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Red Cross
Red Crescent

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The Movement and the armed forces

♦ Health in Iraq
♦ Today's Dunants
♦ Hunger in Moldova

A close-up photograph of a person's hands holding a small booklet titled "REGLE LIMPIO". The booklet features the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement logo and the text "Respecte las reglas de la guerra". The background is dark and out of focus.

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 and the National Societies.

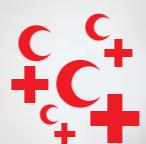


ICRC

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) is an impartial, neutral and independent organization whose exclusively humanitarian mission is to protect the lives and dignity of victims of armed conflict and other situations of violence and to provide them with assistance. The ICRC also endeavours to prevent suffering by promoting and strengthening humanitarian law and universal humanitarian principles. Established in 1863, the ICRC is at the origin of the Geneva Conventions and the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement. It directs and coordinates the international activities conducted by the Movement in armed conflicts and other situations of violence.



The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies works on the basis of the Fundamental Principles of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement to inspire, facilitate and promote all humanitarian activities carried out by its member National Societies to improve the situation of the most vulnerable people. Founded in 1919, the International Federation directs and coordinates international assistance of the Movement to victims of natural and technological disasters, to refugees and in health emergencies. It acts as the official representative of its member societies in the international field. It promotes cooperation between National Societies, and works to strengthen their capacity to carry out effective disaster preparedness, health and social programmes.



National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies embody the work and principles of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement in more than 186 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.

Together, all the above components of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement (the 'Movement') are guided by the same seven Fundamental Principles: **humanity, impartiality, neutrality, independence, voluntary service, unity and universality.**

In the same manner, 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.**

Red Cross Red Crescent

EDITORIAL

In 2009, we will be marking the 150th anniversary of the battle of Solferino, the moment when the world's largest humanitarian movement, the Red Cross and Red Crescent, was born. Founded originally to alleviate the suffering of soldiers wounded on the battlefield, the Red Cross Red Crescent has worked tirelessly ever since to extend its humanitarian work to other categories of victims, in particular civilians.

In parallel, as international humanitarian law, which aims at mitigating the effects of armed conflicts, has developed over time, so has the relationship between the Movement and the armed forces. The more recent involvement of the military in the management of crises — in war zones and after natural disasters — has added a new, sometimes problematic, dimension to this relationship.

With the benefit of hindsight, we thought it useful to take a look at how this relationship has evolved and to examine more closely some of the current challenges, notably through the lens of the conflict in Afghanistan, where the stakes are perhaps the highest of all.

It is 20 years since the first issue of *Red Cross Red Crescent* magazine appeared, as the back cover of this issue attests. What better moment to thank all our readers across the globe for their loyalty and interest over the years? It is also time for Jean-François Berger, ICRC editor, to move on after ten years at the helm.

Jean-François Berger
ICRC editor



WITOLD KRASSOWSKI / ICRC

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Cover image

Teaching international humanitarian law to guerrilla fighters, Altaquer, Narino, Colombia.
William Torres / ICRC

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For better, for worse

How does the Movement relate to the military?



Japanese military emergency medical team members prepare a red cross flag at their camp as they begin work in the tsunami-hit city of Banda Aceh on the Indonesian island of Sumatra, 19 January 2005.

On the eve of the 150th anniversary of Henry Dunant's work at Solferino, members of the Movement and soldiers talk about a relationship that has been variously described as 'fundamental', 'privileged' and 'a dilemma'.

IT'S shortly after 15:00 hours — that's 3pm in civilian parlance — at a vast, rainswept military training area at Grafenwoehr, in south-east Germany, not far from the border with the Czech Republic. A dozen army officers in camouflage uniforms sit round a table in a lecture room as a British officer prepares to speak.

Suddenly, there's a problem: a suspect presence is spotted in the room — the reporter for this magazine — and there's a hurried discussion with the course organizer. It's explained that he is here only for the presentation that will be made by the ICRC and will then leave. Heads are nodded, the reporter can sit down and the proceedings start.

These are staff officers preparing for a posting to Afghanistan towards the end of 2008, where they will be members of the headquarters staff of Regional Command South, based in Kandahar, of NATO's International Security Assistance Force (ISAF).

The deputy head of the ICRC delegation in Afghanistan, Patrick Hamilton,

takes the floor to brief the officers on the organization's approach to the protection of civilians. This includes reporting complaints from civilians about alleged violations of international humanitarian law (IHL), whose rules seek to limit the effects of armed conflicts.

Complaints of this kind are taken up at regular meetings with both the military authorities and the armed opposition in Afghanistan. The ICRC requests the authorities to carry out an investigation, communicate the results and ensure a change in the conduct behind the incident.

Aware of the military's sensitivity to any claims of misconduct, Hamilton emphasizes that the ICRC talks about 'allegations', not 'accusations'. His presentation over, the officers turn to their internal business — a briefing on ISAF's own 'post-incident' procedures.

"I have the impression," Hamilton notes after the session, "that there is a good general understanding of what the ICRC does. NATO knows we have contact with the armed opposition and the

Taliban — they would like to see us pass on the same IHL message to them. We tell them that that is exactly what we do, it's the core of our presence in conflict — being and saying the same thing to all sides."

The ICRC has become a regular participant at these courses, informing the officers about its work and the issues they will discuss in the field. It's a level of dialogue and trust that would have been hard to imagine ten years ago.

"The ICRC is an obvious choice of lecturer," says Major-General Agner Rokos, the Danish commander of NATO's Joint Force Training Centre (JFTC) which runs the pre-deployment exercise. He explains that the JFTC has a comprehensive approach to training that includes representatives of organizations that they would meet on the ground. "That, of course, includes the ICRC." Rokos recognizes the importance of the ICRC's independence: "We do understand the ICRC can't be seen as being embedded with the military."

The ICRC's independence — a key element of its belief in neutral, independent humanitarian action — for a long time put a brake on developing closer institutional ties with military forces. This is despite the fact that operational contacts on the ground — essential for obtaining access to the wounded, prisoners and civilians trapped by conflict — have always been an everyday necessity.

First World War, 1914–1918. A wounded soldier is transferred on to a Hungarian Red Cross train.

VIENNE KRIEGSARCHIV / ICRC



USA: a helping hand for a GI's family crisis

An American soldier serving in Iraq — call him Joe Brown — is looking forward to the birth of his first child. But complications arise and his wife is hospitalized; she needs her husband at her side. On the basis of verification obtained by the local Red Cross chapter, the soldier is granted emergency leave to return home and be present at the birth.

"This is our oldest service, running ever since the Spanish-American war in 1898," explains Joe Moffatt, executive director of the American Red Cross's Service to Armed Forces. A special charter from the US government in 1905 led to Red Cross staff being posted on American bases in every conflict involving US forces.

"We are there for the soldiers and their families," says Moffatt. "We do nothing off base." In the space of 12 months the unit's 316 staff handled 650,000 emergency communication services while assisting 185,406 military families worldwide. The Red Cross is putting in place a psychological support programme to help some families of servicemen cope with the stress of separation.

"The relationship between the Red Cross and the armed forces is nothing short of fundamental," says Michael Meyer, head of international law at the British Red Cross. This link, he says, is at the origin of the Red Cross Red Crescent and without it, members of the Movement would not be able to carry out fully their respective mandates.

Today, all the components of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement (ICRC, the National Societies and the International Federation) have regular and structured links with armed forces, be it in promoting international humanitarian law or responding to natural disasters and armed conflicts.

In 2007, the Council of Delegates adopted a guidance document on relations

The relationship is defined in official texts. Article 3 of the Movement's statutes describes a National Society's sphere of activities, while Article 4, which states the conditions for a society's official recognition, explicitly calls for it to be "duly recognized" by its government as a "voluntary aid society, auxiliary to the public authorities in the humanitarian field".

The First Geneva Convention of 1949 establishes how National Society personnel engaged in an official auxiliary capacity — and under military orders — are given the same protection as regular army medics.

with the military, aiming "to safeguard the independence, neutrality and impartiality of their humanitarian work", essentially through respect for the Red Cross Red Crescent principles.

The changing nature of military operations since the early 1990s and the military's own involvement in relief operations has brought both sides to realize that their relationship needs to be adapted.

Doing so has required an effort on both sides. "Generally, the military has been better at getting close to civilians over the past ten years than the other way round," says Flemming Nielsen, head of operations coordination and focal point for civil-military relations at the International Federation.

"Some humanitarians have the feeling that the military is the problem, they are 'the killers,'" says Nielsen, a former Danish air force officer who has broad experience in relief work, with the United Nations (UN) and the Red Cross Red Crescent (see box). "They need to understand that the military are there, they have a role. We have to learn how to work with them, and when it's not possible, explain why."

Over at the ICRC, David Horobin is the coordinator for rapid deployment. He sees a growing involvement by the military as inevitable. "The 'blue water' that traditionally existed between natural disasters and conflict-related emergencies is shrinking," he says. "The military is now configured to respond to all types of emergencies. But they still need civilian expertise."

Horobin, who has also worked for the International Federation and the British government, says that while military logistical assets can be helpful, the Movement must be aware of their dual role and use them only as a last resort. "Soldiers can be dealing with humanitarian supplies one moment and bringing in troops and arms the next," he explains. This situation is known to the military as 'three-block operations', in which humanitarian assistance, stabilization operations and fighting can take place almost simultaneously.

All of which is a world away from the beginnings of the Red Cross. The battle of Solferino, on 24 June 1859, was the starting point, when Geneva businessman Henry Dunant found himself helping to organize aid for wounded soldiers. The book he later wrote swiftly led to two landmark achievements: the creation of voluntary aid committees in every country, to support the army medical services in time of war; and the adoption of a treaty to ensure impartial



Durum, Sudan. ICRC dissemination session on the rules of war, given to 'Justice and Equality Movement' combatants.

a new emblem — the red crescent, by the Ottoman Empire — and the start of ICRC work for captured soldiers. National Societies started helping civilian victims of natural disasters.

BORIS HEGER / ICRC

The outbreak of the First World War in 1914 brought about the greatest humanitarian mobilization ever seen — tens of thousands of nurses, countless ambulance units and hospital trains. Many volunteers lost their lives near the front lines.

But after the war, people were seeking peace. The League of Red Cross Societies, founded in 1919, was to be

Working with the military in disasters

Following the South Asia earthquake in 2005, Flemming Nielsen was in Pakistan's North-West Frontier Province to coordinate relief. "We were cooperating with the military every day," he recalls. "Nothing could have been done without military support, from the Pakistan army and the United States, United Kingdom and Germany, working under the UN flag. The Red Cross Red Crescent was able to use those assets when necessary."

"It was unusual", Nielsen adds. "The Pakistani military was carrying out a relief operation that had been worked out by the Red Cross Red Crescent: we were planning, they were helping."

After the Indian Ocean tsunami in 2004, the remote Maldives archipelago with its 1,200 islands called for close cooperation with defence personnel. "There were initially more than 20,000 displaced persons on various islands and it was our responsibility to help provide relief items," says Jerry Talbot of the International Federation.

This included bringing 20,000 metal roofing sheets from India. But with no Red Crescent society and few local resources, the International Federation operation was totally dependent on the Ministry of Defence for delivery and distribution.

"We paid for the charter of a barge that the Ministry of Defence used, they handled the delivery. We provided three warehouse tents to them. It was a major logistical challenge and we could not have done it alone," recalls Talbot.

the new focal point for National Societies, which would no longer need to worry about wounded soldiers because there would be no more war...

According to Jean-Christophe Sandoz, a legal adviser at the ICRC, the privileged links between Red Cross and armed forces were questioned. "In the 1920s, with the National Societies turning towards peacetime activities, their relations with the authorities changed as well, from the original position of being auxiliaries in a strictly military sense and for wartime purposes," he says.

"There was a need to articulate the Movement's basic principles, notably that of independence. This was to some extent at odds with the traditional auxiliary status; the Red Cross Red Crescent's principles would be universal, as against the strictly national perspectives that had reigned up until then."

The ICRC continued to work with governments to improve the protection of soldiers, based on its experiences in the First World War. In 1925 states signed a treaty banning the use of poisonous and bacteriological weapons; in 1929 a new Geneva Convention was added to protect prisoners of war.

International humanitarian law remained focused on the plight of military victims. It was not until 1949, after the murderous outrages of the Second World War, that civilians came under its protection.

However, the law had to be applied. It had always been an obligation for governments to instruct their soldiers in the Geneva Conventions. But this was not always a priority in the cold war.

"We were preparing for the worst, meaning the possibility of a nuclear war," says Charles Garraway, a former senior



Palestine Red Crescent workers remove a body from the Jenin refugee camp in the West Bank as Israeli soldiers look on, 15 April 2002.

legal adviser in the British army, now on the staff of the British Red Cross. "The feeling was that once that started, there wouldn't be any prisoners to look after. Instruction in humanitarian law at that time was comparatively formalistic."

Protocols to the Geneva Conventions, bringing greater protection to war victims, called on the Movement to do more to help governments teach their armies the law.

The major role fell to the ICRC. Aided by a Swiss army officer it organized courses, attended by officers from around the world, and produced its first manual for armed forces.

A specialized unit (today known as FAS) was formed to help armies instruct the law of war and to develop relations with the armed and security forces around the world (see box). But this approach was unable to reach, systematically, the fighters outside traditional military structures — the guerrillas, rebels and 'freedom fighters' often encountered in Africa, Asia and Latin America.

The problem grew in the 1990s, in the wars that followed the break-up of the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia, in Africa and more recently in the Middle East. A new approach had to be worked out. The ICRC was also stepping up contacts with UN and NATO forces involved in peace support operations.

Since the turn of the century the work of FAS has been closely aligned with operational problems facing the ICRC, for example by helping the institution understand better the military world and mindset, building mutual confidence and a genuine dialogue where the ICRC can express its humanitarian concerns and get answers.

Following the attacks on the United States and the subsequent 'war on terror',

Relations with soldiers — a worldwide approach

Since the early 1980s, the ICRC has built up a structured network of relations with armed forces around the world (more than 160 in 2008). The aim is to help the military incorporate international humanitarian law (IHL) or the Law of Armed Conflict into their training courses and operational procedures.

Almost 30 specialist delegates are in the field, based in strategic cities: Nairobi, Pretoria, Abidjan, Cairo, Bangkok, Kuala Lumpur, New Delhi, Tashkent, Lima, Moscow, Kiev, Skopje, Budapest, Brussels, London and Washington. (A smaller number of delegates are assigned to similar tasks with police forces.)

Their aim is now not only to promote IHL training but to build up a relationship that supports the ICRC's operational needs, above all making sure that key armies are aware of the ICRC's role in conflict and the sort of practical cooperation they can expect.

Outside formal military structures, and in order to reach all victims, ICRC delegates have always sought to develop contacts with other kinds of fighters (rebels and guerrillas, for example) with mixed success. A special adviser at headquarters is working to put in place a framework for these complex efforts and to ensure that lessons learned are not lost.

the ICRC's relationship with the military has faced another challenge.

"Today we are dealing with armed forces that have the capacity for global projection of power — notably the USA, but also UN peace operations," explains François Sénéchaud, head of the FAS unit. "This means we are dealing with these forces wherever we meet them in the field. We have to make sure that our message is coherent, whether it's delivered in the USA, in Iraq, in Djibouti or in the Philippines."

Or Kabul. In fact it is in Afghanistan that relations between the ICRC and the military are entering a new phase. While the two sides enjoy a more open dialogue than at any other time, important differences of approach remain — for example, over the military's role in providing assistance, which armed forces see as a key part of stability operations.

ICRC deputy operations director Walter Fuellemann says that using humanitarian action to further military objectives is a problem. "It's more than 'blurring the lines'. It can end up by confusing the population in need, and everybody else, about the very nature of humanitarian work, about whether there

is actually any such thing as neutral, independent humanitarian action or whether all aid comes with strings attached."

As governments seek to become more efficient and cost-effective by 'bundling' their response to both disasters and conflicts, using professional civilian partners, the Red Cross Red Crescent finds itself under a certain pressure to join in.

So where does this leave the National Societies' status as auxiliaries to the public authorities — the traditional basis of their existence? Where are the limits? What happens if a government, sending troops to somewhere like Afghanistan or Iraq, asks a National Society to carry out a role that would violate the Movement's principles?

The implications of this — for the status of National Societies and any government funding — led to the adoption of a resolution by the Movement's 30th International Conference, in 2007. This stated that while societies had a duty to give serious consideration to any request from the authorities, they also had a duty to turn down any which appeared to contradict the principles.

The Red Cross Red Crescent is not alone in seeing this kind of situation as

a potential threat to the 'humanitarian space', that could affect the perception of aid workers (and therefore their security), their ability to reach the victims and indeed the notion of truly independent humanitarian action that is based on needs and not on political or military considerations.

Various sets of guidelines have been produced — by the Movement, by groupings of states and organizations (the 'Oslo Guidelines'), by non-governmental organizations — that govern, for example, the use of military logistics assets in emergencies.

What General Dufour, a distinguished Swiss military commander and the ICRC's first president, would have thought about these developments is open to conjecture. But the fact is that, 150 years down the line, the Movement that resulted from Henry Dunant's call to action at Solferino is redefining its relationship with its original beneficiaries, the military — and the process is far from complete.

Nic Sommer

Nic Sommer is a freelance journalist and editor based in Geneva.

US soldiers with the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force distribute school stationery to Afghan children in Orgun, in eastern Afghanistan, 16 March 2007.



Turning away from violence in South Africa

A displaced mother and child rest in a tent at Primrose shelter centre in Johannesburg.

Young South African volunteers take a stand against violence towards foreign workers in the 'rainbow nation'.

TSOTANG SETHABELA remembers the first day of violence in Thokozala township in May. "I was at home when I heard that a group of foreigners, including some South Africans, were being beaten up, robbed and evicted from their houses. Some of the houses were set alight," says the Red Cross volunteer, who was asked to report to the Red Cross office in Germiston, a suburb of Johannesburg, South Africa's largest city.

The situation was grave. In Gauteng Province, more than 60 people were killed and scores injured. More than 35,000 people were left homeless after mobs burnt and looted homes belonging to foreigners, many of them migrants from countries such as the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, Mozambique, Somalia and Zimbabwe. In KwaZulu Natal Province, more than 1,800 homeless people were accommodated at ten police stations and in community halls belonging to 19 local faith-based organizations. In Western Cape Province about 13,000 people were displaced when the violence hit Cape Town.

Fear and trauma

In all three provinces, the South African Red Cross Society was part of the joint operations committee that dealt with the crisis.

"We heard that hundreds of people had fled from their houses and sought refuge at the local auditorium," says Sethabela. "We visited the premises to conduct a needs assessment of the displaced people. The number of the displaced people grew, as workers returned to find their homes looted and destroyed."

Sethabela says he and a team of volunteers helped to distribute blankets and food parcels to the vulnerable people.

"We worked until very late at night. But we did not mind because we were helping our fellow human beings.

"Initially, the displaced people were scared of the local township dwellers. They were not sure whether they would be attacked. But we regularly spoke to them to rebuild their trust in us. They also saw we were always willing to help

them. We ended up befriending them." South African Red Cross volunteers helped provide essential services, including cooking facilities and food, trauma counselling to the grieving, emergency food packs for those returning to their home countries and psychosocial support. Volunteers were trained by the ICRC and the International Federation in the use of ration cards, warehouse management, logistics and stock control. The ICRC also provided 15,000 blankets and 2,000 tarpaulins. The response from the public was heartening. Individuals, companies and institutions donated more than US\$ 1.8 million to the South African Red Cross.

Nompumelelo Dludla, 24, a public relations management student at Durban University of Technology, put her studies on hold so she could volunteer for two weeks in Durban, first in the central kitchen and then collecting and distributing donated goods.

Initially she was shocked at the violence. "I did not expect that such a thing could happen in our 'rainbow nation'."

During the early days of the violence, she was struck by the sad faces of the displaced people. "But as days went by, they started to smile. They were very happy with the help we were giving them, though the pain of being unceremoniously chased away from their homes could not go away."

Good people

Dludla was also encouraged to see that many people did not support the violence. "The whole experience was an eye-opener for me. I saw another good side of people. I remember one day, there was an old lady who came to donate food — she was crying because she was touched a lot by the situation.

"You could see she hurt. Her emotions taught me a lot about human compassion. It also showed that in our country there were a lot of good people."

Dludla says she hopes the situation can be resolved soon. "It is very important for South Africans to learn to live with other nationalities. Soon we will host the 2010 Football World Cup that will be attended by people from all over the world. We have to make the event a huge success for our country."

Minnie Haule, a Cape Town volunteer with more than 25 years in the Red Cross, emphasizes how she found a lot of satisfaction in helping during the crisis.

"My experiences have reinforced that it is important to think about other people before you consider your own interests. You are forced to learn that you should not turn your back on another human being who does not know where he or she is going to eat or sleep."

"You also learn to care about humanity in general. Some of the affected people were angry. They did not like South Africans at all. But I had to convince them that there were good people in South Africa." She gradually gained the trust of most of the foreign nationals she was working with.

Starting in May, she and her team of four women provided two cooked meals a day to several shelters that accommodated the displaced people. At the height of the crisis, she worked 14-hour days.

Future directions

Relief efforts went beyond addressing the immediate needs of those displaced by the violence. The Red Cross included affected communities in decision-making processes by seeking their representation on the committees formed in each shelter.

In addition, the South African Red Cross Society, with support from the International Federation, also plans to launch an anti-discrimination programme in the coming months, under the banner 'Together for Humanity'. This campaign will draw on successful examples from other National Societies.

In mid-September, South African authorities announced the creation of a number of information points to assist people staying in shelters to reintegrate host communities. These desks would be open every day, allowing people to find the information they needed to resettle in their communities, to move to new locations or to return to their countries of origin. They are being staffed by a host of different organizations including the South African Red Cross Society.

Vuyo Bavuma

Vuyo Bavuma is South African Red Cross Society communications adviser.

The election of progressive former bishop Fernando Lugo as Paraguay's president has unleashed a wave of optimism among the country's poorest. The new political landscape should be conducive to the work of the Swiss Red Cross and the ICRC in the country.

THE fight against corruption, agrarian reform, a halt to the invasion of transgenic soya and, of course, the eradication of poverty: the challenges awaiting the newly elected president of Paraguay, Fernando Lugo, are not for the faint-hearted. With an area almost the size of France (400,000 square kilometres), Paraguay has primarily an agricul-

A new order in Paraguay

tural economy, with nearly half of its 6.3 million inhabitants living in rural areas. Mercilessly exploited for generations, the peasants found succour only from the church and more recently from charitable organizations such as the Swiss Red Cross.

In the region of San Pedro in central Paraguay, a bishop rapidly made a name for himself as a champion of

the poor. He was Fernando Lugo. At the end of 2005, with the presidential elections approaching, the coalition of opposition parties asked the bishop to be their candidate. It seemed like a losing gamble from the start. In 60 years no one had defeated the candidate of the ruling Colorado Party, a veritable electoral juggernaut. Lugo accepted the challenge, and after being let go by

the church, won a comfortable victory on 20 April 2008.

The right to health

With the hopes of the poor resting on his shoulders, Lugo can count on the support of numerous charitable associations and international organizations in accomplishing his mission. In a country where 46 per cent of the population live below the poverty line and almost 60 per cent do not have access to a public health system, the Swiss Red Cross is helping local peasant organizations to set up health centres for the rural population.

One of these is Tesai Reka Paraguay, an umbrella group of 30 peasant organizations working to promote universal health care. Health centres, some of which train nurses and midwives, are being built in the remotest corners of the country.

Maria is a midwife in her fifties. She has turned a room in her house into a mini labour ward with the aid of the Swiss Red Cross. The furniture is rudimentary. Two white metal beds and a wooden table laid out with the basic tools of her trade: forceps, a syringe, sterile compresses, and that's about it. "I have been helping women give birth for 25 years," says Maria.

Work in progress

Paraguay has been out of the media spotlight since the fall of the dictator Alfredo Stroessner in 1989, but the ICRC still has significant work to do there. Its delegates make regular visits to the country's detention centres and act in times of crisis, such as in 2004 when 600 poverty-stricken and desperate peasants were arrested for illegally occupying land that had been left to lie fallow. "The prisons were not designed to house so many people, and the sanitary conditions were appalling," says Michel Minnig, head of the ICRC regional delegation for South America. "We helped the authorities to improve living conditions for the inmates by installing running water and providing mattresses and medicines." The peasants were released, but more than 3,000 remain on probation and can be reimprisoned at any moment.

To support the Paraguayan Red Cross in its goal to become a reference organization, the ICRC is helping to train its members in first aid. It is also working with the police forces to try to bring their directives in line with human rights law, as was done with the Rio de Janeiro police in Brazil. The armed forces, who according to the constitution can be called upon to intervene in the maintenance of law and order, are also an important target audience for the regional delegation. "You have to make them understand that they are not engaged in a military action aimed at destroying the enemy, but in a policing exercise in which force must only be used as a last resort," explains Minnig.

The ICRC also acts as a 'consultant'. The government's decision to place prisons under the authority of the Ministry of Health prompted a full investigation into the general state of the penitentiary system, and the implementation of the resulting reforms has been carried out under the ICRC's supervision. "Fernando Lugo's coming to power should facilitate the ICRC's task, even though the state of the prison system is not one of his central concerns," says Minnig.

"And during all those years, every single labour has gone without a hitch."

Although Western medicine is effective, traditional medicine still has a strong hold in Paraguay. The Swiss Red Cross is also supporting a programme to conserve and develop this branch of medicine, which is based mainly on medicinal plants. For example, at San Miguel College, more than 150 students from rural families are enrolled in a six-year course, which includes the study of products of traditional medicinal plants, such as meadowsweet or maté.

The Swiss Red Cross also assists the Paraguayan Red Cross during emergencies, such as during an outbreak of dengue fever in 2007. On that occasion, emergency activities, including blood donation, the distribution of mosquito nets, the destruction of larva nests and the establishment of clinics to treat people affected by the disease, were launched in 50 communes.

Soya invasion

"We are trying to defend the small peasant farmers from the big landowners who are covering every inch of land with soya," explains Jose Parra, coordinator of Tesai Reka Paraguay. Soya — the fatal word.

An information session organized by the Paraguayan Red Cross, in a school in San Pedro province, on yellow fever prevention.



Cultivation of meadowsweet, a plant used in traditional medicine, at San Miguel College.

LUIS VERA / SWISS RED CROSS



LUIS VERA / SWISS RED CROSS

Pierre Bratschi

Pierre Bratschi is a freelance journalist based in Buenos Aires.

Introducing Bekele Geleta

The International Federation's new secretary general, Bekele Geleta, was born in Ethiopia 64 years ago. He brings a wealth of experience in leadership roles in business, the humanitarian sector and government. But he has also known great hardship, as a political prisoner for five years and as a middle-aged refugee in Canada. *Red Cross Red Crescent* magazine finds out what moves him.

Just four days after becoming secretary general, you issued a warning about the high cost of food at the G8 meeting in Japan. Does hunger particularly worry you?

Yes, it does concern me. Hunger has always been in the background in the humanitarian world. Now it's a crisis of civilization with factors that aggravate hunger — poverty, disasters, crop failures, population growth, unequal distribution of food, increased demand for crops as fuel and a clash of cultures that create a lot of conflict.

But we can also be hopeful. Human ingenuity will respond in the long run with a solution. Hunger is the business of the Red Cross Red Crescent in different ways. One is our response to acute hunger. The other is building resilience, such as through the International Federation's five-year food security programme in 15 African countries. Helping people to help themselves is very important.

What other issues are at the top of your agenda?

Many people are being affected by natural disasters, climate change, urban violence, population movement and migration, and diseases. But many lives are also being saved. We are contributing to community-based and indigenous civil society decision-making, increased accountability and even democratization. We're contributing to peace, and building capacity and civil society at a grass-roots level.

For example, the Afghanistan Red Crescent is present in all of Afghanistan's districts. Where no other organization is present, the National Society is there. In Myanmar, where they don't allow external organizations, the National Society is there. Governments and communities are recognizing us.

Volunteers work together across the board without distinction of gender, ethnicity or colour. They work together around the fundamental principles and they are really a very, very good group. We can make a big difference in the world if we pull together.

What motivates you?

In 1984, I joined the Red Cross in Ethiopia on a Tuesday and on the Thursday the secretary general took me to an area where there was hunger. A couple came to me and asked for clothing so they could bury their two children who had died of hunger. "We want to wrap them up," they told me. It was the most shocking incident I have had in my life. You see the emotional strain. You feel the bitterness of life in their eyes, the hatred of life. They're not crying. That was extremely moving. I hadn't seen anything like that. We did everything to make sure their children had a decent burial and supported them.

As a result of that experience, I had a tremendous determination to make a difference. In Ethiopia, we did. We ran a very efficient system. I worked around the clock.

It's extremely painful to see children suffering from lack of food and reaching a stage where they are malnourished and dying. That weighs very, very heavily on my mind. It's one of the things that wakes me up at night.

What do you bring to your new role?

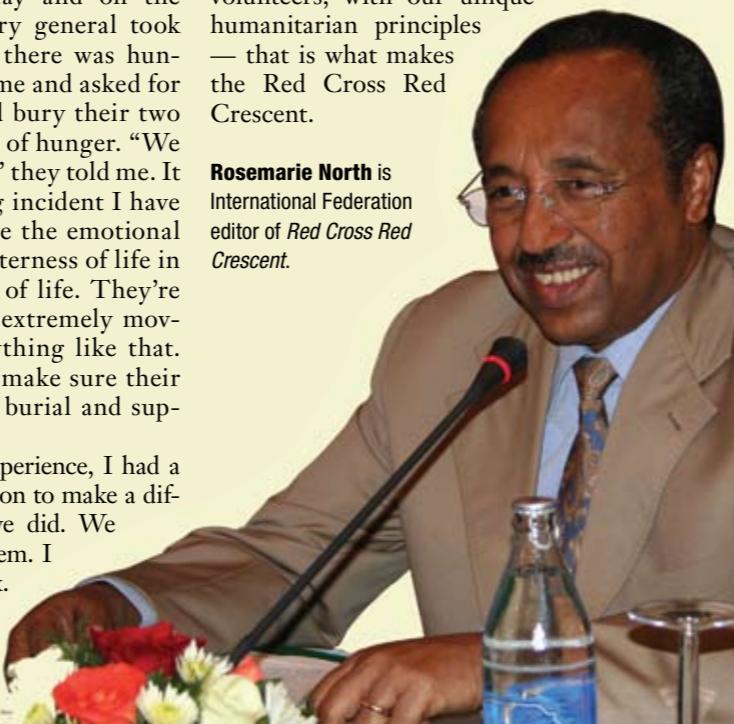
I have lived vulnerability myself. I know what it is. I come from a poor family. I know what it is to go to school hungry. I have served time in prison. And I know what it is to be a refugee. This gives me insight. I know that if people are supported they can turn around an adverse situation. I'm really motivated to help them help themselves. It can be done.

What is the future of the Movement?

There's no question in my mind that the Movement has a very strong future. Disasters never stop, conflicts may not end and people's differences will still divide us. Although there is an overwhelming impulse of human beings to help others in need, deep differences still divide. This is a contradiction in the human mind — saving lives but at the same time not stopping conflict and violence.

National Societies are the basis of the International Federation. The global network and the grass-roots community volunteers, with our unique humanitarian principles — that is what makes the Red Cross Red Crescent.

Rosemarie North is International Federation editor of *Red Cross Red Crescent*.



The ICRC distributed hygiene items, kitchen sets, bed linen and other household items.

that the Red Cross is a humanitarian organization that aims to help people and does not take part in politics. We were lucky: we were heard and believed, although it seemed unbelievable."

Eventually the lull came on 20 August. "People could leave the shelter. Our neighbour invited us to dinner and served us cold beer. That's when we realized the war was over," recall Artur and Hamlet.

Tracing from Tbilisi

At the start of the crisis, Pikria Javashvili, 22, heard the ICRC was looking for English-speaking field officers to join their protection team. Javashvili, who had studied international humanitarian law and knew about the ICRC, called her friend, Nino Berianidze. "I was fed up just watching what was happening on TV and not doing anything to help," recalls Berianidze, 20.

Both young women applied for the job and were recruited within days.

Lela Lazishvili, 25, also heard about the position through a friend. "I wanted to come and see with my own eyes what was happening," she says. Student doctor Ketri Chichinadze, 25, and Tamar Kvaratskhelia, 23, complete the team.

Much of the women's work involves responding to requests from the protection team in Tskhinvali for help in finding relatives of vulnerable, elderly and sick villagers living in South Ossetia, who became separated from their loved ones when younger family members left for Gori or Tbilisi at the start of the war. They then help to reunite the families.

The work has all the hallmarks of a detective story. Berianidze remembers one case in particular. "I was looking for the daughter of an old, bedridden woman from a village outside Tskhinvali. I found the daughter in Tbilisi but she thought that her mother had died. When I spoke to her and told her that we thought we had found her mother, she asked me all sorts of questions. She couldn't believe it was really her, but it was. When we reunited them here at the delegation, I will never forget the look of joy on the daughter's face."

Anastasia Issyuk (ICRC Tskhinvali) and **Jessica Barry** (ICRC Tbilisi).

Helping in Georgia

The recent conflict in Georgia triggered a swift and steady humanitarian response from the Movement. These brief accounts from ICRC Tbilisi and Tskhinvali staff illustrate the early stages of assistance to the victims of the conflict.

As employees of the ICRC Tskhinvali office, Hamlet and Artur started their security shift on 7 August. It ended on 20 August, when they saw the flags on the vehicles of the first ICRC humanitarian convoy entering South Ossetia. During the fighting they kept the gates of the ICRC premises open — people, looking for shelter, were coming all the time. "The neighbours knew that this was a Red Cross building, we had planted the flag on the second-floor balcony for that reason," recalls Artur. "Almost 40 people, mostly women and children, hid in the basement. They were terribly frightened, literally trembling with fear. I was thinking constantly 'how are my parents?', knowing they were worrying about me. As soon as the skirmishes calmed down a little, I ran home — just

for ten minutes — and came back immediately."

Three times armed men in masks entered the compound threatening to ransack the office and set it on fire. Each time Artur and Hamlet talked them into abandoning the idea. "We knew that closing the gates, barring them or resisting in any way made no sense. And you cannot argue much with a tank, you know! The only way to save the office, and the people who entrusted themselves to us, was to convince the visitors

Wide-ranging support

From the outset, the Red Cross Society of Georgia distributed emergency relief to displaced people, recruited blood donors and provided psychosocial support. At the same time, the Russian Red Cross Society provided hygiene articles, blankets, clothes and other assistance to people who fled South Ossetia, took care of hundreds of unaccompanied minors, gave psychosocial support and started a fund-raising campaign.

Our world. Your move.

In 2009 it will be 150 years since a young Swiss businessman saw people suffering and chose to take action. That man, Henry Dunant, understood the power of an individual to make a difference. At a battlefield in Solferino, Italy, in 1859 he tended to the wounded and dying. He returned home to found what is today the world's largest humanitarian organization, the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement. In its wake came the basis of modern international humanitarian law. Ninety years ago, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies was created to assist all people everywhere. Sixty years ago, in 1949, the Geneva Conventions were enshrined in law to reinforce legal protection for people affected by armed conflict.

Henry Dunant's drive to reach out to his neighbours continues today in the hearts of 97 million volunteers who work in every corner of the globe. They are on the front line of every major humanitarian challenge facing the world today and tomorrow — the humanitarian consequences of climate change, migration and population movement, epidemics and public health emergencies, disaster response, violence in urban settings, food crisis, widespread poverty and armed conflict.

All through 2009, the Movement and *Red Cross Red Crescent* magazine will commemorate the continuing need to take humanitarian action. The images on these pages illustrate how one person can make a difference. And how one Movement can change the world.

Our time is now. Our battlefield is everywhere someone is asking for help. What will you do?

Jean-François Berger and Rosemarie North



TALIA FRENKEL / AMERICAN RED CROSS



THORKEL THORKELSSON / INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION



REUTERS / SANTIAGO FERRERO, COURTESY www.alertnet.org

This campaign is a call to action. The world today faces unprecedented challenges and we must all work together to address these challenges and promote a culture of engagement. The 'Our world. Your move.' campaign aims to show how people worldwide are personally affected by today's humanitarian challenges and to highlight what Red Cross Red Crescent volunteers and others are doing to help. Do you have a story to tell? If so, we want to hear from you! The campaign web portal www.ourworld-yourmove.org will allow individuals, groups and National Societies to share their stories



REUTERS / VYDROS KARAHALIS, COURTESY www.alertnet.org



REUTERS / JOSE CENDON, COURTESY www.alertnet.org



REUTERS / ALI JAREKJI, COURTESY www.alertnet.org



REUTERS / BORIS HEGER / ICRC

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Top: Mobile phones made available in Baghdad by the ICRC in collaboration with the Iraqi Red Crescent Society so that the civilian population could contact their relatives.

Bottom left: Emily Nuttal waits at an American Red Cross shelter in California during wild fires. **Bottom right:** A would-be immigrant is carried on a stretcher after arriving at Spain's Canary Islands.

This page

Top left: A Hellenic Red Cross worker fights a forest fire north of Athens.

Top right: A woman sits on sacks of food during a Red Cross distribution in southern Ethiopia.

Above: Iraqi refugee children run at a private school in the Jordanian capital, Amman.

Right: An ICRC delegate talks with a detainee in a prison in Bolivia.





REUTERS / MARIANA BAZO. COURTESY www.alertnet.org

WITOLD KRASSOWSKI / ICRC



THIERRY GASSMANN / ICRC



CARL DE KEYZER / ICRC



BORIS HEGER / ICRC

Page 18, from top:
ICRC training exercise with the Colombian armed forces. A girl displaced by conflict in Iraq drinks water from a tap in a camp in Baghdad. Tens of thousands of Peruvian earthquake survivors take shelter in a stadium in Pisco. Myanmar Red Cross Society volunteers distribute relief to people affected by Cyclone Nargis.

This page

Top: Preparations for distribution of basic household items, with support from Sudanese Red Crescent volunteers, Garsila, western Darfur. **Above left:** Dissemination session for officers of the Democratic Republic of the Congo's armed forces, Uvira, South Kivu province. **Above right:** This open-air surgical team, based in Nyala, Sudan, stands ready to fly or drive to combat zones to treat those in need. **Right:** Home visit by a nurse from the Russian Red Cross.



ZUMRAD MAGOMEDOVA / ICRC

In the hunger zones

In Moldova, the poorest country in Europe, families subsisting on onions and cabbage get a helping hand from their Red Cross.

THE endless fields that looked so promising in spring now stand grey and dry. Another year of drought has brought more hunger and hardship to Moldova, a country of 4.3 million people in eastern Europe.

"Two years ago it all looked different," says Maria Dragach, 35, and a mother of seven whose family has been assisted by the Red Cross Society of the Republic of Moldova. "Our garden was full of vegetables and my husband had a job in Chisinau, but now with this desert land we have to save every penny to buy the cheapest food and to make ends meet."

Maria tried to grow vegetables, but the merciless July sun left her with dried pea-sized green tomatoes and a few cucumbers.

Today her supplies consist of two cabbages, potatoes and carrots. These are

the ingredients for the *schit* (cabbage soup) she cooks daily to give her husband George and boys a decent breakfast before they go to work in the fields. They take homemade bread too. For supper they will have baked cabbage that she cooks while they are in the fields. It's the same every day.

Lean seasons

Buckwheat with onions is a richer meal, but they cannot afford it as often. Sometimes they have spaghetti with fried onions "to add some colour", as Dragach puts it. Vegetable oil is expensive and she tries to save it when she can. Last year the family sold their cow for lack of fodder. They have one rabbit that will probably be the last meat the family will have this year.

"When I was pregnant with my last son," she says, holding her seven-

month-old baby, "I desperately wanted to eat fish. There are no rivers or lakes in our area and we did not have money to buy it in the city. Then my brother's wife sold her gold necklace to buy some fish for me. I still feel so grateful to her for that."

In 2007, Moldova, the poorest country in Europe, was struck by the worst drought in its recent history. The drought affected 80 per cent of the country and badly affected farming, which constitutes one-fifth of Moldova's gross domestic product. Families were forced to sell or slaughter their livestock — they could no longer afford the fodder.

This year, another drought brought more hardship. Gardens dried up. The price of staples such as rice, meat and vegetable oil soared 150 per cent in the first five months of 2008. And there is



After a lean harvest nearly emptied her cellar, Nina Bobuh survived thanks to Red Cross food aid.

less work. To add to the worries, floods swept northern Moldova in July. The United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization says Moldova is the only European country that needs urgent food aid. The World Bank warns that the level of poverty in Moldova could reach 41 per cent in 2008.

"It seems everything comes at once: no fodder, no cow, no milk, no meat, no job," says Dragach. "Our eldest son will not go back to school in September for his last year of studies. He will help his father to earn for the family, otherwise we will not survive."

The Dragach family was among the 10,000 people who received a 30-kg food parcel with rice, buckwheat, vegetable oil, two cans of meat, sugar, flour and oil from the Moldova Red Cross. The distributions were aimed at the most vulnerable people, generally multi-child and single-headed families and those with disabled members in isolated villages. They were most at risk of malnutrition.

Building resilience

Dragach says the parcel was a boost to the family's diet but only lasted two weeks. "I tried to economize but it was difficult to keep that stuff away from the children."

Red Cross executive director Vasile Cernenchi worries about the coming winter. "When I see all the empty glass jars in the cellars that traditionally would have been filled with winter preserves by this time of year, I can foresee the coming problems," he says. "Next winter, we expect to see an acute shortage of food for the most vulnerable people, who will

have neither winter supplies nor money to buy food, the price of which is ever increasing."

The solution lies in longer-term food security programmes, says Edmon Azaryan, head of the International Federation's monitoring mission in Moldova.

"Food, fodder, clothes for children, seeds, money to pay for rents and communal services, agricultural machinery and fertilizers were identified among the most acute needs of the country's rural population," he says.

In Moldova, as in the other countries affected by hunger, what is desperately needed are programmes to build community resilience. The Red Cross Red Crescent is putting in place such programmes, which include providing seeds, tools and fertilizer, in many African countries (see box).

"Moldova's poorest and most marginalized were already finding life extremely tough even before the drought. This has pushed them to the brink of extreme poverty," says Joe Lowry, International Federation representative for Belarus, Moldova and Ukraine.

"As many people of working age — mothers and fathers — have left the country, the onus is on grandparents to care for children, or for children to fend for themselves. This is a very disturbing situation in the year 2008, right on the border with the European Union.

But simple charity is not enough. The Moldova Red Cross needs support to help lift people out of poverty. We are looking at novel, sustainable solutions

like livestock rearing, poultry farming, beekeeping and microcredits to help make this happen."

Making sense of life

Nina and Nadezhda Bobuh are known by their neighbours as "the little bees". The 71-year-old twins, who live in the Moldovan capital, Chisinau, survived last year's grim winter thanks to a Red Cross canteen.

"We only eat the soup there," explains Nina Bobuh. "We pack the main course which we then warm up for dinner and save the buns for breakfast."

Nina, a former book seller, and Nadezhda, a former nurse, guide the Moldova Red Cross volunteer down to their cellar. Shelves are full of empty glass jars that in recent, happier, times were filled with preserves for the winter.

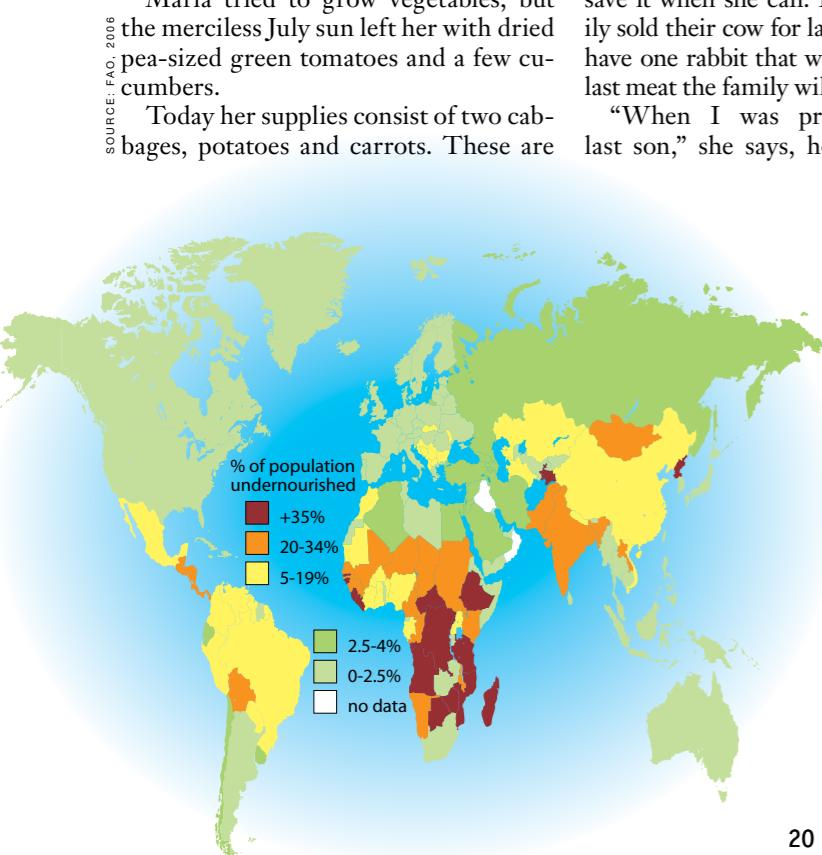
They economize in any way they can. Near their garden stove is a sheaf of brushwood that the elderly sisters collect from the forest every week. They collect water from the roof.

Yet every month they buy a sack of wheat for US\$ 35 to bake bread and biscuits they share with their older neighbours.

"When we share this homemade bread, we feel some sense in life," says Nina Bobuh.

Rita Plotnikova and Tatiana Plosnitsa

Rita Plotnikova is International Federation communications manager in Budapest, Hungary; Tatiana Plosnitsa is International Federation programme coordinator for Moldova.



Action on world hunger

The Red Cross Red Crescent has been responding to a dramatic rise in the price of food. Rising food, fuel and fertilizer prices left an extra 75 million people hungry, bringing the estimated number of undernourished people to 923 million in 2007, according to the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization.

Meanwhile, the ICRC has stepped up its response to needs caused or aggravated by rising food prices, especially in Afghanistan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Somalia and Yemen.

In April 2008, the International Federation launched a five-year community-based Food Security Initiative to benefit 2.2 million people in 15 African countries with projects such as sustainable farming, microfinance, small-scale irrigation schemes and alert systems. One of the countries in the initiative, Ethiopia, has struggled with food prices that rose 330 per cent because of a food shortage after floods and drought in 2007 and 2008, and failed rains. In areas that are the worst hit, the Ethiopian Red Cross Society is assisting 76,000 people with emergency food, better access to water, hygiene promotion and agricultural aid.



The story of an idea – in pictures

Renowned French artist Jean Giraud, alias Moebius, has created a comic strip charting the history of the Movement from 1859 to the present day. Here he shares his views on the world and contemporary humanitarian action.

Jean Giraud, why did you agree to take on this project?

I get a huge number of requests. Some, such as yours, have a greater legitimacy than others, in the sense that they transcend the purely professional and serve a clear public purpose. Thus, the ICRC's request could not be treated lightly. Your organization — the Red Cross Red Crescent — is now part of our planet's consciousness and is the custodian of a universal thought which has the human being at its centre. It was a fascinating prospect, therefore, to retrace the historical construction of this thought, at least, in this case, from the battle of Solferino.

How did you go about this particular assignment?

On an artistic level, I had to reconcile the requirements of historical accuracy with the need to produce a comic strip that was understandable to everyone. In other words, I had to rely heavily on old photographs and a quite substantial body of

documentation, while using plot devices characteristic of comic strips that enabled me to give my imagination free rein. For example, on the first page, Henry Dunant is seen explaining to a French colonel what led him to organize relief for all of the wounded. In fact, we do not know if that exchange took place. But the most important thing for me was to explain clearly the motives behind Dunant's actions and to show how exceptional they were.

I constantly switched between three graphic styles: one very fanciful, almost adolescent, another much more realistic, closely influenced by photographs of the day, and the third, reminiscent of a certain type of symbolic illustration, designed to portray all the force and brutality of specific events, such as the First World War. In the last instance, I put a great deal of my emotions and my family's past into the drawings. I am quite a whimsical person; I have always liked to convey emotions through a multitude of styles.

What is your view on present-day humanitarian action?

Things are not as clear-cut as they used to be. The plethora of actors and of those claiming a particular



Do you believe in the existence of fundamental values?

Of course. The weakest must not be crushed: it is a basic concept. We have a tendency to rush to the aid of the defeated. But I try to take a step back each time, in particular with respect to how the media is portraying the situation. The status of victim does not automatically accord you all the virtues.

Moreover, we tend to demonize certain states without understanding that nations act according to a logic that far exceeds the lifetimes of individuals. We forget to reintroduce history into our vision of the world. In my view, there exists a collective unconsciousness within each human group and we cannot only analyse what happens through a humanitarian or individual prism alone. It calls to mind what Konrad Lorenz said about doves: they are a symbol of peace, but they are neither more nor less fierce than any other animal. Survival takes precedence over all else.

There are many things that are repellant to an honest man, but what makes us revolt should also prompt us to ask what we do that others may find revolting. In so-called rich countries, millions of people are left by the wayside. They are caught up in financial, political, organizational or conceptual storms. What are we doing for them? Today, we should be fighting man's self-destructive tendencies and trying to preserve our ecosystems. The Earth may one day look like Easter Island: deserted but with magnificent monuments. But I remain an optimist! If we fail as Homo sapiens, I am convinced that another life form, and one with awareness, will take our place.

Interview by Didier Revol
ICRC communication officer.

The animated publication, *The story of an idea*, is available in Arabic, Chinese, English, French and Spanish free of charge from the ICRC and the International Federation.



Early Warning Early Action could revolutionize disaster management. But will donors back it?

If I'd had time to research this properly we wouldn't be here." A frustrated correspondent had been scouring Mozambique's flooded Zambezi valley by helicopter for a disaster and found only a successful government operation to evacuate thousands of people from low-lying areas.

The truth is that the smoother evacuations are, the less you're likely to hear about them. No disaster, no story. And then the danger is: no story, no donors.

Even attentive disaster-watchers might be surprised to hear that seasonal Zambezi flood waters in Mozambique in early 2008 peaked above the 2001 level, when more than 100 people died, and well above last year's, when a huge international relief operation followed.

Yet by mid-January, some 55,000 people had been moved, virtually without any loss of life. For a post-conflict African state, it was an extraordinary and barely reported feat (see box).

Forecasts and warnings

As well as Mozambique, Bangladesh, the Caribbean and West and Central Africa are good examples of 'Early Warning Early Action'.

"Unusually, we decided to send emergency funds to the southern African countries affected by the floods in January based on the clearly flagged potential for the situation to deteriorate, including medium-range forecasts," says Peter Rees, head of the International Federation's operations support department.

"What the local Red Cross or Red Crescent can do is prepare communities through the volunteer network and help them be self-reliant," he adds.

What's new in Early Warning Early Action is routinely taking humanitarian action — moving supplies, people and money — based on forecasts and warnings. And at grass-roots level, helping to get these warnings across in a way people can trust.

Rees's experience of managing the International Federation's Disaster Relief Emergency Fund or DREF — a cash reserve for National Societies dealing with emergencies — has highlighted a large increase in climate-

Early warning in action



NASA satellites track Hurricane Ike swirling over Cuba and heading towards the Gulf of Mexico in September 2008.

related disasters: storms, floods and droughts and the health emergencies they can trigger. Exactly the kind of events that can often be foreseen.

Now the International Research Institute for Climate and Society at New York's Columbia University, which specializes in integrating climate information into decision-making, and the International Federation have formed a partnership to develop early-warning methods that will allow the International Federation to mobilize its network for early action.

"We try to provide the International Federation with weather and climate information in context," says Molly Hellmuth, the institute's focal point. "We can help them spot climate anomalies and put them into language the International Federation's whole network can understand."

The International Federation's West and Central Africa zone in Senegal is also working with African meteorological and drought centres on climate factors that affect food security.

Maarten van Aalst, an expert at the Red Cross Red Crescent Climate Centre in The Hague, explains: "Early action applies not just when a particular hazard, like a cyclone, is about to hit, but also to longer timescales when the warning's about elevated risk."

Raising the bar

"The focus of the Red Cross Red Crescent should be on providing both early warning and the last mile of dissemination to households," says Bhupinder Tomar, an International Federation disaster preparedness specialist.

"We need a mechanism that will actually permit action after early warning,

Send us outboards

Sergio Moiane, the senior local official, points to a map on the wall of the Mozambique government's flood-relief centre in Buzi, just south of Beira. "This area's like a funnel," he explains. "We know for sure that when the level at Dombe gets to 5.5 metres, we'll be flooded three days later."

And flooded they were. In mid-January, the height of the rainy season, Buzi was soaked to its very foundations, but otherwise unscathed by the flood waters that had just receded. No one died, although more than 1,100 upriver evacuees were in temporary accommodation nearby, and the flooding was judged to be the worst since independence in 1975.

Buzi is also the training base of the Mozambique Red Cross Society's aquatic rescue team, which will be able to replenish its stocks of fuel and outboard motors thanks partly to a cash grant from the

International Federation's DREF. Branch president and team manager Paulo Inacio Maguanda gently points out that evacuations cost money.

Only quick-impact aid mechanisms like DREF can support local early action like this, as international money may not filter down to the branch during the emergency phase. But once the DREF grant is assured, National Society headquarters can draw on their own reserves as necessary.

The Mozambique Red Cross keeps boat teams in four flood-affected provinces, but they were all desperately short of spare parts and engines by the end of January.

Asked what he would most like from the regional appeal launched by the International Federation a week after the DREF money was announced, Maguanda does not pause for thought. "Send us outboards," he says.

including access to human and financial resources at very short notice.

"The challenge is not only to inform communities of any impending disaster risk, but also to help them deal with it," he adds.

In Togo, experts are about to test an early-warning system in flood-prone villages using poles with coloured bands to represent danger levels. When water rises to the red band, says West and Central Africa disaster management coordinator Youcef Ait-Chellouche, "people know they need to start moving to safe places."

When forecasts for West Africa suggested extremely heavy rainfall this year, the International Federation launched a pre-emptive flood-preparedness appeal worth nearly US\$ 750,000, primed with a substantial contribution from DREF. Relief stocks were pre-positioned in three cities and contingency plans and early-warning systems developed with National Societies.

Soon after the appeal, thousands of people in the Liberian capital Monrovia were made homeless in floods described as the worst ever in the city, while extremely heavy rain caused deaths and damage in Benin, Burkina Faso, Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, Gambia, Niger, Nigeria and Togo.

It is far easier to wait for disaster to happen, then respond, than it is to stay on the ball seven days a week, interpreting carefully worded forecasts, and allocating resources by experience, judgement and specialist advice, rather than what's on the evening news.

"But until we get the donors fully on board with the idea of taking action before disaster strikes," says Rees, "we will have to lean on DREF — the only instrument flexible enough to enable us to guarantee genuinely early action."

Alex Wynter

Alex Wynter is a freelance journalist and editor based in London.

Desperate times for Iraqis

More than five years after the outbreak of the war in Iraq, the humanitarian situation in much of the country remains critical. Despite the improving security situation, living conditions continue to decline, leaving millions on the brink of despair.

In recent months, Iraq has seen a significant improvement in general security. The number of security incidents has dropped by 60 per cent compared with 2006 and 2007. However, fear and vigilance still rule the lives of ordinary Iraqis, who describe the situation today as one of ‘relative security’.

In Baquba, north of Baghdad, in the summer of 2007, I saw Layla Jaafar, a 35-year-old mother of two, mourning the death of her younger sister from cancer. She was crying and murmuring: “I envy her being rid of this life. She is lucky to have a grave and us to bury her.” Owing to the security conditions and limited movement, there was no proper funeral ceremony, no rituals for family and friends to pay their re-

spects. The burial was hasty; everyone wanted it over with quickly. Few family members attended, which is totally out of keeping with the Iraqi way of saying farewell to their loved ones.

There has been no official toll of civilian casualties since the invasion in 2003. At the peak of the violence in 2006 and most of 2007, the figure of dozens a day was widely acknowledged and published in the media. Scores of unidentified bodies were dumped in the streets of Baghdad and other major cities; some were left to rot amid civilians’ fear and reluctance to approach or bury them. Special burial grounds have been established for the unclaimed bodies, while the remains of others are being uncovered in mass graves in and around the big cities.

Relatives grieve as they claim the body of a civilian, killed during clashes, from a hospital morgue in Baghdad’s Sadr City, 23 April 2008.



Hundreds of thousands of Iraqi men and women have seen the inside of a detention place. Those who have been released speak of the ill-treatment and cruelty they suffered, for instance in the Abu-Ghraib prison in Baghdad.

Deteriorating living conditions

While security has seen a ‘relative’ improvement, public services and general living conditions are on a downward slide. For a country that once boasted the best health system in the region, the current health situation is desperate, despite a 60-fold increase in budget between 2002 and 2005. Diseases thought to have long disappeared, such as tuberculosis and cholera, have staged a comeback, while drug addiction is on the rise. Chronic



child malnutrition hovers around 20 per cent, and only 70–80 per cent of the population have access to clean water and public food distributions. These figures are not surprising given that only 40 per cent of the population is employed and more than 30 per cent is living on or below the poverty line.

The insecurity and a deliberate terror campaign of intimidation, kidnapping and killing targeting medical, education and other professionals has prompted a massive brain drain. The medical work force has shrunk by 50 per cent. According to various reports, up to 3,500 teachers have been kidnapped, killed or displaced, leaving their assistants to take on their teaching duties. Student enrolment and attendance have fallen considerably, with women representing around 70 per cent of those dropping out.

Even the most optimistic figures show an annual shortfall of 46 per cent in generated electricity, meaning that Baghdad has no more than two hours of power supply a day. The quality and timing of the power supply is outside the control of householders and what they get does not correspond to their needs. With power restricted to no more than 10 amperes, some electrical appliances have become obsolete, causing families to adopt alternative practices and leading to lower living standards. Some families buy electricity from private contractors to supplement the national supply, but the cost is around US\$ 100 a week, putting it beyond the reach of most families.

Exiled

The displacement of one-fifth of the Iraqi population, either internally or

Children, wounded in a bomb attack, receive treatment in a hospital in Baghdad, 18 June 2008.

externally, is widely considered one of the most serious humanitarian crises in the world. Living conditions for those who have sought refuge abroad are difficult, their lives a continuous struggle for survival. Few people are aware of or understand their plight and growing despair, and the assistance provided to them by the international community and their host countries falls short of their basic needs. Their health and education is suffering and their savings are drying up. Their skills and qualifications are growing rusty or at best are only partially used, while Iraq lacks professionals to fill key positions. The internally displaced are suffering as badly, with little or no access to potable water, electricity, food, health care, education and other basic services. The daily uncertainty has taken its toll both physically and mentally.

Recently, on a hot and dusty afternoon

in Baghdad, Waleed Ahmed, a 42-year-old merchant, joyfully described to me his experience of the improved security, “I drove home safely with my wife and kids at 8.30pm after visiting relatives. During the 15-minute drive, we passed through four checkpoints. This is an achievement, as such a trip was unthinkable last year or the year before.” Taking a drink of water, he continued: “We have had no electricity or water for the past two days and no fuel to run the generator or the car.” After a short moment of reflection, he described his present situation as a “mercy from God”. Noticing my astonishment at his willingness to compromise so drastically, his next-door neighbour quoted an Iraqi proverb, “Show him death for him to accept a fever.”

Nasir Ahmed Al-Samaraie

Nasir Ahmed Al-Samaraie is former Iraqi ambassador and ICRC adviser in Amman.

Continuous support

Present in Iraq since 1980, the ICRC broadened the scope of its operations in the country in 2008. Assistance to the civilian population affected by the conflict includes emergency relief, support to hospitals dealing with large-scale emergencies, efforts to improve health care for the population and the maintenance of vital water and sanitation infrastructure. The ICRC also supports physical rehabilitation centres in Iraq, assists displaced civilians and has initiated some livelihood-support programmes to help destitute people gain a measure of self-sufficiency.

Protection activities focus on people detained or interned by the multinational forces or by the Iraqi authorities; this includes helping them maintain family links, with the active support of the Iraqi Red Crescent Society.

The International Federation has been supporting the Iraqi Red Crescent Society continuously since 1991. The cooperation has focused on rehabilitating health centres, community-based health in schools and communities including immunization campaigns, distributing wheelchairs and large-scale relief operations for vulnerable Iraqis. Recent work includes strengthening the capacity of the National Society, and helping improve the visibility and transparency of the Red Crescent.

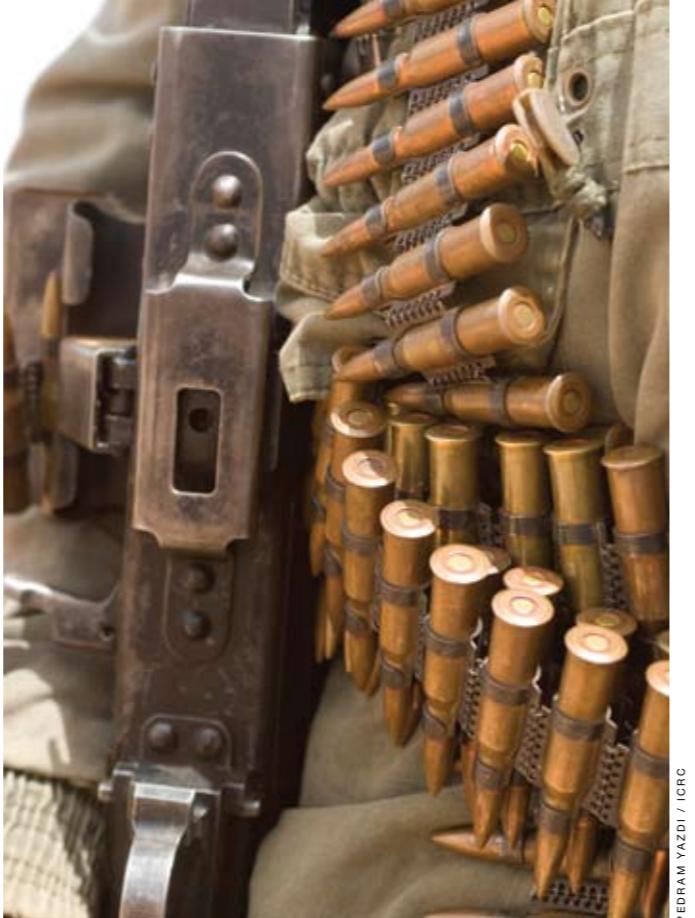
IN BRIEF

Privatization of war

"Ideally, states should not task private contractors to take an active part in combat operations," said Philip Spoerri, ICRC director for international law. "Combat functions in armed conflicts should remain the responsibility of governments and should not be outsourced to private contractors."

So far, 17 countries (Afghanistan, Angola, Australia, Austria, Canada, China, France, Germany, Iraq, Poland, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Sweden, Switzerland, Ukraine, the United Kingdom and the United States) have agreed on the Montreux document, named after the town on Lake Geneva where government experts met from 15 to 17 September 2008 to discuss how to better regulate private military and security contractors. The Swiss foreign ministry launched the initiative in 2006, and the ICRC has been closely associated with it since the outset. The private military and security industry was regularly consulted during the process, as were non-governmental organizations.

The Montreux document reaffirms the obligation of states to ensure that private military and security companies operating in armed conflicts comply with international humanitarian and human rights law. The document also lists some 70 recommendations, derived from good state practice. These include verifying the track record of companies and examining the procedures they use to vet their staff. The ICRC underlined the benefits of this document for countries and people affected by armed conflict. "The paper provides an excellent basis on which the ICRC can discuss issues of humanitarian concern with all countries where pri-



PEDRAM YAZDI / ICRC

vate military and security companies operate, or where these firms are based," Spoerri pointed out. "Because of its very practical recommendations, it will be especially useful for states with weak governments or those struggling with the impact of armed conflict, but which want to regulate such companies on their territory."

Floods sweep India

In August and September, an estimated 2.6 million people were displaced by devastating floods in India that killed more than 50 people. Isolated between the original course of the Kosi River and a new channel that formed when its banks were breached in Nepal, people struggled to survive. Humanitarian organizations — including the Red Cross Red Crescent — assisted in spite of massive logistical challenges. In Bihar alone, nearly 300,000 homes were destroyed.

"The rising waters destroyed many of the bridges and roadways that would otherwise have

been used to access nearly 1,600 villages that desperately need help," said Peter Ophoff, head of delegation for the International Federation in India. "As a result, the Indian Red Cross Society and others involved in relief efforts are relying on boats and helicopters."

The Indian Red Cross distributed tents, tarpaulins, mosquito nets, basic food and kitchen sets. It also helped move people to safety, provided first aid and deployed three water and sanitation units to provide vital clean water for drinking and improved hygiene. The International Federation coordinated the procurement and

delivery of 10,000 tents and supported detailed assessments of longer-term needs.

"It is important to recognize that, while the situation in Bihar is the focus of international attention, this year's monsoon has caused additional distress across the nation," said Ophoff. "Throughout India, nearly 500,000 homes have been destroyed and more than 18 million people have been affected by flooding."

Officials said flood waters in Bihar might not fully recede for months. Submerged villages could remain unreachable and displaced people dependent on relief for the foreseeable future.



Americas' storms

Thousands of National Society volunteers across the Americas were deployed in August and September to prepare for and respond to storms Fay, Gustav, Hanna and Ike.

In the north of Haiti, tropical storm Hanna caused havoc just days after the country was hit by Hurricane Gustav. Haitian National Red Cross Society staff and volunteers, working with partners in search-and-rescue missions, gave early warning information to communities, encouraged people at risk to move to safer ground as water levels rose, provided first aid and helped shelter displaced people.

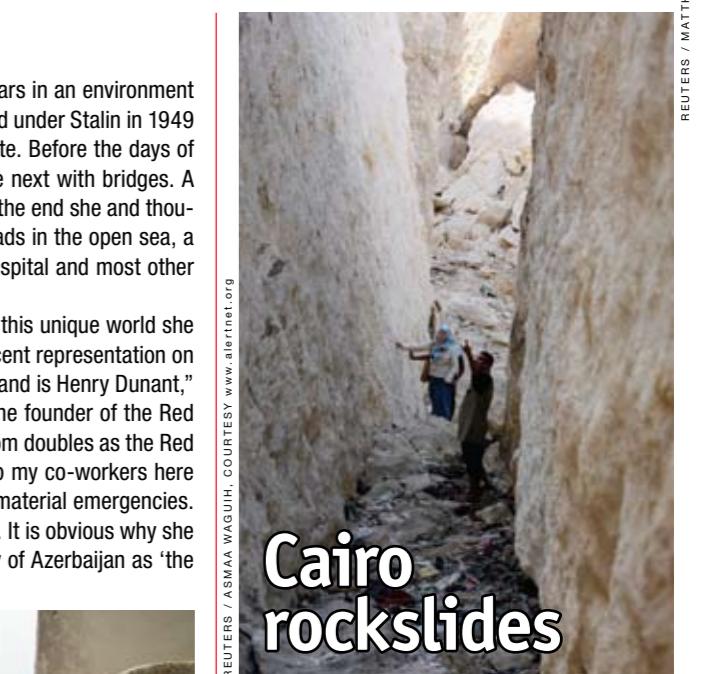
When Hurricane Ike passed over the Caribbean, hot on the heels of Hanna, the sheer volume of water it dumped on Haiti, the poorest country in the Americas, proved too much. The floods unleashed by the torrential rains, gushing unimpeded through the deforested hills, led rivers to burst their banks, change their courses and wash away many lightly built homes. The storms killed an estimated 700 people and forced 200,000 to evacuate.

Meanwhile, in Cuba, early warning saved many lives during Gustav, the worst hurricane in 50 years, when thousands of people were rapidly evacuated. But the damage to homes and infrastructure was immense, with an estimated 100,000 homes destroyed by the hurricane. "Around 2,500 volunteers were called into action to address relief needs arising



from Fay, and 4,000 volunteers had to be mobilized to deal with the damage caused by Hurricane Gustav," said Luis Foyo, director general of the Cuban Red Cross.

Across the Americas, volunteers worked around the clock to evacuate people, care for them in emergency shelters, distribute food, provide first aid and psychological support, and trace missing family members. In some places, rains made delivery of aid hazardous and reduced the ability to conduct assessments. The efforts of the Red Cross were backed by international technical expertise and emergency appeals launched by the International Federation.



Cairo rockslides

Egyptian Red Crescent Society intervention teams and volunteers helped rescue people buried under rockslides at a shanty town on the edge of Cairo on 6 September. Up to 200 people were feared to have been buried when huge boulders fell on Manshiyet Nasr neighbourhood, which is home to 1.2 million people. Red Crescent staff and volunteers also helped transport injured people to hospitals and erected a 50-tent camp. The disaster occurred at about 09:00 when most residents were sleeping, having woken up earlier to eat ahead of the daylight fast for Islam's holy month of Ramadan.



IN BRIEF

Humanitarian law training

Filipino graduates of a post-graduate diploma course in international humanitarian law (IHL) say the course contributed to their development as professionals and as advocates for disseminating IHL in the Philippines. The course is offered online, with ICRC support, by the National Academy of Legal Studies and Research at the University of Law in Hyderabad, India.

"The course allowed me to understand the universality of IHL, its idealism and the importance of its application. As manager in charge of the IHL office of the Philippine National Red Cross, it was a must for me to do this course," said course graduate Roy C. Bautista.

Another graduate, Teofilo G. Panaga of the Philippine Navy, said, "I found the course useful not only for my personal advancement but most of all for my organization. It shows that the Filipino armed forces adhere to the principles of IHL, especially its compliance with the Geneva Conventions on the need to educate its personnel on IHL."

The course was an eye-opener for Myrish Cadapan-Antonio of the Salonga Center for Law and Development at Silliman University. "In the academic arena in the Philippines, IHL is still in its infancy," he said. "In fact it is only since this course and the ICRC-sponsored moot court competitions have existed that IHL principles and laws have begun to permeate Philippine legal education."



REUTERS / SUSANA VERA, COURTESY www.alerinet.org

Spanish plane disaster

Twenty-three Spanish Red Cross teams brought psychological support to families of the victims of a plane crash at Madrid airport on 20 August that killed more than 150 people. The teams, with 170 psychologists, doctors, nurses, social workers and first aiders, helped family members who went to the temporary morgue each day to wait for the identification of their loved ones.

Pablo Navajo, spokesman for the Spanish Red Cross, said, "This initial assistance is very important to help affected family members avoid cases of post-traumatic stress which can manifest later." More than 700 Spanish Red Cross volunteers participated in search and rescue, and provided first aid and shelter to teams involved in the operation. They distributed hygiene articles, blankets, food and other relief items to relatives.



Pakistan

The ICRC is working to meet the emergency needs of around 60,000 people affected by the armed conflict involving government forces and armed opposition groups in North West Frontier Province (NWFP) and Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA).

"The situation is evolving rapidly and remains unpredictable. In order to address the needs of the people who fled the fighting, we need to be able to move quickly and be flexible," said Pascal Cuttat, the head of the ICRC delegation in Pakistan. "We are expanding our support for hospitals dealing with large influxes of war-wounded people. But we have to be ready to do more."

Funding has been increased recently and will be used mainly to deliver relief to people who have been displaced or cut off by the conflict. The ICRC has already distributed essential items such as tarpaulins, blankets, hygiene items and cooking pots to people arriving in improvised camps or staying with host families in Lower Dir and Mardan in NWFP, and is now entering the next phase in its relief effort, which includes the distribution of food to the displaced.

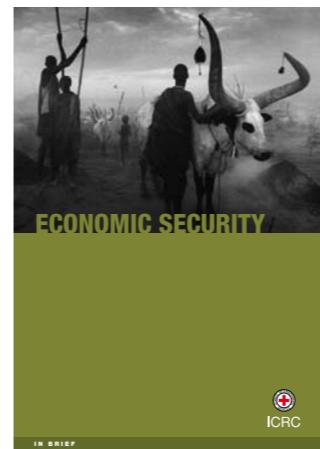
"The ICRC reminds all parties to the conflict of their obligation to comply with international humanitarian law," said Cuttat. "In particular, the parties must respect and protect individuals not, or no longer, taking part in hostilities, i.e., civilians and the wounded, sick or detained. In addition, they must respect and protect humanitarian workers and allow and facilitate deliveries of humanitarian relief supplies."

In NWFP and FATA, the ICRC is working in partnership with the Pakistan Red Crescent Society, and coordinating its activities with the authorities and other humanitarian organizations.

RESOURCES



BOOKS



Economic security

ICRC, 2008

This leaflet provides a comprehensive overview of the range of ICRC activities in this area — from emergency distributions of food and household items to establishing programmes for sustainable food production and microeconomic initiatives. It illustrates clearly that food is not enough. Unavoidable expenditures also include shelter, access to health care, education and taxes, among others.

Available in English and French.



Inter-American Plan 2007-2011
International Federation, 2008

The result of intense work by 35 National Societies, this plan sets out how the Americas will use the International Federation's Strategy 2010, the recommendations of a mid-term review, the Federation of the Future plan, the Strategy of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and the Global Agenda goals to scale up the impact of the region's work by 2011.

Available in English and Spanish.

The International Federation field school

International Federation, 2008

This six-page brochure explains the concept of field schools, which aim to train health professionals in rapid health assessments and managing health programme planning, implementation and evaluation in increasingly complex emergencies. Field schools provide real mission experience through direct interaction with communities that are prone to or affected by an emergency, or entering the post-emergency phase.

Available in English.

The ICRC and universities

ICRC, 2008

This concise leaflet outlines the different ways in which the ICRC works with academic circles and recommends to governments on how to prepare their disaster



ICRC materials are available from the International Committee of the Red Cross, 19 avenue de la Paix, CH-1202 Geneva, Switzerland. www.icrc.org. International Federation materials are available from the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, P.O. Box 372, CH-1211 Geneva 19, Switzerland. www.ifrc.org.

Red Cross Red Crescent magazine is also available online at: www.redcross.int.



Introduction to the Guidelines

for the Domestic Facilitation and Regulation of International Disaster Relief and Initial Recovery Assistance
International Federation

laws and plans to avoid common problems. The guidelines set out minimal quality standards in humanitarian assistance and the kinds of legal facilities aid providers need to do their work effectively.

The guidelines were unanimously adopted in November 2007, at the 30th International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent.

Available in Arabic, English, French, Russian and Spanish.

Influenza: preparing for a pandemic

International Federation, 2008

Influenza features in the opening chapter of the story of the International Federation, whose predecessor was formed within a few months of the 1918-19 influenza pandemic that claimed 20 to 40 million lives. Today 'bird flu' has killed more than half the people it has infected. It could evolve into a virus that spreads human to human. A community-based organization like the Red Cross Red Crescent can be influential in prevention — the world's first line of defence. This publication outlines actions taken to date and plans for the future.

Available in English.

Wound ballistics: an introduction for health, legal, forensic, military and law enforcement professionals

ICRC, 2008

This DVD explores the impact on human tissue of bullets from rifles and handguns, as well as fragments from explosive weapons — an area of study known as wound ballistics. Designed for instructional purposes, the film has been made for a range of specialist audiences.

DVD available in English, French and German. Sfr 30.

can sometimes be blurred and the only way to categorize specific situations is by examining each individual case. The intensity of violence is the key determining factor. This categorization has direct consequences for the armed forces and civil authorities as it does for the victims of the violence. It determines which rules apply and the protection they provide is established in greater or lesser detail according to the legal situation.

Available in English. Sfr 2.



VIOLENCE and the use of force

ICRC



VIDEOS

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