

Human resources

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HUMAN RESOURCES

The Human Resources Division recruits staff in accordance with the organization's needs and supervises their management and career development.

The year 2001 was marked by the tragic incident in which six ICRC delegates were assassinated in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Handling personnel difficulties

In quantitative terms, personnel requirements were relatively stable. The number of expatriate staff in the field ranged from 1,040 to 1,200, which represented a decrease in comparison to 2000. Since the end of 1999, the ICRC has considerably increased its capacity to react to an emergency by keeping available a small reserve pool of about 30 members of staff. This has enabled the organization to respond effectively to humanitarian crises such as the one that occurred in Afghanistan towards the end of 2001, which required the deployment of nearly 100 employees in the field. Making such a large number of employees available at very short notice – six weeks in this case – was achieved by calling on staff from National Societies, from other ICRC field operations and from the pool available at headquarters. The rapid assessment of needs carried out by these members of staff and their swift response clearly benefited the victims of the crisis.

As a result of this new arrangement the level of vacant positions in August 2001 was 1.4%, which was lower than the average rate in previous years. Delegations were given greater support by some 180 National Society employees carrying out over 500 assignments, and by local staff who carried out some 30 temporary missions as expatriates over the course of the year.

Staff diversity

In keeping with the ICRC's policy of internationalization, the percentage of staff from countries other than Switzerland rose to 41% on average for the whole organization in 2001. This represented an increase over previous years. In the field, roughly half the employees were from countries other than Switzerland, which represents an increase of 3% compared to 2000. In addition, approximately 40 local staff employed in field delegations were under ICRC headquarters contracts.

In order to improve its operational response, the ICRC has relied increasingly on locally recruited staff in its delegations throughout the world. Past experience has shown that giving more responsibilities to local staff, along with proper coaching and supervision, has benefited ICRC operations. This was particularly the case in Afghanistan, where the local staff kept ICRC activities running after the forced departure of its expatriates.

Broadening the base for hiring new staff

The ICRC furthered its policy of widening the catchment area and actively recruiting certain categories of personnel. Recruitment campaigns were carried out in Argentina, Brazil, Madagascar, Mauritius, Portugal, Romania and South Africa. Although this approach has not yet yielded results in line with expectations and will have to be developed further, it did succeed in establishing a network of contacts.

Improving professional standards

Efforts to improve professional standards were maintained throughout 2001. Management principles relating to respect for the individual, accountability and communication, efficiency, evaluation and the learning process, and adapting to security problems were approved by the Directorate and became part of basic management training.

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In 2001, a new performance-evaluation system was introduced with the aim of structuring achievements by objectives, identifying employees' skills and better determining the potential and development needs of employees. The Human Resources Division assigned a staff member to carry out quality control through briefing and dialogue with managers, with the aim of ensuring that training policy is in line with management needs.

Adapting the management framework

In a bid to achieve greater transparency, the Division set up a system which openly and equitably invites applications for vacant senior-management positions. In addition, vacancy notices could be freely consulted on the ICRC's intranet. These measures gave employees greater access to information and control over their chosen career paths.

The pay system introduced in 2000 became fully operational and functioned smoothly. Thanks to this new system, salaries were better managed and equality between men and women in the same position was guaranteed.

A working group on equal opportunity was set up in 2001 to identify the objective and subjective obstacles to women's career opportunities and to propose specific measures for reducing or removing them. The working group's proposals were validated by the Directorate and will be implemented progressively with the aim of increasing the number of women in positions of responsibility.

