

# Communication and external resources

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# COMMUNICATION AND EXTERNAL RESOURCES

“Respect and ensure respect for the Geneva Conventions”. When the Swiss Confederation convened an International Conference for the Protection of War Victims in June 1993 to take place with this theme at the end of August,<sup>1</sup> it presented an opportunity for the ICRC to stage a worldwide campaign to draw attention to international humanitarian law, its successes and failures in practice, the protection it affords and ways to enhance respect for its rules.

In the space of two months, the ICRC drew up and put into action a worldwide communication and information campaign. The communication strategy which was launched in June included films, television and radio programmes, interviews and spots, brochures, photos, fact sheets and press kits. One hundred and nine National Societies played an active part in relaying the information and getting their country’s media interested in the conference.

Getting the ICRC’s message across is also an essential part of the ICRC’s work in countries not at war where delegates strive to increase respect for the principles of international humanitarian law and knowledge of the Movement’s policies and activities among the authorities, soldiers, policemen and civilians of the world. The effectiveness of the ICRC’s work and the safety of Red Cross and Red Crescent staff are directly related to the success of the institution in making itself and the Movement known and understood. To this end, programmes carried out in the field<sup>2</sup> are backed up and complemented by films, TV news rushes, photos and publications prepared and distributed at headquarters.

Another way of increasing knowledge and awareness of the ICRC’s work and mandate is to set up decentralized information units within its existing delegations. In 1993, three new units started operating in Moscow, Bangkok and Abidjan respectively, bringing the total number to nine. The others are situated in Nairobi, Pretoria, Harare, Cairo, Belgrade and Zagreb.

## Films, broadcasts and photographic material

Television teams under short-term ICRC contract were sent to countries where trouble had flared up and humanitarian problems had arisen and where the international community had failed to realize the extent and urgency of the needs. Film shot in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Afghanistan, Rwanda and Burundi, for instance, was broadcast throughout the world on television networks such as Euronews, CNN, WTN and national television programmes.

<sup>1</sup> See *International Conference* p. 236.

<sup>2</sup> See *Dissemination* under the various countries.

Two films - *Remembering the Silence*, which featured ICRC activities for detainees, and *War and Dignity* - were produced. In addition, the yearly *Retrospective* film showing the ICRC's main activities was produced in December.

International news agencies received photo and information sets covering Afghanistan, Rwanda, Burundi and subjects related to the International Conference for the Protection of War Victims. Demand for ICRC photographic and video material in general increased sharply, quite apart from requests linked to the conference.

The Red Cross Broadcasting Service (RCBS) produced monthly radio programmes covering all the ICRC's major activities. The programmes, in six languages, were broadcast on short wave and also sent to about 70 radio stations worldwide, as well as to National Societies and most ICRC delegations. Swiss Radio International and the ICRC continued the cooperation which began in 1992.

In 1993 the ICRC ventured into new ground by producing a CD-ROM on international humanitarian law especially destined for universities, governments and National Societies. Promotion for it got under way at the end of the year.

## Seminars and workshops

As in previous years the ICRC participated in numerous workshops held for the press by journalists' associations and organizations such as UNHCR or the Council of Europe on the protection of journalists and photographers working in dangerous situations.

On various occasions the ICRC was called upon to organize a seminar on the media and international humanitarian law, clearly an increasingly important issue for journalists throughout the world which the institution plans to address again shortly.

## Exhibitions

At headquarters, efforts to make the ICRC and its specific mandate better known to the Swiss public continued. On 24 January an open day was held which attracted more than 3,000 visitors. As in previous years, the ICRC took part in the International Geneva Press and Book Fair.

In Vienna, during the World Conference on Human Rights, the ICRC set up a permanent information desk and in St Petersburg during the celebrations held in December to mark the 125th anniversary of the Declaration of St Petersburg,<sup>3</sup> the exhibition "Humanity in the Midst of War" was shown.

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<sup>3</sup> See *Eastern Europe and Central Asia* p. 166.

## Publications

In 1993 the ICRC sought to raise public awareness of the acute suffering of the civilian population in various countries, for instance in Afghanistan, Somalia, Rwanda, Burundi and Bosnia-Herzegovina, by issuing special brochures. The brochures were distributed mainly to the press and to the ICRC's donors.

The *International Review of the Red Cross* is the ICRC's official publication for opinion, reflection and reference with regard to the mission and policies of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement. It comes out six times a year in English, French, German, Spanish and Arabic. In 1993 it focused on subjects related to the International Conference for the Protection of War Victims in the run-up and follow-up to the event, as well as on the relationships between humanitarian law and human rights.

The ICRC also continued to contribute to the Movement's *Red Cross Red Crescent* magazine produced jointly with the Federation.

Numerous dissemination brochures and *ad hoc* publications were produced, some at headquarters and others in the field, in close cooperation with ICRC dissemination experts. As the ICRC's activities spread to new parts of the world, these publications covering the basics of international humanitarian law were translated into a wide range of languages.

## Fundraising

The ICRC is essentially funded by government and National Society contributions. While the humanitarian problems arising from some conflicts receive wide media coverage and operations to address them are well funded, others receive scant public attention and tend to be ignored. The ICRC makes a point of attracting attention to the plight of the forgotten victims by informing the general public and, in greater detail, the donor community and National Societies more closely about them. Excessive earmarking of funds can leave the ICRC lacking the means to assist some people whose needs are extremely urgent, whereas enough resources have been made available for others. In order to respond to urgent needs where and when they arise, the ICRC must have sufficient non-earmarked funds.

Building up close relationships with the donor governments and National Societies is an essential aspect of the ICRC's fundraising policy. Regular and special situation reports are issued and meetings are organized to establish close contacts with the ICRC's interlocutors and to promote better knowledge of its activities and understanding of the problems it faces in its efforts to alleviate the suffering inflicted on victims of the numerous conflicts and disturbances throughout the world. In December 1993, a two-day workshop was organized in Yverdon, Switzerland, where senior representatives of major donor governments

and the ICRC met for open and informal discussions and exchanged views on humanitarian issues. A similar meeting will be held with the National Societies, as maintaining close working relationships with them is equally essential. They contribute to ICRC operations in cash and kind and, very importantly, they second qualified personnel for medical activities and sanitation projects, as well as for logistics and relief administration.<sup>4</sup>

Contributions from corporations and increasingly from private donors play a sizeable part in financing the ICRC's activities. In 1993 three regular collections by mail and two special appeals, one for victims of antipersonnel mines and the other, which was launched just before Christmas to help the population of Bosnia-Herzegovina survive the winter, met with a generous response.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> See *Human Resources* p. 273.

<sup>5</sup> See also *Financial tables* pp. 277-287.