

RCRC

Red Cross Red Crescent

Issue 1 • 2015

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Fundamental Principles 2065

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Matters of principle



THE MAGAZINE OF THE INTERNATIONAL
RED CROSS AND RED CRESCENT MOVEMENT

The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement is made up of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) and the National Societies.



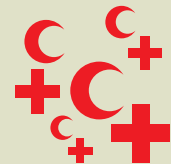
ICRC

The International Committee of the Red Cross is an impartial, neutral and independent organization whose exclusively humanitarian mission is to protect the lives and dignity of victims of armed conflict and other situations of violence and to provide them with assistance. The ICRC also endeavours to prevent suffering by promoting and strengthening humanitarian law and universal humanitarian principles. Established in 1863, the ICRC is at the origin of the Geneva Conventions and the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement. It directs and coordinates the international activities conducted by the Movement in armed conflicts and other situations of violence.



International Federation of
Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) is the world's largest volunteer-based humanitarian network, reaching 150 million people each year through its 189 member National Societies. Together, the IFRC acts before, during and after disasters and health emergencies to meet the needs and improve the lives of vulnerable people. It does so with impartiality as to nationality, race, gender, religious beliefs, class and political opinions. Guided by Strategy 2020 — a collective plan of action to tackle the major humanitarian and development challenges of this decade — the IFRC is committed to 'saving lives and changing minds'.



National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies embody the work and principles of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement in more than 189 countries. National Societies act as auxiliaries to the public authorities of their own countries in the humanitarian field and provide a range of services including disaster relief, health and social programmes. During wartime, National Societies assist the affected civilian population and support the army medical services where appropriate.

The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement

is guided by seven Fundamental Principles:

humanity, impartiality, neutrality, independence, voluntary service, unity and universality.

All Red Cross and Red Crescent activities have one central purpose:

to help without discrimination those who suffer and thus contribute to peace in the world.

Guiding lights through many dilemmas

I N 2015, the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement celebrates the 50th anniversary of the adoption of the Fundamental Principles of the Red Cross and Red Crescent. Since 1965, the Fundamental Principles — humanity, impartiality, neutrality, independence, voluntary service, unity and universality — have guided National Societies, the ICRC and the IFRC when they faced difficult choices.

As the first representative of the ICRC in Cambodia after the genocide perpetrated by the Khmer Rouge regime (1975–1979), I myself was confronted with a delicate situation that had to be decided in the light of the Fundamental Principles. (*To read these principles in their entirety, see page 4.*)

As we were discussing with the government in Phnom Penh about putting in place a vast relief action in favour of the genocide survivors, several tens of thousands of refugees were in effect stuck at the border with Thailand. They were still inside Cambodia, in territory controlled by the Khmer Rouge. Their situation was dramatic and the ICRC decided to come to their aid. The government of Phnom Penh saw this operation as a violation of their national sovereignty and they threatened to expel the ICRC if it didn't cease the relief operations via Thailand. The ICRC therefore faced a difficult choice that it resolved in light of the principle of Impartiality. (*To read about how the ICRC resolved this situation, see page 10.*)

This example highlights the importance of the Fundamental Principles. Of all the resolutions adopted at International Conferences of the Red Cross and Red Crescent, the resolution concerning these principles is the most important, the one most often referred to and the one that has most strongly contributed to guiding the work of the Movement and ensuring its coherence.



Photo: IFRC

However, it would be mistaken to believe that the Fundamental Principles originated with this formal adoption. From the very outset, the Movement consciously followed a number of fundamental principles dictated by the mission assigned to it and reflected in the resolutions of the founding conference of 1863, which gave birth to the Red Cross. These principles were also reflected in article 6 of the original Convention for the Amelioration of the Condition of the Wounded in Armies in the Field of August 1864, which marked also the creation of contemporary international humanitarian law.

Thereafter, there were numerous references to the fundamental principles. Since 1869, in order to be accepted as members of the Movement, new National Societies were required to observe the fundamental principles. On the other hand, until the Second World War, the Movement made little effort towards reaching a universally accepted formulation of those principles.

While the Movement was constant in laying claim to these fundamental principles, it appeared unwilling, or unable, to set them down in a form that would be binding on all its members. The drawbacks of this situation became brutally apparent during the Second World War, when references to the fundamental principles failed to prevent serious abuses from being committed by certain components of the Movement.

After the Second World War, both the ICRC and the IFRC sought to set these principles down in a form that would be universally accepted. The momentum for decisive progress came from Jean Pictet's book *Red Cross Principles*, published in 1955. Following its publication, the ICRC and the IFRC set up a joint commission, which set down the principles in a declaration containing seven articles. This declaration was adopted by the International Conference of the Red Cross in Vienna in 1965.

This declaration of the Fundamental Principles represented a charter for the Movement. On the one hand, it permitted the adoption of a universally accepted statement of the principles that the Movement had advocated from the start without actually agreeing on their definition. On the other, it gave these principles new legal effect, making them a source of duties for all the components of the Movement.

Although states are not directly bound by the Fundamental Principles, they are required, by virtue of the statutes of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, to respect the duty that the components of the Movement have to observe them.

For the Movement, the principles have served as an extraordinarily effective guide during these past 50 years, as demonstrated by our experiences in Cambodia in 1979. Since we have had these principles, on which we depend, we should do nothing to weaken their authority. We should be ready, however, to continue to analyse the fashion in which they are put into action and continue to put them into practice in all our actions.

By **François Bugnion**

Member of the International Committee of the Red Cross.

In brief...

A deadly start of 2015 for humanitarians

A series of deadly attacks took the lives of 11 Movement workers in the first quarter of 2015. All were killed in the act of helping others.

- Two brothers working for the Yemen Red Crescent Society (YRCS) were shot while evacuating wounded people in the southern port city of Aden on 3 April. Three days earlier, another YRCS volunteer was shot while coming to the aid of the wounded.
- Two Syrian Arab Red Crescent (SARC) volunteers were killed the same day while retrieving dead bodies and preparing shelters for people fleeing fighting in Idlib, Syria.
- A Palestine Red Crescent Society volunteer was shot on 30 March while working at the Yarmouk camp in Syria. (Since the beginning of the Syrian conflict, 42 SARC and eight Palestine Red Crescent volunteers have died while carrying out their duties).
- Also on 30 March, an ICRC staff member was killed and a member of the Mali Red Cross injured when their ICRC truck was attacked near the northern Malian city of Gao.
- A few days earlier, a Myanmar Red Cross volunteer died from wounds sustained 38 days earlier when the Red Cross convoy he was travelling with was attacked in Northern Shan State, Myanmar.
- In February, two staff and one volunteer from the Sudanese Red Crescent Society were killed, and another volunteer wounded, in an attack in Blue Nile State.

In addition, numerous volunteers and staff have been injured in other

violent incidents, including several who were attacked while working to combat the spread of Ebola virus disease.

Ebola claims Red Cross workers lives

The Ebola virus disease claimed the life of a Sierra Leone Red Cross Society nurse, who was working at the IFRC Ebola treatment centre in Kenema, Sierra Leone, in January. This was the first death of a Red Cross volunteer or staff member in Sierra Leone since response operations were launched in April 2014.

A total of 144 national and 19 international staff work at the IFRC's Kenema centre, where they have cared for more than 500 patients since it opened in September.

Then, in late March, a volunteer ambulance driver for the Red Cross Society of Guinea succumbed to the disease, bringing the total number of Movement deaths caused by Ebola since April 2014 to four.

In all cases, volunteers and staff are deployed only after they have been fully trained and have the proper protective equipment. More than 10,000 volunteers have been active in Red Cross Red Crescent actions against Ebola since the outbreak began.

Future holds little promise for Iraq's displaced

As new waves of violence in Iraq have led to the displacement of more than 1.9 million Iraqis, the Iraqi Red Crescent Society has come to their aid while continuing to help Syrians who have taken refuge there. The number of Syrians in Iraq is estimated at 216,000, most of whom are living in the Kurdish region, which hosts the largest refugee camps in the country. The IFRC and ICRC have also stepped up their actions to help displaced people in Iraq.

Young lives turned upside down

Nine-year-old Benicia Anjikapou was living a normal life, going to school and living with her parents and four siblings near

Bangui, capital of the Central African Republic, before violence erupted and claimed the life of her father. Now she lives in a camp for displaced people. "More than 50 unaccompanied children live here, some of whom do not know their own names, let alone those of their parents," says Mathias Yadjemai, who oversees the camp. He is grateful for the support of the Central African Red Cross Society, which has provided blankets, sleeping mats, plastic buckets, solar lamps and collapsible jerrycans, purchased through a revised IFRC emergency appeal in support of the National Society.

More than 1 million displaced in Nigeria

Roughly 1.2 million people have fled their homes due to fighting and violence in the northern Nigeria, with more than 200,000 of them seeking refuge in neighbouring Cameroon, Chad or Niger. The IFRC and the ICRC have stepped up their response and are working with National Societies to deliver food, water, shelter, health care and to help people maintain contact with family members.



Photo: Lene Vendelbo/IFRC

More than one-third of Malawi was devastated by the country's worst flooding in decades after weeks of heavy rains in January. With more rain expected, the IFRC launched a US\$ 2.8 million appeal to help 42,000 desperate people and support emergency operations of the Malawi Red Cross Society, which is already aiding thousands of destitute people. "People have lost everything," says Michael Charles, IFRC's acting regional representative in southern Africa. "They don't know where their next meal is coming from."

Humanitarian index

7.0: The magnitude of the earthquake that struck Haiti five years ago (12 January 2010) leaving 222,570 people dead, 300,572 injured and 2.3 million displaced.*

9.1: The magnitude of the earthquake off the northern coast of Sumatra, Indonesia, that triggered a tsunami, which swept across the Indian Ocean, killing more than 226,000 people and causing massive destruction along coastal areas of 14 countries more than ten years ago (26 December 2004).**

18: Number of people who died in the Philippines during Typhoon Hagupit in December 2014, compared with 6,300 who died as a result of Typhoon Haiyan in 2013. Various natural factors as well as preparedness work by government and the Philippine Red Cross may have played a role (see story, page 16).***

713: Number of bodies returned to family members by Afghan Red Crescent volunteer Malik Abdul Hakim in the last seven years, according a January 2015 report in *The New York Times*. (See page 4.)

800: Number of children reunited with their families (including almost 300 formerly associated with the armed forces and other armed groups) by the ICRC in 2014 in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.****

57,000: Homes built with Red Cross Red Crescent funding in the aftermath of the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami.**

2,817,154: Number of people reached by community-based health and first-aid activities in the areas affected by the 2010 Haiti earthquake in the last ten years.*

Sources : *IFRC Haiti earthquake, five-year progress report;

IFRC/2004 Indian Ocean tsunami, 10 years on; *Philippines Red Cross; ****ICRC.

Voices

"Our mission is to help human beings, not to leave them behind"

Saboor Ahmed Kakar, national youth leader at the Pakistan Red Crescent Society, speaking about a dilemma he faced in which he had to decide whether to accept army protection during an emergency operation in 2009. See page 4.

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The Fundamental Principles turn 50 years old this year. What better time to examine the challenges faced in putting these key guiding principles into action? In this story, a volunteer from Pakistan tells how what started as a routine food distribution mission revealed a series of dilemmas, questions and difficult choices.

An early test of principle

Following the genocide perpetrated by the Khmer Rouge regime, the ICRC launched its biggest ever aid operation in cooperation with UNICEF — and the Fundamental Principles, adopted in 1965, faced one of their first big tests.

A delicate balance

A National Society asks for your advice in how to balance its auxiliary role with local government and the principle of independence.

■ Focus

Fundamental Principles 2065

Paris-based artist Pat Masioni imagines some of the issues that might confront the Fundamental Principles 50 years from now.

■ Disaster risk reduction

Bouncing back

How communities in the Philippines are helping to redefine that now ubiquitous humanitarian buzzword 'resilience' from the ground up, as they cope with successive storms and other natural disasters.

■ Economic crisis and migration

Hard times, new energy

A strategic crossroads between continents in the middle of the Mediterranean, the Republic of Cyprus is coping with increasing migration in the midst of financial crisis.

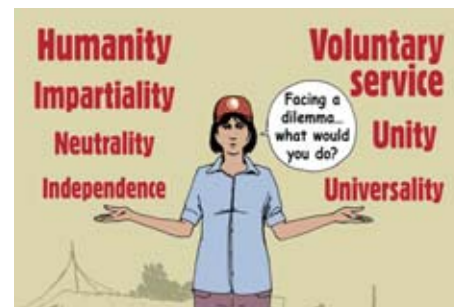
■ The missing

Cases of identity

Patricio Bustos says visits from ICRC delegates when he was imprisoned in Chile in the 1970s likely saved his life. Now, as head of the country's forensic services agency, he's working, with help from the ICRC, to find answers about what happened to those who disappeared during Chile's years of dictatorship.

■ Resources

Answers to your questions about international humanitarian law; a five-year Haiti progress report; a brochure on explosive remnants of war; market analysis for the humanitarian; and an animated video entitled 'You probably don't have Ebola if...'



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

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P.O. Box 303, CH-1211 Geneva 19, Switzerland

E-mail: rcrc@ifrc.org ISSN No. 1019-9349

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Printed

on chlorine-free paper by IRL Plus SA, Lausanne, Switzerland

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

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

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

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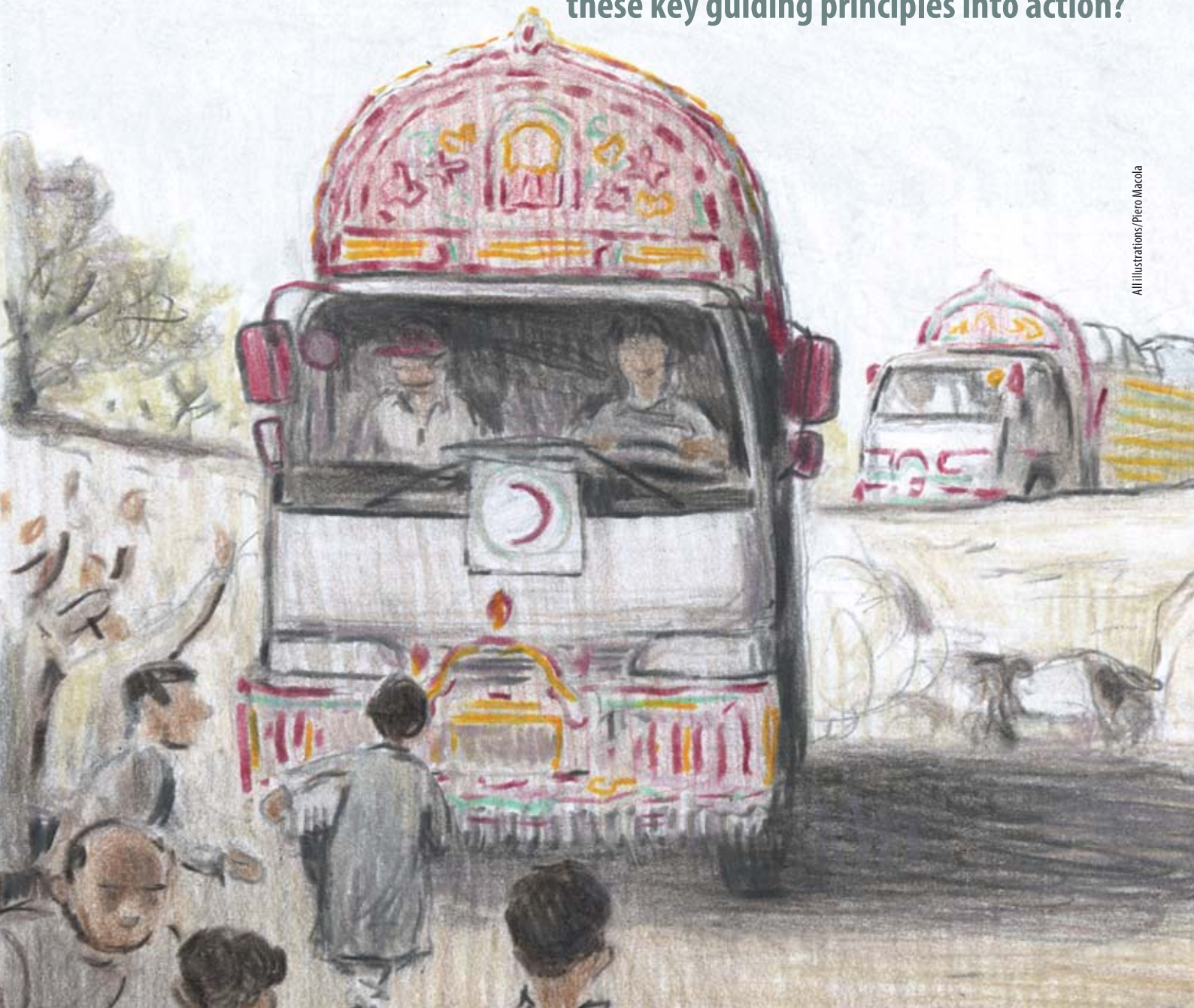
The maps in this publication are for information purposes only and have no political significance.

On the cover: For 50 years, the Fundamental Principles have guided the Movement through its humanitarian endeavours. Often, the realities it confronts pose questions and challenges that must be navigated using the principles as guide and inspiration. Illustration by Piero Macola.

Image credits (from top): Piero Macola/ICRC; Rommel Cabrera/IFRC; AFP Photo/HO/Cyprus Defence Ministry; Hector Gonzalez de Cunco/IFRC.

Matters of principle

The Fundamental Principles turn 50 years old this year. What better time to examine the challenges faced in putting these key guiding principles into action?



All illustrations/Piero Macola

The Fundamental Principles of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement

Humanity

The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, born of a desire to bring assistance without discrimination to the wounded on the battlefield, endeavours, in its international and national capacity, to prevent and alleviate human suffering wherever it may be found. Its purpose is to protect life and health and to ensure respect for the human being. It promotes mutual understanding, friendship, cooperation and lasting peace amongst all peoples.

Impartiality

It makes no discrimination as to nationality, race, religious beliefs, class or political opinions. It endeavours to relieve the suffering of individuals, being guided solely by their needs, and to give priority to the most urgent cases of distress.

Neutrality

In order to continue to enjoy the confidence of all, the Movement may not take sides in hostilities or engage at any time in controversies of a political, racial, religious or ideological nature.

PICTURE YOURSELF as a volunteer carrying out a food distribution in a rural community in Balochistan, Pakistan, after a terrible flood. You are standing on top of a truck full of food parcels, so that the assembled crowd can hear you better as you begin to speak.

Suddenly, a gunshot rings out nearby. It startles and shocks you, and you find yourself staring at a gun.

This was exactly the scenario that faced Pakistan Red Crescent Society volunteer Saboor Ahmed Kakar as he and a team of volunteers tried to unload supplies from a caravan of trucks in the flood-affected area. The operation was the turning point for Kakar: he had to confront a chain of difficult choices that shaped what it meant to be part of the Red Cross Red Crescent Movement, how far he was willing to go for its Fundamental Principles and how he could possibly apply them when forced to decide between imperfect solutions.

Speaking of principles

Malik Abdul Hakim is a living example of how the principles of neutrality and humanity can enable someone to ease the suffering of fellow human beings. Hakim's main task, as recently featured in the *New York Times*, is to deliver bodies of those killed in fighting back to their loved ones. He does this for people on all sides of the Afghan conflict.

"He collects the bodies of soldiers and police officers killed in areas of Taliban dominance and takes them home," *New York Times* reporter Azam Ahmed wrote in the 5 January 2015 edition. "From government centers, he carries slain insurgents back to their families, negotiating roads laced with roadside bombs."

Hakim is able to do this, according to the story, because he gained a reputation for neutrality during his tenure as a volunteer for the Afghan Red Crescent Society and for not taking sides in the political and military battles raging in his war-torn country. Neutrality is one of the seven Fundamental Principles of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and it is a critical tool in helping people affected by crisis.

Movement-wide dialogue

Around the world, these Fundamental Principles — humanity, impartiality, neutrality, independence, voluntary service, unity and universality — serve as an inspiration, guide and tool for enabling action and ensuring that people of all persuasions trust the Red Cross Red Crescent Movement's humanitarian motivations. As we mark the 50th year since the adoption of the seven principles as we know them today, an exploration of their contemporary application is more critical and relevant than ever.



Why is this so? Since 1965, the humanitarian sector has expanded and diversified dramatically. Today, thousands of organizations offer a wide array of assistance under a diverse range of operating principles — far from the situation when the Movement and a few other key organizations delivered the bulk of humanitarian aid. In recent decades, aid has also often been used as political tool, bundled with development programmes or military campaigns in order to win the hearts and minds of local populations. These trends have sometimes led to confusion, mistrust or even rejection of the core principles that enable effective humanitarian action.

For our diverse Movement, the application of the principles in complex, politicized or even dangerous environments can also raise significant challenges. Every day, Movement volunteers, staff and leadership face tough decisions in which the principles play a central role.

For these reasons, a Movement-wide initiative was launched in 2013 to reinvigorate understanding of the principles by "fostering open, inclusive and constructive dialogue and debate across the Movement in order to generate a better common understanding of the relevance of the Fundamental Principles in today's humanitarian action".

This dialogue is happening via public forums, debates, regional workshops within the Movement and webinars (see our website www.redcross.int for a list of links), and through promotional campaigns for World Red Cross Red Crescent Day on 8 May, and the 50th birthday of the Fundamental Principles in October. All this leads up to the 32nd International Conference of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement in December, during which the principles will be a core theme for discussion and action.

Red Cross Red Crescent magazine's contribution begins with this cover story about a food distribution in which volunteers faced a series of tough choices related to the principles. We then asked other experienced humanitarians for their thoughts on the dilemmas these volunteers faced that day. We invite you tell us: what would you do? What have been your challenges and successes?

Independence

The Movement is independent. The National Societies, while auxiliaries in the humanitarian services of their governments and subject to the laws of their respective countries, must always maintain their autonomy so that they may be able at all times to act in accordance with the principles of the Movement.

Voluntary service

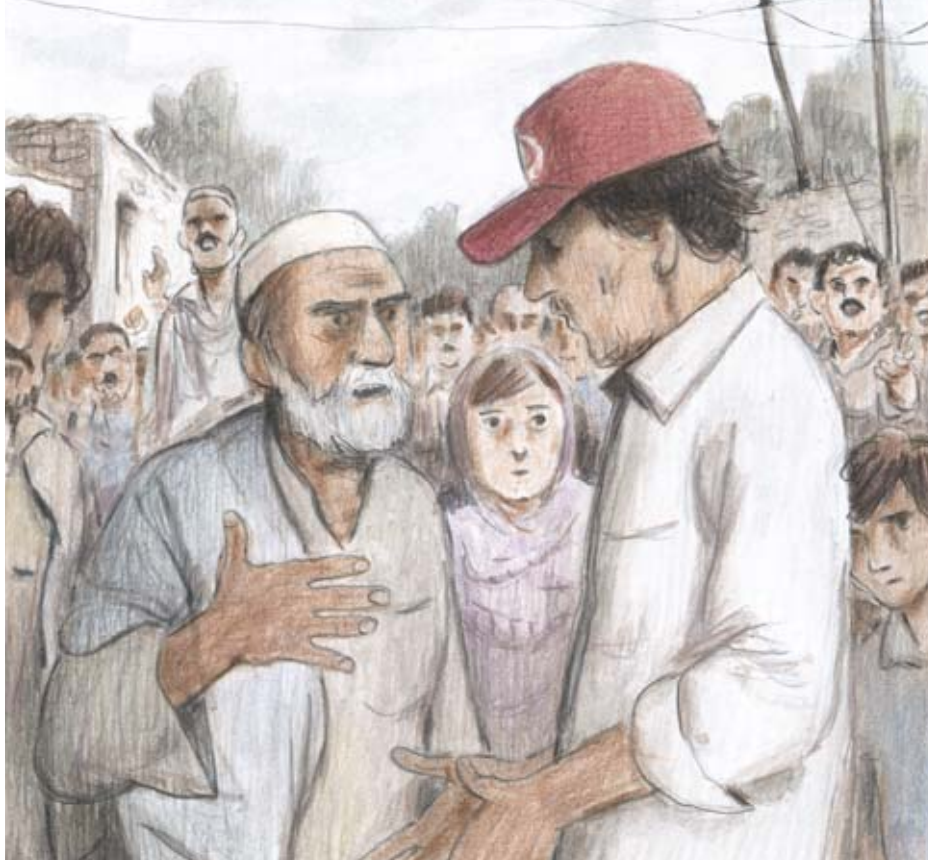
It is a voluntary relief movement not prompted in any manner by desire for gain.

Unity

There can be only one Red Cross or one Red Crescent Society in any one country. It must be open to all. It must carry on its humanitarian work throughout its territory.

Universality

The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, in which all societies have equal status and share equal responsibilities and duties in helping each other, is worldwide.



A day of dilemmas

Kakar had joined a year earlier and by the time the Damani dam broke in 2009, he was an experienced and well-trained vol-

unteer. It happened to be Kakar's turn as team leader for the food distribution on that dramatic day. Before the distribution, the branch contacted local officials in the

area and made the usual arrangements for a distribution. As is often the case in such situations, when Kakar arrived at his destination with 25 trucks full of food parcels, the people clustered around the convoy to receive desperately needed supplies.

But as the team was unloading, a man approached and introduced himself as a local leader. He said he knew who needed help the most and so he wanted to take over the cargo and distribute the food, thereby strengthening his prospects of winning upcoming local elections.

Kakar knew that to accept this demand would compromise the principle of impartiality, with distribution potentially proceeding according to certain people's wishes or personal connections rather than family need. Kakar was very conscious, therefore, of a tension between the principle of impartiality and the possibility that the local leader might make it difficult, or impossible, for the volunteers to do their jobs that day, or to come back in the future.

The dilemma: what would you do?

In putting the principles into action, there is not always a clear answer about how to apply them in each context. To get perspective, we've asked some experienced humanitarians to give their views on each dilemma that Kakar faced that day.



I would tell the local leader, "Thanks a lot for your humanitarian feelings, but can you tell me where those poor people

are? Where do they live? We have to register them in our database and take information from them. This is a long process and you need not to bother yourself with it." You should deal with all the parties, especially in times of war, from the same distance. Because if you give relief supplies to one leader, who represents one side or another,

then the people on the other side will suspect that you are not independent and impartial. You need all sides to trust you to complete your missions.

Fadi, a volunteer with the Syrian Arab Red Crescent

Distribute the food yourself. Verify all information. It takes more time and we are all impatient — but in the long run it builds trust.

Tore Svenning, head of secretariat, Standing Commission of the Red Cross Red Crescent

To give the leader the food would compromise impartiality. So I would turn his offer down in a diplomatic way. I have to put the peoples' needs first, and make sure they get supplies according to their needs. Accepting this kind of offer



Photo: SARCC



Photo: Erica Tong-Jinod/Standing Commission

will also cause the loss of credibility among the people. During any relief operation, any National Society will face this kind

of challenge so you always need to have diplomatic connections to make sure that you can provide the highest possible level of service.

Salam Khorshid, Syrian Arab Red Crescent and member of IFRC's Youth Commission

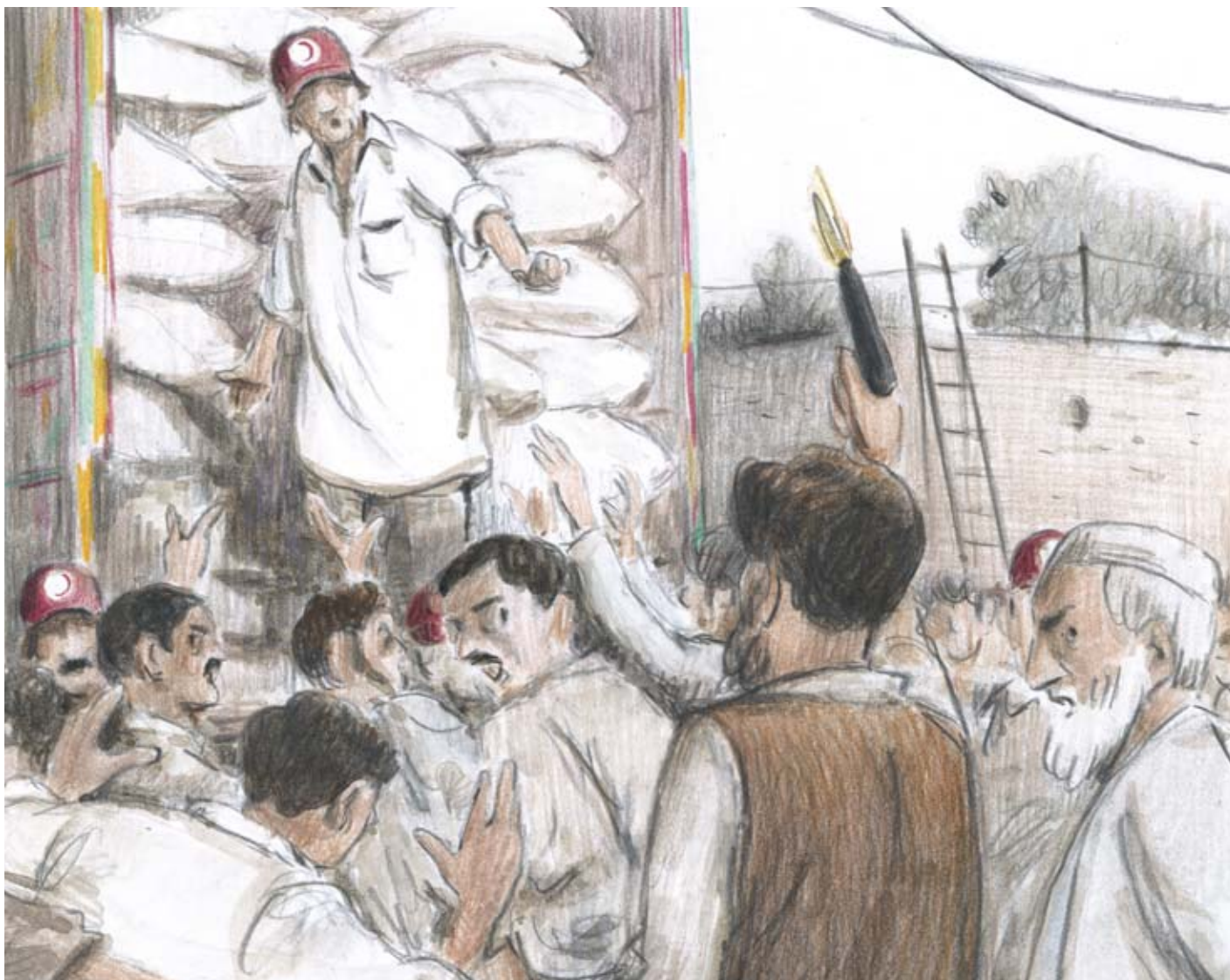
It's a risky situation, but I would say, "I need to make the choice about who is the most vulnerable." Perhaps I might offer them to help us in some way, but only if we make the decision about who receives the aid. I don't know if it would have worked, but I would try this negotiation. And if he says, "No," then I would probably say, "Halt the distribution."

Yves Daccord, Director General, ICRC



Photo: ICRC

Fadi and Tore Svenning were responding to a question about this dilemma posted by the magazine on the Movement's Fundamental Principles Facebook page. What would you have done? Send your responses to rcrc@ifrc.org.



Kakar's decision

Kakar decided impartiality took priority, as the threat was only a possibility. Breaking the principle of impartiality would also conflict with the principle of humanity, as the people most in need might not receive food.

"I greatly honour you as a leader," he told the man, "and you are highly important to me, but I cannot give you these supplies as it is against our principles and ways of distributing food. If you are also a victim of floods, of course we will give your family the support that we can in accordance to your need."

The leader commanded his followers to take over the trucks, but the community joined together to stop them. When the leader realized the community wasn't with him, he gave an order and a bodyguard fired a shot in the air. Kakar was grabbed by a villager and thrown off the truck to avoid further danger. Members of the community fought and subdued the shooter and finally handed him to the police.

For the moment, Kakar and his team appeared to be out of danger. But who

there could guarantee their safety? So the team faced their second dilemma: should they stay and distribute the food or turn the convoy around until the village and its leaders could promise that the humanitarians would be safe? And even if they were successful in unloading their trucks in an orderly way in accordance with the principles, would they be able to return with more supplies in coming days?

In the end, the branch volunteers were able to distribute the food following the usual procedures. Once back at branch headquarters, however, the team needed to discuss and think about the situation. At first, they leaned towards stopping further distributions. "After the incident," explains Kakar, "we said we would not work there any more, because our safety was more important."

But even with threats looming, the principle of humanity, the very reason Kakar had joined the Red Crescent, tugged at his conscience. "Yes, we had decided to pull out," he recalls, "but my mission was to help human beings, not to leave them behind."

The volunteers agreed and asked staff for the decision to be reversed and for deliveries to resume. "It was only because of the courage of my colleagues and their dedication that I could work like this," Kakar recalls. "There were about 35 of us, every one very committed to the Fundamental Principles. The incident was covered by the media, and the National Society and our local branch supported our decision." ■

By **Ismael Velasco**

Ismael Velasco is CEO of the Adora Foundation, a non-profit organization based in the United Kingdom.

The decision: what would you have done?

What do you think of the comments made in response to the branch's decision? Would you accept the army escort? What challenges have you faced in trying to put the Fundamental Principles into action? Tell us your story: rcrc@ifrc.org.

Facing these dilemmas

Neutrality and independence in the fight against Ebola

“IN THE EARLY STAGES of the Ebola virus disease outbreak, as the Liberian Red Cross Society [LRCS] took over the safe and dignified burials service, we had a real challenge in the area of neutrality and the use of the emblem,” says Neima Candy, national Ebola virus disease coordinator for the LRCS. “When we first took over the service from the Ministry of Health, we inherited a policy of armed escorts for safety.”

This posed a serious challenge for the team because even in areas of violence and armed conflict, staff and volunteers of the Red Cross Red Crescent Movement avoid using escorts from police or armed forces because the practice contradicts the Fundamental Principles of neutrality and independence. These principles aim to ensure that people understand these workers are not associated with any political, military or security agenda and that their motivations are purely humanitarian.

“The challenge was that we could not automatically change the policy. Because

the government had been running the safe and dignified burials service, and at that time we were only supporting them, we couldn’t change the rules straightaway. Therefore, we weren’t able to use our emblem on the vehicles. And because we weren’t visibly Red Cross, the trust in the community, which understands our neutrality, just wasn’t there. As a result, we experienced continued aggression.

“In Liberia, the Red Cross has long-standing community respect because during the war (1999–2003), the Red Cross was providing burials. So people know that we take care of this service. But because they couldn’t see we were the Red Cross and neutral, the existing mistrust (of government and health authorities), along with the rumours about Ebola, meant that people often didn’t trust us and refused to let us do our job. Community members were saying, ‘You people are saying you are Red Cross but we are not seeing a red cross’.

“Sometimes they would even fight, which was a concern for the immedi-

ate safety of our volunteers. It was also a concern for contagion because if they’ve come in contact with the bodies and then touch the volunteers it’s going to cause chaos.”

What would you do in this situation? How would you convince communities that you are neutral and at the same time convince the police to discontinue the escorts so that you can offer services under the Red Cross emblem?

In dealing with the dilemma posed by obligatory police escorts, Candy says her team looked at this issue from two angles. “Firstly, we wanted to let the people know that we were Red Cross and why we weren’t using our emblem,” she says. “So we increased our social mobilization efforts, especially in communities where we had had resistance. We raised awareness about why we were picking up bodies and the risks associated with bodies remaining in their homes and about how to avoid coming in contact with bodily fluids. Finally, we also raised awareness that even though we came in unmarked cars, this was a Red Cross team.

“The second element was negotiating with the police. At first, they insisted that they must accompany us. Then we started having some cooperation, so we suggested that we do a trial run, collecting bodies without the armed escort. Because we didn’t have any resistance when we went out with just the emblem, the police agreed to stop coming. As we had been scaling up and taking on more responsibility, we were better able to engage with them gradually and diplomatically change the armed-escort policy.

“Neutrality was central in making our decision, but because we had inherited government teams who didn’t have a Red Cross background, we had to work hard to brief those teams on the principle of impartiality. For instance, sometimes the teams would get a call that there was a body to pick up in their area, and it was sometimes difficult to teach some team members that they couldn’t prioritize that pick-up over others.” ■



Photo: LRCS

As told to **Anita Dullard**, IFRC communications specialist.

... what would you do?

Neutrality at the community level

IN BELIZE, one of the most common dilemmas faced while working with communities, no matter how large or small, is the interference of politics in humanitarian action, says Lily Bowman, secretary general of the Belize Red Cross Society. "This causes disparities among community members and has contributed to tensions and conflicts that have lasted many years.

"When the Belize Red Cross began implementing the Resilience in the Americas project in eight communities in northern Belize, the project team experienced first hand the challenges of working with people divided by politics — a situation that truly hampered the neutral work of our organization. In the selection of beneficiary families, for example, if we spoke with people from one political party, then only their party members would be selected. The same was true if we spoke to those from the other political party. There was no focus on vulnerability or need.

"In order to apply neutrality, however, there can be no favouritism and one must avoid political controversies. In the village of



Photo: Belize Red Cross Society

San Victor, for example, we are constructing 20 elevated latrines to address the problem of water contamination caused by floods, as well as low-lying latrines for the elderly and disabled. When the project team first introduced the project, the San Victor community was deeply divided politically. Many community members were unwilling to interact with one another. The tension was heavy and it hampered our progress."

What would you do? How do you maintain the principles of neutrality and impartiality in such a highly partisan environment?

Getting past the political divides that split local communities in Belize took some creativity and hard work. To address this tension, the Belize Red Cross formed com-

munity support groups and asked local people to join.

"These groups were comprised of community members who displayed genuine interest in creating sustainability, security, accessibility to services and economic opportunities for their community, without a political agenda," says Bowman. "Even though they were from different political, religious and family backgrounds, they were willing to come together at a common table to address the problems and needs in their community."

Group members were also introduced to the seven Fundamental Principles, in particular the principle of neutrality. Under the guidance of the project team, group members applied the principles to every activity and every decision-making process and discussion. By doing so, they were able to set aside their political differences and identify a list of the most vulnerable families, from both political parties, who should receive the latrines. The group is following a similar process in a project to create economic opportunities for young people. Bowman says the struggle in other communities continues, but there have been numerous successes by following models similar to this one. ■

Religious materials under the Red Cross roof?

DANISH RED CROSS volunteer and goodwill ambassador Torbjørn 'Thor' Pedersen recently found himself in an awkward position vis-à-vis the principles of neutrality and impartiality. Now on a worldwide tour of every country without taking an airplane, Pedersen always visits the National Society and writes about his experiences on his blog (www.ouceponasaga.dk/blog).

"One day I found myself visiting a National Society where, as always, I was greeted with warmth and hospitality. While I was there, the National Society invited me to sit in on a leadership seminar for Red Cross youth. I sat down in the classroom and was handed the same material as everyone else. To my surprise I also found a pamphlet from an evangelical

Christian denomination known for its active recruitment methods. I looked around the classroom and saw the same pamphlet lying on the tables of the other participants. This outraged me as it strongly conflicted with my understanding of the Fundamental Principles."

"I chose not to say anything during the class. Later when I was alone with the Red Cross youth leader I brought up the subject of the religious pamphlet. The leader remarked that he was aware of this. However he said the teacher was very good and had been a part of the Red Cross for many years as a volunteer educating young people. Besides, he said, the teacher never brought up the issue of religion while teaching. Having in mind that I was a guest, I discreetly questioned the youth leader if he could



Photo: Torbjørn Pedersen

see that this was a problem. He just nodded his head and shrugged his shoulders. Personally, I think the local National Society should keep the educator but tell him that the distribution of unrelated pamphlets cannot take place under the Red Cross roof." ■

An early test of principle

In the aftermath of genocide in Cambodia, the principle of impartiality faced one of its greatest trials.

WHEN ICRC DELEGATE François Bugnion took off for Phnom Penh, Cambodia, in July of 1979, six months after the fall of the Khmer Rouge, the seven Fundamental Principles as we know them today were less than 15 years old. While the main tenets of the principles pre-date their official adoption by the Movement in 1965, they were nonetheless facing their first trials as official guiding precepts of the entire Movement.

Bugnion's experience in Cambodia was certainly a case in point. Mistrustful of outside intervention after years of foreign interference, the new Cambodian authorities at first hesitated before allowing

only two people, Bugnion and UNICEF's Jacques Beaumont, to come to Phnom Penh to discuss the possibility of a massive relief plan.

"The first thing that staggered us was when we were flying over the border into Cambodia at low altitude," recalls Bugnion, now a member of the International Committee of the Red Cross. "In Viet Nam, each square metre was cultivated with rice paddies, like anywhere in South-East Asia, while in Cambodia, there was not a single field cultivated. There was no trace of human activity; the countryside was entirely grey-brown."

Beaumont and Bugnion were allowed into Cambodia largely because the ICRC

and UNICEF were the last organizations to leave Phnom Penh when it fell to the Khmer Rouge in 1975. Now returning for the first time in four years, they were shocked by what they saw.

"The city was completely empty, completely dead," Bugnion recalls. "There were no telecommunications, no telephones, no vehicles in circulation. We had the feeling of being in a country in a totally disastrous situation."

"We went into some hospitals where there was no material, no medicine and no doctors, because the doctors had all been killed. We went into some orphanages where the people in charge didn't know how to assure the survival of these children."

The Cambodian government agreed in principle to the proposed relief operation. But it did not want there to be any foreign presence on the ground. Beaumont and Bugnion explained that it would not be possible to launch a massive and complex operation without an experienced, international workforce. As a matter of principle, the international aid workers had to be present to make proper assessments and to account for where the aid went. It was a question of accountability and impartiality.

The dilemma: a background on interference

The government ultimately agreed. But the real test was still to come. To fully appreciate the dilemma Bugnion and Beaumont would soon face, it's important to understand Cambodia's reticence towards foreign intervention. After the fall of the Khmer Rouge, the country had finally emerged from a long period throughout which outside forces — from Asia and beyond — had meddled with or controlled the country's affairs.

In the decades following Cambodia's independence from France in 1953, Prince Norodom Sihanouk, who led the country from 1960 to 1970, sought to remain neutral in the Cold War proxy conflict that was tearing apart its neighbour Viet Nam.

But not everyone agreed with Sihanouk's neutrality given that the war going on in neighbouring Viet Nam was already spilling over Cambodia's border. In 1970, Sihanouk was ousted and a new regime sought to stop North Viet Nam's use of Cambodia as a means to transport supplies.





ICRC delegate François Bugnion during his mission to Cambodia in 1979. Photo: ICRC

An image taken during joint ICRC and UNICEF relief operations launched near the Cambodian border in 1979. Photo: ICRC

“It was extremely troubling because on the one hand we thought: it’s only by working with the government that we will be able to assist the majority of people living in Cambodia. But who are we to effectively ignore the situation of several tens of thousands of people, who are in an even worse situation?”

François Bugnion, speaking about one of the greatest dilemmas concerning the Fundamental Principles he faced during his career with the ICRC.

But because the new regime lacked credibility with the Cambodian population, the country quickly descended into civil war. The Khmer Rouge profited, taking control of nearly all Cambodia’s countryside.

“During this civil war, the ICRC was present in Cambodia with large relief and medical programmes, as well as family reunification services and other activities,” Bugnion recalls. “The ICRC and UNICEF were the only two organizations that stayed until the Khmer Rouge took Phnom Penh on 17 April 1975.

“On that day, the capital, which had a population of 2 million people, was completely emptied. There were no exceptions, neither for those injured in the war, nor the elderly, nor young women who had just given birth the night before.”

Without functioning institutions, a monetary system and no viable economy, people had to fend for themselves. Many were executed or sent to work camps. Some 2 million people were killed — roughly 25 per cent of the country’s then population of 8 million. “During that pe-

riod, there was no possibility for the ICRC to act [within Cambodia],” Bugnion recalls.

A dilemma for Impartiality

Four years later, weakened by internal divisions, the Khmer Rouge fell to the Vietnamese forces, and the People’s Republic of Kampuchea was established. Six months after that, Beaumont and Bugnion were on the plane to Phnom Penh.

But just as the two were negotiating a relief package with new Cambodian authorities, another situation was developing near the Thai border. Seeking to escape the fighting, a massive exodus of refugees had been moving towards Thailand. At first, Thailand accepted the refugees. But as the numbers grew, it closed the border, leaving thousands trapped in border zones inside Cambodia controlled by the Khmer Rouge.

In response, the ICRC and UNICEF mounted a major relief action in favour of the trapped refugees. As neither organization could gain access to those refugees from the Cambodian side, they brought in supplies through Thailand.

“When the government of the People’s Republic of Kampuchea learned of this, it reacted in an extremely strong fashion,” Bugnion recalls. “To a certain extent, it was understandable. This was the reaction of a government that was not recognized by the international community and which had the feeling that these two humanitarian organizations were, in a sense, trampling their sovereignty.

“The government took a very firm position, saying, ‘If you want to engage and collaborate with us, it must be only with us and you must stop all your operations across the border’,” recalls Bugnion. It was not an idle threat: the authorities demanded their passports, granting them 48 more hours inside the country.

“It was extremely troubling because on the one hand we thought: it’s only by working with the government that we will be able to assist the majority of people living in Cambodia. But who are we to effectively ignore the situation of several tens of thousands of people, who are in an even worse situation?”

What would you have done in this situation? To find out how François Bugnion and the ICRC responded, turn to page 13.

A delicate balance

Weighing independence with the auxiliary role to government.

EVER SINCE ARMA ORUC took the helm of the Zenica branch of Red Cross Society of Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) five years ago, the branch has slowly built up a reputation among the community and local authorities as a critical service and important partner during times of crisis.

But it hasn't been easy. Local authorities have not always seen the branch as a partner in preparing for and responding to natural disaster, while for many years, the branch was unable to get access to badly needed government funding.

Things started to turn around after branch activities such as blood donation and first aid captured the attention of the media, which brought wider recognition of the branch's contributions to the community. Ultimately, the branch's efforts paid off and local authorities allocated the branch an annual budget of approximately US\$ 8,000.

Then, in May last year, the organization was thrust into the spotlight when the worst floods in a century hit BiH and several other countries in the region. The situation required fast decisions under the

considerable pressure caused by an unfolding, widespread disaster. Throughout, branch staff cooperated with local authorities on a daily basis, responding to a wide range of urgent needs. Local officials and beneficiaries saw first-hand the efficiency of the National Society's distribution system, the ability of its workers to manage the registration of those receiving aid, as well as the enthusiasm and commitment of its staff and volunteers.

Now, almost a year after that crisis, the Zenica branch — as well as branches in nearby Bijeljina and Brcko — enjoy more respect and better recognition for their work, by both local communities and authorities. For this reason Oruc feels more confident in approaching local authorities with proposals aimed at improving cooperation and strengthening the auxiliary status of the National Society at branch level. One key aim, she says, is for the Zenica branch to become part of the area's official civil protection team, which coordinates preparations for crisis and emergency response. She would like to see the branch

Balancing act

The dilemmas that aid workers face based on the principles are often described as a balancing act. Here is a case in point: a community on one side of a conflict asks why you are giving more aid to the other side. "Because they have greater need and the principle of impartiality requires us to help the most vulnerable first and provide assistance in proportion to the need," you explain. They respond by saying: "Either you provide us with more equal amounts of aid or we will no longer see you as neutral in this conflict and you will no longer be able to operate in our territory." What do you do?

Neutrality

To demonstrate neutrality, one option is to set up more operations in the less-affected side so that trust and access to this population are maintained. This might conflict with the principle of impartiality but it could be a better alternative than losing access to all those in need on one side of the conflict.

Impartiality

In this scenario, maintaining strict adherence to impartiality would mean losing the trust and acceptance on one side of the conflict, as well as access to people in need in the territory they control. It could also lead to larger perception issues that might affect future aid operations. On the other hand, how far can you go in compromising on this essential principle?

Humanity

As all the consequences of your decisions are being weighed in the balance, the principle of humanity, which calls on us "to prevent and alleviate human suffering wherever it may be found", underlines your considerations and deliberations.

become an equal and independent partner in preparation and response; now, during crisis, there is a tendency to take direction from civil protection officials.

The Zenica branch, therefore, faces a challenge common to many Red Cross and Red Crescent National Societies: how to forge a close working relationship with local authorities while retaining autonomy in its humanitarian actions. ■

By **Andreea Anca**

Andreea Anca is a senior communications officer for the IFRC.

What would you do?

How would you advise Oruc so that her branch can operate in accordance with the Fundamental Principle of independence, which acknowledges that National Societies “are auxiliaries in the humanitarian service of their governments” but says they must also “maintain their autonomy”? Send your responses to all these questions to rrcc@ifrc.org. They will be considered for publication in the next edition.



Arma Oruc, head of the Zenica branch of Red Cross Society of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Photo: Andreea Anca/IFRC

An early test of principle



Photo: ICRC

(continued from page 11) After the ultimatum in Phnom Penh, Beaumont and Bugnion returned to Geneva for consultations with the ICRC and UNICEF. “The ICRC was divided,” says Bugnion, “but finally we agreed that this was not really an issue of international humanitarian law, but a problem of the respect of the Fundamental Principles; specifically the principle of impartiality would guide us in this particular case. The principle of impartiality compelled us to continue the cross-border operations, in spite of issues of state sovereignty and of threats of expulsion from the country.”

It was a risky balance. But in the end, it came down to a simple calculation: “If the government decided to expel us, that would be their decision,” Bugnion

says. “But if we decided not to assist people that we could help, then that was our decision. From that standpoint the decision was made: we took the risk.”

“So I returned to Cambodia with the authorization from the ICRC leadership to pursue the operations across the Thai border and the approval for a plan of action for the most extensive rescue operation ever attempted by the ICRC. It had a budget of US\$ 110 million, which represented 3.5 times the global budget of the ICRC for the previous year.”

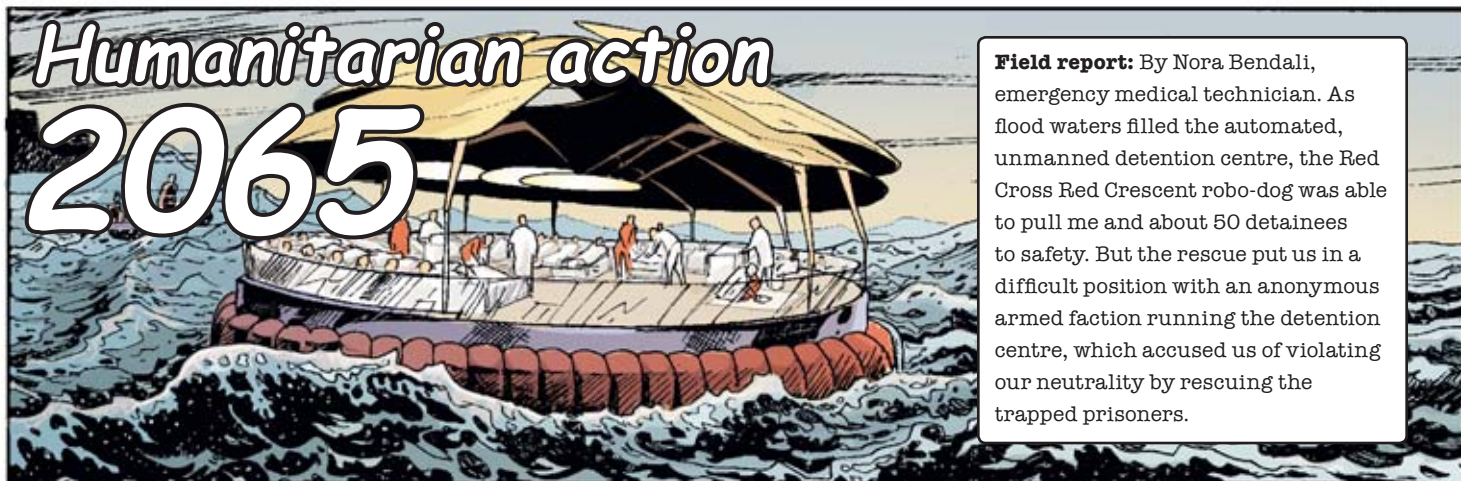
The objective was to feed 3 million people, completely re-equip the hospitals and clinics, and import seeds and tools to restart agriculture, among other things. “The counterpart to all of that would be that we would be firm on the question of respect of the principle of impartiality.”

Upon their return to Cambodia, Beaumont and Bugnion met with the Minister of Foreign Affairs. Ultimately, the minister agreed with the plan of action, under the condition that discussion regarding the operations on the Thai border continue. “In short, he agreed to separate the question of trans-border operations from the rest of the operation,” Bugnion recalls.

“What is interesting to me is that confronted with this dilemma, and seeing that international humanitarian law didn’t clearly indicate the path to follow, it was truly on the basis of the Fundamental Principles that the ICRC ultimately solved the problem.”

“This experience is useful relative to other situations where we are put under pressure, where we are told not to help certain people who are under the power of a political body that has not yet been recognized,” Bugnion suggests. “For example, in cases of civil war when governments say: ‘You can only help those who are under our control, not those who are under control of our adversaries.’ From this point of view it was an important precedent.”

Humanitarian action 2065



Field report: By Nora Bendali, emergency medical technician. As flood waters filled the automated, unmanned detention centre, the Red Cross Red Crescent robo-dog was able to pull me and about 50 detainees to safety. But the rescue put us in a difficult position with an anonymous armed faction running the detention centre, which accused us of violating our neutrality by rescuing the trapped prisoners.



You say you are neutral, but you let our prisoners escape...

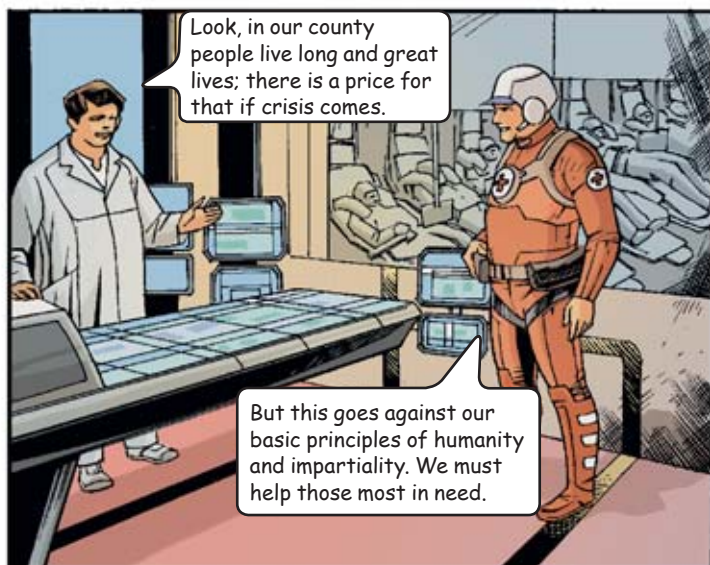
We had no choice, they would have drowned and there was no one running the detention centre to help them.

These people were found without personal data implants. This is illegal here. We will come today to reclaim them...



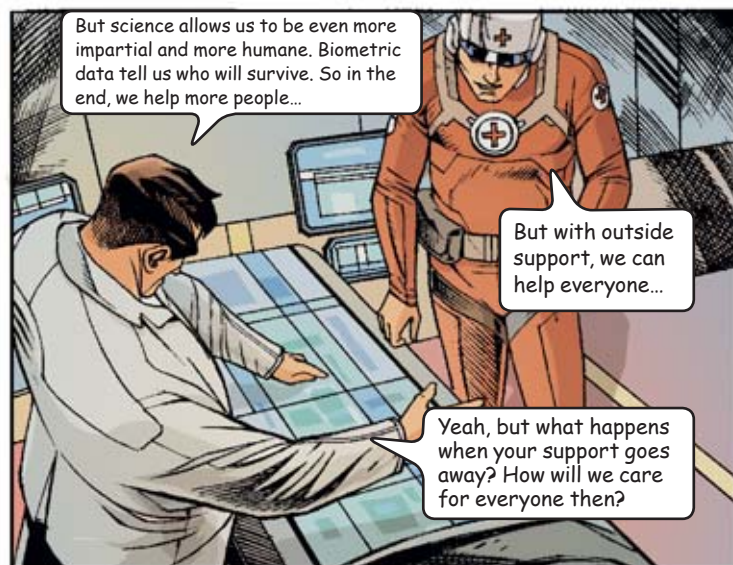
But that is just one of the challenges facing the Movement...

Field report: The state of Colono has used genetic therapy and other technology to extend human life. Many people remain active for more than 150 years. But a mysterious disease is claiming thousands of lives. The state refuses international help and says the Movement can only help those aged 100 years or less or whose biometric profile indicates more than 40 years of life ahead of them.



Look, in our county people live long and great lives; there is a price for that if crisis comes.

But this goes against our basic principles of humanity and impartiality. We must help those most in need.



But science allows us to be even more impartial and more humane. Biometric data tell us who will survive. So in the end, we help more people...

But with outside support, we can help everyone...

Yeah, but what happens when your support goes away? How will we care for everyone then?

Meanwhile, reports are coming in that thousands are fleeing the fighting in Solano and going into the 'dead zone', an area contaminated by biological agents during an attack on the former city of Tagalan.

They have to be warned!

If we can set up shelters just outside the hot zone, maybe we can get them to come back.

But how? Communications are down and we don't have enough bio-protection suits to make a meaningful intervention.



I have a solution. It's time to deploy Hank.

Hank, the robot? I'm not so sure. You're too young to remember 2039.

I wasn't there. But I've spent the last 25 years working to fix those glitches.



25 years earlier, the first robot humanitarians were deployed along with about 100 humanitarian workers in protective gear following an attack on a nuclear power station. Before the attack, people had used to robots as slaves. Technical failures plagued the operation and many who encountered the robot-humanitarians felt insulted. Many robots were destroyed.

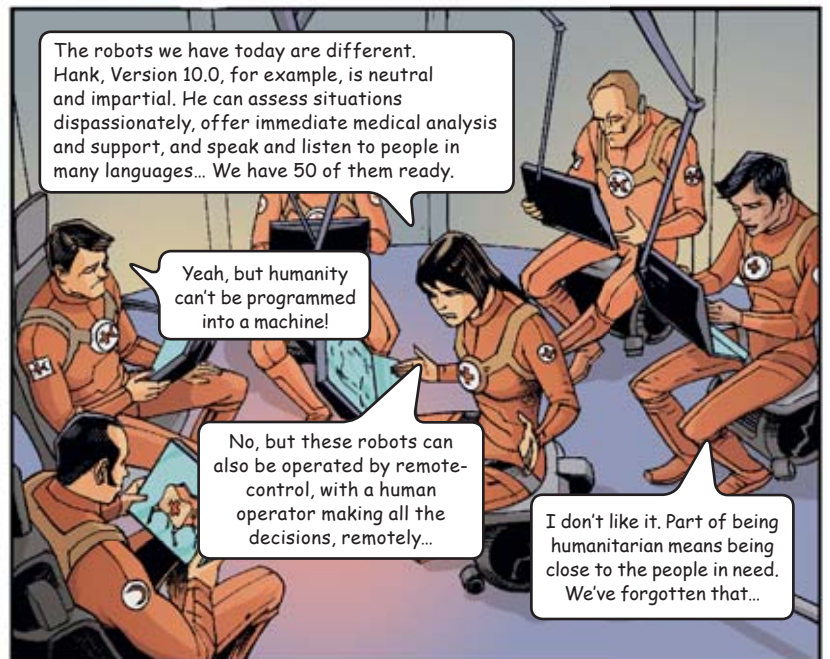


The robots we have today are different. Hank, Version 10.0, for example, is neutral and impartial. He can assess situations dispassionately, offer immediate medical analysis and support, and speak and listen to people in many languages... We have 50 of them ready.

Yeah, but humanity can't be programmed into a machine!

No, but these robots can also be operated by remote-control, with a human operator making all the decisions, remotely...

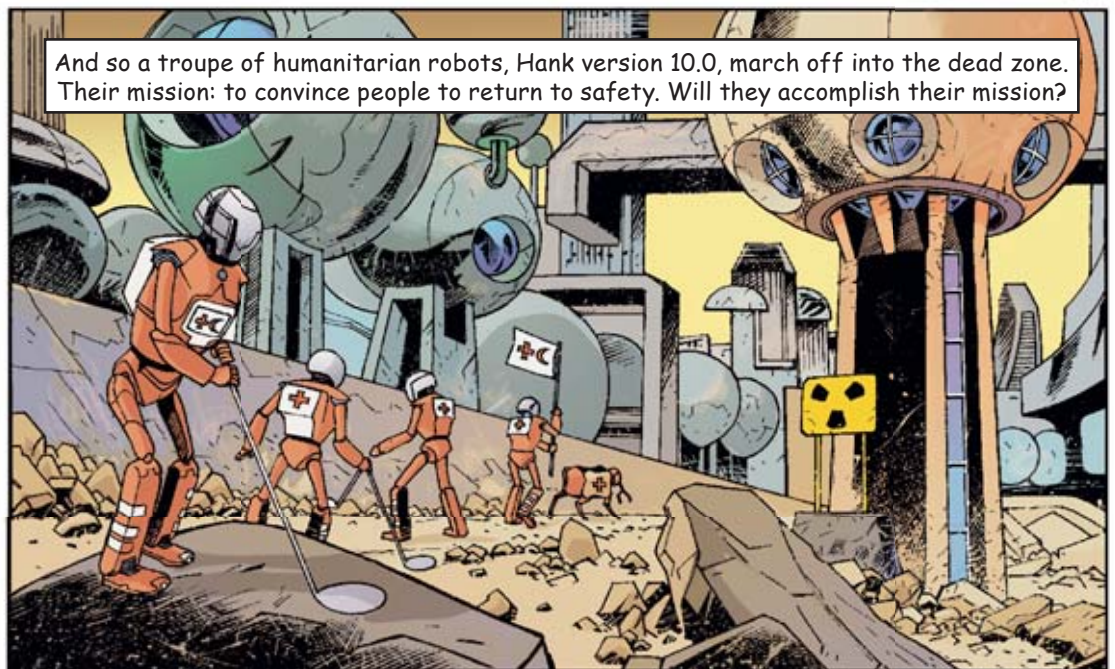
I don't like it. Part of being humanitarian means being close to the people in need. We've forgotten that...



This isn't a time for nostalgia. This is a time to save lives.



And so a troupe of humanitarian robots, Hank version 10.0, march off into the dead zone. Their mission: to convince people to return to safety. Will they accomplish their mission?





Bouncing back

How communities in the Philippines are helping to redefine that ubiquitous humanitarian buzzword 'resilience' through cooperation and concrete action as they cope with successive natural disasters.

ESTHER VIERON, 63, lives in a close-knit fishing community on an isolated part of the West Samar coast in the Philippines, surrounded by mangroves that provide shelter for fish and fishing boats alike.

Despite the community's entrenched poverty, Vieron remembers a time when even poor people could 'bounce back' from a disaster more easily.

"When I was young there was an abundance of food, but climate change and loss of land to construction is making our day-to-day struggle harder," she says, adding that these days, with more and more ferocious storms and a growing population, it's getting harder to start over.

"The storm of 1969 was a bad one, it took many lives," says Vieron, who retired from local politics some time ago, but remains a highly committed and respected Philippine Red Cross community volunteer. "Even so, typhoon Haiyan was the eye-opener

for us and Ruby [Hagupit] really scared us because of the constant heavy rain and wind.

"After Typhoon Haiyan, people have been listening to what we tell them," she says. "I tell them that if we work together we can become more resilient."

Defining and demonstrating resilience

But what does it mean to be resilient in a country that experiences an average of 20 major tropical storms a year? In international humanitarian circles, the term 'resilience' has become a favoured buzzword among donors, humanitarian organizations and development agencies seeking to find better and more proactive ways to reduce the suffering and losses caused by disasters and crisis.

Generally, resilience refers to the ability of people or things to absorb shocks, to be flexible and able to adapt to changing circumstances. In the Philippines, the word for resilience translates literally as 'bounce back', a term that is often used after natural disasters.

Since Typhoon Haiyan in 2013, the most powerful storm ever to make landfall, and several other powerful typhoons in 2014, the local definition of resilience has evolved. When speaking of building or enhancing resilience, the Philippine definition now might also include something like this: multiple levels of society working together (on weather monitoring, storm-warning, evacuation plans, better home building, economic initiatives and community

After natural disaster strikes, it is often the resilience of local communities, which shoulder the greatest burden in rebuilding their homes, lives and livelihoods, that makes the greatest difference. As part of a global Movement initiative called the One Billion Coalition for Resilience, the Red Cross Red Crescent Movement has called on all stakeholders "to engage and support" efforts to strengthen community resilience in concrete and systematic ways.

Photo: Rommel Cabrera/IFRC

awareness, among other things) to strengthen people's ability to cope with severe shocks.

Following Haiyan, the Philippines government called for a 'whole-society' approach in which people and agencies at all levels and in all sectors become involved. The Philippine Red Cross, with support from its in-country Movement partners, is following a similar tack, forging relationships with communities by liaising with local leaders and recruiting, training and equipping volunteers to work with their local recovery committees. This usually involves disaster preparedness training, health initiatives and constructing safer shelters.

The challenge for the National Society and the country as a whole is how to strengthen risk-reduction efforts and make them more consistent in all corners of this geographically and culturally diverse nation. With its network of 100 chapters and thousands of community volunteers, the Philippine Red Cross is already playing a key role.

A working definition

But what does 'building resilience' look like? An illustrated dictionary might include, along with its definition, a picture of Philippine Red Cross volunteer Lenita Macavinta-Diego making her daily rounds in Aliputos, a coastal village on Panay Island in Aklan province.

Trained by the Philippine Red Cross to conduct emergency drills, simulations and first-aid training, and to identify safe evacuation centres, such as community halls and two-storey houses, she makes sure that food and medical supplies are stockpiled for emergencies and that the most vulnerable community members are evacuated first. During Haiyan, the volunteers' actions in Aliputos meant there were no casualties even though all 570 houses were damaged or destroyed.

That typhoon, which made landfall in the Philippines in November 2013, dramatically changed perceptions of how to prepare for and respond to storms. Before Typhoon Haiyan, many people thought little of sitting out a typhoon in their own home and people were often reluctant to evacuate for fear of losing their belongings to looters.

More than a year later, attitudes have changed markedly, say Red Cross volunteers. Even people who in the past refused to evacuate heeded local authorities and sought shelter in designated evacuation centres, usually schools or community halls on higher ground, when alerted about Typhoon Hagupit in December 2014.

Life after Haiyan

In that sense, the Philippine Red Cross's outreach task has been made a lot easier. Now people pay more attention to the news and official warnings and take

pre-emptive evacuations seriously. They stock up with food and they know how to secure their property and livestock well before the storm arrives.

Haiyan was also a hard lesson for emergency responders. The Philippine Red Cross is used to operating in many locations and responding to natural disasters, but coming as it did straight after a major earthquake (Bohol), Haiyan tested the organization's capacity to the limit and prompted a rethink about future responses.

Eric Salve, head of disaster management services at the Philippine Red Cross, says Haiyan was a wake-up call for the Philippine Red Cross to redouble its community volunteer recruitment efforts. In many of the worst-hit areas, staff and regular volunteers were either affected themselves or cut off and unable to help.

Another factor that has made a difference post-Haiyan is stronger leadership at the provincial and municipal levels. Local governments in some of the coastal provinces have managed to contain injury and loss of life through preparation and evacuation measures.

With Haiyan, the resultant storm surge took thousands of lives because people thought the surge would be similar to past storms. In typhoons Hagupit and Seniang, both of which hit the Philippines in December 2014, loss of life was generally limited to cases in which people ventured out and put their lives at risk.

In the case of Hagupit, early action also played a role. As soon as the country's lead weather forecasting agency (PAGASA) spotted the storm forming and heading for land, the government swung into action. Storm warnings were issued and well over 1 million people were pre-emptively evacuated. Even though Hagupit destroyed houses and infrastructure, the human cost was far less. Officially, only 18 people died compared with Haiyan's death toll of 6,300.

"It is time for the world to embed resilience... into the industrialization process and the development of towns and cities, accounting for factors like seismic threats, flood plains, coastal erosion and environmental degradation."

Margareta Wahlström,
United Nations Secretary
General's Special Representative
for Disaster Risk Reduction, in a
recent article entitled *The year
of resilience*.

☺ After Typhoon Haiyan in 2013, many coastal villages such as this one were torn apart by high-force winds and rising sea waters. Rebuilding communities to withstand the storms and developing warning and evacuation systems are part of making communities more resilient to disaster.

Photo: Rommel Cabrera/IFRC



➡ In the wake of successive typhoons, the Philippine Red Cross and Movement partners have supported programmes that help local people get back into business — as fishermen, farmers, builders and many other professions.

Photo: Rommel Cabrera/IFRC



Community buy-in

But at the community level, disaster risk reduction efforts are still fragile. A lot depends on the calibre of leadership and the willingness of people to participate in exercises like community evacuation drills, clean-ups and initiatives aimed at improving health.

“Haiyan taught us a lot, such as more effective preparation,” Salve says, “but Hagupit reminded us that we still need to fast-track and prioritize recruitment of community volunteers. We need to remember that during a typhoon, everyone is vulnerable and our messages need to get through to the whole community.”

One central theme behind all these efforts is that resilience is not something that can be delivered like a project or a programme. For a community to be truly resilient, changes must be fostered in such a way that they can continued without outside support. They require community buy-in and investment.

This kind of thinking is not new. For many years, the Movement and other humanitarian actors have sought to bring lasting improvement to people’s lives by enhancing local health systems, improving the health of livestock or helping people start small enterprises. Today, however, such efforts are growing in scale, tend to come earlier in the wake of crises and are more often championed under the banner of ‘resilience’.

Even from the onset, humanitarian relief often includes cash-grants or cash cards that allow victims of crisis to make their own decisions (with some restrictions) about what they need most. In theory, this form of assistance can boost the resilience of local markets and bring about recovery more quickly.

Since Haiyan, for example, almost 30,000 households have received cash grants enabling them to earn a living again as part of the Philippine Red Cross’s three-year US\$ 360-million recovery plan involving some 500,000 people. Initial data show that farming, rearing livestock and setting up local con-

venience shops are the top three income-generators for those who have received such support.

This can also be the case during conflict. In addition to emergency assistance, the ICRC, which has long been present in the Philippines due to the ongoing conflict, increasingly includes cash grants, cash cards, provision of tools or machinery, training and micro-loans as part of a package to help communities attend more quickly and effectively to their own needs.

After fighting broke out in Zamboanga City between a faction of the Moro National Liberation Front and government forces in 2014, some 40,000 people fled their homes. Most of these people found shelter in tents, improvised wood and tarpaulin structures or bunkhouses along the Cawa-Cawa shoreline, or in a local football stadium.

In addition to emergency relief efforts, the ICRC and Philippine Red Cross offered financial support to the neediest in exchange for work (for example, garbage collection in the stadium and along the shoreline) or help with restarting small businesses.

In remote areas of Mindanao and the Visayas, local communities were able to identify their own needs and priorities. “Communities often rely on farming for survival, so we work with them to implement sustainable projects and improve crop yields,” says Alan Colja, the ICRC’s economic security coordinator in the Philippines.

One conflict-stricken community recently decided that it wanted to boost incomes by expanding its cut-flower business, so the ICRC helped it set up a small nursery and provided advice on increasing production. The ICRC trained 560 people in carpentry so they can help rebuild more storm-resistant homes and storm shelters.

2015: the year of resilience?

To some degree, resilience could be considered a re-branding or consolidation of earlier buzzwords — ‘sustainability’, ‘preparedness’, ‘emergency planning’, ‘risk-reduction’ and ‘economic security’ — in a way that satisfies humanitarian organizations and development agencies. The beauty of the term is that its inclusiveness allows for buy-in from people with diverse interests. The downside is that resilience can mean almost anything — another catchy slogan used opportunistically for almost any agenda.

For its part, the IFRC has long made the case to development and humanitarian donors that disaster preparedness and risk-reduction efforts in disaster-prone areas are absolutely essential to meeting post-2015 Millennium Development Goals.

Now at the global level, momentum is gathering around this concept as more organizations and high-level players align and push for greater investment in risk prevention, and by extension, promotion of more resilient communities as a way of reducing

government expenditures over the longer term.

In an article published to coincide with the tenth anniversary of the Hyogo Framework for Action (HFA), a risk-management plan adopted by the United Nations a decade ago following the devastating 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami, Margareta Wahlström, the United Nations Secretary General's Special representative for Disaster Risk Reduction, calls for resilience "to be the hallmark of 2015." She makes a case for participating governments to revise the HFA to take account of climate change, urban sprawl and rapid population growth.

"It is time for the world to embed resilience... into the industrialization process and the development of towns and cities, accounting for factors like seismic threats, flood plains, coastal erosion and environmental degradation," she writes.

In March, when the third international conference on disaster risk reduction convened in Sendai, Japan, one goal was to update the HFA.

After 30 hours of negotiations, consensus was finally reached on the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, which lays out a 15-year strategy and "opens a new chapter in sustainable development as it outlines clear targets and priorities for action, which will lead to a substantial reduction of disaster risk," according to Wahlström.

1 billion strong

Representatives of 42 National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and the IFRC took part in the con-

ference, where they called for greater action towards building community resilience. The way to do that, they argued, is by ensuring sustainable access to water and sanitation, investing in public awareness and education, supporting effective disaster-preparedness systems, and developing stronger building codes and other laws to reduce risks and ensure swift response during crisis, among other actions.

They also called attention to the recently launched 'One Billion Coalition for Resilience', an initiative to scale up community and civic action on resilience over the next ten years, "so that it is owned, led and carried out by people themselves to bring about lasting change in their communities", according to IFRC President Tadateru Konoé. The coalition's goal is to engage at least one person in every household around the world in active steps towards enhancing community resilience.

Given the global and local reach of the Red Cross and Red Crescent volunteer network, National Societies are at the heart of this grass-roots resilience revolution. For those looking for a working model, the Philippines may offer a case in point if the 'whole-society' approach proves to be effective over time and the concrete resilience actions promoted by the Philippine Red Cross and others become truly embedded in local communities throughout this diverse, island nation. ■

By **Kate Marshall**

Kate Marshall is an IFRC communications specialist based in Manila.

"After Typhoon Haiyan, people have been listening to what we tell them. I tell them that if we work together we can become more resilient."

Esther Vieron, 63, Philippine Red Cross volunteer

Some of the workers at this joint Philippine Red Cross and IFRC shelter construction project in Tabontabon will move into the shelters they are working on. Most beneficiaries are expected to contribute labour to build their house if they are able. This kind of 'sweat equity' contribution also fosters a sense of local ownership, an important part of any resilience-building effort.

Photo: IFRC



Hard times, new energy

A crossroads between continents in the eastern Mediterranean, Cyprus is coping with increasing migration in the midst of financial crisis. One of the Movement's newest National Societies responds.

➡ In September 2014, more than 350 refugees from the Syrian conflict were rescued from this fishing boat.

AFP Photo/HO /Cyprus Defence Ministry



➡ They were brought by cruise ship to the Port of Limassol on the island of Cyprus.

AFP Photo/Andrew Caballero-Reynolds



SITTING ON THE EDGE of his single bed, one of only two pieces of furniture in his drab, run-down room, a 38-year-old Syrian man named Samir* speaks about how he ended up in Nicosia, Cyprus's capital city.

"I was living in Damascus with my wife and my daughter," he says. "I went to get some food for my family and when I was away, our apartment building was bombed. My wife and my daughter were killed."

Fearing for his life, Samir says he left Damascus, lived in a refugee camp for several months before making his way towards Cyprus. Samir was lucky. He escaped the horrors of war. But like many migrants, he is now living another sort of nightmare — a legal limbo that forces him to live in the shadows of society, searching for work while trying to avoid the police.

Migrants from Syria who arrive in Cyprus qualify for 'subsidiary protection', a status that prevents them from being sent back to their native country. But it doesn't protect them from being detained by police for entering and living in Cyprus illegally.

Samir has already spent four months in detention, first in Nicosia's central prison and then later at the Menogia detention centre for immigrants near the south-eastern city of Larnaca. "I am worried about being sent back," he says.

As an undocumented migrant, Samir doesn't qualify for government financial assistance and because he left Syria quickly, without papers, he cannot prove his identity to authorities or agencies that might help him attain refugee status or asylum.

In the meantime, finding day labour is no easy task. A painter by trade, Samir finds himself in a country suffering from the aftermath of a nationwide banking crisis that culminated in late 2012 and which has brought the economy to a near complete standstill. Many Cypriots lost their businesses, homes, retirement pensions and savings, while many others can only withdraw small daily sums of money due to a policy aimed at preventing a run on the banks.

While economists and politicians see signs of a comeback (following a 10 billion euro bailout in 2013), many average Cypriots see little sign of improvement. Last year, unemployment reached 18 per cent for people aged 25 and over, and close to 45 per cent for people under 25.

Meanwhile, personal, home and business loans have all but dried up. Everyone has been hit, but migrants and the elderly (many of whom lost their retirement pensions) are particularly vulnerable.

"We see these cases every day, elderly people who are stuck in their beds at home begging for help," says Leas Kontos, a volunteer with the Nicosia branch of the Cyprus Red Cross Society, who spends most days making house calls, delivering food packages or medicine to the elderly, single mothers or others who cannot come to the branch headquarters during food distributions.

Kontos also sees many migrants during his rounds. Most are from eastern European and Central Asian states, but others have come from as far away as Cameroon and Sri Lanka. More and more are coming from Syria.

"People are coming to Cyprus because they think there is work here or because they think it's an entry into the European Union," says Giorgio Frantzis, a field officer at the Nicosia branch, where migrants can get food, basic household supplies, clothing, information and referrals to help them survive in their new home. "They've heard that Cyprus is a prosperous place. Which it was until recently."

New stories, new challenges

In the midst of all this, the Cyprus Red Cross Society itself is going through a metamorphosis of sorts, a transformation brought on by the economic crisis, the influx of migrants and the new opportunities posed by the National Society's admission into the IFRC at its General Assembly in November 2013.

Today, the National Society is shouldering a new and growing set of responsibilities in a country with few remaining nationwide civil society organizations. But the crisis has also forced it to halt its long-standing support for international operations in the Philippines and Sri Lanka.

"We were doing many projects abroad because we could afford it and because there were no great needs locally," says Takis Neophytou, director general of the



Cyprus Red Cross. "Now, we concentrate on local needs," he adds, noting that some of the National Society's own resources were lost or frozen due to the banking crisis. "Donations from individual donors overall are much less, while needs have increased."

One important response has been a campaign, launched with the support of three major corporations, to secure money for a school breakfast programme and other local relief efforts. This campaign, and other fund-raising efforts, has allowed the National Society to nearly double its delivery of food parcels.

New energy

The crisis has also brought on a new sense of urgency and energy to a National Society whose domestic operations, up until two years ago, had been fairly routine, says Niki Hadjitsangari, the president of the Limassol branch on the island's southern coast.

"We were a small, fairly typical and traditional European Red Cross," she says. "We would do blood drives, deliver blood to the hospitals, visit old people in nursing homes and take presents to underprivileged children at Christmas. We were helping poor people, but because Cyprus was a very prosperous country, there were not so many needs."

Now the branch distributes food, clothing and supplies on an ongoing basis and is struggling to find ways to expand the cramped, overpacked areas where it stores and prepares food packages. The branch's lobby, about the size of an average elevator, is being expanded to accommodate the growing number of migrants who arrive seeking assistance, information and referrals. "We are operating in emergency mode," says branch treasurer Annie Haraki.

Emergency mode

In September, the branch faced one of its biggest recent emergencies when it mobilized to assist 345

Already active in helping refugees and migrants, the Cyprus Red Cross Society responded by both advocating for the protection of the refugees and offering direct assistance at a temporary camp set up for the refugees.

Photo: Cyprus Red Cross Society

Syrian and Palestinian migrants who arrived at the port of Limassol after having been rescued at sea during stormy weather by a passenger ship. Before they arrived, Red Cross staff in Nicosia called in additional volunteers who worked in three-day shifts to set up tents and established a distribution centre at a pre-existing, government-run camp for migrants nearby.

Cyprus Red Cross volunteers then provided migrants with basics necessities (clothes, shoes, hygienic kits, personal care items, toys for the children) as well as first aid, psychosocial support and help connecting with family back home or elsewhere. In following weeks, the National Society organized activities to improve the migrants' quality of life, including schooling for the children, English language lessons for adults and limited legal advice and referrals.

When authorities stopped offering any services at the camp in January, roughly 100 migrants stayed on and volunteers continued to offer services, medicine and supplies to those who remained. A Cyprus Red Cross volunteer doctor made regular visits and the National Society offered transport to two local hospitals, which agreed to accept patients from the camp. Staff and volunteers also provided information aimed at protecting migrants from smugglers and others who might take advantage of their vulnerable situation.

"We see these cases every day, elderly people who are stuck in their beds at home begging for help."

Leas Kontos, a volunteer with the Nicosia branch of the Cyprus Red Cross Society

☞ A banking crisis that hit Cyprus in 2012 continues to cause considerable hardship for average Cypriots. At the beginning of the crisis, people's ability to withdraw money was greatly restricted and lines at banks were long. The crisis caused the Cyprus Red Cross to downscale international operations and focus more on the needs of local residents, as well as migrants and refugees.

Photo: REUTERS/Bogdan Cristel

The episode was a test of the National Society's capacity to respond to an acute emergency as well as its role as a neutral and independent humanitarian organization. This was particularly true, says Neophytou, when government agencies asked the National Society to advance particular policies regarding the migrants' legal status that might not be in the migrants' best interests.

"Unacceptable demands by the public authorities, deriving from accidental or intentional conception or misinterpretation of our auxiliary role, must never overpower the Fundamental Principles of the Movement," he says.

Insecure times

Indeed, charting a new course to increase assistance for vulnerable migrants is not easy during hard economic times. "With the economic crisis, people feel insecure," says Andri Agrotis, a lawyer and volunteer who serves as secretary in the Nicosia branch and helps run the branch's services for migrants. "Some people feel that if you have more foreigners in the country that means the country will never recover because we need to maintain these new people."

The National Society has responded by saying it will endeavour to protect and support migrants, promote wider understanding of their rights and their need for social inclusion, as well as offer ser-





vices (such as family tracing) at three government 'reception centres for asylum seekers' in Kofinou, Larnaca and Paphos.

"We feel that we have to follow the Fundamental Principles and that we are doing whatever we can within our resources and capabilities as a small National Society," says Agrotis, who also represents the Cyprus Red Cross on the Platform for European Red Cross Cooperation on Refugees, Asylum Seekers and Migrants (PERCO).

Part of that responsibility, says Fotini Papadopoulou, president of the Cyprus Red Cross, is to be a voice for vulnerable people and to speak out against xenophobia, racism and attitudes that lead to exclusionary policies and social marginalization.

Now that the Movement has fully accepted it into its fold, she says the Cyprus Red Cross can play an even greater, and more effective, role on the local, European and global stages by participating in Movement decision-making and by benefiting from other forms of Movement support.

Remaining relevant

A key part of that process will be young people, many of whom are now facing a future in which half of them will not be able to find jobs on the island.

"Unemployment is the number-one issue in Cyprus," says Vanessa Kyprianou, the president of the Cyprus Red Cross youth section, adding that volunteering is still a big part of the young Cypriot spirit. "But it's often a challenge to ask people to volunteer when what they need is a job to help put food on the table."

✎ Cyprus Red Cross volunteer Leas Kontos makes daily deliveries to people in Nicosia who have been hit hard by the 2012 financial crisis. Many of those he visits are elderly, unemployed or who have jobs that do not cover their expenses and debts.

Photo: Malcolm Lucard/IFRC

"Unacceptable demands by the public authorities, deriving from accidental or intentional conception or misinterpretation of our auxiliary role, must never overpower the Fundamental Principles of the Movement."

Takis Neophytou, director general of the Cyprus Red Cross Society

Despite this, many young people have mobilized to help fellow Cypriots and migrants, she says. And like youth anywhere, many are passionate about global issues, such as reducing the effects of climate change, as well as gender equality and youth empowerment.

"So we really need to come up with new programmes that will challenge the youth, not just ask them to do what the older generation has been doing," she says, adding that the Cyprus Red Cross is taking steps in the right direction: the youth section has equal status to the branches, meaning it reports to the executive committee, has a voice in strategic decisions and has fund-raising responsibilities.

Some of the more innovative — and fun — responses to the crisis, most notably rock concert fund-raisers, were organized by young volunteers. Still, there is a gap in the National Society's human resources. Most staff and leadership are 50 years old, or older. Many of the National Society's older generation, including Papadopoulou, say it must do more to bring up a new generation of management and leadership.

"Cyprus was a paradise some years ago," says Papadopoulou. "I think Cyprus can be a paradise again and I think the youth will be a big part of making that future. But it will only happen if we work very hard and if we help each other, help everyone, to get through this crisis." ■

By **Malcolm Lucard**

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

*Not his real name

THE MAN ESCORTING PATRICIO BUSTOS fumbles with his keys. Bustos doesn't complain. After all, he has waited a long time for this. What's a few more seconds? The heavy, steel door swings open at last and Bustos steps into a cement courtyard the size of a tennis court, surrounded on three sides by a blue, one-storey building.

"Yes, I remember," he says quietly.

Bustos is Chile's national coroner, the man ultimately responsible for finding answers when the government needs to know how, why or when someone died — or to find answers about who has died in cases where the remains cannot be easily identified. One of his biggest cases, which he is handling with assistance from the ICRC, involves finding answers about those who were murdered or executed, or who simply disappeared, during Chile's years of military regime, which lasted from 1973 to 1990.

On this day, nearly 40 years later, 64-year-old Bustos is making a personal journey, a return to a painful part of his past.

The last time Bustos saw this courtyard was in 1976, under very different circumstances. Then a young doctor with Marxist sympathies, he had been arrested for actively resisting Chile's military regime. The facility, known as Cuatro Alamos, was a detention centre in Santiago run by Chile's secret police. Only the secret police knew he was there.

Returning to the corridors for the first time since his release in 1976, Bustos walks up and down a narrow hallway, searching his memory. Then he stops in front of a door, above which is painted number 2. "This was my cell," he says, standing on his toes to peer through the square spaces above the door.

Bustos strides to the far end of the hallway, turns left and enters a room with white ceramic tiles and six shower heads. "This is where they beat the prisoners," he says matter-of-factly. "This is where I was beaten."

He lingers for only a minute. There is another place he wants to visit, a rectangular room with iron bars over the windows that served as Cuatro Alamos' communal area. While held captive, Bustos had been summoned there one day to meet three men bearing red and white badges.

That meeting, and other similar private talks with these men in subsequent months, are almost certainly what kept him from disappearing. "This is where I met the ICRC officials," he says, standing in the middle of the room, a slight echo from the concrete accentuating his voice's otherwise flat, unassuming tone. "This is where I met them."

Los Desaparecidos

Bustos arrived at Cuatro Alamos more than two years after the events of 11 September 1973, when

Cases of identity

Patricio Bustos says visits from ICRC delegates when he was imprisoned in the 1970s likely saved his life. Now, as head of Chile's forensic services agency, he works, with help from the ICRC, to solve one of the country's greatest mysteries: what happened to those who disappeared during the country's decades of military regime?

tanks rolled and the air force bombed the presidential palace. President Salvador Allende and dozens of his supporters died that day. General Augusto Pinochet went on television that night to announce that the military had seized power in the name of protecting the fatherland.

The arrests began immediately and continued unabated. In just one episode on 12 October, soldiers arrested 26 leftist sympathizers in the city of Calama and held them in a prison, incommunicado. Eight days later, authorities released a statement: all of the men had been shot dead the previous day while attempting to escape after a truck transporting them to another prison suffered a mechanical failure. No further details were provided. Nor were the bodies.

So many bodies didn't turn up throughout Chile that a phrase was coined to describe them. They became known as *Los Desaparecidos* (the disappeared).

For years, families of those who had disappeared in Calama and 15 other cities across the country in less than a month sought more information. After Chile returned to democracy in 1990, they finally got some answers. The military had tortured and then executed 96 people, including the 26 in Calama, as part of an infamous campaign that became known as the 'caravan of death'.

"It's a humanitarian gesture, something the country has to do, something the [Legal Medical Service] has to do, to provide justice. It's important to remember that we as a society still have debts to pay."

Patricio Bustos, head of Chile's Legal Medical Service



But what about the remains? Where were they?

One of the 96 was Luis Alfonso Moreno, a 30-year-old security guard and Socialist Party activist. Investigators called his family in January 2014. They had found fragments of his body in the desert and conclusively identified them.

The family held a ceremony for Moreno at the general cemetery in Santiago, with his bones in an urn draped by the Chilean flag. Beside the urn was a black-and-white photograph of his wedding day in 1969.

Mourners told stories that prompted laughter and tears. Someone played a guitar and they sang his favourite songs. This produced more remembrances. Moreno was buried in a gravesite that held the remains of other Pinochet regime victims.

"We had lost hope," says Luis Alfonso Moreno Jr, who was 3 years old when his father disappeared. "We thought impunity would rule. Now he's with his comrades."

Mistaken identities

Moreno's identification was performed by the Legal Medical Service (SML in Spanish), Chile's national coroner's office, the agency Patricio Bustos now heads. The SML is gaining a reputation as an agency that can serve as a model to similar agencies dur-

ing or after both conflict and natural disasters. But it wasn't always that way.

Only a few years earlier, before Bustos became director, the SML had misidentified dozens of people who had disappeared after Pinochet and the military took power. The episode is remembered as 'Patio 29', a reference to an area in the general cemetery where the victims were buried. Between 1994 and 2002, the SML claimed to have identified 98 bodies from Patio 29 and delivered the remains to the families for proper burial. But in dozens of cases, the SML later said that the identifications were mistaken.

Relatives of the 1,200 victims whose remains had not been positively identified were especially outraged. "We lost confidence in the SML," says Alicia Lira, who heads a group that represents relatives of people executed by the military regime and whose remains have still not been found.

When the SML's director at the time resigned, Bustos, who held a senior post in the health ministry, applied for and got the job. Bustos immediately made changes. On his second day, he met with several relatives of *Los Desaparecidos* and told them that he would establish stricter rules to end misidentifications, be accessible to them and ensure that his agency treated the families in a more humanitarian way.

Now Chile's top coroner, Patricio Bustos sits in the cell where he was once detained during Chile's military regime in the 1970s. Not far from this cell, Bustos was visited by three ICRC delegates who he says helped prevent him from meeting the fate of many of his fellow prisoners: execution or disappearance.

Photo: Hector Gonzalez de Cunco/IFRC



Family members inter the body of Luis Alfonso Moreno after his remains were positively identified by Chile's Legal Medical Services using DNA sampling technology. Moreno was a 35-year-old security guard and Socialist activist who was arrested and killed by the military regime in 1973.

Photo: Hector Gonzalez de Cunco/IFRC

Answers in blood

The effort to rebuild the families' trust continued in 2007, when the Chilean government created a DNA-sampling centre that enabled forensic scientists to match DNA from found bones with the living relatives of the disappeared. The agency also signed agreements with foreign accredited, genetic-analysis laboratories and began working more closely with the ICRC, which has significant expertise in the identification of human remains.

Two years later, the SML launched its first public campaign inviting family members of the disappeared to donate blood to see if their DNA matched unidentified remains that had already been found or that might be discovered. The SML collected more than 3,500 samples.

Collecting blood is a simple task. But for many family members, the process awakens painful memories. "When a family member gives a sample, they

inevitably get emotional, because they feel there is the possibility of finding your loved one some day," says Lorena Pizarro, representative of the Families of Disappeared Detainees Association.

Last year, the SML went a step further with a new programme, called 'A drop of your blood for truth and justice', which aimed to reach out beyond relatives of *Los Desaparecidos* to others who think their family may also have been a victim of the regime.

Since 2007, the SML has definitively identified 138 remains — meaning 138 families now have a place to visit their loved ones. Of those, 58 were among those that had been previously misidentified.

Despite the successes, many challenges remain. While Bustos says the SML still has work to do in gaining the trust of those who lost loved ones, the problem has not been getting the relatives to provide blood samples. The problem has been finding the remains of *Los Desaparecidos*.

According to records revealed during various investigations into the regime, the military and the secret police took deliberate steps to hide the remains. In one notorious operation, code-named 'Throw out television sets', the military dug up and moved remains in order to hide the evidence. Some of these 'television sets' were dug up from secret gravesites, loaded onto military aircraft and dropped into the sea.

But when remains do appear, the blood samples from relatives greatly increase the chances of a definitive match. Using DNA can be important, says Olga Barragán, forensic adviser in the ICRC Brasilia Regional Delegation, covering Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Paraguay and Uruguay. But DNA is only part of the overall puzzle.

"You try to get as much information as you can from the families," Barragán adds. "The colour of the eyes, the skin, the sex, the weight and height, dental records, any surgeries, implants or x-rays. The region has made big advances in forensic science in recent years, not only because the technology is better but also because forensic workers are better prepared, with a holistic humanitarian vision. So, they are getting better results."

The ICRC's forensic work in Chile is not limited to the disappeared, however. It also assisted the SML following an earthquake in 2010 that killed more than 500 people and a prison fire, also in 2010, that killed 81 inmates.

And in two other high-profile cases, the ICRC was brought in as a neutral observer after Chilean judicial authorities ordered the exhumations of Chilean poet Pablo Neruda and former Chilean president Salvador Allende in order to definitively determine the cause of their deaths. The ICRC role in the Neruda exhumation, conducted by the Chilean



Alicia Lira, who heads a group that represents relatives of people executed by the military regime.

Photo: Hector Gonzalez de Cunco/IFRC

forensic service with help from other Chilean and international experts, was to help ensure that the exhumation followed international standards and that the rights of family members were respected during the process.

From note cards to DNA samples

Late last year, the ICRC's role took on a new dimension when it became one of four institutions to permanently store DNA samples of Chile's disappeared in its archives in Geneva, Switzerland. "This is the first time the ICRC has received DNA samples for future use, for the identification of human remains strictly for humanitarian purposes," says Morris Tidball-Binz, director of the ICRC forensic services unit based in Geneva.

Since the First World War, the ICRC has relied on personal information to reconnect family members separated by conflict. A hundred years ago, it was collected on note cards and stored in warehouses filled with filing cabinets. Later, it was secured on computer networks. The storage of DNA samples is unprecedented.

For Pizarro, this arrangement with an international organization shows that families of Chile's disappeared are "not alone", and that finding answers is a global responsibility. "The hope is that, even if hundreds of years go by, we will have a place to return to, in order to identify our loved ones," she says.

The Tower

For Bustos, the drive to find answers on behalf of the disappeared has been deepened by his own personal experience. It began on 10 September 1975. Bustos says he had just left his place of work in Santiago when three agents grabbed him, forced him up against a wall, handcuffed, gagged and blindfolded him and then hustled him into a waiting car. They beat Bustos for 30 minutes until they reached their destination: Villa Grimaldi, the secret police's main torture centre.

The secret police had been hunting for Bustos for months and had almost caught him several times as he constantly kept on the move, using any one of eight aliases.

At the time of the coup, Bustos says he had been the president of the medical students' centre at the University of Concepción, a hotbed of leftist political activity. After the coup, the military government expelled him from the university. He went to Santiago to join the underground resistance movement and soon headed a mobile medical team that treated people who were also in hiding.

At Villa Grimaldi, Bustos says he was stripped, placed upon the metal coils of a bed known as *La Parrilla* (the grill). There, he was interrogated and given electric shocks.

He was then dragged to a narrow, 40-metre tall building known as The Tower. There, his wrists and ankles were bound while his arms were looped

At the laboratory of Chile's Legal Medical Service, two technicians measure the remains of a person believed to be a victim of the military regime in the 1970s. This kind of detailed analysis, along with DNA sampling and examination of clothing, objects or material found near the body, can help investigators find answers, even years after a crime took place.

Photo: Hector Gonzalez de Cuncu/IFRC



under a horizontal metal bar that was thrust behind his knees; his head inclined downward. For hours, he was held in this excruciating position, known as the Parrot's Perch.

Over the next two months, Bustos says he was placed repeatedly on the Parrot's Perch and on *la parrilla*, sometimes alongside his wife, who had been a dentist and was also in the underground opposition until her arrest.

In November 1975, Bustos was transferred to Cuatro Alamos, where the secret police often took political prisoners to recover from torture before deciding their ultimate fate. There he met José Zalaquett, a human rights lawyer who had also been arrested. "His chances of surviving were very poor," Zalaquett recalls, given Bustos' importance to the resistance movement and thus perceived danger to the military regime.

Men with red-and-white badges

Word of Cuatro Alamos' existence filtered out. One person who learned about the secret facility was Sergio Nessi, an ICRC delegate general for Latin America. Determined to visit, he obtained grudging permission to visit the facility. No outsider had previously been allowed in.

Nessi and two other ICRC officials — Rolf Jenny and Willy Corthay — entered Cuatro Alamos on 9 December 1975. There, they met Bustos and other political prisoners in the communal room.

Nessi and Jenny registered each man's name and Corthay examined their injuries, especially Bustos'. He could barely walk. The ICRC delegates spent about 90 minutes with the detainees and returned the following day with medicine for Bustos and supplies for the other detainees.

Most important, though, the ICRC now knew of their existence and could demand their protection. "Once he was registered by the ICRC, his life was as safe as could be possible," says Zalaquett, who later served on Chile's 1991 Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

Debts to pay

Ultimately, in December 1976, Bustos was released from prison and expelled to Italy. There, he rebuilt his life as he practised medicine. Bustos returned to Chile in 1991 after the reestablishment of democracy. By then, he had sought out Nessi in Europe to thank him personally.

"The ICRC was an important factor in saving my life," Bustos says. He also credited his family and other political prisoners, who, after being freed, spread the word about his whereabouts.

On a recent visit to Villa Grimaldi, which is now a memorial centre, he sat on the steps in front of The Tower. "It's difficult to be here, but I find a way to do

it," he says, adding that he visits Villa Grimaldi several times a year in memory of those who died there or who disappeared from there.

Bustos says he feels a sense of tranquility when the SML identifies the remains of a disappeared victim. He nearly always attends the ceremony where the remains are given to a family, making sure that agency officials explain the proof in detail. But it pains him that they have been able to identify only 10 per cent of the remaining disappeared.

Marta Vega is among the relatives still looking for closure. Her father Juan, a Communist Party activist, disappeared in 1976 when she was 17. "We have no idea where he is," Vega says.

Vega, her siblings and her cousins have all given blood to the SML. "I feel good that if his remains appeared tomorrow by chance, we have the samples to identify him," she says, adding, "Bustos has done a good job. Whatever need or worry we have, he addresses them."

On the good days, when the SML is able to deliver the remains of a disappeared victim along with conclusive proof, Bustos says he does not express happiness or satisfaction to the family. "It's a humanitarian gesture," he says, "something the country has to do, something the SML has to do, to provide justice. It's important to remember that we as a society still have debts to pay." ■

By Tyler Bridges

Tyler Bridges is a journalist based in Lima, Peru.



"When a family member gives a sample, they inevitably get emotional, because they feel there is the possibility of finding your loved one some day."

Lorena Pizarro, representative of the Families of Disappeared Detainees Association

📍 Lorena Pizarro, president of an association of families for detainees who disappeared during Chile's military dictatorship.

Photo: Hector Gonzalez de Cuncio/IFRC

PUBLICATIONS



International humanitarian law: Answers to your questions

ICRC 2015

This introductory booklet to international humanitarian law has been fully revised and is accessible to all readers interested in the origins, development and modern-day application of humanitarian law. Available in Arabic, English, French and Spanish

Haiti earthquake five-year progress report

IFRC 2015

The earthquake that struck Haiti in January 2010 was one of the biggest natural disasters in recent history, resulting in more than 1.5 million internally displaced people, unprecedented human losses and material damage. This report spans the response actions of the IFRC and its member Red Cross and Red Crescent National Societies from January 2010 to November 2014, to improve the health, living conditions, hygiene, nutrition and livelihoods of those affected by this horrific tragedy. Available in English, French and Spanish

Explosive remnants of war

ICRC 2015

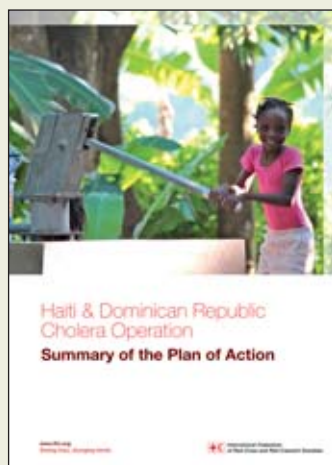
This brochure highlights the risks posed by unexploded and abandoned ordnance in war-affected countries and summarizes the Protocol on Explosive Remnants of War, a treaty adopted by states

in 2003 to minimize the impact of these weapons. Available in Chinese, English, French and Spanish (online only)

Safer Access: An introduction

ICRC 2015

This publication aims to provide a brief introduction to the Safer Access Framework, a project developed by the ICRC to help National Societies ensure that staff and volunteers can safely access vulnerable communities during times of violence, conflict or other disturbances. More detailed descriptions and guidance materials can be found in *Safer Access: A Guide for All National Societies*, which is the core component of the Safer Access Practical Resource Pack containing further useful materials. Available in English



Haiti & Dominican Republic Cholera Operation: Summary of the Plan of Action

IFRC 2015

In 2012, the governments of Haiti and Dominican Republic, with support from the United Nations, the Movement and non-governmental organizations, created the Coalition for the Elimination of Cholera on the island of Hispaniola. This initiative seeks to mobilize resources for well-coordinated efforts aimed at the elimination of cholera from the island. This document reflects a summary of the IFRC-wide two-year

Emergency Plan of Action and its contribution to the broader ten-year national plans to eradicate cholera from the island of Hispaniola. Available in English

Market analysis guidance

ICRC 2014

People's livelihoods depend to a significant extent on markets. Sudden shocks such as drought or conflict can severely limit how markets function and, as a result, drastically reduce people's access to essential commodities. This publication offers

processes and tools that can be used to integrate an assessment of market conditions into various phases of projects being implemented in the field. It is intended for staff who have a leading role in market assessment and for managers who need to make strategic decisions and implement market-related relief and early recovery work. It follows another brochure in the series entitled *Rapid assessment for markets – Guidelines for an initial emergency market assessment*. Available in English

VIDEOS

You probably don't have Ebola if...

IFRC 2015

Ebola virus disease is harder to catch than you think. It may dominate the news, but if you are outside the countries where Ebola is endemic, you're more likely to be struck by lightning than catch this disease. That's the message of a new, colourful, animated video produced by the IFRC. Unlike influenza or tuberculosis, the video points out, Ebola cannot spread through the air. People contract Ebola by touching the blood or bodily fluids (including sweat, urine, and semen) of a person who's infected.

Available on the IFRC YouTube channel in Arabic, English, French, Portuguese and Spanish

Other videos from IFRC 2015

The IFRC YouTube channel also includes new videos on subjects ranging from building economically resilient communities in Haiti to creating disaster preparedness mechanisms, and a collection of videos on the tenth anniversary of the Indian Ocean tsunami and the fifth anniversary of the 2010 earthquake in Haiti.

Available in Arabic, English, French and Spanish

Gaza Strip: keeping sewage out of drinking water in Beit Hanoun

ICRC 2015

Damaged sewer systems are placing 50,000 people at serious risk in the Gazan town of Beit Hanoun. "We have to repair basic infrastructure as quickly as possible," explains ICRC water engineer Sara Badei in this video recently released by the ICRC. "This means getting materials and resources to where they're needed. The ICRC has done a lot already, but there's much more still to be done." In this video, Badei explains the consequences of mixing drinking water and sewage.

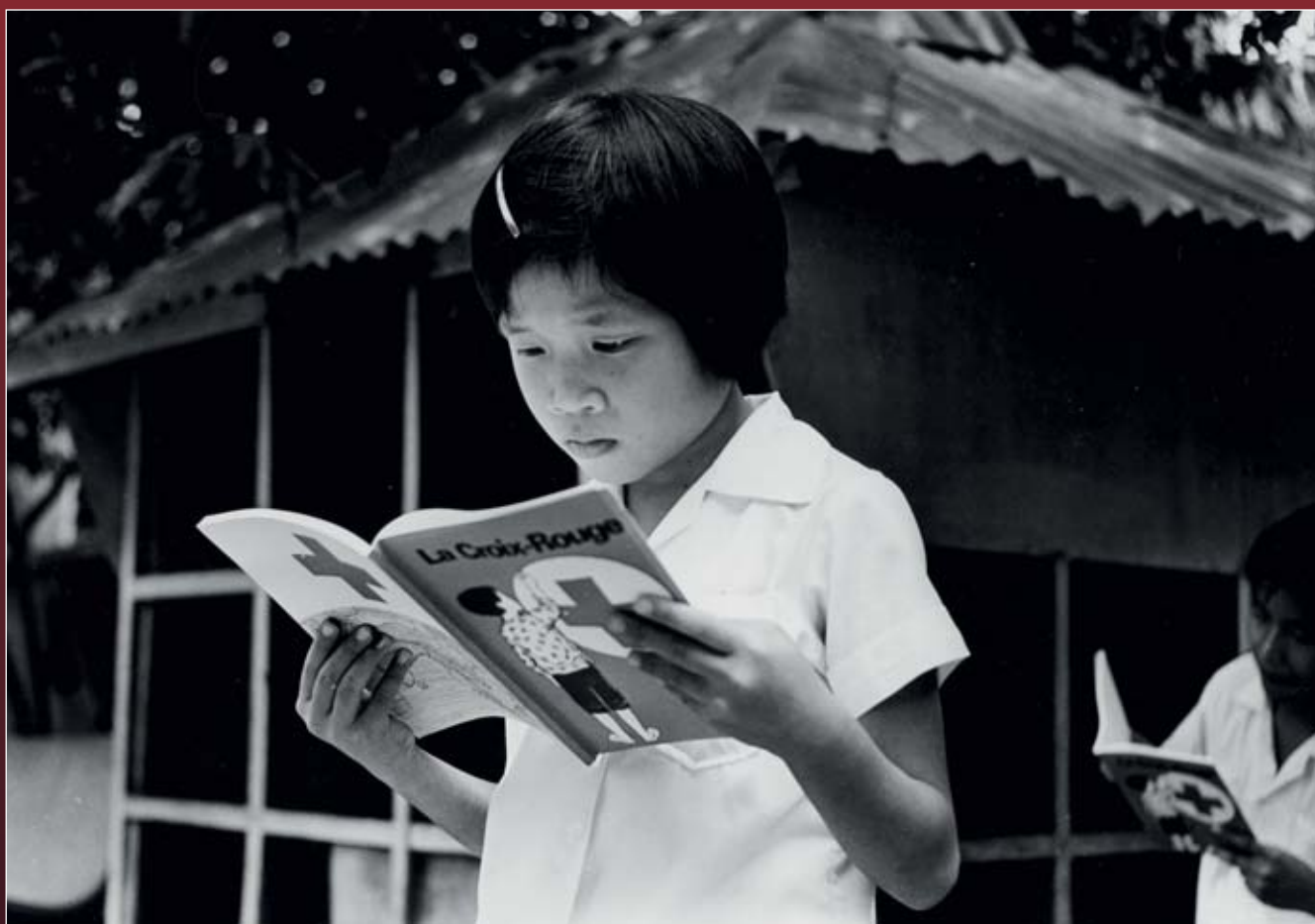
Available at www.icrc.org

Liberia: bringing Redemption Hospital back to life

ICRC 2015

Redemption is the name of a public hospital providing free medical care to the people of New Kru Town in Monrovia, the capital city of Liberia. The Ebola epidemic killed 112 people at this health facility, forcing it to shut down in September 2014. As part of its contribution to fighting the epidemic and helping to restore health facilities in Liberia, the ICRC decided to go in with its expertise and clean up the contaminated areas. This video recounts the story of Sébastien Renou, one of the few brave people on the front lines, who helped to clean up Redemption Hospital.

Available at www.icrc.org



The Seven Fundamental Principles are often the first things people learn about the Red Cross Red Crescent Movement. The act of sharing these principles and getting people to understand them has long been a key part of putting them into action. In this undated, uncredited photograph from the ICRC archives, taken in Laos, probably in the 1960s, a young girl reads about the Principles in a book about the Red Cross.

Photo: IFRC