

RCRC

Red Cross Red Crescent

Issue 2 · 2014

www.redcross.int



When the International Prisoners-of-War Agency was established by the ICRC 100 years ago this August, its objective was to trace people who had been separated from loved ones during the First World War. It was a huge task: during and after the war, agency volunteers processed tracing requests concerning nearly 2.5 million prisoners of war.

With no form of mechanized data management then available, all requests were analysed, sorted, typed on index cards and filed for future use. For more, see our list of links at www.redcross.int.

Lessons of war

How the Syrian Arab Red Crescent rose to the challenges of civil war

We need to talk about volunteering

A new study questions the strength and reach of our volunteer network

Quiet killer

Once on the decline, dengue fever has made a deadly comeback

Lost in migration



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



International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies



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.

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 189 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'.

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.

A new chapter in Movement's family links story

A retired air commodore with the Indian armed forces, J.L. Bhargava remembers his first encounter with the Red Cross Red Crescent Movement. It was during the 1971 India–Pakistan war, when an ICRC delegate brought letters to the prisoner-of-war (POW) camp where Bhargava was detained. "Strangely, everyone except me got at least one letter," recalls Bhargava, who shared his story on the blog of the ICRC's New Delhi office as part of the Movement's MyStory project (see page 26). "So everyone got excited and all over the room they were opening the letters."

"One of the ICRC representatives asked me, 'You didn't get a letter?' I said: 'No.' I was very perturbed. He said: 'Next month, I will bring you a letter.' The next month, when the mail came, I got five letters."

More than four decades later, 72-year-old Bhargava remembers these letters and the ICRC visits vividly — a testament to the enduring value that such messages and visits bring. Though not every attempt to trace a relative or deliver a message is successful, every day people around the world are connected to loved ones thanks to the individual actions of Movement volunteers and staff.

Today, their work is backed up by an increasingly sophisticated global tracing system that endeavours to keep pace with the modern communications revolution while adapting to new challenges. One example is the Migrants in Europe project, in which 18 European National Societies and the ICRC have teamed up to help migrants search for relatives. They do so by allowing their own photographs to be posted on a website, along with a simple message such as 'looking for my brother' or 'looking for my husband' (see more at www.redcross.int).

The notion that delivering news about family members during conflict is a vital humanitarian action has been present since the Movement's inception. Sixty

years later, during the First World War, the practice took on greater proportions, when some 7 million POWs were detained and more than 20 million people were displaced. The International Prisoners-of-War Agency, set up by the ICRC 100 years ago this August, ultimately delivered more than 1.8 million parcels to POWs during that conflict.

Today, the communications revolution provides the illusion of universal connectivity. Still, millions of people fall through the cracks, particularly during conflict, natural disaster or in detention settings (where communication is often restricted).

One of our greatest challenges is how to help the growing number of migrants, many of whom are stranded in camps, prisons or host communities far from home and their network of friends and family. The Movement's history and expertise with tracing and detention — and its worldwide network of National Societies — put it in a good position to help. Our cover story (Lost in Migration, page 4) focuses on just one example in which a National Society and the ICRC are working together to provide Restoring Family Links (RFL) services to detained migrants.

Elsewhere around the world, National Societies, the ICRC and the IFRC are engaged in local and regional efforts to assist migrants; tracing services offer an important means of reaching out to vulnerable people on the move.

But our collective response is still small compared to the vast scope of the problem. Does the Movement have the capacity and the will to scale up its RFL network to meet this challenge? A century ago, the First World War prompted a massive mobilization that laid the foundation for today's global RFL network. What would it take to create a similar mobilization today? Send your thoughts to rcrc@ifrc.org.

Malcolm Lucard
Editor, Red Cross Red Crescent magazine



In August 1914, the ICRC established the International Prisoners-of-War Agency to restore contact between prisoners of war and their families — and later, between all people separated by war. Photo: ICRC



The first ICRC visit with prisoners of war took place at the Gardelegen camp in Germany in 1915. Photo: ICRC



Today, it is estimated that there are some 220 million migrants around the world. Many are being detained. Can the Movement's history and expertise with tracing offer migrants an important humanitarian service in certain cases? Photo: REUTERS/Athit Perawongmetha

In brief...

Iraq conflict escalates

With armed conflict escalating in Iraq, the Movement is responding to what has become a large-scale, complex humanitarian crisis.

The ICRC has distributed food, water and other aid to displaced people in numerous cities and provided medical support and supplies to local hospitals. "Many hospital personnel have fled because of the danger, and there is a shortage of medicines," says Patrick Youssef, head of the ICRC delegation in Iraq.

Some 4,000 Iraqi Red Crescent Society volunteers are also involved in providing assistance, and 18 branch operation rooms have been set up to distribute aid, according to the IFRC, which allocated US\$ 400,000 from its Disaster Relief Emergency Fund to support the National Society.

Branches in several northern provinces, for example, have provided thousands of hot meals, as well as tents and other assistance for families displaced from Mosul. In the

Voices

Speaking of inappropriate aid...

"During a drought in Zambia, we received donations of second-hand underwear. This topic [of inappropriate aid] is very real."

Samson Mujuda, a representative of the Zambian embassy in Ethiopia, speaking during a November 2013 meeting of diplomats and disaster management experts from 35 African nations in a disaster response dialogue at the African Union (AU) in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

"As part of our response to Typhoon Haiyan, we received four boxes of ball gowns."

Jeanine Cooper, representative of the United Nations (UN) Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs to the AU, speaking at the same meeting, which also focused on developing better agreements and national legislation to improve timely delivery of appropriate aid.



'Panic is the enemy' when Ebola strikes

Ever since ebola swept through eastern Sierra Leone this summer, 21-year-old Julius Tamba Kamanda has been extremely busy performing a dangerous and crucial task. Kamanda belongs to the Sierra Leone Red Cross Society dead body management team (pictured above), which often collects as many as 8 or 9 bodies per day as part of efforts to contain the deadly disease. "We don't have a day off," he says, adding that team members start at 8 am and "sometimes get back to our homes around midnight."

Similarly, volunteers from the Red Cross Society of Guinea have also been collecting dead bodies and stepping up emergency communication to contain rumours and raise awareness on how to prevent the spread of the virus. "The Red Cross can play a pivotal role in trying to stem the fear and stigma which can rise very quickly during such an outbreak," says Facely Diawara, who oversees the National Society's health operations. "Panic is our worst enemy."

Helping women in emergencies

Many refugees fleeing Syria into neighbouring Lebanon often find themselves living in informal tent settlements or unfinished buildings that lack even the most basic sanitation services. While this puts the entire refugee population at risk, the lack of adequate hygiene is often hardest on women. In response, the IFRC and the Lebanese Red Cross are providing women's emergency kits for 5,300 women and teenage girls.

The kits include basic necessities for maintaining feminine hygiene and items that can help protect women in cases of sexual violence. "I am eager to learn how my daughters and I can benefit from this women's kit," says Salwa, one of the 1 million refugees who have fled to Lebanon since the conflict started in Syria.

ICRC condemns murder of Libya delegate

An ICRC delegate with more than seven years' experience carrying out assignments in Gaza, Iraq, Sudan and Yemen was killed by armed men in the city of Sirte, Libya in early June. Michael Greub, a 42-year-old Swiss national, had been the head of the organization's Misrata sub-delegation since March. Two staff members who were with him when the incident occurred remain extremely shocked, but were physically unharmed. "The ICRC vigorously condemns this heinous attack," ICRC Director-General Yves Daccord said. "We are devastated and outraged. Michael was a devoted humanitarian who spent many years of his life helping others."

Humanitarian index

2.5: percentage of people suffering from dengue who die from the infection.

20: percentage of those who contract dengue and die from the infection if they lack adequate health-care services.

70: percentage by which the local production of medicines in Syria has been reduced during three years of conflict.

Sources: IFRC, ICRC, United Nations, Syrian Arab Red Crescent

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We need to talk about volunteering

A new study finds that our volunteer network is not consistently strong in many parts of the world. The study's authors say it's time for a serious and frank conversation about volunteering.

Articles, letters to the editors and other correspondence should be addressed to:

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■ Health

Quiet killer

Once nearly eliminated, dengue fever has made a dramatic and deadly comeback. Episodic, isolated eradication campaigns are not enough to contain this preventable, mosquito-borne disease.

■ Interview

Speaking up for humanity

After his first two years on the job, ICRC President Peter Maurer reflects on his role as humanitarian ambassador and on the future of humanitarian action.

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■ Profiles

My Red Cross Red Crescent story

People from across the Movement share their personal Red Cross and Red Crescent stories.

■ Resources

A new pamphlet on the Fundamental Principles and a downloadable and visually striking new app from the Finnish Red Cross are among the Movement's new offerings.

We gratefully acknowledge the assistance of researchers and support staff of the ICRC, the IFRC and National Societies.

The magazine is published three times a year in Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish and is available in 189 countries, with a circulation of more than 70,000.

The opinions expressed are those of the authors and not necessarily of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement. Unsolicited articles are welcomed, but cannot be returned.

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On the cover: A detained Cambodian worker waits to cross the Thailand–Cambodia border at Aranyaprathet, in Sa Kaew, Thailand, 15 June 2014.

Photo: REUTERS/Athit Perawongmetha

Photos this page, from top: Haris Coussidas/ICRC; Laila Tawakkol/SARC, Homs branch; Paula Bronstein/Getty Images; Salvadorean Red Cross Society; Nick Jones/IFRC



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Lost in migration

One hundred years after the Movement established the Central Tracing Agency and the International Prisoners-of-War Agency, migration poses new challenges and options for Movement efforts to reconnect families and protect migrant detainees.

HERE ISN'T MUCH TO DO in an immigration detention centre (IDC) except wait. Day in, day out, with no pens, paper, books or contact with the outside world, the only thing the 1,564 detainees in the Lenggeng IDC can do is wait and hope that someone will help to get them home.

The Lenggeng IDC sits on a hill in a remote and picturesque jungle area, south of Kuala Lumpur,

the capital of Malaysia. Here, amid the deceptively pretty bougainvillea and mango trees, sit hundreds of frustrated and anxious men and women from countries such as India, Iran, Myanmar, Nepal, Nigeria, Palestine and Uganda. They speak many different languages and have different stories but most are united in a common desire to go home and see their families.

"I was promised a good job in Malaysia," says Catherine,* one of some 250 women migrants detained in the centre. "I thought it would mean a better life and more money for my mother and child.

"About two months after I arrived, the authorities raided my house and arrested me for not having valid work papers," says Catherine, originally from Kampala, Uganda. "I don't have any money to pay for my ticket home so for almost a year I have been waiting here in detention, hoping and praying that someone will help and I can leave soon."

"Today I was able to write my first Red Cross message (RCM) to my mother, which has given me some hope. I have been able to make one phone call to her but my credit ran out and I can't afford to buy

"RFL with migrants is... a lot more complicated than in a natural disaster because you're dealing with people from many countries, with different languages and all kinds of different situations."

Muna Djuly, ICRC assistant protection officer



© Jaya Maruthan, head of international relations at the Malaysian Red Crescent Society, visits a migration detention centre in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, as part of an effort to help detained migrants contact family members via Red Cross messages. Photo: Haris Coussidis/ICRC



© Migrants from different countries in western Africa sit in the police commissioner's office after being arrested at a border checkpoint in Agadez, Niger in March 2014. Photo: REUTERS/Joe Penney

New frontiers

Over the past few decades the global rate of migration has increased significantly with more than 200 million people now classified as international migrants. Factors such as conflict, persecution, poverty and the search for employment are driving this global trend, which in turn is creating growing humanitarian needs for the Red Cross Red Crescent Movement.

In South-East Asia, migration is a prevalent issue. For example, between 2 and 4 million migrants, of many different nationalities, are thought to be living in Malaysia. Some pass through, fleeing conflict or persecution, ultimately hoping to seek asylum or be resettled in other countries such as Australia or Canada. Many others are duped by traffickers or are economic migrants who come to Malaysia to work, often illegally, and find themselves arrested and awaiting deportation in one of Malaysia's 17 immigration detention centres around the country.

Around the world, the Movement offers services for migrants in desperate and immediate need (those who have just landed by boat or crossed a desert, and are hungry, sick, cold or dehydrated, for example). And in many cases, it offers more long-term help such as integrating with new communities, referrals for dealing with legal or other issues, or tracking down lost loved ones through its Restoring Family Links services. For those in detention, cut off from normal communication channels, some National Societies see the Movement's RFL network as offering a unique global service to populations with roots in every corner of the globe.

One hundred years after the establishment of the Central Tracing Agency and the International Prisoners-of-War Agency — institutions that cemented the Movement's role in reuniting people separated by war and in protecting those detained during wartime — the issue of migration is pushing the Movement's protection mandate into new territory.

Could RFL be an important means to reach out to this growing, and extremely vulnerable, migrant population?



another card, so hopefully this message will reach her and she will know that I am OK."

The message that Catherine was able to send home comes thanks to a joint pilot project, which began almost three years ago, between the Malaysian Red Crescent Society and the ICRC that has brought Restoring Family Links (RFL) services for detained migrants in the Lenggeng IDC.

"The people in Malaysia's IDCs come from many different countries," explains Lim Mei Chin, the Malaysian Red Crescent's RFL officer. "More recently, there has been a rise in the number of people from Rakhine state in Myanmar."

During the RFL officers' visits, the detainees are able to write Red Cross messages to their families or provide telephone numbers so that the Malaysian Red Crescent Society, other National Societies or ICRC delegations can deliver short oral messages to relatives over the phone. However, unlike traditional *salamat* or "I am alive" messages, which are traditionally dictated to Red Cross Red Crescent staff in separate meetings and avoid authority censors, in Malaysia the phone messages are extracted from what has been written down in the Red Cross messages.

Going home is not easy

It may not sound like much. But for the detainees, awaiting their fate with days turning into weeks, then months and years, any help or interaction with the outside world is welcomed. "Some of them have been here for as long as two years," explains Mohammed Ramzan Bin Che Hassan, who has been in charge of the Lenggeng centre for the past three

years and has seen the number of detainees rise from 800 to more than 1,500 during his tenure.

Lim Mei Chin, Malaysian Red Crescent's RFL officer, says Red Cross messages are still a crucial tool because many relatives of migrants do not have phones or computers. Often they have changed phone numbers, or the migrants have lost the phone numbers of their loved ones.

Photo: Haris Coussidis/ICRC

Despite all the new technology and things like Facebook, which can be very useful, the Red Cross message is still very important.

Lim Mei Chin, RFL officer, Malaysian Red Crescent Society

"We just want these people to go back to their homes," he says, adding that most detainees are being held due to immigration offences such as lack of official documentation or valid work permits. "Here, we are dealing with detention and deportation, not punishment."

But 'going home' isn't so easy. Organizing the paperwork and lost passports through embassies, or finding the funding to pay for plane tickets, means many of those brought to the IDC will be detained for at least three months. And with their mobile phones confiscated on arrival and telephone cards for the pay phones prohibitively expensive, contact with their families can quickly be lost.

"There is definitely a need for the RFL service in the immigrant detention centres," says Muna Djuly, the ICRC's assistant protection officer. "The detainees will maybe get one free call when they arrive or maybe on a holiday like at Eid. Other than that, they have to pay for a phone card, which often they can't afford, in order to make international calls. And, of course, there is no internet access, so as time goes on, they are cut off from their families."

Each month, before the RFL team arrives at the IDC, the detainees, who for the moment are always preselected by the authorities, sit two by two in orderly lines, with men on one side and women on the other.

People on the move

All are wearing distinctive yellow t-shirts emblazoned with *tahanan Imigresen* (immigration detainee). Some are already familiar with what have come to be known as 'red messages' and are hoping to receive a reply from loved ones. Others are hearing about the RFL service for the first time and are shown a poster, which explains the service in languages such as Arabic, Chittagonian, Indonesian, Nepali and Persian.

Each time they visit, the ICRC and Malaysian Red Crescent Society teams set up desks and chairs in an empty room, which is usually used for weekly medical visits by the Malaysian Ministry of Health.

"The RFL team always meets detainees in a room away from the cells," says Max Weigmann, deputy head of the ICRC regional delegation in Kuala Lumpur, explaining that the visits offering RFL services are completely different from the ICRC detention visits, which are also undertaken here to check on the conditions and welfare of detainees.

In most countries where ICRC works in detention settings, RFL services are integrated into its one-on-one meetings with detainees. While Red Cross messages could be part of that visit, the main purpose is to speak about prison conditions and

treatment of inmates. The RFL meetings organized with the Malaysian Red Crescent Society are different and focus entirely on the process of relaying messages from the detainees, which in itself can be a complicated process.

"RFL with migrants is very different and, in most cases, less sensitive for the authorities than in a conflict situation," says Djuly. "It's also a lot more complicated than in a natural disaster because you're dealing with people from many countries, with different languages and all kinds of different situations."

"In an emergency or conflict, you tend to hear similar stories and are mainly tracing people who are still in their own countries. RFL for migrants is totally different because you are dealing with people on the move."

The complexity of each human story is evident during the monthly RFL visit to Lenggeng. IDC regulations require that all the messages be written in English. So it can take some time before the information is extracted and written down on the form.

It takes almost three hours to collect 22 Red Cross messages. A number of the detainees are unable to read or write. The vast majority cannot speak English and rely on their co-detainees who have learnt Malay or have a smattering of English to help them convey their messages to the team.

One by one, stories are told and messages are collected. There is the young man from Nepal who was tricked into working on a remote plantation and ran away. Next, three Indian men explain to a Tamil-

speaker from the Malaysian Red Crescent Society that they want to contact their wives and ask them to buy their plane tickets home.

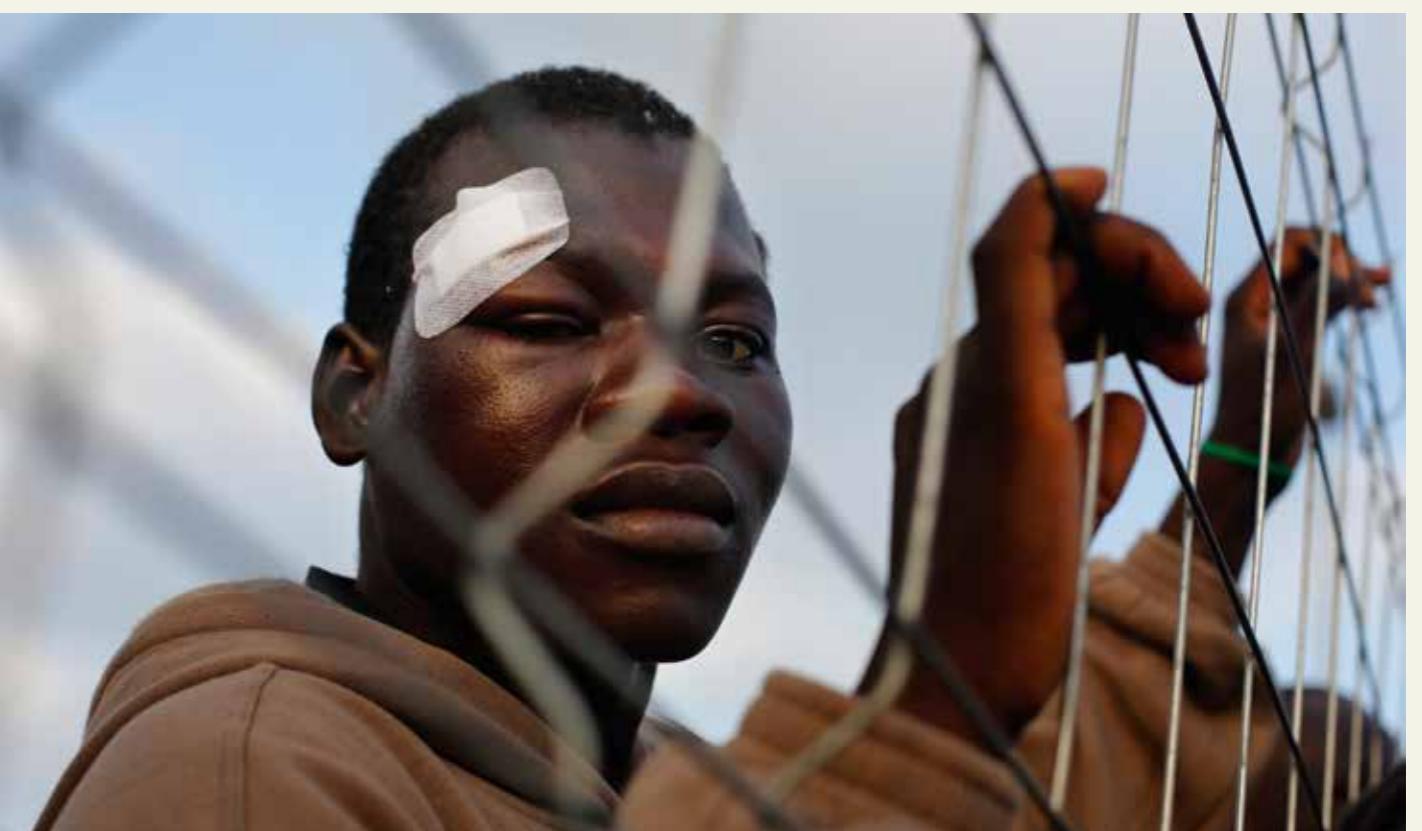
Then young women from Cambodia, Myanmar and Uganda, all arrested for various irregularities with paperwork and visas, come forward wanting to write to parents and grandparents. It's an unspoken reality that many women are trafficked into prostitution in Malaysia but many are too ashamed to tell their families.

Some detainees are hesitant about using the RCM service. "It sometimes happens that detainees are reluctant to fill out an RCM for fear of worrying their families or feeling ashamed that this has happened to them," says Lim. "We try to persuade them but some people just don't want to be found."

Once an RCM is written, there is also a further challenge of ensuring the address and contact information are correct so the message can be delivered successfully.

"Phone numbers, addresses and other contact information often get lost in the chaos of the journey or sometimes names are not spelt correctly," explains Djuly as she points to one form in which 'near to the coffee factory' has been neatly written in the address section. "Plus many family members move around or become scattered, making tracing difficult."

The detainees have no writing paper, so some detainees have written out important phone numbers on the back of chewing gum wrappers or noodle



packets and painstakingly copy down the digits onto the RCM forms.

"Sometimes we can get permission to get their mobile phones back from the lockers so we can find a number someone is looking for," says Lim while scanning through the messages for potentially sensitive words, which are blacked out with a pen. "We always have to explain to them that they can only write family news," she adds. "The authorities check all the RCMs so we want to protect their [detainees'] security and take out anything that could be seen as critical or sensitive."

A reliable tool

In the absence of reliable contact information, mobile phones and internet access, Lim stresses that the Red Cross message, first set up 100 years ago, remains a key tool for modern tracing work.

"Despite all the new technology and things like Facebook, which can be very useful, the Red Cross message is still very important," she says. "We still need to use the RCM forms because not everyone has connectivity and sometimes they don't know the phone numbers or their families moved away a long time ago. Now we can scan the form and e-mail it to our colleagues in National Societies and their branches to hand out in the villages or wherever. It's still a good way of working."

As each case is processed, Ramlan and his staff hover in the background taking a curious interest

in what is taking place. Over the past three years, the ICRC and Malaysian Red Crescent Society have slowly become accepted and understood within the detention centre. But there are still challenges in terms of communication and a key part the process is managing expectations of the detainees.

There is no guarantee that the messages will reach the intended person or that the detainee will receive a response. As Ramlan says, the rate of reply to RCMs can be slow and is often a disappointment to some detainees. But, he adds, "If even one person is helped, it is a success."

Every link matters

Perhaps, but with millions of people on the move, and many of them detained or staying discreetly in countries along the migratory route, will the Movement's RFL services be encompassing enough to offer a reliable, global messaging service in the age of cell phones, Google and Facebook?

Clearly, in detention settings where communications are limited, the Red Cross message continues to play a major role. And the Movement's worldwide grass-roots presence makes it uniquely suited for taking on this global humanitarian task.

Indeed, cooperation is strong on RFL and migration issues in many regions and efforts towards expanding collaboration in this area are ongoing. In South-East Asia and the Pacific islands, for example, tracing requests often come in to the Malaysian

"Today I was able to write my first Red Cross message to my mother, which has given me some hope."

Catherine, a detainee and migrant from Uganda, being held at the Lenggeng detention centre, south of Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

ICRC assistant protection officer Muna Djuly says Restoring Family Links services are greatly needed because access to telephone, internet and other forms of communication inside immigrant detention centres is very limited.
Photo: Haris Coussidis/ICRC



Red Crescent Society from the Australian Red Cross, as many migrants have settled in Australia or have been detained within its jurisdiction. Or they come from families in conflict-affected countries such as Afghanistan, Myanmar, Sri Lanka and Syria who contact their local Red Cross or Red Crescent for help in finding out what has happened to their loved ones.

But what happens when there are weak links in the chain? In some countries along the migratory route, in Indonesia for example, neither the ICRC nor the National Society has access to migrant detainees. In other countries, the National Society itself does not have robust RFL services.

"For many National Societies, RFL is not always a priority because there is no conflict and, therefore, no urgent need," explains the ICRC's Weigmann, adding that the consistent training and support of specialized RFL teams would ultimately be more beneficial than the sudden mobilizing of non-trained RFL staff to respond to a sudden-onset emergency.

For these and other reasons, the Movement's increased engagement on migration, which was formalized in 2007 with a declaration during the 30th International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent, has generated considerable internal debate.

Some have expressed concern that the Movement, and particularly National Societies, do not have the resources and capacity to tackle such a complex issue as migration and that other expert organizations, such as the International Organization for Migration, the United Nations Refugee Agency and other grass-roots non-governmental organizations, already have this specific mandate.

With RFL, for example, if there are weak links in the Movement's RFL services along the world's many migration trails, is it running the risk of offering false hopes to migrant detainees, refugees or others who fill out Red Cross messages?

For the Malaysian Red Crescent Society, RFL only became a priority in 2004, when it trained 500 volunteers across its 15 branches. "RFL had never been a priority in the branches and most of them didn't even know it was a service we provided," says Djuly. "So the training was very basic, just an introduction to the service, the RCM forms and how to fill them out."

Malaysian Red Crescent team members acknowledge that scant human and financial resources make



Lim Mei Chin, Malaysian Red Crescent's Restoring Family Links officer, helps Catherine write a message to her family in Uganda.
Photo: Haris Coussidis/ICRC

RFL work a challenge for a number of reasons. "A lot of our volunteers are medics, or medical students, or in full-time jobs like teaching, so this means they are not available on weekdays," explains Jaya Maruthan, head of international relations at the Malaysian Red Crescent. "This creates a problem because the RFL visits can only happen on weekdays, so often we have to use volunteers who have not had the training."

RFL visits may also require another kind of training: psychosocial support. Interaction in often highly charged and emotional environments can be demanding on both the RFL team and the detainees. "Our visits are almost a form of psychosocial support," says Lim. "Just talking can be of great help." She cites the example of the English-speaking African detainees who simply relish the opportunity to speak to someone and express themselves.

"But over time you do notice the change in many of the migrants," she says. "Their spirits become low and they start to look dishevelled. But we are not trained to deal with depression and psychosocial issues."

Irrespective of debates over Movement strategies on migration, it's clear to those meeting with migrants and taking their messages that their efforts are making a difference, even if it is a small one, in this growing global humanitarian crisis.

"Often the detainees just want to talk and connect," agrees Djuly, again stressing the importance of the RCM service. "Just by writing something down in an RCM, they know that someone knows they are there."

Webextra Red Cross messages in the Facebook age

Can the Red Cross message survive in the age of Google's PeopleFinder, Facebook and the nearly ubiquitous cell phone. To read more about how the Movement's efforts to restore family links are responding to new technologies, visit www.redcross.int.

By Jessica Sallabank

Jessica Sallabank is a freelance journalist based in Sydney, Australia.

*Not her real name

Lessons of war

Challenged by three years of civil war, the Syrian Arab Red Crescent has given the world a case study in the value of neutral, independent and impartial volunteer action.

LIKE MANY VOLUNTEERS and staff members at the Syrian Arab Red Crescent (SARC), Feras Farris has grown used to the sound of exploding mortar shells and gunfire — near-constant and loud reminders that the work he and his colleagues do is among the most dangerous occupations on earth.

A water and sanitation coordinator for the SARC, Farris and his team bring critically needed water and sanitation supplies through front lines and checkpoints in order to reach populations cut off from basic services.

Each trip begins with negotiation. "Before starting a mission, we send a message to all parties on the ground to get their approval, to ensure we have an agreed ceasefire," he says, adding that during each call, he explains the National Society's mandate, the purpose of the mission and the specific places to be visited. "We do not enter any hot area without approvals from all parties on the ground. We have to ensure the safety of our volunteers and convoys."

Even then, there are no guarantees. "In one of our missions to the eastern areas of Deir Ezzor, even after coordination and approval from all parties, we were detained by one of the parties because they didn't receive information of our entry," he recalls.

"We explained ourselves to them many times, but no way. Fortunately, the group's leader had previously heard about the Syrian Arab Red Crescent's work, so he gave the order and we were released."

An honour born of tragedy

Stories like this one are commonplace among volunteers, whose attempts to distribute food, aid the wounded or deliver water or fuel are often delayed or thwarted by fighting or armed groups active in the country's three-year-old civil conflict.

In Aleppo, for example, volunteers have faced extreme dangers and ultimately had to stop first aid in some areas due to intense fighting. "First-aid teams were working around the clock to help people,"

says Sana Tarabishi, the communications officer at the National Society's Aleppo branch. "After a few months, while the conflict grew harsher, our teams were abducted and attacked many times, which in turn forced them to stop their work in areas where clashes were taking place." They turned their attention instead to providing first-aid services to displaced people inside collective shelters.

Such stories give a glimpse of the challenges, fears and frustrations that the National Society's volunteers and staff endure. They tell not only of individual courage — for which there is plenty of evidence — but also of the commitment, competence and solidarity that has come to define the Syrian Arab Red Crescent Society response.

This bloody civil war, which has turned once thriving communities into a maze of rubble-filled alleyways and crumbled buildings, could easily have torn this National Society apart. Instead, the SARC has scaled up and transformed itself from a

relatively typical, peacetime auxiliary into an organization that is a flagship for the Movement, an essential partner for many external organizations hoping to help the people of Syria and an inspiration for humanitarians around the world.

As the conflict grew harsher, our teams were abducted and attacked many times, which in turn forced them to stop their tasks in areas where clashes were taking place.

Sana Tarabishi,
communications officer at the
SARC's Aleppo branch



and the application of the Fundamental Principles began to pay off.

"Respecting the Red Cross Red Crescent Movement's principles during our work was one of the main reasons that the SARC has been able to take a distinctive role and to position itself as a leading humanitarian organization during the conflict," says Abdul Rahman Attar, president of the SARC. "The SARC confirmed its neutrality through its volunteers, too many of whom have paid with their lives in the line of duty."

Helping all in need

Because the conflict has also polarized many communities, which are not as mixed as they were three or four years ago, there is often a strong feeling in some neighbourhoods that "if you are not with us, you are against us", notes Åsa Erika Jansson, the IFRC country representative in Syria.

As a result, volunteers have had to strongly defend their neutrality, impartiality and independence in the face of people who want to know why volunteers "are helping the enemy", remarks Jansson, who began her posting in Syria in 2009.

"Nothing is as difficult as an internal conflict," she adds. "But there is a very strong sense among the volunteers of adherence to humanitarian principles. It's really impressive the way SARC volunteers embody these principles."

But it's a delicate balance. The National Society needs a close connection to communities through its branches but it must also maintain a relationship with the government, in order to have access and get through checkpoints. When working in some areas, the National Society is accused of aiding the rebels; others have accused the SARC of being too close to the government.

On the ground, the volunteers are the ones whose lives lie in this balance. Zaki Malla Aref, a volunteer since 2003, is responsible for SARC warehouses in al-Raqqah in north-central Syria.

"We are committed to neutrality," Malla Aref says. But he explains that it helped that people in his area "knew their faces, which convinced the community of our mandate and that we are only there to help them."

Still, this has not protected all of the branch's volunteers, two of whom were killed while on duty, while many others have been detained, including Malla Aref's brother. "My brother was abducted for five days by an anonymous group and he suffered a lot during that time," he says.

"We are facing huge risks in al-Raqqah," he says, adding that most local charities in the area help one side or the other, so people are not used to the idea of neutral, independent humanitarian assistance. "When a group asks us, 'Who are you?', this is the big challenge. We have to tell them we are the Syrian



In the old city of Homs, in the area known as Al-Hamidiyyeh, a team of Syrian Arab Red Crescent volunteers conduct a water and sanitation assessment to ensure safe drinking water for the residents.

Photo: Laila Tawakkol/SARC, Homs branch

Arab Red Crescent and we are not with this group or the other."

The hard-won, but never guaranteed, acceptance of SARC's neutrality has made them a key asset both to partners within the Movement and to external aid-givers. "The SARC's presence in both government and opposition-controlled areas, its proximity to affected populations, the dedication of its staff and volunteers and their deep knowledge of the terrain allow the ICRC to deliver aid even in the most challenging environments," says Daphnée Maret, deputy head of the ICRC's Syria delegation.

Laying the foundation

Given these pressures, many say that the various forms of support and training provided by IFRC, the British Red Cross and the ICRC — as well as SARC's experience assisting some 140,000 Iraqi refugees in 2004 — proved to be critical. "One thing that really mattered was the preparedness work in terms of disaster risk reduction and disaster management strategy and training," says the IFRC's Jansson. "The volunteers were well trained and when the needs arose, they knew how to involve communities."

Baher Kayal, a volunteer with the branch in Homs, agrees. "Since 2000, SARC volunteers have participated in training for disaster management and first aid," he says. "But at first we didn't apply what we learned. The actual tests came during the Lebanon war in 2006 and when we received Iraqi refugees in 2004.

"At that time, these crises were not our crises, and the war in Lebanon continued only for one

month. But with this current conflict, through more than three years of daily work, we have gained experience and applied the theoretical information we learned in training," says Kayal. "With each mission, we learned a new lesson."

The net result of all this preparedness, experience and support can now be measured in the number of people who have been helped. At the beginning of the crisis, the SARC was delivering food parcels to 850,000 people per month.

Today, SARC staff and volunteers distribute food and non-food items to 3.5 million people each month, provide support in water and sanitation, and offer emergency and primary health-care services through the SARC's network of health facilities and ambulances.

In some sense, the Syrian Arab Red Crescent Society has become a de facto workforce for the entire international aid effort and is actively involved, by some estimates, in distributing as much as 80 per cent of the aid coming into Syria.

The SARC not only works closely with the ICRC (with support from the IFRC and its member National Societies), it partners with United Nations (UN) agencies such as the World Food Programme, the UN Refugee Agency, the UN Children's Fund and some 30 international non-governmental organizations to reach otherwise unreachable pockets of vulnerability.

Stretched thin

Given the subsequent demands and expectations, many SARC staff and volunteers say they are being overstretched. It is not possible, however, to simply to add more volunteers — despite the fact that there is a waiting list of people who want to join the volunteer ranks.

"Demand for volunteering is extremely high, but the challenge is that we are not finding enough time to properly train the new recruits and so they learn in the field," says Muhammed Walid Sankari, SARC Aleppo branch president.

"Volunteers are risking their lives to help people in need," he adds. "The least we should do is provide them with the proper training and the financial support to help them commute."

But, as in most conflicts around the world, there is never sufficient support. Some financial appeals for food or other support both inside and outside Syria have fallen short and the National Society has often faced a shortage of supplies in its warehouses.

The tragic loss of so many volunteers has also forced the National Society and the Movement to find new ways to protect volunteers. This year, for the first time, the IFRC supported the National Society in the provision of bullet-proof vests. For some

"Respecting the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement's principles during our work was one of the main reasons that the SARC was able to take a distinctive role."

Abdul Rahman Attar,
president of the Syrian Arab Red Crescent
See our full interview with
Abdul Rahman Attar at
www.redcross.int.

time, the Movement has resisted this move, believing that it might give volunteers a false sense of security and induce them to take greater risks. Given that many volunteers have been killed while in a vehicle, or performing other basic tasks, the policy was re-examined.

Keeping going

Volunteers and staff say that while they have changed tremendously in the last three years, they are at heart the same National Society. It's just the scale of the work that has changed. Still, the tragic losses during the last three years have strengthened their solidarity with fellow volunteers and their will to keep going.

"We had to bear the impact, we lost our colleagues," says Baher Kayal from the Homs branch. "The events were the reason that many people volunteered and they are the reason that the relationships among us have really strengthened. We became one family — we have lived with SARC volunteers more than the days we lived with our families."

SARC's director of operations, Khaled Erksoussi, puts it this way: "Our strength comes from the fact that our volunteers are from all over the country, from the towns and villages, and because of that they have a strong connection to the local community. They can negotiate and facilitate access and know-how to assess the needs and the situation.

"This, however, is also our weakness because that also makes our volunteers exposed to the same dangers as their communities. We are a volunteer-based organization; we cannot stay in five-star hotels and ride armoured vehicles all the time and leave our community exposed." ■

By Viviane Tou'meh and Malcolm Lucard

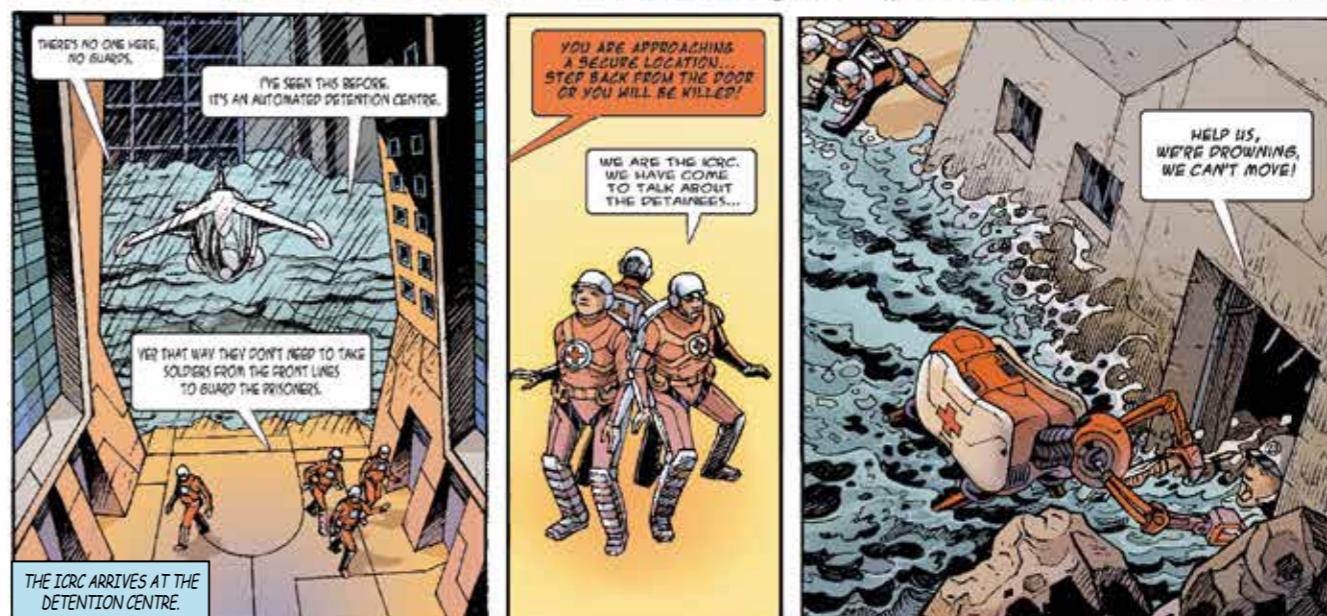
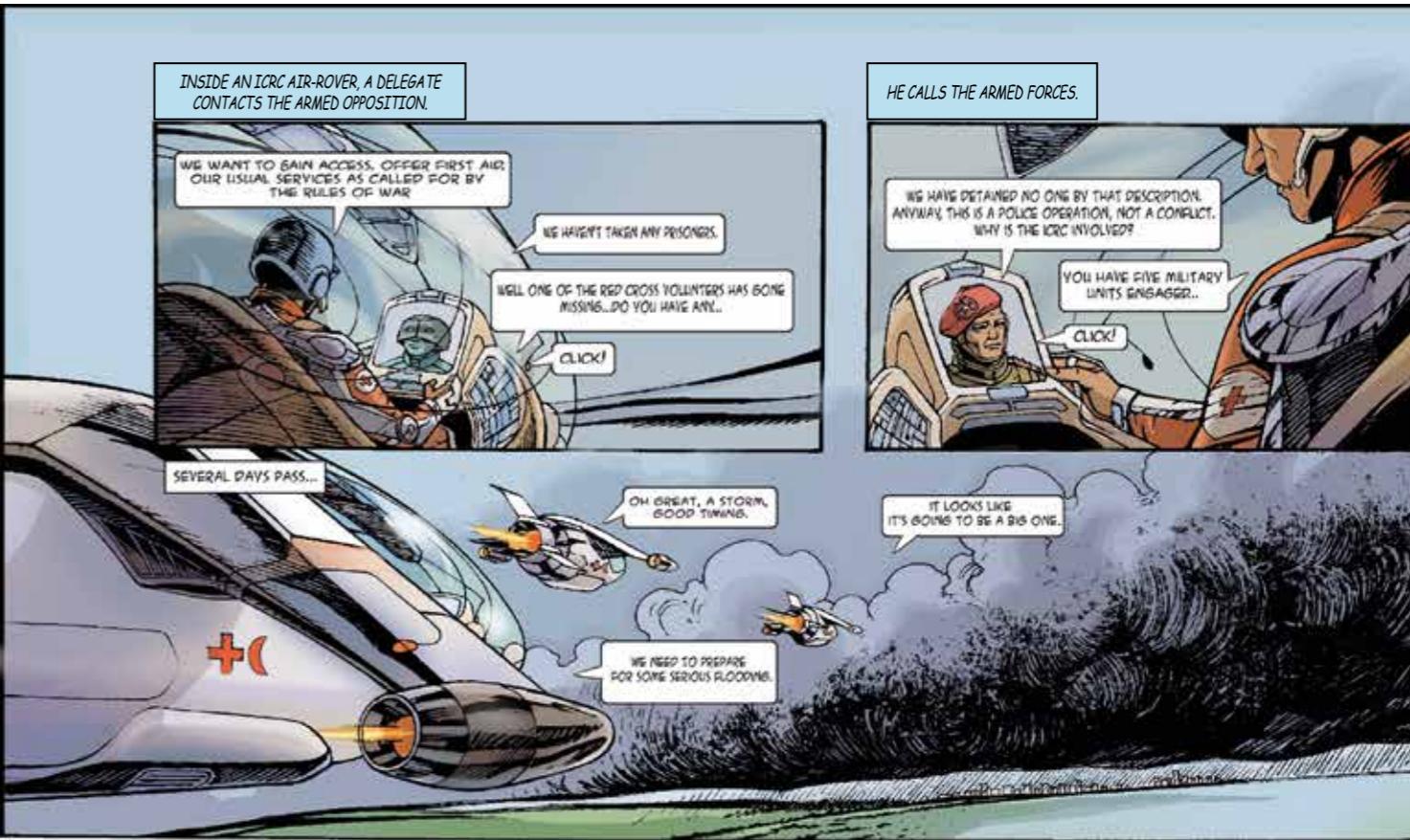
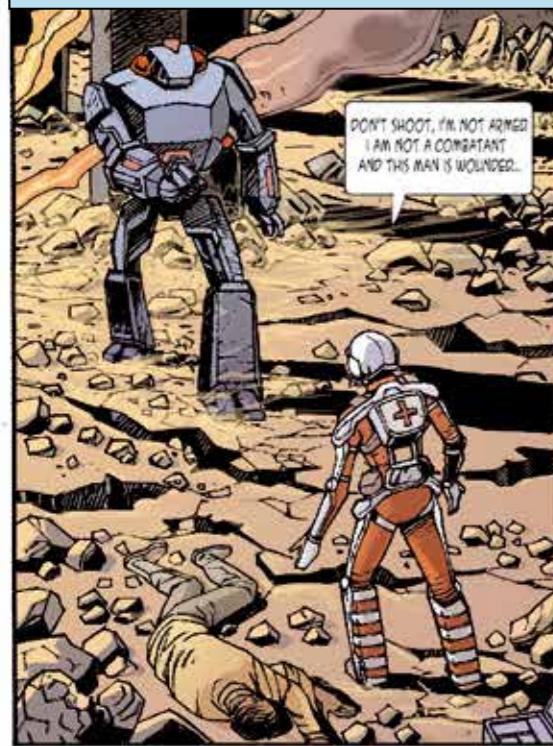
Viviane Tou'meh is a communications officer for the Syrian Arab Red Crescent.

Malcolm Lucard is editor of *Red Cross Red Crescent* magazine.



Humanitarian action 2064

IT WAS A FAIRLY ROUTINE DAY, 17 APRIL 2064, THE 200TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE FIRST GENEVA CONVENTION. WHEN AN IFRC AERIAL RESPONSE VEHICLE RECEIVED AN ALERT FROM AN IFRC COLLEAGUE THAT FIGHTING HAD BROKEN OUT IN THE CITY OF SHALANO. GOVERNMENT FORCES RESPONDED WITH FIGHTER DRONES AND A PLATOON OF ROBOTIC SOLDIERS, WHILE REBELS RESORTED TO VARIOUS HIGH-TECH TACTICS. SUDDENLY, A CYBER ATTACK FROM AN UNKNOWN SOURCE CUT OFF CONTROL OF THE ROBOTIC SOLDIERS, LEAVING OUR VOLUNTEER FACE-TO-FACE WITH A RENEGADE ROBOT SOLDIER.



➊ Bonafacio Mazia, 57, lost his left leg to an anti-personnel landmine in 1987 during Mozambique's civil war, which lasted from 1977 to 1992. Mazia continues to farm, having developed extraordinary balance. With his wife carrying the hoe, every day he hobbles 45 minutes each way to his garden plot. Photo: Brent Stirton/Getty Images



Waiting to strike

"Unlike bullets, which stop flying after a peace agreement is signed, landmines and unexploded remnants of war lie in the ground, primed and waiting to strike without distinction." So writes author and photographer Mark Jenkins in his introduction to an exhibition of photographs (taken in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Iraq, Laos, Mozambique and Nicaragua) that document the human toll exacted by these pernicious weapons. Most of those injured by these weapons were civilians, almost half of whom were children — playing, herding livestock or collecting firewood, he notes. Since the adoption of 1997 Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention and the 2008 Convention on Cluster Munitions, the number of victims worldwide has declined sharply. But much land remains to be cleared and many people are still being killed and gravely injured every year. Here are just a few of the striking and powerful images, which capture the anguish and resilience of survivors, as well as the passion of those trying to reduce the suffering. See the full exhibit at www.icrc.org.



➊ In January 2006, when Sajad Faleh was 4 years old, he and three brothers found an unexploded cluster munition and began playing with it. The subsequent explosion killed Sajad's two older brothers, lacerated the stomach of his younger brother and amputated both Sajad's legs. He is waiting for an assessment at the ICRC's Physical Rehabilitation Centre, in Najaf, Iraq. Photo: Marco Di Lauro/Getty Images



➋ Juan Ramón López, 55, was working as a freelance deminer on a coffee plantation near the border of Nicaragua and Honduras in 1998 when an anti-personnel mine blew off one leg. The next year he was clearing another area when a mine amputated his other leg. He now works as a gold miner, standing in the sluice on his stumps, running his hands through the gravelly water, his prosthetic legs and metal crutches left lying in the leaves. Photo: Sebastian Liste/Getty Images



➌ In November 2013, in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Mirza Smajlovic, 12, Denis Merdzanovic, 12, Alen Konakovic, 14 and Jasmin Sidran, 12 (left to right) were playing with their friend Mirza Merdzanovic, 10 (cousin of Denis), when they found a bag of weapons in a stream. Mirza put a rifle grenade together and hit it against a wall. The explosion killed him and injured these four boys. Photo: Veronique de Viguerie/Getty Images



➍ Nine-year-old Mek, holds the portrait of Somak Toe, 12, who was one of three boys killed by an unexploded ordnance they were carrying home by bicycle. More than 270 million cluster submunitions were dropped on Laos during the Viet Nam/US war, which ran from 1963 to 1972. Photo: Paula Bronstein/Getty Images

We need to talk...

A new study finds that our volunteer network is not consistently strong in many parts of the world and that a serious conversation about volunteering is overdue.

...about volunteering!



A new IFRC study, *The Global Review of Volunteering*, says the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement can claim 17 million volunteers, represented by the 17 figures above. However...

57 per cent of these volunteers belong to four National Societies

57%

Ten National Societies have 75 per cent of volunteers worldwide

75%

1.25%

There are 100 National Societies which, combined, have just 1.25 per cent of the global volunteer workforce

54%

54 per cent of National Societies have a centralized database but only half of these actually think their database is accurate

To see charts and maps that explain more about the state of volunteering in the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, visit www.ifrc.org/data.

Footnote: A 2011 IFRC study called *The Value of Volunteers* estimated a global total of 13.1 million volunteers. Why is the number now 17 million? The difference can be attributed to just three National Societies (China, Iran and Japan), which between them add 5 million volunteers to the 2011 total. During the 2011 study, the numbers for these three National Societies were obtained by extrapolation rather than through consultation with the National Society.

Quiet killer

Once near to being eliminated in many parts of the world, dengue fever is making a deadly comeback. Experts say only a sustained and vigorous effort will put an end to this preventable disease.

WHEN IT COMES TO SAVING lives from infectious disease, knowledge is often the best antidote. Alejandra Mendoza-Rivera, who lives in Leon, near Nicaragua's Pacific coast, knows this first hand. She credits the information about dengue fever brought to her by Nicaraguan Red Cross volunteers for saving the lives of her two children, Osmari, 2, and 12-year-old Francisco.

"Both children had high fever so we went to the health centre because... I was scared that it could be dengue," she says. "They gave me the order for the exams and confirmed it."

Thanks to the Red Cross visit, Mendoza-Rivera says she also takes even more care in cleaning her home. "I put into practice everything I learned during the presentations," she says. "For example, keeping the water receptacles protected, cleaning my yard, putting covers on barrels, being careful and always clean."

A mosquito-borne viral infection, dengue causes a flu-like illness and can occasionally develop into the life-threatening severe dengue. About 2.5 per cent of people who contract dengue die. Without proper preventive health and care services, fatality rates can exceed 20 per cent.

The outbreak in Nicaragua in 2013 had already claimed 14 lives by June, with 57 additional severe cases and 4,000 people affected by the dengue virus in what authorities confirmed as a 300 per cent increase in dengue cases over the prior year.

"Now that the Red Cross volunteers have come to help us two days a week, we have been able to fumigate and remove rubbish more often, and in this way were able to eliminate the *Aedes aegypti* mosquito — responsible for dengue transmission — during its aquatic phase," says Silvio Pirado, a

technician specializing in vector- and rodent-borne diseases at the Malpaisillo Health Centre in Leon.

Dengue and severe dengue affects most tropical and sub-tropical countries in the Asia-Pacific region, the Americas, Africa and the eastern Mediterranean. Over the past 50 years, dengue has spread from nine countries to more than 100 nations, making it the most rapidly-spreading vector-borne disease.

A preventable disease

But it shouldn't have to be that way. "During the 1950s and 1960s, the Pan-American Health Organization adopted a public health strategy to fight dengue, which successfully reduced, and in certain cases eliminated, the disease in the Americas," explains IFRC Under Secretary General Walter Cotte.

"With time this momentum was lost. Dengue cases were once practically non-existent in countries like Brazil, Colombia and Mexico; today, these countries are counted among the top ten most endemic countries in the world."

Today, almost half of the world's population lives in dengue-endemic countries. The number of cases has risen from 15,000 per year in the 1960s to roughly 390 million today. Once seen as an urban and peri-urban disease, dengue is increasingly becoming a challenge in rural areas.

In Colombia, for example, the caseload has gone from 5.2 per 100,000 in the 1990s to 18.1 cases per 100,000 in the past five years. The increase in cases is a result of population growth, unplanned urbanization, lack of environmental sanitation, increased long-distance travel and ineffective mosquito control.

Insecurity, displacement and violence can also play a role. Nearly 80 per cent of the 30,000 residents of Guapi, in Colombia's Cauca department, which suffered a dengue outbreak in 2013, have no access to safe drinking water. The municipality has no waste disposal or wastewater treatment plant so most waste is dumped directly into the river or the ocean.

Similarly, when Paraguay suffered its worst dengue outbreak in 2011, with a total of 38,206 confirmed cases and 62 reported deaths, the highest numbers of cases and fatalities hit both the relatively rural department of Alto Parana and the metropolitan area around the country's capital, a sprawling urban zone encompassing ten cities and home to more than 2 million inhabitants.

The urban breeding ground

New communities on the city outskirts are overcrowded, lack solid waste management services and have inadequate water and sewer systems. Meanwhile, the dengue-carrying mosquito can breed anywhere from puddles on building sites, barrels of drinking water, stagnant drains to vases of flowers in peoples' homes.



These are some of the reasons that National Societies, the IFRC and other organizations dealing with dengue say it's time for a dramatic change in approach. Dengue eradication must shift from episodic, isolated dengue eradication campaigns to holistic, concerted and long-term efforts aimed at eliminating the conditions that nurture the disease.

Many Red Cross and Red Crescent efforts, for example, are funded through the Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF), which allocates money quickly in response to emergencies such as outbreaks. These injections of money have made a significant impact in many countries in terms of reducing the outbreak's damage, and they have had some long-term residual effects in helping National Societies to partner with other local and national organizations, set up depots with supplies and materials, and develop capacity and knowledge for ongoing interventions.

But they are not enough to keep the dengue effort going and therefore prevent the next round of outbreaks. What's needed, health officials say, is long-term investment in integrated programming and community-level initiatives that lead to long-term behaviour change.

Much of this work is already being done by National Societies. It just needs to be scaled up. The Paraguayan Red Cross, for example, coordinates with the municipalities and health centres to eliminate mosquito breeding grounds and promote sanitation and case detection. It also supported preventive actions organized by the Ministry of Health and various city councils through community intervention and education. The National Society also carried out a dengue-awareness communication campaign using different mass media outlets.

Practice pays off

Similarly, in El Salvador, dengue prevention is part of an ongoing health programme funded by the Norwegian Red Cross that tackles preventive and environmental health at the community level. In conjunction with local family health units and other organizations, the National Society is involved in clean-up campaigns, water purification, fumigation and preventive health seminars. These go hand-in-hand with dental health services, sexual and reproductive health discussions and nutrition assessments, among other activities.

Prevention efforts also are often integral to the emergency response. In July 2014, for example, when Salvadorean authorities declared a yellow alert for another mosquito-borne disease called chikungunya, the IFRC's US\$ 184,000 DREF allocation supported National Society's efforts to stop the immediate outbreak and prevent future epidemics of chikungunya and dengue.

In areas that have sustained prevention efforts, there is evidence that the investment of time and money pays off. In 2001, for example the Maldives saw a record 2,909 cases of dengue. Through its volunteering network, the Maldivian Red Crescent raised awareness in schools, carried out community clean-up activities and distributed information, education and communication materials. By 2013, the cases of dengue had decreased by 155 per cent in eight of the ten atolls where the National Society is operating. ■

By **Gennike Mayers** and **Enrique Guevara**
Gennike Mayers and Enrique Guevara are IFRC communications officers based in the Americas.



© ICRC President Peter Maurer during a visit to Colombia in 2013.

Speaking up for humanity

After two years on the job, ICRC President Peter Maurer reflects on the future of humanitarian aid and his role as the ICRC's top humanitarian ambassador.

THE FIRST TWO YEARS of Peter Maurer's tenure as ICRC president have been intense ones. To get to know its operations and the humanitarian challenges it faces, the former Swiss ambassador to the United Nations has ridden a canoe up the Piñuña Negro River in Colombia, visited orphanages in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and seen where volunteers from the Syrian Arab Red Crescent prepare their ambulances for missions across front lines. Among many other visits. When not in the field, he has travelled to nearly every capital of global diplomacy, where he has met with leaders such as United States President Barack Obama and Chinese President Xi Jinping. In areas where ICRC operates, he has engaged key actors such as Syrian President Bashar al-Assad and others with influence over the course of ongoing conflicts. *Red Cross Red Crescent* magazine caught up with Maurer recently to talk about what he's learned so far and what he thinks of the challenges ahead.

RCRC: What are your impressions after two years at the ICRC?

Maurer: I have been very impressed by the dedication of ICRC staff and by all the volunteers and personnel of the National Societies. It is very motivating to belong to a Movement with so many committed people.

Of course, there have been disconcerting images as well that I hadn't ever been confronted with as a diplomat: seeing the wounded in provisional hospitals in Syria; seeing the effect of the closures in Gaza; looking at the thousands of children in Goma, in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, who have lost trace of their parents. There is a constant mix between disconcerting experiences and encouraging ones as you feel how much people appreciate the work of the Red Cross Red Crescent Movement.

What is the humanitarian impact of these trips?

Responding to the humanitarian needs of people and ensuring the support for ICRC's action is a crucial task for ICRC and thus for the president. Visiting operations and engaging with political and diplomatic decision-makers is therefore a key function of the president. It's about negotiating and expanding access to populations in need and therefore expanding the surface of operations of ICRC. It's about trying to influence key stakeholders to respect international humanitarian law (IHL) and to anchor the organization within new countries that haven't traditionally been involved in international humanitarian work.

At the same time, engaging with political leaders allows the ICRC to be much more precise in the way it engages its humanitarian response. Restrict-

tions to access are the restrictions of politics upon humanitarian action. So the interaction of the ICRC president, with the legitimacy of the organization's specific international mandate, can have a positive impact in bringing humanitarian issues to the political agenda.

What do you do when you confront roadblocks?

Humanitarian diplomacy is a long process. You can't expect from one meeting that things just fall into place. I had a very good conversation with President Assad more than a year ago, for example. But some of the objectives we talked about have not yet materialized, such as full access to detention facilities. It doesn't mean that it won't materialize, that this is a failure of humanitarian diplomacy. It means that things have been more complicated and therefore require another try. Humanitarian diplomacy is always a long-haul exercise.

This year, we mark the 100th anniversary of the first Geneva Convention. What are the key challenges, threats and opportunities for international humanitarian law looking forward?

There are many different angles to this question. That is why it is critical to ensure that the interpretation and development of IHL continue to keep pace with and evolve alongside the changing conflict environment. How do technologically advanced weapons such as drones and automated weapons relate to the legal framework of IHL? We need to consider whether the current framework is a sufficient guide or whether it needs interpretation or development.

Another is the debate on the definition of the modern battlefield. Is the battlefield still geographically circumscribed? Or is it simply moving with the armed actors? Is there a global battlefield in the 'war on terrorism' or is the battlefield still limited to certain precise places where military operations are taking place?

Patterns of violence are also changing. Increasingly, we see situations in which unstructured armed groups are equipped and behave as if they were armed actors in the traditional sense: criminal networks that have military capabilities similar to structured armies or armed groups.

When armed conflict and law enforcement are intertwined, we debate about the applicable legal framework — IHL or human rights law — and how to ensure that armies and armed actors understand their responsibility with regards to both IHL and human rights law.

We have to remember, however, that the key objective of both legal systems is to protect people. A possible lack of clarity about the legal reading should thus never lead to a lack of protection. And

we should never get into a situation where the mitigation of the impact of violence is not undertaken just because the types of violence might fall under this or that legal box.

How about technology?

How will new technology shape humanitarian action in coming years? I believe that the big jump in technology affecting humanitarian action is still in front of us. Many of the humanitarian agencies and organizations have basically been using modern technologies as information management systems or to speed up deliveries. We are better informed, and informed more quickly, and therefore can design operations more accurately.

In coming years, we will most likely see information systems transform the way we deliver assistance and this will affect the role of intermediaries such as National Societies, the ICRC and the IFRC alike. Victims of conflict and natural disaster will be increasingly connected and have a greater say in organizing relief and delivery of supplies themselves.

Are there downsides to this trend?

One of the critical issues will be how these developments affect neutral, impartial and independent humanitarian action. Some communities may be able to connect to the world and respond to their needs through solidarity with communities elsewhere in the world. But you may have other communities that are less connected and where equity becomes an issue. Also, in natural disasters, which capture the imagination of a lot of people, there may be an easier environment for this kind of connectivity to succeed. In protracted conflict, however, aid may unplug after a couple of weeks if no intermediaries are present.

What will humanitarian action look like in the next 20, 30 or even 50 years?

I am not sure that the nature of humanitarianism is something that allows us to project 30 and 50 years ahead. I think of the future, not as a static or stable reality for which you can prepare but rather as an environment requiring constant adaptations in the ways and means with which we respond. It will require agility, innovation and flexibility. Therefore, I am more interested in how we can be more rapid in our response, more accurate in how we deliver aid and more flexible in responding to very context-specific situations. ■

Web extra

To read more of our interview with Peter Maurer, see www.redcross.int and www.ifrc.org.

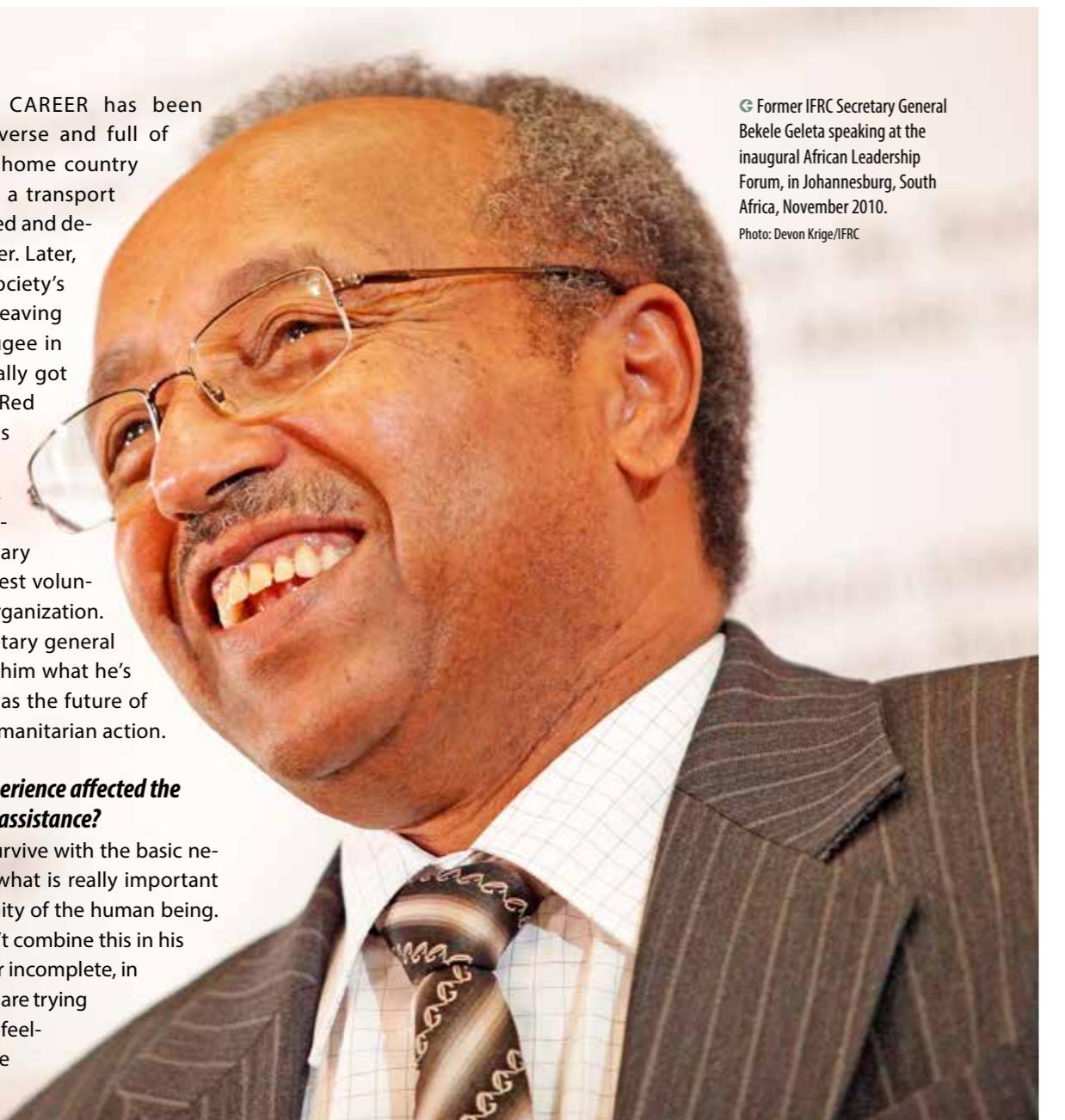
The end of aid as we know it

Outgoing IFRC Secretary General Bekele Geleta says the future will bring radical changes in the way humanitarian assistance is conceived and delivered.

BEKELE GELETA'S CAREER has been nothing if not diverse and full of challenges. In his home country of Ethiopia, he worked as a transport official before being arrested and detained as a political prisoner. Later, he served as his National Society's secretary general before leaving Ethiopia to become a refugee in Canada, where he eventually got a job with the Canadian Red Cross Society. After stints working at the IFRC secretariat in Geneva, then back again in Canada, he applied for the job of secretary general of the world's largest volunteer-based humanitarian organization. As his tenure as IFRC secretary general came to a close, we asked him what he's learned and what he sees as the future of Red Cross Red Crescent humanitarian action.

RCRC: How has your life experience affected the way you see humanitarian assistance?

Geleta: Helping people to survive with the basic necessities is one thing. But what is really important in life is to respect the dignity of the human being. A humanitarian who doesn't combine this in his or her work is insufficient, or incomplete, in my view. The individuals we are trying to help should be given the feeling that they are responsible for their own lives. We will



Former IFRC Secretary General Bekele Geleta speaking at the inaugural African Leadership Forum, in Johannesburg, South Africa, November 2010.
Photo: Devon Krige/IFRC

support them, but the decision is theirs, including whether to accept the assistance or not.

Do humanitarians sometimes not show this respect?

It is not the intention. The overwhelming will is to do good, to support people. But it's only effective if it's about engaging the people you are trying to help. Don't just go and deliver; respect people and listen to them. See what they want and how they see what you are trying to offer. Now, more organizations are beginning to have this approach but for a long time, it was 'march, deliver and save'. It was the charity mentality.

How do you see the IFRC culture of assistance in this regard?

It is changing due to various influences and due to different experiences we've had. I believe we are working within a system that is changing towards an approach that's about the participation of the people affected and therefore accountability to the beneficiary.

During your tenure as secretary general, you often said that we need to think of what we do as a form of development, not just as emergency response. Can you explain your thinking on this?

The Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement has participated in development right from day one. Just imagine first-aid training for one person in a family. It helps to sustain the productive capacity of the family.

Let's take preventive health. This is a contribution to development. Or take disaster risk reduction, or capacity building of National Societies. These are all important contributions to development. Helping people to become meaningful participants in the social and economic life of the country is also a huge contribution to development. That is what the Red Cross and Red Crescent does.

Where we have failed is to profile this in such a way as to access development funding. We've been working on all this using humanitarian funding. If we had started accessing development funding sooner, we would have been able to expand our efforts much further.

What do you say to those who are concerned that if we get too engaged with long-term development funding and projects, then we may not be seen as neutral in some areas where big development funds and agencies are not perceived as neutral?

We are not moving towards big road building projects or building up industries. And we will continue to do the kind of work we do in any case. The only thing we have added is to accept this reality and say clearly that we are going to be part of it.

"Don't just go and deliver; respect people and listen to them ... Now, more organizations are beginning to have this approach but for a long time, it was 'march, deliver and save'. It was the charity mentality."

There is a technological revolution going on around the world. What are your thoughts about the opportunities this offers?

What's going on now is a civilizational transition. The way people think and the way they connect are going to be dramatically different in the near future. People's expectations are changing and there is demand for change in many aspects of our society.

For example, in terms of humanitarian assistance, technology now allows members of the diaspora (of countries affected by disaster) to transfer money to their relatives or friends at home simply by pressing a button. This reduces the need for the humanitarian middleman.

That's why we need to think of bigger and better ways of linking up our membership with what we are doing in the field. On the giving side, we should be able to devise better ways of using technology to trace donations between donors and the National Society branches where people are distributing assistance and helping people in the field.

I believe the intermediary role will still be very important. But it's about being a humanitarian intermediary in a technology savvy way. The benefit is a lot of cost savings for the whole global health system and a lot of efficiency in humanitarian assistance. But there has to be a change in the way we think and the way we do things.

What changes are necessary?

It won't be like it used to be where our job was mainly to deliver things. No. It's more about helping households become active participants in the growth-making decisions about their lives, even in small ways.

It is going to be a role that contributes to self-sufficiency, that helps the vulnerable become more independent. It will no longer be about charity.

What experiences have helped shape this view?

I remember meeting a young man in Africa a few years ago and he asked me, "Why are contributing to our agony?" I said, "What do you mean?" He said, "You buy things, bring them here, distribute them and when you go, we are left with nothing. Aren't you an African? Don't you feel anything? If you are an African, work in the right way or leave us alone." It was extremely painful and it has made a big difference in terms of shaping the way I think about humanitarian assistance. ■

Web extra

For more of our interview with Bekele Geleta, see www.redcross.int.

My Red Cross Red Crescent story

Suwarti

Interview with an Indonesian Red Cross Society nurse, now working for the Japanese Red Cross Society.



Photo: Nick Jones/JRCS

THE SCENE OUTSIDE the bus window was apocalyptic. It resembled the city of Hiroshima in the aftermath of the atomic bomb in August 1945. Where a town once stood was now detritus. The frames of shattered buildings dotted a flattened landscape of rubble, twisted metal, upturned cars and boats.

Suwarti, dressed in her Japanese Red Cross uniform, sat and stared, expressionless, at the carnage. "It's upsetting. I'm speechless," she told a journalist filming her for a TV news report.

The Indonesian nurse had travelled to the town of Yamada, in north-east Japan, with five colleagues from the Himeji Red Cross hospital, more than 800 kilometres away. It was April 2011 and around six weeks after a magnitude 9.0 earthquake struck under the Pacific Ocean and sent towering tsunami waves crashing into communities along the Tohoku coastline.

The destruction brought back memories for Suwarti of her experiences in the Indonesian city of Banda Aceh, following the devastating tsunami of 26 December 2004. She arrived there with a relief

team from her public hospital in the capital, Jakarta, about a week after tectonic plates ruptured off the coast. "Another team had already started treating survivors at a makeshift evacuation centre, but there was a shortage of water, food and medicine," says the 36-year-old Java native, sitting in a meeting room in her Himeji hospital.

"It took about two weeks to come to terms with some of the shocking scenes I saw," she says of that time almost a decade ago. "I felt tired and kept thinking about all the people crying and those who had lost their families and houses, and didn't know what to do."

Seven years later, in Japan's Iwate Prefecture in 2011, Suwarti found herself at a high school that was serving as an evacuation centre for 400 local residents.

"At the evacuation centre, there were six high-school students who lost their parents in the tsunami. I spoke several times to one who was suffering a lot. She thanked me for coming and told me she wanted to become a nurse like me. I also talked to many elderly women, for I understood how important it was to talk to people as part of this kind of care."

MyStory

Launched on World Red Cross and Red Crescent Day on May 8, the year-long MyStory project shares personal experiences with the Movement.

Suwarti already had a deep appreciation for the value of psychosocial support after her experience in Aceh in 2004. "When we arrived in Aceh, people were appreciative of us," she says. "But more than just treating injuries, it was important to talk and hold people. Mental support, I realized, was a vital part of being a nurse there."

Before heading out to respond to the earthquake and tsunami in Japan, Suwarti was prepared. She received disaster relief training, including guidance on how to counsel survivors and the bereaved, and she completed another course at her hospital in the summer of 2013.

Suwarti's determination to help in Tohoku can be traced back to her experiences in Aceh, where she learned that the Japanese Red Cross had sent a medical team to the area.

"When my country was in need, lots of different countries helped us, including the Japanese Red Cross," she says. "In fact, the head of the ER [emergency response] here [in Himeji] spent a year and a half in Aceh and the head surgeon went there for a year. So I felt that if I could pass the national exam and had the chance, I would really like to go and help those people in Tohoku."

Suwarti first arrived in Japan in 2008 on a nursing programme set up by Japan and Indonesia. Despite her extensive ER and intensive care experience in her home country, she still had to pass Japan's national

nursing exam. The biggest hurdle was learning Japanese, including medical terminology.

Suwarti continued to study intensively for the five-hour nursing exam and finally, after her third attempt, she became one of only 16 foreign nurses — from nearly 400 — to pass.

In 2013, Suwarti shared her experiences in Tohoku with trainee nurses and staff at one of Indonesia's top nursing schools, and she has been asked to help produce an official disaster preparedness and response manual.

"In 2004, we weren't prepared for that size of disaster and had no experience of disaster relief. Therefore, we were grateful to receive support from the Japanese Red Cross. But Indonesia still needs to learn more about disaster relief. I'm very happy to have joined the Japanese Red Cross where I can learn these kinds of skills."

"Disaster can strike at any time and affect anyone, so as a nurse, I felt I had a duty to help in Iwate. I also now feel that I would like to do whatever I can to help, should another disaster strike in the future," she says. "As a member of the Red Cross, I strongly feel it's my duty to help anyone affected by disaster — no matter what their ethnicity, religion or nationality."

By Nick Jones

Nick Jones is a freelance journalist based in Tokyo.

My Red Cross Red Crescent story

Amir Barazande

Youth volunteer with the Red Crescent Society of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Mashhad city, north-eastern Iran.



Photo: Red Crescent Society of the Islamic Republic of Iran

ALTHOUGH I'M ONLY 20, the Red Crescent has already played a very important role in my life. When I was 14, my friend's mother had a serious asthma attack while we were walking together in the street. She had forgotten her inhaler, but luckily the quick first-aid actions of a passer-by saved her life. It was a very frightening moment but also an important one, as the very next day, my friend and I decided to volunteer with local branch of the Iran Red Crescent and learn more about helping people.

For me, being a volunteer with the Iran Red Crescent also gives me a chance to be part of an international network. In recent years, I feel that Iran has become isolated and misunderstood by many countries, so when the Iran Red Crescent sends help to disasters overseas and is able to work with other National Societies, I feel it's an opportunity to show people that we are more than what is presented in the media; that what is portrayed of us, of our people, is not accurate at all. I think being part of the Red Cross Red Crescent Movement is important for bringing down such political and cultural barriers and prejudices.

My Red Cross Red Crescent story

Zeljko Filipovic

Deputy head of the ICRC's economic security unit. From Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina. Now living in Geneva, Switzerland.



Photo: ICRC

BY A TWIST OF FATE, almost half of my life has been shaped by my work with the ICRC. In 1992, when war broke out in the former Yugoslavia, I avoided being drafted by taking a job with the chamber of commerce in the small town of Pale that was considered a Serb stronghold. Although Pale was not shelled regularly like Sarajevo, there was a large influx of internally displaced people and basic supplies became scarce. Money was tight, so I also opened a small video shop to make ends meet. It was thanks to the shop that I first met the ICRC delegates who were renting films to pass time during the nightly curfews. At that time, I had only heard a little bit about the Red Cross in Bosnia.

I remember, growing up, that on 8 May we could buy special Red Cross stickers and pins shaped like little drops of blood, but other than that I didn't know much about them.

As the conflict continued, I was persuaded to apply to the ICRC as a driver. My father was a car mechanic so, growing up, I had spent a lot of time helping in his workshop under our house. I was offered the job and before I knew it, I was driving to pick up an ICRC delegate who was waiting at the separation line in the Muslim-majority town of Goradze, a protected enclave in eastern Bosnia. It was my first day with the ICRC and I found myself being stopped at the border with nothing but the vehicle and an enormous high-frequency radio. I remember how nervous I felt as the border guards teased me and tested my reaction but as soon as I was waved through, I realized the power and respect that the Red Cross emblem can have.

After the Dayton Peace Agreement was signed in 1995, I continued to work with the ICRC and started to travel outside of Bosnia on international relief missions in Eritrea, Indonesia, Iraq, Jordan and the Russian Federation. In another twist of fate, I met my wife Flore, an ICRC protection delegate, when we were on mission in Eritrea. Our daughter Mia was born a few years later in Indonesia. We got married when we were in northern Caucasus.

My Red Cross Red Crescent story

Kum Ju Ho

Operational development and youth focal point at the IFRC's South-East Asia regional office. From the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.



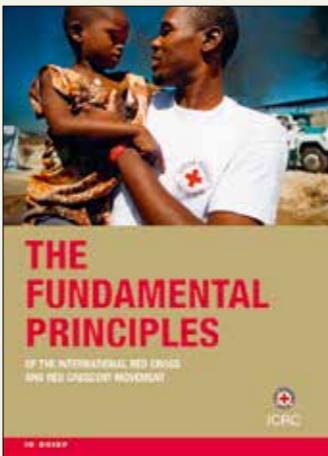
Photo: DPRK Red Cross

T WAS AFTER I SAW the consequences of a terrible flood that I applied to work with the Red Cross of the People's Democratic Republic of Korea. In 1997, I was a student of international relations and, as part of my course, we learnt about

the work of humanitarian organizations. I clearly remember one day my classmates and I boarded a train in Pyongyang and travelled to some remote villages, far in the north of the country. In 1995, a terrible flood had destroyed most of the water systems installed during the 1960s and a lot of the roads to the villages were also gone. I will never forget the hardship of the people we saw there. We had all heard about the situation from other people, but it was very sad to see with our own eyes the farmers and their families, even children, walking for hours just to bring back heavy buckets of clean drinking water. However, in some of the villages, we saw the Red Cross was already there helping and had put in taps, pumps and water tanks. It really left an impression on me and by the time I took the train back, I knew that once I graduated, I wanted to work for them. I started with the National Society as a health officer and have been working with the Red Cross Red Crescent Movement ever since. ■

Resources

PUBLICATIONS



The Fundamental Principles of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement

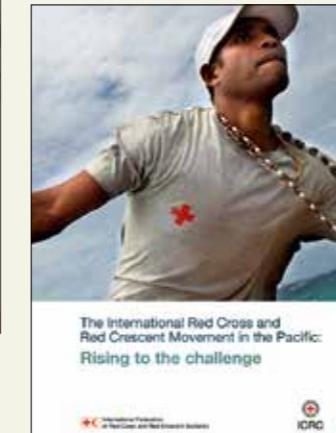
ICRC 2014

Humanity, impartiality, neutrality, independence, voluntary service, unity and universality: these seven Fundamental Principles sum up the Movement's ethics and are at the core of its approach to helping people in need during armed conflict, natural disasters and other emergencies. This eight-page pamphlet explains how the principles unite the components of the Movement and enable them to provide effective, unbiased assistance to people in need. They are mandatory rules of conduct that the Movement's components are required to follow at all times, and states must respect this necessity. Available in Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish

Red Cross Red Crescent Climate Training Kit

The Climate Training Kit provides a range of training products to enhance the capacity of Movement staff and volunteers to engage communities on the issue of climate change. Produced by the Red Cross and Red Crescent Climate Centre, based in the Netherlands, the interactive modules contain exercises, games, film clips, presentations, reading material, and examples from numerous Red Cross

Red Crescent National Societies. Download at: www.climatecentre.org/training. Available in English



The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement in the Pacific: Rising to the challenge

ICRC/IFRC 2014

The countries of the Pacific region are richly diverse in terms of culture, development, infrastructure, location, social dynamics and resources. From vast Australia to recently independent Palau and the many islands of French Polynesia, each nation faces its own challenges. Political and economic security, access to services, geographical remoteness, natural resource management, population growth and environmental degradation are all factors that influence development outcomes for communities in the Pacific region. Available in English

The Global Water and Sanitation Initiative 2005–2025

IFRC 2014

The Red Cross Red Crescent Global Water and Sanitation Initiative promotes a common but adaptable approach among National Red Cross Red Crescent Societies to establish large-scale, long-term sustainable water and sanitation programmes. It aims to advance efforts in scaling up equitable,

ICRC materials are available from the International Committee of the Red Cross, 19 avenue de la Paix, CH-1202 Geneva, Switzerland. www.icrc.org.
IFRC materials are available from the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, P.O. Box 303, CH-1211 Geneva 19, Switzerland. www.ifrc.org.

MEDIA

ICRC cooperation delegate

ICRC 2014

This 5-minute video clip shows how, when ICRC sometimes teams up with National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies in the field, the cooperation delegate is there to make sure that, in difficult situations, the ICRC, IFRC and National Societies are all working closely together and towards the same goals.

Available in English and French

Madagascar: Plague-free prisons

ICRC 2013

It might be supposed that the plague has been eradicated from the planet, but it is still rife in countries like the Democratic Republic of the Congo or Madagascar. This ten-minute film shows the efforts being made by the ICRC and its local partners to prevent an outbreak of plague in Malagasy prisons where overcrowding and unsanitary conditions would help this highly contagious disease to spread like wildfire.

Available in English, French and Malagasy

Risk Zones (app)

Finnish Red Cross 2014

It is impossible to achieve sustainable development and a permanent

Available in English

reduction in poverty unless we are able to manage the impacts of various risks on the lives of the most vulnerable people. This is the premise of a new computer and smart phone software application, launched by the Finnish Red Cross. The app explains, with colourful imagery, which parts of the world are affected by war, disease or natural disasters. How do they affect the lives of people and what can the Red Cross Red Crescent do to help? Download the Risk Zones tablet application free of charge from any app store.

Available in English, Finnish and Swedish

Safer Access practical resource pack (CD-ROM)

ICRC 2014

The materials in the Safer Access practical resource pack CD-ROM have been created with and for National Societies to help them carry out their humanitarian work in challenging circumstances. This CD-ROM includes an interactive guide for National Societies, three National Society case studies and nine National Society experiences, a print-ready Safer Access poster, a graphics package and flyers in four languages, among other tools. The pack also includes 'Staying alive', which provides guidance on safety and security guidelines in conflict areas.

Available in English

sustainable and affordable access to water and sanitation services for all and thus contribute towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals.

Available in English

Protect health care poster series

ICRC 2014

The young man shown in this vivid, four-colour poster survived because both police and protesters gave access to Red Cross volunteers during a riot. This is just one of the stories told in the new set of

Available in English and French