

Multilateral Aid Review: Assessment of International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)

Summary

Organisation: **International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)** Date: February 2011

Description of Organisation

Note on ICRC, IFRC and National Societies: *The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement is the largest humanitarian network in the world, and is composed of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) and 186 individual National Societies. ICRC has an exclusively humanitarian mission to protect and assist victims of armed conflict and others forms of violence and directs and coordinates the Movement's international relief activities during armed conflicts. IFRC inspires, facilitates and promotes all humanitarian activities carried out by National Societies - directing and coordinating National Societies actions to assist the victims of natural and technological disasters, refugees and those affected by health emergencies. National Societies act as auxiliaries to their national authorities in the humanitarian field. They provide a range of services including disaster relief, and health and social programmes.*

As a signatory to the Geneva Conventions, the UK recognises the unique mandate and established role of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and supports the organisation's **overall humanitarian mission**¹ - to protect and assist victims of war and other forms of violence.

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) is an impartial, neutral and independent not-for-profit organisation with an exclusively humanitarian mission. It directs and coordinates the international relief activities conducted by the Red Cross Movement in situations of conflict. ICRC is therefore different in nature from other multilaterals that DFID works with.

Established in 1863, the ICRC is the origin of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement. As a private organisation under Swiss Law, oversight is provided by a 'Committee' of 25 members whose role is to establish the ICRC's doctrine and general policy and monitor its activities. DFID participates in the Donor Support Group (DSG), a discussion forum comprising governments which contribute over CHF 10 million per annum to the ICRC. UK views the DSG as a very useful forum for influencing ICRC policy and strategy.

ICRC works in 4 main areas:

- Protection: e.g. support to political prisoners, restoring family links interrupted by conflict;
- Assistance: e.g. economic security, health services, water and habitat, physical rehabilitation of mine victims;
- Prevention: Promotion of International Humanitarian Law and humanitarian principles, mine action

- Cooperation with national societies: including capacity building, technical and financial assistance to support sustainable outcomes for vulnerable people.

ICRC received CHF 1,099.4 million in 2009, 92% of which came from governments or the European Commission.

Contribution to UK Development Objectives	Score (1- 4)
<p>1a. Critical Role in Meeting International Objectives</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + ICRC is viewed as extremely relevant in the conflict countries where it works. + ICRC often has unparalleled access to vulnerable populations because of the trust it has developed with the government and is therefore often the only organisation offering assistance and protection, particularly in remote areas. - In non conflict settings, ICRC's role is less critical as there are sometimes other actors who may be able to fulfil some of ICRC's functions. = ICRC scores a 4 overall because of its unique role. There would be a significant gap in the overall humanitarian effort if ICRC did not exist. 	Strong (4)
<p>1b. Critical Role in Meeting UK Aid Objectives</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + ICRC's role is most critical in those countries which are also a priority for DFID. + ICRC often has access to vulnerable populations that DFID does not. + There is widespread evidence that the ICRC has been critical in delivering against objectives that are also priorities for Dfid and HMG as specified in the past and this is expected to continue. - For countries which have emerged from conflict, ICRC's role is less critical to the UK agenda. = Score of 4 reflects ICRC's critical role in conflict countries 	Strong (4)
<p>2. Attention to Cross- Cutting Issues:</p> <p>2a. Fragile Contexts</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + ICRC's <i>raison d'etre</i> is to be able to assist and protect the most vulnerable in fragile environments. + ICRC has unparalleled access and government support giving it the farthest reach of any humanitarian organisation. 	Strong (4)

<p>countries in the world and its ability to deliver under the most difficult circumstances, and crucially where other organisations cannot is relatively unique.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + We are not aware of any situations in which ICRC has declined to assist vulnerable populations + Evidence from the MAR country missions was overwhelmingly positive. - Confidentiality prevents ICRC from reporting comprehensively on its protection activities so it is not always possible to get clarity on what has been delivered for this component of their work. = ICRC performs impressively in difficult circumstances, often where other organisations do not operate. Although there is little written reporting on protection activities anecdotal evidence suggests they are also effective on this side of their mandate. 	
Organisational Strengths	Score (1- 4)
<p>5. Strategic and Performance Management</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Mandate is clear with a line of sight to strategy. Leadership is strong including at the country level and the Planning for Results framework enables reporting on outputs. + ICRC delegates are generally good quality with HR management policies geared towards raising professional standards and developing the particular skills required for humanitarian work. + ICRC is proactive about dialogue with donors, including the UK, despite the lack of a traditional multilateral organisation governing board. - Evaluation function is still relatively ad hoc and implementation of evaluation recommendations could be strengthened. = ICRC is generally strong in this area and, critically, is able to report on outcomes at the country level. There is, however, scope to improve the rigour of the evaluation function and generally improve reporting on results. 	Satisfactory (3)
<p>6. Financial Resources Management</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + ICRC manages limited resources effectively and allocates aid according to agreed schedules. Its built up reserves allow it to pre-fund operations before donor funds have been made available. + It has strong systems for financial accountability and the ability to change the focus of project activities to ensure that they are always appropriate to the context. 	Strong (4)

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> + All ICRC's systems and processes have been designed to work in fragile contexts. = ICRC's financial management is structurally sound, well adapted to the fast-changing nature of ICRC's business and designed to work in fragile contexts. 	
<p>7. Cost and Value Consciousness</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Cost efficiency underpins ICRC's financial management and there is evidence that value for money considerations are taken into account in ICRC programming. + ICRC has a range of internal cost control and auditing measures which aim to ensure full accountability to donors and stakeholders in country. + Headquarters has direct control over local procurement and enforces very tight guidelines. Standard administration charge is 6.5%, lower than most agencies - Weak country evidence on cost control = Score of 3 reflects that ICRC is generally thought to be good at making funding go a long way and has robust procedures in place to ensure value for money, but also that it needs to build-up evidence of this practice at country level. 	<p>Satisfactory (3)</p>
<p>8. Partnership Behaviour</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + ICRC often has strong partnerships with governments, other parts of the Red Cross Movement, donors and often with other parts of the humanitarian system. They are recognised as a strong and trusted partner. - ICRC willingness to engage with humanitarian partners in country is not consistent and depends in large part on the particular ICRC delegates in country. It is sometimes criticised for not taking an active enough role in humanitarian coordination fora and for being overly protective in terms of sharing information about their activities. = Although ICRC is a strong and trusted partner with a large network, its inconsistency in engaging with partners in country reduces its score to a 3. 	<p>Satisfactory (3)</p>
<p>9. Transparency and Accountability</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + ICRC publishes comprehensive project information in its Annual Report, with a strong focus on outcomes and results. + There has been increasing openness and transparency by ICRC over the last 8 years. 	<p>Weak (2)</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - ICRC operates on a policy of confidentiality rather than transparency to deliver its mandate. Although we are fully supportive of ICRC's role, and understand this need, it unavoidably makes it less transparent as an organisation. - The degree of ICRC accountability to recipient country stakeholders is also not clear. = ICRC is stronger on accountability than transparency and on balance it merits a score of 2 overall. 	
Likelihood of Positive Change	Score (1- 4)
<p>10. Likelihood of Positive Change</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + ICRC has strong management, the Donor Support Group is effective and ICRC is a learning organisation which has demonstrated its willingness to take on board donor concerns and implement change accordingly. - Because ICRC is a private organisation, the UK does not have a role in ICRC's formal governance structures. = Overall, within the limits of ICRC mandate, the UK has a productive working relationship with ICRC and multiple channels to push for reforms and ICRC also appreciates this useful and productive relationship. 	Likely (3)

ⁱ "The ICRC: Its Mission and Work", 6.2.2009. ICRC Extranet