski admitted frustration over the issue.

"There's a sense of blame, that poor people, it's their fault," he noted. Jaworski said some Galvestonians oppose what they perceive as a sense of



Red Cross volunteers assist a resident with settling into a storm shelter in Galveston in 2008.
Photo: William Pitts/American Red Cross

“The question becomes, now that you’ve seen the impact of a natural disaster like Hurricane Ike, how do you organize against that impact in the future?”

Trevor Rikken, senior director of disaster services for the American Red Cross

entitlement by those who lived in public housing. “Why should they get help and not me?”

Also at play is a political climate fuelled by anti-government sentiment at both federal and local levels.

“The debate over federal versus local control plays into this,” said Jaworski. “The people who oppose rebuilding low-income housing say, ‘The feds [federal government] won’t tell me what to do.’ Those in support of rebuilding say, ‘They [the poor] have just as much right as anyone to come home.’ Meanwhile, hundreds of people are fixing their houses with the same pot of money and they are not complaining about it.”

At issue is how the city will define itself in the future: as a laid-back resort community dependent on tourism, with a large number of workers commuting to affordable housing on the mainland, or as the working-class city it has long been, dependent on the wharves, the port and the medical centre and their labourers to support the local economy.

Neighbourhoods across the island still harbour rotted-out houses that have been deserted, and the city lacks the staff to claim and demolish them. But Jaworski’s number-one concern is the dip in population following Hurricane Ike, putting Galveston’s census below 50,000 and at risk of being declassified as a small urban district subject to federal transportation and education funding.

“There’s a sense of loss in the community,” he admitted, “a fear that we’re not coming back. But I choose to see it differently. We bottomed out; now let’s change.”

Trevor Rikken, senior director of disaster services for the American Red Cross, spent three weeks in Galveston following Hurricane Ike in 2008, helping coordinate the emergency response. Galveston, he says is representative of a lot of communities in the United States that see population and numerous other community losses after a disaster.

“The question becomes, now that you’ve seen the impact of a natural disaster like Hurricane Ike, how do you organize against that impact in the future?” says Rikken.

The American Red Cross advocates partnership and training with local businesses, churches, schools and community centres to ‘develop resilience’. One such tool is its newly developed Ready Rating, a service to businesses and organizations to help them measure their readiness and preparedness level in the face of future disasters. One rating criteria, for example, asks the following question: if your company or organization has one central headquarters and it is destroyed, how will you conduct operations and reach your people? It’s not a hypothetical question, but an experience-based reality check for communities like Galveston.

To Rikken, helping companies and local organizations survive is key to helping people recover. “We’ve seen how invested those centres of gravity, those centres for social capital are in a community like Galveston. They are trusted resources,” he said. “Our job is to help them develop tools to either respond or recover.”

Taking aim at poverty and blight also requires time and will. Jaworski cites a pre-Ike complacency in Galveston that was satisfied to let poor people live in ghettos. Now, he is championing a movement towards building new mixed-income neighbourhoods and scattering low-income housing around the city.

“I say let’s play on the strengths of this place, let’s make it so affordable and gorgeous that people will look and say, ‘Why aren’t I living there?’” ■

By **Kathryn Eastburn**

Kathryn Eastburn is an author who lives in Colorado, USA.



Forgotten ferries

When the massive Italian cruise ship *Costa Concordia* capsized off the coast of Italy in January 2012, killing more than 30 people, the world's media responded. In other parts of the world, maritime disasters are claiming many more lives but few of those stories are told.



THE SUN HAD ALREADY fallen over the Mozambique Channel when the *Madjiriha* left the port of Moroni, Comoros, crowded with 180 passengers and crew, heading south towards the island of Anjouan, roughly 100 kilometres to the south-east.

Madjiriha is one of many boats that ferry people among the islands that make up the Comoros, a set of volcanic isles rising from the Indian Ocean between Mozambique and Madagascar. Only an hour into their voyage, one of the *Madjiriha*'s two engines failed, followed closely by the second.

For several hours the ship drifted while the crew tried to restart the engines. The drama continued as the ship approached the coast and seas became



📍 The hull of the *Madjiriha* wallows among the rocks off the south-west coast of Grand-Comoros. Only approved for 90 passengers, the boat was holding roughly 180 people when it capsized in the early morning of 9 August 2011. Photo: Comoros Red Crescent

rough. Finally, around 03:00 on 9 August 2011, the ship smashed into the rocks along the south-west coast of Grand-Comoros island, causing the crowded vessel to capsize.

Once alerted, residents of the nearest coastal village rushed to the rescue. Volunteers of the Comoros Red Crescent also hastened to the scene to assist victims along with military and civilian officials.

But the wreck was not easy to reach. Foundering amid the rocks and crashing waves, the boat had overturned along a particularly inaccessible part of the coast. Throughout the morning and into the day, Red Crescent volunteers joined civilian and government boats, scouring the choppy seas for survivors, collecting bodies and bringing whoever they could find back to shore.

As the rescue boats went back and forth to a beach near the seaside village, other Red Crescent volunteers received the wounded and consoled the grieving survivors. They also carried bodies in sheet-covered stretchers and began caring for the dead according to local customs.

The local health centres were the first to receive the wounded while the entire community, with the support of Comoros Red Crescent volunteers, helped in any way they could before the patients, traumatized and in shock, were transferred to El-Maarouf, the main hospital in the capital Moroni.

By the time the sun set on 9 August, the official toll was 56 dead, nine of whom could not be identified; an additional 48 people were still missing. Among the victims were many children. Thanks to those who responded, 76 people survived, some of whom suffered serious injuries.

Resources overwhelmed

Despite the heroic efforts of the responders, the disaster quickly revealed weaknesses in the islands' ability to deal with mass casualties. The hospital in Moroni, for example, was quickly overwhelmed. Some patients simply decided to go home. "Considering the overflow and panic of doctors and paramedics, and knowing the lack of means in this hospital, I preferred to go home and being able to rest," said one of the survivors, who suffered damage to his spine.

In the following days, as it became clear that no more survivors would be found, Comoros Red Crescent volunteers turned their full attention to offering psychological, emotional and practical support to the victims. They worked to reconnect victims with relatives, identify remains and attended funerals, providing psychosocial therapy to the injured and relatives of victims.

To this day, the scars of August 2011 are still fresh. "I regularly relive this drama and directly think of my two children aged 3 and a half and 1 and a half,"

said Ibrahim Drolo, a survivor who also felt that victims have received a very limited assistance. "I wonder, had I died, what would have become of my children?"

"We are all morally wounded. And we are really disappointed that the government did not take care of us," he said. Like many victims, he would like to see those responsible for the accident held accountable.

"My entire life has changed radically," said Fatima Youssouf, the widow of one of the victims. She relives the drama almost every day as she sees her five orphan children, aged between 3 and 12 years, growing up without a father and a breadwinner. "I do not work; if I did, how could I take care of my children?"

An ocean graveyard

Sadly, the tragedy of the *Madjiriha* is far from an isolated incident in the waters between the islands of the Comoros and other Indian Ocean countries.

Indeed, the crossing between the islands of Anjouan and Mayotte, which remains under French administration, has become a maritime graveyard for hundreds of people every year, many of whom were trying to immigrate to French territory.



📍 A big part of the response to maritime emergencies involves proper identification and treatment of the dead. Here a policeman records the handprint of a woman killed in a ferry tragedy in Zanzibar, Tanzania in July 2012. Rescue workers including the Tanzania Red Cross responded after an overcrowded ferry sank in rough seas.

Photo: REUTERS/Thomas Mukoya, courtesy www.alertnet.org



of the equation is what happens before these ferries leave port.

Lack of attention

In the Comoros, critics and groups of victims say there is a general lack of attention from both officials who oversee port activities and among ship owners, captains, crews and even those dealing with civil security.

One key issue is chronic overcrowding of vessels. While the Madjiriha had permission to carry 90 passengers, it left with 180 people aboard. Local media also reported that the ship had experienced technical problems linked to the engines a few days before.

A few days after the sinking of the Madjiriha, a national commission was set up by the Ministry of Transport with the mandate to “enforce the rules and laws in force without any complacency”.

Regular and unannounced controls appear to be taking place, and mechanical and safety checks are carried out before each boat’s departure. Many wonder if these measures will remain in place once local public attention wanes, but so far it appears that enforcement after the disaster has changed and reduced unregulated boat traffic between the islands.

Now, new rules force crews to have proper systems for giving life jackets to passengers in emergencies. The authorities have also taken steps to improve weather reporting and avert clandestine, unauthorized ferry services. They have also set up a system of coast guards. The state has established a Directorate for Civil Protection that recruited 120 young people who will be trained to become firefighters.

The Comoros Red Crescent has been studying ways to better prepare for future maritime emergencies, including developing response units and training rescuers specialized in nautical activities who would also need to be outfitted with appropriate equipment. The National Society must also strengthen psychosocial and material support to compensate for the lack of state services.

Meanwhile, one year after the tragedy, the hull of the Madjiriha still sits rocking in the waves, just a few metres from shore. A few days after the tragedy, a tugboat tried to turn the boat in order to recover bodies trapped inside. The tug failed and the human remains are likely still trapped inside — one more reminder for relatives and victims of a painful problem that still has not attracted a complete response. ■

By **Ramoulati Ben Ali**

Ramoulati Ben Ali is a communications officer for the Comoros Red Crescent.

In 2004, the San-Son ferry sunk with 120 passengers on board. Only one person, a woman, survived. In 2006, another ship, the Al Mubarka, foundered, killing 20 people and 33 others reported missing, followed by the Niyati Soifa, taking 60 lives, with only ten survivors who were rescued by fishermen.

Another boat, the Ile d’Anjouan sank in 2009 off the coast of Tanzania with 47 passengers and 29 crew members, plus livestock and cargo. Fortunately, 75 people were rescued by a German container ship, which received a distress call while heading to Zanzibar.

The Comoros is not the only country in the region to face this problem. In July this year, the Tanzania Red Cross National Society was among the first to respond to a passenger ferry accident near Chumbe island in Zanzibar. The MV Skagit, certified for 250 people, capsized as it was travelling to Zanzibar from Dar-es-Salaam. Local sources said the ferry was carrying more than 280 passengers. “Strong waves hit the boat causing it to lose control,” said one survivor. “Passengers panicked as they scrambled for life jackets.”

Kibar Tawakal, disaster response manager for the Tanzania Red Cross, said the National Society set up a response unit in Zanzibar’s port to provide first aid and offer information to relatives. Rescuers that day saved 146 people.

What these later two incidents suggest is that lives could be saved if systems were in place to reach those in distress before it’s too late. The other part

While some Comoros Red Crescent volunteers joined boat crews searching for survivors, other volunteers on the beach rushed victims to medical care centres or to makeshift morgues.
Photo: Said Abdou/Comoros Red Crescent

“I regularly relive this drama and directly think of my two children aged 3 and a half and 1 and a half. I wonder, had I died, what would have become of my children?”

Ibrahim Drolu, who survived the 9 August 2011 ferry accident off the coast of Grand-Comoros Island

PUBLICATIONS

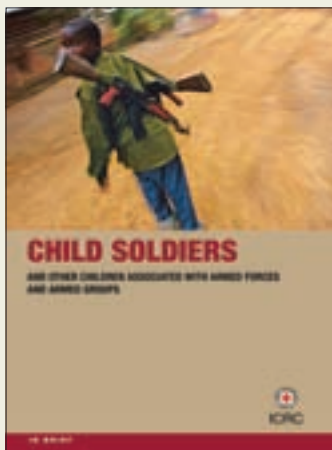


World Disasters Report 2012 IFRC, 2012

This year's *World Disasters Report* aims to widen and sharpen the focus on the complex causes of forced migration and the diverse consequences and impacts for both affected populations and humanitarian actors. The report draws attention to the diverse health needs of forced migrants, stressing the importance of enhancing professional standards and mainstreaming the health care of those displaced. Available in English, summaries in Arabic, French and Spanish

Child soldiers and other children associated with armed forces and armed groups ICRC, 2012

This updated brochure provides detailed information about the problem of child soldiers, and outlines what should be done to



prevent their recruitment, protect them and help them rebuild their lives after their demobilization. Available in English and French; Spanish (first edition)

Health Care in Danger: the responsibilities of health-care personnel working in armed conflicts and other emergencies ICRC, 2012

A guidance document in simple language for health personnel, setting out their rights and responsibilities in conflict and other situations of violence. It explains how responsibilities and rights for health personnel can be derived from international humanitarian law, human rights law and medical ethics. Available in English

A guide for parliamentarians to the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement IFRC, 2012

This guide aims to familiarise parliamentarians with the Movement, particularly the role of Red Cross and Red Crescent National Societies throughout the world. There are a number of characteristics that distinguish National Societies from non-governmental organizations, the United Nations and other elements of civil society, but not all parliamentarians are aware of these differences. This guide is designed to provide information and understanding with a view to building on the existing strong and valuable relationships between parliamentarians and the National Society as auxiliaries to government. Available in English, French, Spanish and Russian

Contingency Planning Guide IFRC, 2012

This guide, the second version produced by the IFRC, is for practitioners, volunteers and staff working with National Societies around the world who wish to benefit from the collective

experience of their colleagues. It aims to prepare an organization to respond well to an emergency and its potential humanitarian impact. Available in English

Strategic planning guidelines for National Societies IFRC, 2011

This guide provides an overview of the key aspects of strategic planning in a National Society, based on good practice and learning from around the world. This introduction answers some of the key conceptual questions a leader may ask when setting out on the strategic planning journey. Available in English

Mini EHL: The essence of humanitarian law ICRC, 2012

This resource kit introduces young people to the principles and basic rules of international humanitarian law (IHL). It provides 5 x 45 minutes of sequential learning activities designed for both formal and non-formal education settings for young people and other interested groups. Available in English and French. Sfr. 7

IFRC Annual Report 2011 IFRC, 2012

The International Federation reviews its work worldwide over the year. This report highlights key operations and development activities, and also includes the year's financial statements. Available in Arabic, English, French and Spanish

Rapid Mobil Phone-based (RAMP) survey toolkit IFRC, 2012

This toolkit describes how to design and implement Rapid Mobile Phone-based (RAMP) surveys. The RAMP is an easy-to-use, swift, inexpensive survey methodology that allows for data collection by Red Cross Red Crescent volunteers on locally available, inexpensive mobile phones and produces a final survey report within days of completion of the final questionnaire. Available in English and French

MEDIA

Health Care in Danger: what is it and why is it important? ICRC, 2012

ICRC Director-General Yves Daccord gives his personal view as he attends a photo exhibition on the theme during the London Olympics. Images by Tom Stoddart show the dangers facing medical staff and patients in war zones. Running time: 3:44 min. Available in English

Into the light IFRC

In Asia Pacific, an estimated 500,000 people who inject drugs are HIV positive. In many countries, repressive laws fuel HIV transmission, denying drug users access to health and social services. Through a series of intimate portraits, this film highlights the impact of HIV harm-reduction efforts carried out by the Red Cross in Cambodia and Viet Nam. Running time 10:00 min. Available in English online at: <http://vimeo.com/ifrc/into-the-light>

TED^xRC²: multiplying the power of humanity ICRC, 2012

The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement's first-ever TEDx event took place on 27 November 2011. Over 550 people gathered in Geneva, Switzerland, to hear our speakers talk about multiplying the power of humanity and meeting tomorrow's humanitarian challenges. Running time 18:00 min. Available in Arabic, English, French and Spanish



Photo: Marko Kotic/ICRC



The Thai Red Cross Society (TRCS) Snake Farm was opened in November 1923 by Queen Savang Vadhana, then president of the TRCS. The farm raises snakes for an institute it also runs that produces anti-venom for snakebites and conducts vaccine research.

See page 6 and www.redcross.int.