CHAPTER-II
THE INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE OF THE RED CROSS
AND REFUGEE MANAGEMENT

Introduction:

According to the ICRC (International Committee of the Red Cross) mission statement, the overall humanitarian mission of the institution, as an “impartial, neutral and independent organization” rooted in IHL, is “to protect the lives and dignity of victims of war and internal violence and to provide them with assistance”\(^1\). It assesses opportunities and challenges in the environment in question, analyses the most important stakeholders, and defines the organization’s desired positioning, the scope of its action, and its ambitions. It sets strategic orientations and fields of activity for fulfilling the ICRC’s humanitarian mission – to protect lives and the dignity of victims of armed conflict and other situations of violence and to provide them with assistance. It clearly states the values and principles guiding action and attitudes which are discussed under with different headings.

KEY AREAS OF RISK FACTORS:

The ICRC’s six key success factors and areas of risk, which belong to the institutional risk management framework, are the elements critical to the organization and its work. They are:

- Three factors related mainly to “the ICRC’s own capacity to act” relevance\(^2\), organization and processes and human resources capacity and mobility
- Three factors related mainly to the “external environment” access (to victims), reputation/acceptance and positioning

Among the each area, the ICRC can encounter risks and opportunities; by influencing these areas, the ICRC can reduce its weakness to the risks and take better advantage of the opportunities, thus improving its response to the needs of people affected by armed conflict and other situations of violence and positioning itself as a main player in this respect. The ICRC’s key success areas of risk constitute common reading grid for analysis in yearly and other reviews

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\(^2\) International Review of the Red Cross An unrivalled source of international research, analysis and debate on all aspects of humanitarian law, in armed conflict and other situations of collective violence. Vol 2 no 4
by the Directorate. Such reviews include the results achieved, an assessment of risks, and the
definition or updating of management objectives and action plans to mitigate the main risks and
reinforce the key success factors. This aims to ensure efficient management of the organization
according to available resources and priorities and thus preserve the ICRC’s reputation and
enable it to continue to demonstrate its added value. Annual reviews are submitted to the ICRC
Assembly.

Factors elucidating the ICRC’s success:

- **Relevance**: the relevance of the ICRC’s response refers to meeting the most pressing
  needs of people affected by armed conflict and other situations of violence in an
evidence-based, result-oriented and timely manner, and using the ICRC’s traditional
modes of action (support, substitution, persuasion, mobilization, denunciation).

- **Organization and processes**: organization and processes pertains to the structure of
  the ICRC and its decision-making, working, and information management processes. It
includes the management models, structures, procedures and rules that govern the work
of its staff and contribute to the ICRC’s reputation as a professional, effective and
efficient organization.

- **Human resources capacity and mobility**: the capacities and mobility of the ICRC’s
  human resources refers to the organization’s values, policies and methods for
managing its staff. It also refers to the willingness and readiness of staff members to serve better the
ICRC and people affected by armed conflict and other situations of violence.

- **Access**: access to victims refers to reaching people affected by armed conflict and other
situations of violence in order to assess their situation, to deliver aid and to document
allegations of abuse or violations foils and relevant applicable law committed by parties to
the conflict. The ICRC’s access to those in need depends greatly on its reputation and on
acceptance of the organization by parties to the conflict and by key decision-makers.

- **Reputation and Acceptance**: the ICRC’s reputation refers to the way in which the
organization is perceived by parties to the conflict and by other key stakeholders.
Acceptance of the organization involves parties to the conflict and other key stakeholders
recognizing and accepting the neutral, impartial, and independent nature of the ICRC and

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3 ‘International Committee of the Red Cross: prevention policy’, in International Review of the Red
Cross, Vol. 91, No. 874, June 2009, pp 23

4 *Ibid*, pp 33
its specific mandate under IHL and the Statutes of the Movement to protect and assist those affected by armed conflict and other situations of violence. The ICRC’s reputation and the extent to which the organization is accepted directly influence its ability to gain access to victims and to attract qualified staff and funding.

- **Positioning:** ICRC positioning refers to the position of the ICRC within the field of humanitarian response, its perceived added value for the people affected by armed conflict and other situations of violence, and donors’ perception of the organization’s relevance, effectiveness and efficiency.

**MULTIDISCIPLINARY APPROACHES:**

The ICRC endeavours to respond to the humanitarian needs arising complex armed conflicts. Each situation requires thorough analysis, a sensitive but objective assessment of the needs and human suffering, and the design and implementation of specific and efficient humanitarian responses. Presently situations have to be considered holistically, in a way that integrates local, regional and global elements and takes into account the broad range of problems and needs of the populations the ICRC wants to help. Therefore, for any action to be undertaken, a inclusive analysis is carried out: of the situation, the actors present, the stakes and the dynamics. This enables the ICRC to identify the people adversely affected and their needs. An effective response requires a clear understanding of the cause of the problems and a good knowledge of local facilities, their capabilities and their potential. The ICRC endeavours to obtain an overall perspective of an issue of humanitarian concern by looking at all aspects of the problem and all possible responses. It is also important that the ICRC ensures the rationality of its activities in the medium and long term. The ICRC’s mission is a dynamic that combines the defense of individual rights, through respect by the authorities and other actors of their obligations, with a response to needs, through neutral, impartial and independent action. As described in the ICRC’s mission statement, the organization combines four approaches in its overall strategy after analysing a situation in order to, directly or indirectly, in the short, medium or long term, ensure respect for the lives, dignity, and physical and mental wellbeing of victims of armed conflict and other situations of violence. Such action seeks to prevent (prevention), eradicate the cause of (protection) and alleviate (assistance) human suffering in armed conflict or other situations of violence and strengthen the Movement, as a network (cooperation).

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5 *Ibid* pp 43
of the adoption of and respect for legal norms, confidential representations in the event that obligations are not fulfilled or laws are violated, delivery of relief aid, communication campaigns and the training of first-aid volunteers are all part of a coherent humanitarian mission. Effective monitoring and critical evaluation, drawing on lessons learnt from past experience, are also crucial to this process, as is coordination with the numerous actors present on the increasingly complex humanitarian scene. To carry out comprehensive analysis, set objectives and define and implement plans of action, the ICRC works with a dynamic network of multidisciplinary teams composed of specialists and general staff who are led and coordinated by competent management with clear policies and priorities. The implementation of the ICRC mission is characterized by the strategic use of various modes of action at different levels of intervention, at the headquarters the delivery of various services and in its field operations focus on different target populations associated with a diverse range of activities requiring varied skills and expertise.

METHODS OF ACTION:

The modes of action used by the ICRC and as notified by the ICRC as follows:

- **Persuasion**: confidential representations addressed to the authorities and aimed at convincing them to enhance respect for IHL and other fundamental rules protecting persons in situations of violence and to take measures which improve the circumstances of people affected by such situations

- **Mobilization**: activities aimed at prevailing on third parties to influence the behaviour or actions of the authorities, to support them, or to provide services to people in need directly

- **Denunciation**: public declarations regarding violations of IHL or other fundamental rules protecting persons in situations of violence committed by specific actors, for the purpose of bringing a halt to such violations or preventing their recurrence

- **Support**: activities aimed at providing assistance to the authorities so that they are better able to carry out their functions and fulfill their responsibilities

- **Substitution**: activities to provide services to people in need directly, often in place of authorities who are not able or not willing to do so. The modes of action used by the ICRC depend on the situation, the problems encountered and the objectives to be achieved. They aim to make the relevant actors aware of and fulfill their responsibilities.
The ICRC does not limit itself to any one of them; on the contrary, it combines them, striking a balance between them either simultaneously or consecutively.

STAGES OF INTERVENTION:

The activities carried out under the ICRC’s programmes are conducted at the following complementary levels to reach common objectives in aid of the affected populations:

- Preventing or alleviating the immediate effects of an emerging or established pattern of abuse or problem.
- Restoring dignified living conditions through rehabilitation, restitution and reparation.
- Fostering a social, cultural, institutional and legal environment conducive to respect for IHL and/or other fundamental rules protecting persons in situations of violence.

PURPOSE AND ACTION-ORIENTED MANAGEMENT

At least once a year, on the basis of an analysis of the given situation and of the humanitarian issues, the ICRC defines objectives with plans of action and indicators for the coming year for each context in which it operates. The plans of action and indicators describe how the ICRC aims to work towards the objectives in question. Changes in situations and humanitarian issues may require objectives, plans of action and indicators to be revised during the year. Objectives and plans of action and indicators are organized according to target populations and list activities according to programme.

ICRC Appeals provide donors with information about these objectives, their plans of action and indicators and the corresponding budget. The ICRC also produces an Annual Report, which provides information – descriptive, quantitative and financial – regarding those objectives and plans of action and indicators. Whenever possible the reporting is result-oriented. It includes a description of the products and services resulting from processes that use a combination of resources, and their effect or results at output, outcome or impact level. The ICRC works according to the following definitions of the terminology used, adopted on the basis of a common understanding in existing writings:

- input: human, technical, material and financial resources and logistical means that enable a person/organization to do something
- activity: any action or process through which inputs are combined to generate goods and services (outputs)
- **output**: the products, goods and services that people receive as a result of ICRC activities and that are expected to **lead** to the achievement of outcomes
- **outcome**: short- and medium-term
  - **Short-term outcome**: the likely, or achieved, short-term effects of the output that are expected to **lead** to the achievement of medium-term outcome
  - **medium-term outcome**: the likely, or achieved, medium-term (1–5 year) effects of the short-term outcome that are expected to **contribute** to the impact
- **Impact**: primary and secondary long-term effects to which interventions **contribute**, positively or negatively, directly or indirectly, intended or unintended. The ICRC, as any other actor, is likely only to contribute to an impact.

**PERSONS TARGETED IN FIELD OPERATIONS:**

In background of its field objectives, the ICRC has drawn up standard list of seven target groups, divided into two broad categories. These are defined as follows:

i) **Affected persons** are individuals or segments of the population suffering the direct and/or indirect effects of a confirmed or emerging situation of armed conflict or violence, who do not or no longer take a direct part in the hostilities or violence. The aim of ICRC action for such people is to ensure that they are respected and protected and to alleviate the suffering caused by the situation, in accordance with the provisions of IHL and internationally accepted standards. The ICRC distinguishes between three different groups of people:

  - **Civilians**: all people who do not or no longer take a direct part in hostilities or violence but whose physical or mental integrity and dignity are either threatened or affected during an armed conflict or another situation of violence
  - **People deprived of their freedom**: all individuals deprived of their freedom in connection with an armed conflict or another situation of violence, such as prisoners of war, civilian internees and security detainees

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■ wounded and sick: people – civilians or weapon bearers – injured or suffering from disease or otherwise in need of medical assistance or care in an armed conflict or another situation of violence

ii) important individuals of their roles and functions, may directly or indirectly take action to curb, avoid or put an end to violations of IHL or other fundamental rules protecting persons in situations of violence, and protector aid those affected when humanitarian problems arise. The ICRC endeavours to persuade them to take action, in the manner most conducive to promoting full respect for those fundamental rules and to ensuring that the people in need receive protection and assistance. This second broad category comprises the following:

■ The authorities: political decision-makers (civil, administrative or legislative authorities, whether official or unofficial)

■ Armed forces and other weapon bearers: armed, police and security forces, and all State and non-State actors involved in armed violence

■ civil society: the public at large, representatives of civil society or other actors exerting influence, such as the media, associations of various kinds, NGOs, religious authorities or opinion-makers, economic entities, young people, university students and academic institutions

■ The Movement: besides the ICRC, the Movement comprises the National Societies and their International Federation. There is a National Society in almost every country in the world, carrying out humanitarian services for the benefit of the community. For the ICRC, the existence of a local partner in each country is a valuable asset and one of the distinguishing features of cooperation within the Movement

Particular apprehension

The ICRC devotes particular attention to certain individual characteristics and situations which further increase liability. As the civilian population becomes increasingly caught up in armed conflicts, specific problems may engender or exacerbate vulnerability among women, children, the elderly or minorities. As warring parties fight for territorial control, more and more civilians are displaced. Forced displacement could aim to weaken enemy forces by targeting

7 Handbook of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, Geneva, 2008, pp 23
communities considered to be supportive of them, or to facilitate appropriation of property or access natural resources.

**Internally displaced people**\(^8\) are those compelled to flee their homes, leaving most of their personal belongings behind, often to resettle in over-populated areas in conditions of extreme poverty, without gainful employment and seldom having the benefit of services such as a clean water supply, sewage systems, health care or education.

**Children** are not spared in armed conflict; they not only represent a large segment of the population but are also more vulnerable than adults. They should benefit both from the general protection guaranteed by law as people not taking a direct part in hostilities and from specific protection as a particularly vulnerable group (**children are covered by 25 articles in the 1949 Geneva Conventions and their 1977 Additional Protocols**\(^9\)). Yet children are major beneficiary of the ICRC’s prevention, protection and assistance programmes worldwide. They are often the powerless witnesses of atrocities committed against their relatives. Many of them are killed, wounded or imprisoned, torn from their families, forcibly recruited into combat, compelled to flee or left without even an identity.

**Women and girls** mostly experience armed conflict as civilians, and as such are often exposed to acts of violence. Such acts include death or injury from indiscriminate attacks and mine explosions, but also direct assaults. Sexual violence, including rape, is widespread and often used as a method of warfare against the civilian population, with women and girls as the main victims. In addition, the loss of male relatives and deprivation of access to the basic means of survival and health care make women and girls vulnerable. It is therefore imperative to understand in which way, owing to their status and role in a given context, women and girls are affected by a situation of violence and how best humanitarian programmes can contribute to alleviating their plight.

To Protect from **weapon contagion**. The ICRC, together with National Societies, implements activities aimed at reducing the impact of weapon contagion on communities living in contaminated areas. The response provided is adapted to each situation and can comprise a

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range of activities, across all ICRC programmes. This involves: providing policy guidance and technical support on weapon contamination issues to National Societies and representing the Movement internationally on these matters; working with protection, economic security and water and habitat programmes to ensure that weapon contaminations a potential source of vulnerability is included in assessments and programme planning; supporting the capacity building of the National Societies and their integration into national mine-action capability; deploying rapid response capacity to ICRC delegations in emergencies where weapon contamination poses a threat to the ICRC and the population; contributing to the development of international mine-action policy, methodologies and systems.

There is a need to continuously heighten awareness of the tragic fate of people missing as a result of armed conflict and other situations of violence and to seek ways of alleviating the anguish suffered by their families. In the wake of the International Conference of Governmental and Non-Governmental Experts on the missing and their families, convened by the ICRC in Geneva in February 2003, and the pledge made at the 28th International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent in December 200310, operational guidelines have been established to prevent disappearances and to respond to the needs and suffering of the families left behind. They continue to be implemented on the ground by the relevant ICRC delegations worldwide with the recommendations pertaining to human remains and forensic sciences, which include: operational support to ICRC field operations on all matters related to human remains and the forensic sciences; training and advice on best practices in the forensic sciences as they relate to the search for the missing, including in natural disasters; spreading knowledge of and promoting those best practices; development of tools, including for the collection and management of information, guidelines, manuals and publications to empower investigations into cases of missing persons; carrying out forensic case-working ICRC operational contexts that require it. Moreover, the ICRC continues to heighten concern about the issue of missing persons and their relatives among Governments, NGOs, UN agencies and relevant segments of civil society and to emphasize the importance of addressing and ultimately resolving the issue.

STRATEGY DESCRIPTIONS

SECURITY:

In order to preserve the lives, security, dignity and physical and mental well-being of people adversely affected by armed conflict and other situations of violence, the ICRC has adopted a protection approach that aims to ensure that the authorities and other players involved fulfill their obligations and uphold the rights of individuals protected by law. It also tries to prevent and put an end to actual or probable violations of IHL and other bodies of law protecting people in such situations. The protection approach focuses both on the causes or circumstances of violations, targeting those responsible and those who can influence them, and on the consequences of the violations.

Security programmes cover all activities designed to ensure protection of the victims of armed conflicts and other situations of violence. The beneficiaries are resident and displaced civilians, people deprived of their freedom (in particular POWs, security detainees, internees and other vulnerable people), people separated from their relatives because of conflict, violence or other circumstances, such as natural disasters or migration, and missing people and their families. As a neutral and independent humanitarian organization, the ICRC seeks to ensure that all the parties to a conflict and all authorities provide individuals and groups with the full respect and protection that are due to them under Inland other fundamental rules protecting persons in situations of violence. In response to violations of these rules, the ICRC endeavours, as much as possible through constructive and confidential dialogue, to encourage the authorities concerned to take corrective action and to prevent any recurrence. Delegations monitor the situation and the treatment of the civilian population and people deprived of their freedom, discuss their findings with the authorities concerned, recommend measures and conduct follow-up activities.

Protecting the disadvantaged people of their freedom:

The objective of the ICRC’s activities for people insolvent of their freedom is purely humanitarian, namely to ensure that their physical and mental integrity is fully respected and that their conditions of detention are in line with Inland/or internationally recognized standards. As circumstances dictate, the ICRC strives to prevent forced disappearances or extrajudicial executions, ill-treatment and failure to respect fundamental judicial guarantees, and, whenever necessary, takes action to improve conditions of detention. This involves in particular:
consult with the authorities to obtain access to people deprived of their freedom wherever they may be held, in accordance with procedures that guarantee the effectiveness and consistency of ICRC action

visit all detainees, assessing their conditions of detention and identifying any deficiency and humanitarian needs

supervise individual detainees

Manage family links (such as facilitating family visits or forwarding RCMs\textsuperscript{11})

endow with material and medical relief supplies to detainees or engaging in cooperation on specific projects with the detaining authorities

Developing a confidential and meaningful dialogue with the authorities at all levels regarding any problems of a humanitarian nature that may arise.

Visits to places of detention are carried out by the ICRC in accordance with strict conditions:

That delegates must be provided with full and unimpeded access to all detainees falling within the ICRC’s mandate and to all places where they are held

That delegates must be able to hold private interviews with the detainees of their choice

Delegates must be able to repeat their visits

Detainees falling within the ICRC’s mandate must be notified individually to the ICRC, and the ICRC must be able to draw up lists of their names.

**Securing the civilians:**

Protection activities for the civilian population are intended to ensure that individuals and groups not or no longer taking a direct part in hostilities are fully respected and protected, in accordance with IHL or other fundamental rules protecting persons in situations of violence. This involves in particular:

Appealing dialogue with the relevant parties at all levels to discuss humanitarian issues and to remind them of their legal obligations

Supervising individuals and communities who are particularly vulnerable and/or exposed to serious risks of abuse, reducing their exposure to those risks and reinforcing their own protection mechanisms

\textsuperscript{11} Red cross Messages
Securing of families and Restoring links: These activities aim to restore or manage contact between members of families, including people deprived of their freedom, who have been separated by an armed conflict, another situation of violence or in relation to a natural disaster, with a view to relieving their mental anguish. This involves in particular:

- Sending family news (through various means, such as RCMs, radio broadcasts, the telephone and the Internet) via the worldwide Red Cross and Red Crescent network.
- Looking for persons separated from their families, in particular unaccompanied and separated children, including demobilized child soldiers.
- Accumulate information on detentions, disappearances and deaths, collecting tracing requests from the families of missing people and submitting them to the relevant authorities for clarification.
- Categorize repatriations and family reunifications.
- Assist family visits to detainees or across frontlines.
- Supervise ICRC travel documents for people who, owing to a conflict, do not or no longer have identity papers and are about to be repatriated or resettled in a third country.

Assisting the missing persons

Activities for missing persons are intended to shed light on the fate and whereabouts of people who are unaccounted-for as a consequence of an armed conflict or other situation of violence, and thereby respond to the suffering caused to their relatives by the uncertainty surrounding their fate. This involves promoting and supporting mechanisms to help clarify the fate of missing persons, including the collection and management of information and the recovery and identification of human remains, facilitating dialogue between the authorities and the families of missing people, and responding to the latter’s needs.\(^\text{12}\)

The aim of assistance is to preserve life and/or restore the dignity of individuals or communities adversely affected by an armed conflict or other situation of violence. Assistance activities address the consequences of violations of IHL or other fundamental rules protecting people in situations of violence. They may also tackle the causes and circumstances of such violations by reducing risk exposure.

Assistance programmes are designed to preserve or restore acceptable living conditions for people affected by armed conflict or other situations of violence, to enable them to maintain an adequate standard of living in the irrespective social and cultural context until their basic needs are met by the authorities or through their own means. The beneficiaries are primarily resident or displaced civilians, vulnerable groups such as minorities and the families of people who are unaccounted for, the sick and the wounded (both military and civilian) and people deprived of their freedom.

Managing basic facilities: Economic security programmes are designed to ensure that households and communities have access to the services and resources required to meet their essential economic needs, as defined by their physical condition and social and cultural environment. In practice, this translates into three different types of intervention:

- relief interventions: to protect lives and livelihoods by providing people in need with the goods and/or services essential for their survival when they can no longer obtain them through their own means
- production interventions: to protect or enhance household’s or community’s asset base – its means of production – so that it can maintain or recover its livelihood
- structural interventions: to protect livelihoods by influencing processes, institutions and policies that have a direct impact on a target population’s capacity to maintain its livelihood over time (such as agricultural or livestock services)

Access to water and to a safe living environment: Water and habitat programmes are designed to ensure access to water and to a safe living environment. In situations of acute crisis, infrastructure may have been damaged by fighting and basic services may not work or be inaccessible. People may be forced to leave their homes to look for water in a hostile environment. By monitoring the situation and implementing projects when and where necessary, in both urban and rural contexts, the ICRC ensures access to water and safe environmental sanitation conditions, and promotes basic health
care by taking emergency action and supporting existing facilities. In emerging crises, chronic crises and post-crisis situations, the priority is to support and strengthen existing structures through initiatives taken in conjunction with the authorities and through specific programmes that meet the needs of the population in a viable, sustainable manner.

Providing Health services are designed to ensure that the health needs of people in armed conflict or other situations of violence are met according to defined minimum packages of health services/care. Curative and preventative health interventions remain at the heart of ICRC projects; saving lives and alleviating suffering are the central objectives of health assistance.

Such assistance can entail support to local or regional health services and when necessary substituting for them on a temporary basis. ICRC health interventions involve:

- Implementing activities directly, supporting existing structures/organizations, or mobilizing others in order to carry out first aid, war surgery or health care delivery in conflict situations. Activities include primary health care, mental health and hospital-related activities such as emergency surgery, pediatrics, obstetrics and gynecology and hospital management
- ensuring that detainees have access to basic healthcare
- negotiating with the authorities in order to guarantee safe access to quality health care for the affected population and a safe working environment for medical personnel

Physical Rehabilitation methods

Rehabilitation is an integral part of the process needed to ensure the full participation and inclusion in society of people with disabilities. It involves providing disabled people with assistive devices, such as prostheses, orthoses, walking aids and wheelchairs, together with the therapy that will enable them to make the fullest use of those devices. Physical rehabilitation must also include activities aimed at maintaining, adjusting, repairing and renewing the devices as needed.

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13 Forsythe, The Humanitarians, 2002 pp 22
ICRC’s physical rehabilitation assistance is designed to strengthen the overall physical rehabilitation services of a given country. It aims to improve the accessibility of services and their quality, and to develop national capacities to ensure their long-term viability. ICRC physical rehabilitation projects aim to allow the physically disabled to participate fully in society, both during and after the period of assistance. Although its focus is on physical rehabilitation, the ICRC’s Physical Rehabilitation Programme recognizes the need to develop projects in cooperation with others so as to ensure that beneficiaries have access to other services in the rehabilitation chain.

PREVENTION:

The endeavor of prevention is to promote an environment that is favorable to respect for the lives and dignity of those who may be affected by an armed conflict or other situation of violence, and that is favourable to the work of the ICRC. The approach has a medium- to long-term outlook and aims to prevent suffering by influencing those who have a direct or indirect impact on the fate of people affected by such situations, and who can influence the ICRC’s ability to gain access to these people and operate efficiently in their favor. In particular, the prevention approach involves communicating, developing and clarifying IHL and promoting the implementation of IHL and other relevant bodies of law, and promoting acceptance of the ICRC’s work.

COLLABORATION WITH NATIONAL SOCIETIES:

The aim of cooperation is to increase the operational capabilities of National Societies, above all in countries affected or likely to be affected by armed conflict or other situations of violence. It further aims to increase the ICRC’s ability to interact with National Societies and work in partnership with them. The cooperation approach aims to optimize the Movement’s humanitarian work by making the best use of complementary mandates and skills in operational matters such as protection, assistance and prevention. It involves drawing up and implementing the policies of the Movement that are adopted during its statutory meetings and strengthening the capacities of National Societies, helping them to adhere at all times to the Fundamental Principles. The ICRC

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14 This information is largely drawn from papers prepared by each Government for the *Department of International Protection Resettlement Handbook*, published by the UNHCR. pp 21-32
shares its expertise with National Societies working in their own countries and with those working internationally by:

- intensification of both the National Societies’ capacity to take action and provide appropriate services in times of armed conflict and other situations of violence in their own country and the ICRC’s action and operational capacity through its interaction and partnership with National Societies
- support operational partnerships with National Societies in their own countries and with those working internationally in order to respond to the needs of people affected by armed conflict or other situations of violence
- Support dialogue and coordination and having regular communication on issues of common concern with National Societies and the International Federation Secretariat.

The sections below describe these activities, distinguishing between cooperation with a National Society working in its own country and cooperation between the ICRC and National Societies working internationally. The final section discusses overall Movement coordination in the field.

The ICRC provides expertise in certain areas to all National Societies in order to strengthen their capacity to conduct activities domestically in accordance with their own priorities and plans. These areas include:

- endorse IHL and spreading knowledge of the Movement’s principles, ideals and activities among both internal and external target groups
- Managing health care and relief services in situations of conflict and internal strife
- reinstate family links through the worldwide Red Cross/Red Crescent tracing network according to the Restoring Family Links Strategy for the Movement and its corresponding implementation plan
- preventing the risks of weapon contagion
- Supporting National Societies in relevant legal matters, such as drawing up or amending statutes, recognizing or reconstituting a National Society, and preparing for the Movement’s statutory meetings.

The National Society remains responsible for designing, managing, and monitoring all the activities it carries out. The ICRC facilitates the implementation of planned activities by:
Facilitate National Societies with technical expertise

Providing material and financial assistance in order to help National Societies to fulfill their humanitarian role in armed conflict and other situations of violence

Organising support from sister National Societies and retaining a monitoring and support role with respect to the achievement of agreed objectives

Supervising ICRC delegates to National Societies so that they can provide support for executive and managerial responsibilities in areas agreed with the National Society.

The ICRC aims to enhance preparedness and response by optimizing complementarity and strengthening the global Movement network. Written agreements between the ICRC and each National Society ensure that the objectives are clear to each partner and that the working relationship is based on a common understanding of respective roles and responsibilities. The ICRC provides capacity-building support in close consultation and coordination with the International Federation, as activities are carried out with a long-term perspective and are part of each National Society’s development process.

The ICRC and National Societies in their own countries often join forces and choose to implement activities together for the benefit of people affected by conflict or internal strife. Activities selected for joint implementation are those which best fit within the National Society’s own plan, preserve its ability to function as an independent institution and contribute to further strengthening its operational capacity. The National Society’s autonomy in managing such activities may vary, and is contingent on its operational capacity and conditions on the ground. In its institutional strategy, the ICRC identifies operational partnerships with National Societies in their own countries as a priority that seeks not only to enhance theocracy’s own ability to partner with National Societies, but also to build the National Societies’ capacity to conduct their own operations. Written agreements formalize the operational partnership and specify the objectives to be achieved, respective roles and responsibilities, and corresponding plans of action and budgets. Financial, administrative and reporting procedures form an integral part of such agreements. This form of cooperation ensures that partnerships with National Societies have an added value for the beneficiaries, the ICRC and the National Society.
Many National Societies have the resources and willingness to work internationally together with the ICRC, and contribute in cash, in kind or by providing personnel and operational management. This section focuses on how this kind of operational partnership functions and on the form of projects implemented in the field.

In order to make its operational partnerships with National Societies working internationally more effective, and in line with its Cooperation Policy of May 2003, there developed and tested between 2004 and 2006 newforms of partnership and management procedures that aim to bring added value to the Movement’s overall humanitarian response. The first – Integrated Partnerships\(^\text{15}\) – has been designed for situations where a project carried out by a National Society working internationally forms an integral part of the ICRC’s own objectives, and the National Society is integrated into the ICRC’s operational management framework. The second – Coordinated Activities – has been designed for contexts where work carried out by a National Society working internationally is not part of the ICRC’s objectives, but is under the ICRC’s leadership and coordination in conformity with the Seville Agreement.

The ICRC is responsible for promoting and directing the contribution and involvement of other Movement components in international relief operations in countries affected by armed conflict and other situations of violence and their direct consequences. It assumes the role of “lead agency” for the Movement operation in accordance with the Movement’s Statutes and the Seville Agreement, and in consultation with the National Society of the country concerned.

In such situations, coordination mechanisms are established that cover all the Red Cross and Red Crescent institutions active on the ground. When the ICRC assumes the role of lead agency, it implements its own activities while also taking responsibility for coordinating the response of other Movement components. It is currently working to improve its practice as lead agency, by working with the National Society of the country as its natural “primary partner”. Country level memoranda of understanding defining the roles and responsibilities of each Movement component in emergency and normal

situations, during periods of conflict, transition and peace, have been developed in a number of contexts and have proven effective in preparing the ground for well coordinated Movement action. In cooperation with other Movement partners, the ICRC has dedicated further resources to learning from the experience of coordinating the Movement’s humanitarian response in a number of contexts. Revised operational guidelines to enhance coordination are under development.

FIELD STRUCTURE OF THE ICRC

The ultimate purpose of a field organisation is to enable the ICRC to fulfill its mandate for people affected by armed conflict or other situations of violence, by responding in a timely, efficient and adequate manner to the resulting humanitarian needs. ICRC delegations adapt to the specific needs of the contexts in which they are active and Endeavour to develop the most appropriate and effective strategies. They also act as early-warning systems with regard to political violence or nascent armed conflicts and their potential consequences in humanitarian terms. In ongoing or emerging situations of armed conflict or violence, the delegations focus on operational activities such as protection, assistance, cooperation and preventive action at the responsive and remedial levels, for the direct benefit of victims – civilians, people deprived of their freedom and the wounded and sick. In other situations, the delegations focus primarily on environment-building preventive action, cooperation with National Societies and humanitarian diplomacy, while remaining poised to become more operational should the need arise. Many delegations cover only one country. Others cover several countries and are called “regional delegations”. Certain delegations are tending more and more to provide regional services for their respective regions, such as the Cairo delegation in terms of communication, Amman inters of logistics and Bangkok as a training provider. The ICRC’s presence in the field can also take the form of a mission or other form of representation adapted to the particularities of the context or the specific functions assigned to the ICRC staff on the ground.

REGIONAL DELEGATIONS OF THE ICRC

Regional Delegations16 are grouped by regions covering the following

16 ICRC“Annual report 2011, Key facts and figures”, pp09
geographical entities: Africa; Asia and the Pacific; Europe and the Americas; Middle East. There are 9 regions in all:

- **Africa**
  - Eastern Africa
  - The Great Lakes and Southern Africa
  - Northern and Western Africa
- **Asia and the Pacific**
  - East Asia, South-East Asia and the Pacific
  - South Asia
- **Europe and the Americas**
  - Eastern Europe and Central Asia
  - Latin America and the Caribbean
  - North America, Western, Central and South-Eastern Europe
- **Middle East**

At headquarters, a head of region is in charge of the management of and support for field operations in each region. The head of region answers to the director of Operations and is also in charge of a regional multidisciplinary team representing headquarters services such as Protection, Assistance, Logistics, Law, Communication, Cooperation within the Movement, Humanitarian Diplomacy, External Resources, Human Resources and Finance and Logistics, which are involved as needed. The aim is to enhance relations between headquarters and field delegations, and to better coordinate and focus the support provided by these various services.

**MONITARY SUPPORT**

The ICRC has formulated guidelines to ensure greater uniformity and coherence in managing earmarked funds. These standards are designed to maximize the ICRC’s effectiveness in the field, by limiting the number of financing and reporting constraints. The guidelines include rules on contributions which cannot be accepted on principle. These include:

- donations which are in contradiction with the Movement’s Fundamental Principles

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17 "ICRC Financing and budget" Annual report 2011, Key facts and figures, pp 4
assistance which seek to support only a specific category of beneficiary\textsuperscript{18} (e.g. an ethnic or religious minority)

- offerings which seek to support only a specific sub-region of a country
- visibility requirements which impinge on the security of beneficiaries or ICRC staff

Earmarking is one of the issues raised in the Donor Support Group (DSG), a discussion forum made up of Governments contributing over CHF 10 million annually to the ICRC’s Appeals. The DSG has successfully assisted the ICRC in its efforts to decrease the levels of earmarking on contributions and to improve its standard reporting system. In addition, the majority of DSG members have accepted that the ICRC’s standard reporting meets the reporting requirements related to their donations. The ICRC continues to try to encourage donors to ease their constraints, while maintaining its commitment to use funds as efficiently as possible. In 2001, the ICRC adapted its standard reporting system to its internal annual planning exercise (known in-house as the PfR, or Planning for Results). This commitment to improve reporting to donors has been further reinforced through, for instance, external audits and enhanced internal planning, monitoring and evaluation procedures.

**ASSISTANCE IN KIND OR CASH:**

Contributions in kind refer to assistance provided in the form of food, non-food items or specific goods needed for the ICRC’s assistance activities. The customary procedure for the acquisition of contributions in kind is as follows: the ICRC makes a request for specific goods needed for a particular field operation; that request is matched by a specific donor offer of goods. Once the offer has been accepted, the goods are delivered by the donor directly to the ICRC’s local or regional warehouses. Donors are also able to provide cash contributions to cover the purchase of pre-defined goods by the ICRC\textsuperscript{19}.

**MONITARY CONTROL:**

Faced with increasingly complex environments, over the years the ICRC has progressively and pragmatically adopted an internal control and compliance approach based on three pillars: the Internal Control and Compliance Unit, a financial controller, and the

\textsuperscript{18} ibid.pp10

\textsuperscript{19} "ICRC Financing and budget" Annual report 2011, Key facts and figures, pp 14
Compliance and Quality Assurance Centre in the Philippines. The Internal Control and Compliance Unit are responsible for ensuring that the ICRC’s internal control system complies with the requirements of Swiss legislation and with the ICRC’s internal rules. The unit is mandated by the Directorate to update the “entity-wide” control document which sets the tone for the entire organization with regard to the control environment the ICRC aims to create. This unit is the focal point for the external auditor for any matter related to the internal financial control system. The above-mentioned unit also coordinates the financial controller who, through field and headquarters missions, checks on the implementation of financial, administrative, human resources and logistics procedures. In addition, for more than a decade, the ICRC has run the Compliance and Quality Assurance Centre in the Philippines. It ensures comprehensive and consistent quality control of all accounting and logistics documents to ensure that financial transactions in the field are supported with bona fide documentation and that the standards set by the financial framework are respected. A list of the main financial risks and associated control measures has been drawn up by the ICRC and validated by the external auditors. The list is reviewed at least once a year, although it can be updated whenever necessary. Any required follow-up is done by the unit. The overall objective is to ensure the ICRC is fully accountable to its donors and other stakeholders, such as the authorities in contexts where it operates.

**INTERNAL FINANCIAL ASSESSMENT**

As per the Article 14 of the Statutes of the ICRC, internal financial assessment shall have an internal monitoring function independent of the Directorate. It shall report directly to the Assembly. It shall proceed through internal operational and financial audits”. The ICRC Internal assessment covers “the ICRC as a whole, both field and headquarters”. Its aim is “to assess, on an independent basis, the performance of the institution and the pertinence of the means deployed in relation to the ICRC’s strategy”.

In the area of finance, its role complements that of the external auditors. The Internal assessment helps the ICRC accomplish its objectives by using a systematic, disciplined approach to ensure and give added value to the effectiveness of risk management, control and governance processes. Its methodology follows the Standards for the Professional Practice of Internal

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20 *Ibid.* pp 16

21 “ICRC Financing and budget””Annual report 2011, Key facts and figures. pp 11-14
Auditing of the Institute of Internal Auditors. The internal audit reports its findings directly to the ICRC president and the Control Commission, and issues recommendations to the management.

The head of Internal Audit is appointed by the Assembly. The Internal Audit’s yearly work programme and budget are presented to the Assembly for approval. Each audit assignment is concluded by an audit report. The Directorate is responsible for responding to the recommendations included in Internal Audit reports; a formal system for following up the recommendations in each report is in place. Progress in implementation is reported to the Control Commission of the Assembly.

THE OPERATIONAL APPROACH TOWARDS HUMANITARIAN ACTION

Managing operations:

Introduction:

The ICRC utilize result based management chiefly to enhance the effectiveness of its action for victims of armed conflict and other situations of violence and to increase its accountability, first to the victims concerned, and second to other outside stakeholders, in particular donors. Result-based management links activities from one stage to the next, generates structured information at each stage, provides coherent information for management and reporting purposes, and ensures that resources are used to best effect. In employing the result-based approach, the ICRC works according to the following definitions:

- **input**: human, technical, material and financial resources and logistical means that enable a person/organization to do something
- **activity**: any action or process through which inputs are combined to generate goods and services (outputs)
- **output**: the products, goods and services that people receive as a result of ICRC activities and that are expected to lead to the achievement of outcomes
- **outcome**: short- and medium-term
  - **short-term outcome**: the likely, or achieved, short-term effects of the output that are expected to lead to the achievement of medium-term outcome
  - **medium-term outcome**: the likely, or achieved, medium-term (1–5 year) effects of the short-term outcome that are expected to contribute to the impact

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- **Impact**: primary and secondary, long-term effects to which interventions contribute, positively or negatively, directly or indirectly, intended or unintended. The ICRC, as any other actor, is likely only to contribute to an impact.

**LEVELS OF THE MANAGEMENT**

**Evaluation and analysis**: The ICRC aims to understand situation in order to identify the problems facing a target population, their causes and the consequences for the target population. The purpose of an assessment is simply to identify any problems, not to work out whether and how-to address them. The assessment stage involves collecting information and data, both independently and during contacts with the target population itself, the authorities at all levels, and any other relevant stakeholders.

The ICRC then conducts a thorough analysis of the information gathered during the assessment to determine the current situation. It is necessary to know what the conditions are at the beginning in order to know what needs to be achieved. This is the **baseline**: a set of information that defines the initial situation that must be improved and against which any future improvement will be measured. This is essential for determining objectives.

**Formulation and forecast**: The aim is used to determine the means of achieving the new status. Once the desired new situation of the target population has been defined, a **plan of action** is formulated (with corresponding budget/human resources), outlining the steps required to move from the baseline situation to the target situation. Tools, including any relevant indicators, for monitoring, reviewing, evaluating and ensuring that the ICRC can learn from the process are decided on at this stage.

**Performance and scrutiny**\(^2^3\): The ICRC carries out the various activities identified during the planning stage as being required to achieve the desired results for the target population. Once implementation of the plan of action begins, so does monitoring, using the tools defined at the planning stage. Monitoring is a continuous and systematic process of self-assessment throughout the life of the operation, which involves collecting, measuring, recording and analysing information on all the planned activities and the results being achieved for the target population. It also includes continuous monitoring and analysis of the situation of the

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target population and of the general context in which the operation is taking place. It aids management, with the ultimate goal of ensuring the effective delivery of a relevant and good-quality service.

**Appraisal, evaluation and learning:**

Appraisals are informal internal examinations of performance that take place at various levels: from the context as a whole, which happens at least once a year, down to the sub-target population (e.g. physically disabled people, under Wounded and sick) and sub-programme (e.g. economic security, under Assistance), and even in a limited geographical area within the context. Reviews take the form of qualitative and quantitative, narrative and figure-based reports which are prepared by: teams in the field usually, professionals from ICRC headquarters, mixed teams involving internal and external specialists, or external specialists mandated by the ICRC.

Information on the interim situation is compared with information on the intended results and on the initial situation to identify any significant deviations from the plan. In this way, the ICRC is able to identify problems and take corrective action. Either it will modify the way in which it seeks to achieve its objective, or it will modify the objective itself if it finds that the baseline situation or the needs have changed. As such, the stages of the management cycle are replicated at various operational levels, multiple times, within the overall yearly cycle for a given context.

An evaluation is defined by the ICRC as an independent, objective and systematic examination of the design, implementation and results of an initiative, programme, operation or policy against recognized criteria. It is intended to articulate findings, draw conclusions and make recommendations in order that the ICRC may draw lessons, improve overall policy and practice, and enhance accountability. Evaluations commissioned by the ICRC are internal, while those commissioned by stakeholders outside the institution are external; those taken on by the ICRC together with outside stakeholders are joint evaluations. Internal and joint evaluations aim to influence ICRC action over the long term, on the basis of their findings. Given the magnitude of the undertaking, only a few evaluations are carried out each year.

The ICRC’s Institutional Performance Management Unit in the Office of the Director-General has overall responsibility for managing internal and joint evaluations. This includes writing the terms of reference, recruiting the independent evaluators, organizing visits and interviews, reading and commenting on draft reports, organizing roundtable meetings with the evaluators and the main internal stakeholders to present and discuss the findings, conclusions and
recommendations of the evaluation, and overseeing preparation of the final report. The Unit cooperates closely with the main internal stakeholders throughout the process. A steering committee comprising all those involved is established for all internal evaluations. The main stakeholders must prepare an approach paper, help establish the terms of reference and select the evaluators, provide relevant information to the evaluators, help organize field missions and read and comment in writing on the draft evaluation reports. Once the evaluation report has been distributed, key stakeholders are asked to provide feedback on the conclusions and recommendations and to prepare an action plan for follow-up. The evaluation and learning process leads to lessons learnt both for the delegation and for the ICRC as a whole.

**ANNUAL PLANNING PROCESS:**

**Planning for Results (PfR) Documents** Drawn up by specialists and managers in the field with the help of staff at headquarters, the PfR documents are structured according to the ICRC’s framework of target populations/sub-target populations and programmes/sub-programmes, which provide an assessment and analysis of the situation, including a summary of the progress so far in terms of implementation of actions and results against the objectives defined for the previous yearly cycle, and the new plan for the year to come.

**Assessment and analysis** The PfR documents present the information collected during a thorough assessment of all aspects of the situation, including the results of operations, conducted first hand by the ICRC’s delegations, sub-delegations, missions and offices in the field. They compile information on the:

- general context
- armed conflict or other situation of violence
- humanitarian situation
- security situation
- other actors present

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24 The explanatory notes to the standard introducing the need to monitor and evaluate stipulate: ‘Although in recent years, monitoring and evaluation have been included more systematically in protection planning, the challenge of making this standard practice persists. It is nevertheless now recognized that protection actors have an increased responsibility to establish adequate monitoring and evaluation systems in order to assess the effectiveness of their work – both against their operational objectives, and against broader contextual realities, pp. 21–22.'
Using the information collected during the assessment stage, ICRC specialists in the field and at headquarters conduct a thorough analysis of the situation to identify the problems faced by the target populations, their causes and their magnitude.

**Formulation and planning** On the basis of its mandate, its legal and policy framework and consultations with the potential beneficiaries, the ICRC then determines a desired future situation for the target population. It makes these kinds of decisions on the basis of a number of factors, including: the most pressing needs; its own mandate and capacities; IHL and other internationally recognized standards; resolutions of the Movement’s statutory bodies; a thorough knowledge of the context in question (e.g. customs and cultural sensitivities; national standards, laws and capacities); and the mandate, objectives and activities of other organizations, in particular its partners within the Movement (the National Societies and the International Federation). It sets objectives to be achieved in the medium or long term and determines the incremental steps to be taken in the short term (within the year) towards achieving those objectives. Possible and actual constraints on and limitations to the operation, identified during the assessment and analysis of the context, are also taken into account to ensure that the incremental steps are realistic. This process is undertaken by target population and sub target population, and by programme and sub programme.

The following elements are defined:

- **The desired humanitarian impact** (the desired future situation)
- **General objectives** (medium- or long-term objectives, usually covering a 5-year period)
- **Specific objectives** (that aim to be achieved within the year)
- **Specific operational strategies** (strategies for achieving the specific objectives, enhanced at field level by operational action plans)

The levels of intended result set out in the PfR documents correspond to various result levels defined under result based management. The ways of measuring progress towards achievement of the various levels of results are also defined at this stage. These are many and various – some are standard and used by all delegations conducting similar activities; others are specific to an individual action.
OBJECTIVE-BASED MANAGEMENT IN ICRC PROGRAMMES

The ICRC endeavours to respond to humanitarian needs arising from today’s complex armed conflicts and other situations of violence in the most timely, humane and professional way possible. As described in *ICRC management framework and programme descriptions*\(^\text{25}\), implementation of the ICRC mission is characterized by the strategic use of various **modes of action at different levels of intervention**\(^\text{26}\). The ICRC combines four approaches with a view, directly or indirectly, in the short, medium or long term, to ensuring respect for the lives, dignity, and physical and mental well-being of victims of armed conflict and other situations of violence. Its action seeks to prevent (**prevention**), eradicate the cause of (**protection**) and alleviate (**assistance**) human suffering in armed conflict or other situations of violence and to strengthen the Movement (as a network) (**cooperation**). This involves the delivery of various **services** by headquarters and field operations focusing on different **target populations** associated with a diverse range of activities requiring varied skills and expertise (**programmes**).

Professionals in each programme work according to the ICRC management cycle and within a given framework, which includes ethical and legal aspects, policies, guidelines and working tools. Generic indicators are part of these and provide the basis for defining specific indicators measuring and expressing results for concrete objectives in a given context. The sections below provide information on the management of each ICRC approach, related programmes and existing generic indicators with examples of associated topics on which specific indicators might be defined.

ASSISTANCE:

Generic indicators based on the Assistance Policy exist for all three assistance sub-programmes: **economic security**, **health** (including **physical rehabilitation**)\(^\text{27}\) and **water and habitat**. These generic indicators are provided below with examples of associated topics on


\(^{26}\) The humanitarian action of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement is specifically based on seven Fundamental Principles: humanity, impartiality, neutrality, independence, voluntary service, unity, and universality. References in this article to the ‘fundamental (humanitarian) principles’ are based on this definition.

which specific indicators might be defined for concrete objectives in a given context. As far as sustainability is concerned, the ICRC takes into account the longer-term impact of its activities and, whenever appropriate, endeavoursto find lasting solutions to the needs of the affected population. This provision is introduced because of the life saving character of some of its activities conducted on an emergency basis, the sustainability of which is not guaranteed. Sustainability is therefore a generic indicator for activities in the area of physical rehabilitation, but it also applies to economic security income-generating activities, the rehabilitation of water infrastructure or the rehabilitation/construction of health facilities. In addition, as mentioned above, standard quantitative indicators are available worldwide for all three assistance sub-programmes.

ECONOMIC PRECAUTIONS: The economic security sub-programme covers three areas of activity: relief aid, livelihood support and structural support.

Relief aid – to save lives and protect livelihoods

- **access to food** (e.g. adequacy and stability of access, availability of food, economic activities, household assets, market, food aid, cultural standards, nutritional status)
- **access to essential household items** (e.g. availability of essential household items, household assets and economic activities, material aid, climate, shelter conditions, clothing, living conditions, hygiene, water storage, cooking capacity)
- **access to means of production** (e.g. seed, tools, availability of land, land tenure, job market, land cultivated, yield)
- **food production capacity** (e.g. availability of land, access to means of production such as land, seed, tools or animals, seasons, harvest, animal health, livestock management, training, market, consumption of own product)
- **income generation capacity** (e.g. job market, production, trade and revenue, remuneration, expenses, assets)

Medical care:

The medical programmes covers five areas of activity: first aid, war surgery, health care delivery in conflict situations, physical rehabilitation and health in detention28.

- **availability of service** (e.g. type of service, such as surgery, vaccinations, antenatal care, gynecology and obstetrics; infrastructure and technology; medical/surgical and

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patient equipment; drugs and consumables; presence of staff and professional knowledge)

- **access to service** (e.g. physical access, proximity/security, opening hours, free/paid, universal/discriminatory, patient attendance, catchment population)
- **quality of service** (e.g. existence of and respect for protocols and guidelines; waiting time; staff on duty; quality of supply of drugs and consumables; mortality rate/case fatality rate; referrals; reception; hygiene standards)

For activities in the area of **physical rehabilitation**\(^\text{29}\), an additional generic indicator is used as a basis for measuring and expressing results, at least for certain centres and/or from a certain date: **sustainability** (e.g. local policies, local resources, local public and private structures, training capacities and curriculum).

**SANITATION AND HABITAT:**

The programme covers five areas of activity: safe drinking water supply, sanitation and environmental health, temporary human settlements, energy supply and building rehabilitation and construction.

**Drinking water supply**

- **access** (e.g. proximity, security, quality of source, fetching time)
- **quantity** (e.g. availability per day, seasonal influence, needs per day)
- **quality** (e.g. storage, hygiene, water point maintenance) **Sanitation and environmental health**

- **hygiene and sanitation facility availability** (e.g. quantity, proximity, access day and night, maintenance, cultural standards, hygiene practices, environmental impact, environmental conditions)
- **waste management** (e.g. proximity, removal service, clean areas, hygiene practices, maintenance)
- **vector-borne disease control** (e.g. hygiene practices, safe vector control practices, malaria control practices, stagnant water and refuse) **Temporary human settlements**
- **availability** (e.g. timeliness, quantity, space, water and sanitation, kitchen)

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\(^{29}\) Hans Haug: *Humanity for all: the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement*. Henry Dunant Institute, Geneva in association with Paul Haupt Publishers, Bern 1993, pp 14
- **quality** (e.g. security, space, cultural standards, organization and management, heating/cooling, environmental impact, environmental conditions)

**Energy supply**

- **quantity** (e.g. cooking fuel, water production, wastewater treatment, heating)

- **quality** (e.g. usage, cultural standards, environmental impact)

- **efficiency** (e.g. fuel, equipment, availability, maintenance)

**Building rehabilitation and construction**

- **adequate working/living infrastructure** (e.g. rooms, sanitation, kitchen)

- **adequacy of the installations** (e.g. living space, working space, equipment and services)

- **functional installations** (e.g. organization and distribution of space, water, power, management)

**APPROACH TOWARDS WOMEN AND GIRLS**

Within this approach, the ICRC acknowledges that women’s experience of war is multifaceted (separation, loss of loved ones, loss of sources of livelihood and coping mechanisms, increased risks of sexual violence, greater responsibility for dependents, wounding, detention, even death) and often differs from that of men. The ICRC approaches gender as a means of fostering a better understanding of the respective social and cultural roles of men and women (such as division of labor, productive and reproductive activities, access to and control over resources and benefits) and of the social and economic factors influencing them. It endeavours thereby to obtain a more sensitive and holistic grasp of women’s roles, responsibilities and experiences, and therefore to provide a more adequate response to their needs in times of conflict. In accordance with its principles of neutrality and impartiality, the ICRC does not claim to reform gender relations.

Often, women and children are lumped together in the same category of vulnerability. Such hasty categorization overlooks the fact that women’s needs, experiences and roles in armed conflicts and other situations of violence differ from those of children and that women often display remarkable strength, as evidenced by the part they play as combatants or agents for peace, or by the roles they assume in wartime to protect and support their families. The

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relevant question is not who is more vulnerable but rather who is vulnerable to what particular risks. Different groups face different factors of vulnerability and it is an oversimplification to see one gender as active (male combatants) and the other as passive (female victims).

The ICRC’s main objective is therefore to ensure that the needs, situations and perspectives of women and girls are integrated into all activities and programmes, and that special programmes are developed when necessary to respond adequately to their specific social, medical, psychological, economic and protection needs. Recognizing that armed conflicts have a different impact on men, women, children and the elderly, and that the needs of women are often overlooked, the ICRC pledged in 1999 to better assess and address the needs of women and girls, and to promote the respect to which they are entitled, with a specific focus on situations involving sexual violence. It launched a four-year “Women and War” project (from 1999 to 2003), during which it conducted an in-depth study of the impact on women of armed conflict or internal violence, focusing on issues such as physical safety, sexual violence, displacement, access to healthcare and hygiene, food, water and shelter, and the problem of missing relatives and its repercussions on survivors.

The ICRC then produced Addressing the needs of women affected by armed conflict: an ICRC guidance document to translate the study’s findings into practical guidelines for staff involved in the planning and implementation of humanitarian programmes. At the end of the four years, the ICRC renewed its commitment to the issue by appointing a focal point for the operational implementation of the study’s findings and recommendations. In armed conflict and other situations of violence, sexual violence is a widespread phenomenon that affects mostly women and girls. The overall consequences are serious, but given that the stigma associated with sexual violence may prevent victims from coming forward, the true extent of the problem is often concealed. It affects not only the victims, but also their families, and sometimes entire communities.

The ICRC has therefore developed a Frame of reference for sexual violence in armed conflict another situations of violence, which gives a comprehensive and detailed overview of the various aspects of sexual violence and defines the ICRC’s multidisciplinary approach to the problem. It encompasses preventive action, awareness-raising activities and protection strategies aimed at addressing the causes and consequences of sexual violence while providing victims with timely medical and psychological support. The development of the
ICRC’s stance on women and war is reflected today in its operational strategies, programmes and activities.

Protecting the civilian population

The ICRC monitors the situation of individuals and groups not or no longer taking part in hostilities, the large majority of whom are women and their children. Where documented, allegations of abuse committed against women and girls, such as sexual violence and enforced enrolment by armed groups, are raised in the ICRC’s discussions with all parties on alleged IHL violations and the measures to be taken to stop them. In some contexts, dialogue with women is possible only owing to the presence of female ICRC staff, both national and expatriate.31

In addition to formal and informal oral and written representations to the authorities concerned about alleged incidents, preventive dissemination activities are conducted for all kinds of weapon bearers to raise their awareness of their responsibilities under IHL to protect and respect at all times, in particular, women and children not taking part in hostilities (Authorities, armed forces and other bearers of weapons, civil society).

Reinstate family links

- Enabling women to restore and maintain contact with their husbands and families contributes to their psychological well-being and can also help ensure their safety and the respect of others. In certain contexts, where for social and cultural reasons women are less visible or less accessible, awareness-raising sessions to promote existing tracing services are held specifically for women.

- The ICRC family reunification programme aims to reunite vulnerable people with their families, including children with their mothers, thus preserving the family unit. Similarly, when organizing repatriations, the ICRC pays special attention to enabling families to stay together, with particular emphasis on keeping children with their mothers.

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Boys and girls who have become separated from their parents, including those who have formerly been associated with fighting forces, are registered by the ICRC and their mothers and fathers, or their closest relatives, sought.

Working closely with the authorities concerned and other organizations active in child protection, the ICRC pays special attention to the treatment of unaccompanied girls living in host or foster families; whenever necessary, it directs them to the appropriate referral structures.

The ICRC advocates that children formerly associated with fighting forces, in particular girls, be provided with adequate care, in particular in disarmament, demobilization and reintegration processes.

Family reunifications are organized according to the best interests of the child and only if all parties – the child and the family – want to be reunited.

Special attention is paid to the treatment of boys and girls reunited with their families, and to how the children readapt to family life; whenever necessary the families and the children concerned receive material support and are directed to referral structures. The children are often checked on several months after being reunited with their families to ensure that they do not face new protection problems, especially if they were formerly associated with fighting forces or are girls with children of their own.

**Missing persons**

ICRC action in relation to missing persons benefits mainly women as they are overwhelmingly the ones left behind after a loved one has disappeared during alarmed conflict or other situation of violence.

Whenever possible, the ICRC works closely with the relevant authorities and organizations to accelerate the tracing process. It provides support for ante-mortem data collection and the forensic process, and covers the transport costs of families – mainly women – of the missing to visit mass graves or exhumation sites. On its website it updates and publishes lists of persons reported missing. It provides women with administrative help in dealing with matters of inheritance, pensions, legal status, custody of children and property rights.
The ICRC organizes meetings with family associations, whose members are chiefly women, to ensure that their interests are represented in various fora and provides the associations with financial and technical support.

Directly or through associations or institutions, the ICRC contributes towards the psychological support of relatives of missing persons, principally women and their children, and towards their education and occupational training.

It also encourages Governments to enact or implement legislation to prevent people from becoming unaccounted-for (by establishing an information bureau, for example), to ascertain the fate of missing persons through appropriate measures and to protect and support the families – mainly women who have become heads of household, and children – of those who are missing, notably by making it easier for them to undertake legal proceedings.

ASSISTANCE

Economic security – emergency aid: food and essential household items

When distributing aid, the ICRC gives priority to the most vulnerable households, many of which have been deprived of their main breadwinner and are headed by women. Women and girls are often, therefore, the main beneficiaries of the relief provided to IDPs, returnees and residents.

If the need exists, the ICRC provides food rations and essential household items, such as blankets, tarpaulins, jerry cans, kitchen sets and hygiene kits, to enable women to take care of their families. Other items, such as clothes or fabric to make clothing, are also distributed according to need.

ICRC food parcels often include baby food.

Hygiene kits usually include specific products forewomen and their children, such as culturally adapted sanitary materials, baby powder or washable cotton and plastic nappies. Economic security – livelihood support

In addition to providing relief, the ICRC also aims to help destitute or very poor families, very often mainly households headed by women or girls, recover their ability to earn a living. Its micro-economic initiatives provide victims of sexual

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32 ICRC. 1 Dec 2009 Key Data for ICRC Emergency and Headquarters Appeals 2010. pp23
violence who have lost their sources of livelihood and victims of conflict, such as widows and the wives of missing persons, with social and economic support.

- Livelihood support programmes help women and girls in their Endeavour to ensure the family’s self-sufficiency. Seed and tool distributions, livestock replenishment and vaccination, cash-for-work projects to rehabilitate community infrastructure, grants or material inputs (e.g. sewing machines, donkey carts, flourmills, oil presses, brick-making machines, irrigation pumps), to give but a few examples, directly improve the standard of living of many women and their children by helping women continue or jump-start an income-generating activity. Occupational training often forms part of livelihood support programmes. Particular attention is paid to increasing the participation of women, who perform most of the activities that provide the household with food or income.

**Water supply, sanitation and shelter**

- ICRC water, sanitation and habitat projects (trucking of clean drinking water during emergencies; rehabilitation or building of water sources and infrastructure) give displaced and resident women safe access to a source of water for household purposes, ensure better sanitation practices for the whole family, and free up for other tasks time once spent fetching water. They also reduce the incidence of sickness caused by inadequate hygiene and prevent long journeys to water points during which the women may be at risk of attack.

- In some contexts, the provision of fuel-saving stoves reduces the need for women and girls to go out in search of firewood, thus leaving them more time for other household tasks and reducing their risk of being attacked.

- As women are in charge of the water resources and bear most of the burden for the household in many contexts, ICRC engineers systematically involve them in the design, implementation and management of water and habitat projects.

**Health care**

- The majority of the people treated in outpatient departments and referral hospitals in violence-affected areas are women and children, and thus are the main beneficiaries of ICRC support to such facilities, which provide comprehensive reproductive health and delivery services and care for children under five. Mobile clinics give women and
children who are unable to reach permanent structures access to essential health and medical care and the opportunity to be referred to a second level of care.

- In many contexts where there are not enough skilled birth attendants to cover the population’s needs, the ICRC trains traditional birth attendants/midwives innate and post-natal care, in the identification of at-risk mothers, in skilled attendance for home delivery and in the management of complications. The birth attendants/midwives also play a decisive role in health education (basic care and breastfeeding and the prevention of sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV/AIDS). In some contexts they also receive instruction in how to identify victims of sexual violence and refer them promptly to appropriate medical services.

- In contexts where sexual violence is a major problem, the ICRC provides post-rape kits to ICRC-supported hospitals and health centers and runs training courses enabling health staff working in those facilities to treat victims effectively.

- Local volunteers offering support for victims of sexual violence at community level are trained in counseling techniques; so that they can offer reassuring support to the victims and help them search for solutions. They are also taught mediation skills, enabling them to facilitate the reintegration of victims of sexual violence, who are often rejected by their families and communities.

- Women and children are the primary target of health and hygiene promotion sessions. Most of the time, for social and cultural reasons, the ICRC uses teams of female health and hygiene promoters, who are especially trained for this task. The teams also play a crucial role in raising awareness among women, especially pregnant women and those with small children, of how malaria is transmitted, and distribute mosquito nets to help contain the spread of the disease.

- ICRC support for immunization programmes (cold chain, transport, supervision) run by Governments, NGOs or international organizations benefits mostly women of child-bearing age and children under five, who receive vital vaccinations against, for example, tetanus and polio.

- In emergencies, the ICRC may also support therapeutic feeding activities to help malnourished children and their mothers.
Prevention
Mines/explosive remnants of war
- To help prevent injuries caused by mines and explosive remnants of war, the ICRC marks contaminated areas and conducts mine-risk education. Mine-risk education sessions target primarily children, but also women. They are conducted in schools, places of prayer or/and community aim to ensure the safety of civilians by informing them of the dangers of mines. In the event of an accident, it also provides surgical, medical and economic assistance to victims, including physical rehabilitation. In parallel, it continues its advocacy with the relevant authorities and often supports the work of the national mine-action body.
- Communities are given support to create safe, mine free play areas for their children.

PEOPLE DEPRIVED OF THEIR FREEDOM
Protection
- During its visits to people deprived of their freedom, the ICRC pays special attention to the conditions of detention of any women or girls being held, in particular to their accommodation, which should include dedicated cells and sanitation facilities, and their access to health services, including to female nurses and gynecological care when needed. It provides confidential reports and recommendations to the authorities concerned accordingly.
- As far as possible, ICRC delegates and translators visiting places of detention do so in mixed teams, as these are perceived to be more approachable and better able to assess thoroughly the needs of all people detained.
- As infants often stay with their detained mothers, their needs are also addressed, in terms, for example, of food, health care, clothing and play.
- In certain societies, women who are detained are often ostracized and sometimes even abandoned by their families, especially when they are held for so-called moral offences. The ICRC places special emphasis on their plight in its dialogue with the relevant authorities and in its assistance programmes.
- ICRC support for the penitentiary administration and training for penitentiary staff (medical personnel included) encompasses, whenever relevant, action regarding or consideration of the particular needs of women and children.
ICRC family-news services allow detained women in particular to communicate with their families and detained men to communicate with their wives and mothers outside. This contributes to the psychological well-being of all concerned.

The ICRC enables detained women to receive family visits and family members, who are mainly women and children, to visit their detained relatives, either by organizing the visits itself or by covering the cost of transport. Family visits are not only essential for the psychological well-being both of the detainees and of their relatives outside; they are also a vital channel through which detainees obtain food and essential items. Family visits can also help ensure respect from other detainees, as women who receive no visits may become more vulnerable to prostitution or sexual exploitation and abuse.

**Assistance**

ICRC assistance programmes for detainees are adapted to the specific needs of women and girls whenever necessary. For example, women detainees may receive female hygiene items, clothing and recreational materials for themselves and for their children. Occupational training (in sewing, weaving, literacy, for example) aims to break the isolation of imprisoned women and improve their prospects for reintegration into society after release.

**Water and habitat**

As part of its efforts to improve environmental health conditions for detainees, the ICRC often carries out maintenance, rehabilitation or construction projects in places of detention. These projects always take into consideration the needs of women and children, such as separate accommodation for men and women, separate access to toilets and showers and adequate facilities for women with babies and/or small children.

**CASUALITIES**

**Medical care**

- Women and children have priority in operations to evacuate the wounded and sick from areas affected by fighting.
- The specific needs of women and girls are included in training in first aid and medical evacuations and the support provided to ambulance services.
ICRC support for hospitals focuses as a priority on emergency surgical, obstetric and pediatric services, as well as medical services for patients in general ad women in particular. This support may include the provision of equipment, medical supplies and training, for example in obstetric surgery.

Physical rehabilitation

- Women benefit from physical rehabilitation programmes supported by the ICRC. They may receive artificial limbs, walking aids, wheelchairs and physiotherapy. The ICRC pays particular attention to ensuring that women and men have equal access to physical rehabilitation programmes.
- Where there are no female staff in a rehabilitation centre, the ICRC helps train women, and may pay the transportation costs for women and their dependents to be treated in a centre with female staff. Many disabled women are also offered employment in ICRC runner ICRC-supported physical rehabilitation centers.
- Women also benefit from projects – education, vocational training or micro-credit schemes – to help them reintegrate into society.

APPROACH TOWARDS THE DISPLACED

Displacement is a recurrent consequence of armed conflict and other situations of violence. Civilians are brutally uprooted and forced to flee their homes as they try to avoid the dangers generated by the conflict. In most cases, displacement is an inherently unstable and unsustainable set of circumstances, from the point of view of both those displaced and the authorities concerned.33

There are two broad causes of displacement in armed conflict: as a direct consequence of the hostilities, owing either to actual violence or as a pre-emptive measure on account of fears or threats; and as a secondary consequence, owing, for example, to the exhaustion of resources or to poor access to essential services. Given that the term “displacement” describes a process and a set of circumstances as opposed to a “status”, there is no international legally binding definition of an IDP. Nor does the ICRC have its own definition. The definition most commonly used within the international community is the one provided

for in the 1998 UN Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, which bring together existing norms of IHL, international human rights law and refugee law in a way that covers all the phases of internal displacement.

The definition, which is broad, refers to “persons or groups of persons who have been forced or obliged to flee or to leave their homes or places of habitual residence, in particular as a result of or in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights or natural or human-made disasters, and who have not crossed an internationally recognized State border”. As the majority of IDPs are nationals of the State in which they find themselves displaced, they are entitled to the full protection of national law and the rights it grants to its citizens without adverse distinction resulting from displacement. Some of those displaced, however, will not be State nationals. Nevertheless, they are protected under international human rights law, and many of the same rights must be granted to them without discrimination.

Under IHL, the arbitrary displacement of civilians should not occur in the first place, but if it does, their protection is ensured. Indeed, IHL expressly prohibits any party to an armed conflict from compelling civilians to leave their places of residence. Exceptionally, temporary evacuations may be carried out if the security of the civilians or imperative military necessity so demands. In addition to this express prohibition, the rules of IHL intended to spare civilians from hostilities and their effects also play an important role in preventing displacement, as it is often violations of these rules that cause civilians to flee their homes.

Although displacement is seldom experienced as a linear process, specific phases can be identified:

- **the pre-displacement period**: this requires efforts to prevent displacement, to the extent feasible and in the best interests of those at risk
- **the event that causes displacement**: an understanding of the events causing the displacement is crucial for preventing their recurrence
- **acute crisis or emergency phase of displacement**: periods which are frantic and highly unpredictable and in which immediate protection and assistance efforts are required to ensure basic safety and essential needs with the aim of saving lives
- **chronic crisis or longer-term displacement**: periods in which more stable circumstances are established and in which basic needs are covered by existing
services and infrastructure, though often insufficiently, while the displaced await conditions that will enable them to find durable solutions comprising dignified approaches to supporting those affected, such as the restoration of an independent productive capacity.

- **Return, local integration or relocation** (generally sought once the situation has sufficiently stabilized): this would ideally consist of people being able to return to their pre-displacement place of dwelling, although when this is not feasible, or desirable, local integration or relocation should be an option. Return, local integration or relocation should also be accompanied by support to restore the former lives and livelihoods and independence of the affected individuals.

The ICRC implements an “all victims” approach aimed at protecting the life and dignity of victims of armed conflict and other situations of violence and providing them with assistance. As part of this approach, the ICRC aims to alleviate the plight not only of IDPs but of all those affected (such as those unable to flee and communities hosting IDPs), during all stages of the displacement. This involves working with all stakeholders, from the beneficiaries themselves right up to the highest authorities:

(i) to ensure conditions that prevent any need for displacement to occur in the first place;
(ii) to alleviate the effects of the displacement, if it does occur, both on the displaced themselves and on others; and
(iii) to create the conditions necessary for the permanent return home, local integration or relocation of the IDPs, without adverse effect on them or on others. Within this approach, the ICRC acknowledges that those who have been forced to leave their homes are likely to face particular vulnerabilities. People at risk often flee at very short notice and often in chaos, experiencing, *inter alia*: loss of shelter, resources and essential documentation; a likely disruption of livelihoods (e.g. agriculture, livestock, business, wage labour); separation or disruption/complete breakdown of family and community support networks; increased risks of exploitation and abuse; reduced access to essential services; potential marginalization from decision-making structures; and psychological and physical trauma. These elements obviously increase the general difficulties inherent in a conflict environment.

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34 Ibid., pp 23
35 Ibid., pp 24
Moreover, those affected are often displaced several times over, each time causing further impoverishment and trauma, and weakening coping mechanisms. However, not all people who are displaced are necessarily made exceptionally vulnerable. For example, those who have adequate resources may be able to cope independently with the consequences. Nor are those that do not move necessarily safe. Those who are unable to flee (e.g. the elderly, the sick, the wounded, the physically disabled, those for whom fleeing is too risky, or members of a persecuted group unable to flee because of tensions with their neighbours) are often more vulnerable than those who leave to seek safer circumstances. When people do flee their homes, they have to arrive somewhere. Neighboring communities (whether sympathetic or not) or extended family are often the first to receive the IDPs and can be significantly affected by their arrival, especially when IDPs are directly welcomed into and supported by individual households. Often, however, this temporary solution allows IDPs to stay close to their place of origin and families and to avoid being confined to camps, which should remain a last resort. These residents, however, often enough also faced dire circumstances even before the IDPs arrived and tend to be quickly stretched beyond their capacity to help, reaching the point at which they are forced to send the IDPs away in order to protect their own economic security.

It is frequently the case that host communities begin to resist the arrival of IDPs owing to the strain they place on general resources (land, water, jobs, essential services such as health care and education, etc.). Tensions over insufficient resources can easily emerge and rapidly escalate. Moreover, in some cases those who were originally hosts may also be forced to move as they exhaust their independent means. As such, displacement – and the circumstances causing it– typically has severe protection and resource implications both for those directly affected (i.e. the IDPs) and for those indirectly affected (e.g. host families and communities). As the conflict and violence persist, the general economy can also take a severe hit, with reduced availability of and access to goods/supplies/land/services – all of which could further undermine the independent means and capacities of the entire population. The needs of IDPs cannot, therefore, be considered to the exclusion of the rest of the affected population. Rooted in the principles of impartiality and response according to need, the ICRC’s “all victims” approach means that, in addition to meeting the needs of IDPs, appropriate emphasis is also placed on those unable to flee and on residents who are affected by the displacement of others. This underscores the fact that displacement is not
solely about IDPs. Understanding it, instead, as a process and a set of circumstances allows for acknowledgement of its impact on a wide range of people.

**Preventing displacement**

The ICRC aims to persuade authorities, armed forces and armed groups, through confidential dialogue, to fulfill their obligations to prevent the displacement of civilians (unless the temporary evacuation of civilians during military operations is required for their own security) and other violations of the relevant bodies of law that would result in displacement. If displacement nevertheless occurs, the ICRC makes confidential representations to the alleged perpetrators with a view to having them take measures to stop the violations and prevent further displacement. ICRC assistance activities (such as ensuring access to a safe water supply and health care services, and providing livelihood support) can also help remove some of the causes of displacement.\(^{36}\)

**Alleviating the effects of displacement**

If displacement nevertheless occurs, the ICRC reminds the authorities that it is their responsibility to ensure that IDPs are protected, their rights respected and their essential needs met.\(^{37}\) The ICRC also acts as a neutral intermediary between warring parties in order to facilitate the conclusion of agreements aimed at resolving humanitarian issues, including the plight of IDPs. In addition, the ICRC conducts a wide range of assistance activities which are designed not only to help those affected meet their most immediate survival needs (in terms of shelter, water and sanitation, nutrition, access to healthcare, etc.), but also to serve as protection measures by enhancing individuals’ capacity to avoid threats in their environment that might compound their problems. The ICRC also supports the relevant local authorities and existing structures.

**Facilitating return integration and relocation**

The ICRC also aims to facilitate the return, local integration or relocation of those that have been displaced, by reminding the authorities of their obligations to promote voluntary

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\(^{36}\) François Bugnion: *The International Committee of the Red Cross and the protection of war victims.* ICRC & Macmillan (ref. 0503), Geneva 2003, pp 33

\(^{37}\) Ibid., pp 34
return whenever it is safe, and local integration and/or relocation whenever conditions allow. In this respect, the ICRC continually reminds the authorities that it is their responsibility to restore the basic conditions required for resolving the displacement crisis (including security, access to essential services, opportunities to restore livelihood, etc.). The ICRC often conducts protection and assistance activities for people seeking lasting solutions to their plight, including those returning, integrating locally on a permanent basis or relocating. This includes addressing the concerns of the residents already in the area, with a view to minimizing tensions between the two groups.

By way of conclusion it could be said that, While ICRC has had many successes over the past years, it has also had many failures in its management of refugees. Slow and inadequate responses to refugee emergencies and protection crises have sometimes risked the lives of countless numbers of refugees. A number of internal and external constraints inhibit the ICRC management from achieving its full impact.

Critics argue that the absence of an autonomous resource base for ICRC and the limited mandates and competencies of the organisation continue to limit its response to future refugee crises. ICRC’s actions are limited by the practices of states concerning sovereignty, particularly those norms which preclude intervention in the domestic affairs of these states. The attachment to the principle of state sovereignty remains strong among several powerful Western states, Russia, China, India, Iraq and Afghanistan and many developing and non-aligned states.

The western media and the BBC argue that the ICRC is not mandated to intervene politically against Governments or opposition groups, even where there is clear evidence of human rights violations that result in forcible displacement which was a clear evidence in its rehabilitation process in Afghanistan and Srilanka. In civil war situations like in Srilanka, ICRC staffs are often unfamiliar with human rights and humanitarian laws and are uncertain of how Governments and opposition groups will react to their interventions using these protection norms especially when it was dealing with the srilankan crisis. Increasingly, the organisation finds itself out of its depth and faced with security and political issues that it has neither the mandate nor the resources to deal with. Although it characterises itself as nonpolitical, ICRC is often at the mercy of its donors and host Governments. The agency can
only carry out its enormous emergency and maintenance programmes if it receives funding from the industrialised states. It can only operate in the countries into which refugees move if host Governments give it permission to be there. Thus scholars and humanitarians say that the ICRC is in a weak position to challenge the policies of its hosts even when those policies fail to respond adequately to refugee problems. Financial vulnerability and reliance on powerful donor Governments as well as host states also impedes ICRC in carrying out its principal function of providing protection to refugees. Response to refugee emergencies and repatriations are absorbing most of the limited funds available for international assistance. In recent years, in order to demonstrate its ‘relevance’ to states, ICRC has regularly cooperated in the containment of the internally displaced within countries of origin and in the enforcement of repatriation programmes that are often less than voluntary. Such instances of ‘humanitarian pragmatism, together with the rapid expansion of ICRC’s mandate, has caused widespread concern. Many observers and scholars fear that in becoming a general humanitarian agency and a more overt instrument of state policy, ICRC has diluted its primary function of protecting refugees.

Perhaps the most important constraint facing ICRC results from the shift in focus from legal protection to emergency assistance that has occurred within the agency in recent years.

In its first decades the protection of refugees reflected the core values and practices which gave ICRC its special meaning, identity and coherence. Since the mid 1980s, as operational activities in countries like Iraq and Afghanistan have gained precedence over protection and not humanitarian and its culture of protection has declined.

For the past half century ICRC has been at the heart of international debates about human rights and rehabilitation. The ICRC is often at the mercy of its donors agency, has deeply affected the organizational culture, recruitment policies, socialisation of staff and policy guidelines of ICRC. The new culture of the organisation is rapidly becoming entrenched; organisation personnel have little or no knowledge or memory of institutional history and lack appropriate experience or awareness of how ICRC used to operate before. This is unfortunate because ICRC staff face difficult political and moral dilemmas, often without the benefit of knowledge about either the underlying nature of refugee disasters or about the success or failure of past ICRC interventions. For ICRC staff, the general tendency is to perceive
emergencies in terms of logistics and not as failures of politics, the development process or ethnic relations. ICRC’s objectives are increasingly pragmatic – to do the best in difficult circumstances and to implement the least bad options – and not chiefly to uphold universal principles e.g it could not bring justice to the Tamils in Srilanka.

In recent years ICRC has not been primarily concerned with the preservation of asylum or protection of refugees. Rather, its chief focus has been humanitarian action. ICRC is primarily about assistance – the delivery of food, shelter and medicine – to refugees and war affected populations.

The increasingly protracted nature of refugee situations demands a new approach to refugee protection which acknowledges the long-term repercussions of life in exile. Refugee self reliance, the development of sustainable livelihoods within a framework which supports full and unrestricted refugee rights, presents an opportunity to restore refugees’ dignity and meaningfully improve conditions in asylum countries. However, the ICRC’s current settlement and self-reliance policies do not represent a fundamental break with the past, and consequently are unable to deliver self-reliance. Self-reliance is not possible if asylum states continue confine refugees to camps and settlements where their rights are restricted and the settlement structure limits their opportunities to engage in economic activities like, one experience in Tamilnadu and elsewhere on how the refugees are dumped in their camps. Local settlement policy and current self-reliance strategies place an unrealistic emphasis on the ability to meet the needs of refugee communities. To achieve real and meaningful self-reliance the ICRC must fundamentally alter its approach to refugee policy, recognizing the practical importance of refugee rights, changing the structure of refugee assistance, and ultimately altering its own role in the provision of assistance and advocacy of refugee issues. Self reliance has the potential to radically improve refugee welfare, but not as it currently stands.