

International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) Development Effectiveness Summary*

Context

Mandate: The mandate of the ICRC is articulated in its Mission Statement: "The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) is an impartial, neutral and independent organization whose exclusively humanitarian mission is to protect the lives and dignity of victims of war and internal violence and to provide them with assistance."

This mandate is founded in international law. The Geneva Conventions task the ICRC with humanitarian activities such as visiting prisoners, organizing relief operations, and re-uniting separated families *during armed conflicts*. The ICRC's Statutes mandate it to undertake similar work in *situations of internal violence*, to which the Geneva Conventions do not apply. It is also responsible for promoting understanding of and respect for International Humanitarian Law (IHL).

Size: The latest available figures are for 2005: (exchange rate 2.86 Swiss francs to £1.)

Annual expenditure: The ICRC raises funds through two separate annual appeals, for Headquarters activity and the Emergency Appeal for the field. In 2005 HQ expenditure was 147.6 million Swiss francs (£64.5 million). Field expenditure was 811.121 million Swiss francs (£354.2 million) - 58.7% assistance, 20% protection, 12.7% prevention (dissemination of IHL), and 8% co-operation with National Red Cross/Crescent Societies.¹

Staff: overseas staff in 80 delegations and missions: 1,490 field Delegates, (including secondees from National Red Cross/Crescent Societies) and 9,964 locally engaged staff. Headquarters staff: 783.¹

Beneficiaries: The ICRC's reporting provides statistics on beneficiaries by activity worldwide, rather than a net total. Detainees visited: 0.52 million. Water & habitat programmes: 11.2 million. ICRC-supported healthcare facilities: 2.365 million. Economic security programmes: food: 1.105 million; household items: 2.87 million; food-production & other income generating activities: 2.642 million.¹ Organisations benefiting from ICRC activity include National Red Cross and Crescent societies (capacity building) and armed forces, police forces and other groups carrying arms (dissemination of International Humanitarian Law).¹

Key Issues: The ICRC is widely considered to be one of the best performing humanitarian agencies. One of the challenges it faces is how best to co-operate with the reform of the international humanitarian system, which places an emphasis on UN leadership and co-ordination, while retaining its impartiality, neutrality and independence. The need for confidentiality can present challenges in reporting on impact to donors.

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Is ICRC *BUILDING FOR THE FUTURE?*

Summary The ICRC recognises the need to build for the future and to learn from its operational experience in the challenging, dynamic environments in which it works. At the same time, new developments in ICRC policy and operational approaches are consistently rooted in its mandate which the ICRC remains determined not to compromise. This approach provides a strong, respected, well recognised institutional position on which to build. ICRC personnel are well trained and strongly motivated despite difficult operating environments.

Commitment to Continual Improvement

Does the Board require management to act on performance results?

✓ Yes. The office of the Director General is responsible for ensuring follow-up to the recommendations arising from internal and external audits, reviews and evaluations. Recommendations are used for learning, feed into the annual Planning for Results (PfR) process and wider ongoing change process where appropriate.²

Building Knowledge and Lesson Learning

Does the ICRC have adequate mechanisms for spreading lesson learning?

✓ Yes. Intranet, electronic data bases and printed documents are available to HQ and field staff, containing manuals, procedures, tools, examples of best practice, evaluations and reviews. During evaluations and reviews, through its evaluation unit, the ICRC devotes considerable resources to planning, providing inputs and feedback and linking studies together thematically. Increasingly integrated training modules and workshops aim at spreading knowledge amongst staff who themselves are encouraged to be flexible to undertake missions in a wide range of contexts.²

Results Based Management: To what extent does ICRC manage by results?

✓ To a great extent. The ICRC PfR system is based on planning for future results on the basis of the outcomes of preceding interventions. The annual plans and expected results are modified if necessary during the year based on field needs, especially during the mid-term review process, with up to 10% budget increase allowable before an internal budget extension (and possibly extended emergency appeal launched). This more systematic use of evaluation as a management tool is one of the three agreed MEFF indicators of effectiveness.²

Staff Development

What is the level of staff satisfaction?

Information not publicly available.

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How well is ICRC *MANAGING* its *RESOURCES*?

Summary The ICRC manages its resources effectively, with high levels of financial control and flexibility. Efficient management of finances and staff enables the ICRC to launch major emergency responses before receiving donor commitments and despite holding a fraction of the operating capital of other major humanitarian actors. The common perception of the ICRC being very well resourced is a reflection of efficient use of limited available resources.

Corporate Governance and Strategy

Is the ICRC's corporate strategy based on a clear definition of mandate and comparative advantage?

✓ Yes. The Directorate's four year strategic plan, and the organisation's annual Planning for Results (PfR) process are clearly derived from the ICRC's legal mandate, and its level of access to the victims of conflict drawn from the respect of its neutrality and independence. ²

Resource Management

What is the disbursement ratio (i.e. commitments versus disbursements: Paris Declaration Indicator 7)?

✓ The ICRC funds its operations through voluntary contributions from governments, the European Commission, national Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, and private donors, in response to annual programme and headquarters appeals. It pre-finances its operations regardless of contributions received at any one time, which means that it runs temporary operating deficits on some field operations which it covers from reserves. Other field operations show a surplus at the end of the financial year due to donor earmarking. Both showed a significant increase in 2005 ¹.

✓ In 2005 the ICRC appealed for a total of 1.08 billion Swiss francs (£472.4 million) [1, p 372 field + HQ]. It received a total of 1.014 billion Swiss francs (£443.5 million) [1, p 373, field + HQ appeals] – about 94% coverage of the appeals. The ICRC spent a total of 0.959 billion Swiss francs (£419 million). ¹

✓ In 2005, the ICRC spent 95% of contributions received: this expenditure corresponded to 87% of its planned field budget and 97% of its planned headquarters budget. It ran a temporary operating deficit amounting to 5% of its programme budget (covered from reserves). Surplus earmarked contributions to high profile emergencies amounted to 7% of its programme budget. ¹ The ICRC negotiates with donors on reallocation of unspent funds to other programmes, and uses the annual Donor Support Group to advocate for reduced earmarking.

What is the administrative efficiency ratio (i.e. average gross expenditure per staff member)?

✓ 2005 gross field expenditure of 811.1 million Swiss francs (£354.2 million), divided by 2,273 international staff members (HQ & field), represents 356,850 Swiss francs (approx £124,770) per staff member. ¹ By comparison, this figure was of 328,899 Swiss francs per staff member in 2002. This shows an increase of approximately 8.5% over three years. ⁷

What is the average cost per \$ disbursed (gross)?

✓ Gross HQ costs (\$119.3 million) divided by gross field expenditure (\$655.5 million) = \$0.18 per \$1 disbursed. ¹ By comparison, this cost was of \$0.26 per \$1 in 2002. ⁷ ICRC HQ costs do not necessarily relate directly to field operations (for example, specialised work on IHL) and much of the ICRC's work in the field does not reflect a standard cost. The cost of reuniting a child with its family or disseminating IHL during conflict cannot be compared with distributing bags of rice.

How well is the ICRC's resource allocation criteria aligned with its corporate strategy and comparative advantage?

✓ Well aligned. The ICRC's resource allocation reflects its international obligation to fulfil its unique mandate. ¹

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Staff Management

To what extent is staff recruitment, postings and promotions meritocratic and transparent?

✓ To a great extent and continuing to improve. The ICRC uses its website to publicise vacancies and its HR policies. The ICRC's policy of widening its recruitment base has led to an increase in the number of non-Swiss personnel in its overseas delegations from about 27% in 1993^{3 pg51} to 59% in 2005.¹

Operational Management

Is ICRC sufficiently decentralised to enable it to respond flexibly to country demand?

✓ Yes. The PfR process allows a strong role for heads of delegation in designing country programmes according to need. The ICRC's HQ provides support in the form of policy and technical guidelines, and human and financial resources.²

What is the speed of project approvals and disbursements?

✓ The ICRC undertakes integrated programmes rather than projects. PfR-planned programmes are approved before the start of the new financial year in order to allow timely implementation.² In sudden onset crises, the ICRC typically approves plans very quickly and will pre-finance activities before donor funds have been pledged or transferred.

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How well is ICRC managing its *PARTNERSHIPS*?

Summary The ICRC increasingly values partnership, and has undertaken institutional measures both to manage partnerships effectively, and to ensure that they reinforce its organisational strengths without undermining its independence or neutrality. The nature and context of much of the ICRC's work necessarily limits the depth and number of partnerships it develops.

Voice

What mechanisms exist for developing countries to influence the strategy of the ICRC?

✓ The ICRC's work is not limited to developing countries, but aims to protect and assist the victims of armed conflict worldwide. While the ICRC maintains a constant dialogue with States, it stresses the need for its independence in order to serve the interests of victims of conflict. However, every four years through the Council of Delegates, the ICRC convenes the International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent, which involves representatives of States party to the Geneva Conventions (including many developing countries), the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, and the 187 National RC societies. The 2003 International Conference agreed on an agenda for humanitarian action to be implemented in the following four years. Meanwhile at a country level, the ICRC maintains a constant but confidential dialogue with the concerned authorities regarding multiple issues of protection of both the civilian population and those deprived of their liberty, as well as issues of humanitarian assistance where appropriate⁶.

How actively is the ICRC promoting the participation of civil society?

✓ One of the four areas of ICRC activities is to give active support to the National Red Cross or Red Crescent Society in each of the countries it works in. ICRC assistance provided in cooperation with a National Red Cross or Red Crescent Society can constitute the major part of ICRC humanitarian work in some contexts. Building strong National Societies builds up capacity of what is frequently the major civil society organisation in a country, responsible for the provision of First Aid and Health services, Disaster Preparedness and Response, Tracing services and the Promotion of Humanitarian Values (the four core areas of IFRC work).

✓ The ICRC is a full member of the Steering Committee for Humanitarian Response (SCHR), has a permanent observer status at the International Council of Voluntary Agencies (ICVA) and engages with other NGO umbrella organisations such as VOICE (Voluntary Organisations in Cooperation in Emergencies) and InterAction (the biggest US NGO platform).

How effective is the ICRC at assessing needs of beneficiaries and feeding beneficiary voice back into programme planning through monitoring, reviews and evaluation?

✓ The ICRC has developed a sophisticated results based planning system Planning for Results (PfR) which has been implemented across the organisation since 1998, and steadily refined since then. Analysis of problems and needs of target population is an integral part of this system. The findings of external reviews and evaluations, internal reviews, Biannual Field Reports (every six months) and six month and annual programme implementation reviews feed into the programme monitoring and financial tracking process throughout the year, and into the annual results-based planning exercise. Beneficiary feedback is a key component of monitoring, review and evaluation, although its nature depends on the programme area.²

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Partnership Behaviour

What mechanisms are in place to seek feedback on partnership behaviour and what do the results show?

✓ Partnership with governmental donors and with the European Commission is conducted through bilateral consultations, and in the case of larger donors through the annual meeting of the donor support group (DSG). The DSG meeting is preceded by two donor missions and provides an opportunity for the ICRC to discuss a range of issues in confidence, including asking donors for feedback. The ICRC's main partners are the other components of the Red Cross Movement, i.e. the International Federation and the National Societies. A key formal structure for dialogue within the Movement is the Standing Commission of the Red Cross and Red Crescent, which can set up working groups on an ad hoc basis as needed. The Seville Agreement (1997) sets out the roles of the different components of the Movement and how they should co-operate in different circumstances, e.g. the ICRC has the lead in a country affected by conflict and the IFRC in a major disaster.

✓ Following discussion, a set of additional measures was agreed in 2005 clarifying the roles of National Societies in national and international responses.

✓ Specific partnerships are held with National Societies through well established cooperation agreements and technical partnerships such as those held with organisations providing orthopaedic services. Partnerships are usually practically based on operational activities or specific initiatives.

✓ DFID considers that the ICRC is becoming more open and trusting in partnership arrangements, and more willing to solicit external support, especially in technical areas, on a less formal basis. For example, the British Red Cross has provided expertise to the ICRC to help it undertake reviews and evaluations of its own work.⁴

Alignment

To what extent does the ICRC foster government ownership through the project/programme cycle?

✓ The ICRC is necessarily independent of government due to sensitivities in many areas of its work. However, in the context of transition from conflict to recovery, ICRC's exit strategies may include lobbying the relevant authorities to take over ICRC beneficiary caseloads, and sometimes providing active support to prepare them to do so. This is particularly relevant to work typically covered by the Ministry of Social Welfare. In addition, the focus of ICRC's protection work is to make the concerned authorities aware of their obligations under International Humanitarian Law (IHL), and to ensure that they carry out those responsibilities properly. Only at this point can the ICRC revert to more of a monitoring role. This process involves the ICRC addressing its confidential reports directly to the concerned authorities (rather than engaging in making public statements).

Does the ICRC use local and regional procurement where appropriate?

✓ Yes. The ICRC uses its own independent procurement transport and management system for its operations, which it frequently makes available to National Societies for no charge.⁵ This is a highly effective system, sharing its criteria and specifications with the Global Red Cross logistics and procurement system. The ICRC frequently assists National Societies in strengthening procurement management. A very significant proportion of ICRC purchases are made regionally, and where appropriate, locally.

In what ways has the ICRC been aligning its strategy/programme/projects with common humanitarian plans or the consolidated appeals process?

✓ The consolidated appeals process is UN led; in order to preserve its neutrality and independence the ICRC does not participate formally. However, in practice, ICRC country teams consult with UN country teams on the development of country plans, and provide input and guidance in relevant areas. The ICRC is an active participant in the Common Humanitarian Action Plan (CHAP) process where it has occurred. At the headquarters level, excerpts from ICRC emergency appeal documents are usually distributed at the annual CAP launch ("Humanitarian Appeal").

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Harmonisation

To what extent does the ICRC participate in Inter Agency Country Teams coordination activities such as sector working groups/thematic groups?

⇔The ICRC is an independent actor, and therefore plays no direct coordination role in the UN system and does not take part in the cluster approach. The ICRC however, retains a clear policy of encouraging cooperation with such mechanisms. In the field, the ICRC participates in many country coordination meetings, including clusters meetings. DFID field reports demonstrate increasingly strong ICRC contributions to coordination fora at local and national levels. ICRC also encourages National Societies to co-operate with such co-ordination mechanisms.

To what extent does the ICRC share information with other agencies and donors?

✓ Much of the ICRC's work is confidential. However, it provides regular reports and updates of its work, frequently presented to Donors' Missions in Geneva. The ICRC is transparent in reporting its activities in terms of outputs, but naturally prefers not to be questioned on confidential or more sensitive areas of its work.

✓ Sharing information on the impact of programmes has been a more challenging area. Recently the ICRC has made efforts to share such information with donors, for example evaluation documents, on a secure website. Presentations of internal reviews have been made to donors in the concerned country, in the region and in Geneva, Brussels and Washington DC. While the ICRC will never make public beneficiary names, they may sometimes enter into detailed dialogue with other agencies at country level, including National Societies, regarding programme issues, especially where there are shared caseload areas.

What evidence is there of harmonising procurement and consulting services procedures, disbursement policies and evaluation practices amongst the humanitarian agencies?

Not relevant for procurement and disbursement policies. The ICRC does not usually disburse funds directly to other organisations. It works closely with the International Federation of the Red Cross on emergency logistics and on the procurement of relief goods. The ICRC website features a catalogue of emergency items which is intended to promote the use of relief and medical items meeting minimum specifications across the Red Cross Movement.

✓ The Head of the ICRC's Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation Department is a member of the Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance in Humanitarian Action (ALNAP), a key body bringing together the UN, NGOs and the Red Cross Movement on evaluation issues.

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What do we know about ICRC's COUNTRY/GLOBAL RESULTS?

Summary The ICRC is a highly respected international humanitarian organisation whose consistently strong country level performance reinforces its global role in ensuring that humanitarian intervention is principled and that the basic tenets of International Humanitarian Law are respected worldwide.

Evidence base

What efforts is the organisation making to establish an evidence base for use throughout the programme cycle?

Information is not publicly available.

Is there an agreed set of standards/indicators/benchmarks against which the organisation should deliver and are these being met?

✓ The ICRC is a signatory to the Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and NGOs in Disaster Relief. ICRC programming covers a wide range of integrated activities in the four areas of Cooperation (with National Societies), Prevention (dissemination of IHL), Protection and Assistance. The ICRC's Donor Support Group agreed revisions to the protection and assistance statistics provided in the ICRC's annual reporting in 2005.

Country/Global Results

What information is available on the ICRC's performance at country level?

✓ There are published Biannual Field Reports (every six months) and regular donor presentations in country and to Permanent Missions in Geneva. Annual narrative and financial reports are also broken down at regional and country operational level. Donor reports do not comment on political detail and tend to be output focused, as a "safe" means of reporting publicly on sensitive operating environments. Measurement of impact is provided through ICRC evaluations and reviews, which on occasion may also be published and presented publicly if appropriate.

Examples of ICRC performance at the country level include:

In Darfur, the ICRC delivered food aid to an average of 150,000 people per month; distributed food relief goods to 360,000 people; and improved access to clean water for 1.5 million people by rehabilitating rural water points and repairing and maintaining water-distribution networks in towns and IDP camps.¹

In Afghanistan, the ICRC visited and monitored individually 2,289 security detainees held by US or Afghan authorities and helped them keep in contact with their families.¹

In Cote d'Ivoire, ICRC provided water-treatment plants with 450 tonnes of chemicals, technical support and spare parts to sustain water supply to 1.6 million people in northern Cote d'Ivoire.¹

In Colombia, the ICRC documented 990 alleged IHL violations, made 231 representations to weapon bearers, assisted some 1,000 victims of threats and facilitated the handover of 10 hostages and 6 members of the armed forces to authorities.¹

In Uganda, the ICRC supported existing health facilities, trained health workers and strengthened community-based health activities to ensure that around 300,000 IDPs in more than 15 camps had access to essential health care. ICRC also distributed 40,000 insecticide-treated mosquito nets in 15 IDP camps in an attempt to lower the infection rates for malaria.¹

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What evidence is there of the independence, credibility and utility of the ICRC's own evaluations?

✓ The ICRC's Evaluation Unit (GEN/EVAL) is attached to the Director General's Office (governing body structure), which makes it independent of the departmental work on which it commissions external and semi external evaluations. In addition, Divisions such as the Assistance Division frequently commission internal reviews but using external consultants and/or reviewers provided from National Societies. This approach is intended to provide an external opinion on types of operation with which the reviewers are familiar. Feedback from evaluation and reviews is then considered in the PfR process.

What impact is the ICRC having at the country/global level?

✓ In terms of programmed outputs, the ICRC is very effective in its operations. Even atypical operations such as the Asian Tsunami and Pakistan earthquake responses (natural disasters in situations of conflict) have been outstanding in terms of impact at country levels, as reported by DFID's Field team on the ground. Quality of programming is also high and governed by strict adherence to well established principles and procedures.

✓ As a global player, the voice of the ICRC remains highly respected. In forgotten conflicts and protracted political emergencies (such as in the Caucasus) the ICRC remains a stalwart of protection and assistance where there is often no other significant humanitarian presence.

Portfolio Quality

What is the % of projects/programmes which met their targets?

Information not publicly available.

How does this vary across sectors, regions and countries?

Information not publicly available.

REFERENCES

1. ICRC Annual Report 2005
2. DFID's 2004 Multilateral Effectiveness Framework (MEFF) report
3. ICRC Annual Report 2001
4. Examples include the ICRC Review of Economic Security Programme in Abkhazia 2002, ICRC Evaluation Abstracts 2003, ICRC Review of ICRC Cooperation in Indonesia 1999-2003, and ICRC Final Evaluation of Economic Security Programmes in Serbia Montenegro 2005.
5. Evidenced in BRCS Review of Kenya Red Cross Flood Response 2004 &, BRCS Review of Uganda Red Cross Northern Uganda Relief Operation 2004. – NB documents referred to in 4 & 5 are grey literature.
6. ICRC website
7. ICRC Annual Report 2002

Background This fact sheet is designed to summarise information available on the effectiveness of ICRC. It collates the latest published information in four key areas from a variety of sources including the Multilateral Effectiveness Framework (MEFF) ² as well as a range of ICRC's own Annual Reporting 2-3 and assesses areas of strength (✓) and weakness (✗) and where progress is mixed (⇔).

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