

SAFE

SECURITY AND SAFETY MANUAL
FOR HUMANITARIAN PERSONNEL



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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This manual was compiled by the ICRC Security and Crisis Management Support Unit, in close collaboration with the relevant departments.

Illustrations by Francis Macard.

The ICRC wishes to thank all who contributed.

PREFACE

Dear Colleagues,

As president of the ICRC, I consider the security of our staff to be one of the most important things there is. In 2019, the Assembly set up a special commission to supervise security management.

The environment in which we operate has become particularly difficult: humanitarian action has become politicized and is often threatened by criminal acts; there are those who would question the legitimacy of humanitarian access and weapon bearers are becoming more numerous and decentralized, often forming secretive networks.

The ICRC is investing in essential capacity-building work so that we can continue to meet the needs of those who suffer most wherever conflict and violence reign – in unstable areas where access is difficult, or on front lines. That includes training staff in access negotiation and in security and crisis management. It also means enhancing security tools and processes throughout the organization. These two elements also constitute essential catalysts for the impact of our humanitarian action and the added value we provide in the field.

SAFE is a valuable reference document, enabling us to better understand both the risks and the rules and resources available to us. Each of us has a role to play in ensuring our own safety and that of our colleagues. Be aware of your operational environment, make sure you know the security regulations and please do speak up if something is bothering you. By so doing you'll be contributing to our response as an organization.

I hope you'll find this manual useful, and I look forward to meeting you in the field.



Peter Maurer
ICRC President

INTRODUCTION

You're about to start work for the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), either in your own country or abroad? This manual's for you. In general, we'll use "security" when we're talking about deliberate acts, such as attacks and crime, and "safety" when we're thinking about threats that don't involve deliberate acts, such as road accidents, illness and natural disaster. There won't always be a clear distinction between the two. You'll hear your Francophone colleagues use "sécurité" to cover both "safety" and "security" and as with much French ICRC jargon, this sometimes spills over into English.

Humanitarian work with the ICRC is not just a job. The ICRC's mandate will probably have you working in environments that are unstable, complex, unpredictable and hence inherently dangerous. It's always going to be a challenge – for the ICRC and for you – to create and develop close links with local communities, so that you can build up their resilience and provide them with protection and assistance – while staying safe.

HOW THIS MANUAL WILL HELP

This manual is not going to turn you into a security expert. What it will do is give you the basic tools you'll need to do your job and reach people in need, without running unnecessary risks. Its aims are to prepare you to handle the main threats you're likely to run into and familiarize you with the ICRC's security management philosophy.

In the office, when you're moving around and when you're carrying out your field work, you'll regularly encounter situations that require you to adapt your behaviour to stay safe. So this manual focuses on what *you* can do to protect *yourself*. It also underlines how the image the ICRC projects and the way we're perceived can affect your security.

This manual aims to get you thinking about how to stay safe and healthy. It outlines the main threats you're likely to encounter, provides the tools you'll need to react in an informed, methodical and safe fashion, and contains recommendations as to how to react to immediate danger or a security incident. The 11 chapters that make up this manual are inter-related, but you can read each one separately.

WHO IS THIS MANUAL FOR?

SAFE is aimed primarily at new ICRC staff. Creating a safe(r) working environment is everyone's business, so this manual is aimed just as much at drivers, engineers, logistics specialists and nurses as it is at delegates or administrators. We've designed it to cover everyone's needs, but of course the types of threat you encounter, how vulnerable you are and the level of responsibility you carry will depend on the job you're doing. This means that some of the topics in this manual may not be relevant to you. Some will apply more to staff working in a new context, living in ICRC residences – perhaps with their families – and who therefore come under the ICRC's responsibility even outside working hours. Some readers will be working in relatively stable situations, whereas the issues this manual covers arise mainly where there's armed conflict or violence. (By the way, this manual uses “conflict and violence” as shorthand for the more formal “armed conflicts and other situations of violence”.) But some points apply anywhere, anytime: how to behave, how to analyse your working environment, how to be safe in ICRC buildings, how to protect yourself against criminals, how to prepare a field trip, how to carry out your activities and how to react to a security incident. It's up to you to know which topics directly concern you.

GUIDELINES, TO BE APPLIED WITH COMMON SENSE

The information and recommendations in this manual are general. They don't cover every situation you could possibly encounter. We've done our best to give you the most useful advice, based on ICRC field experience. This manual also draws on specialist publications and other security manuals for humanitarians. Please see the bibliography at the end.

Some situations require you to do or not do certain things, e.g. you must *never* touch a mine and you must *always* wear your seatbelt. But in most cases, you'll need to adapt your behaviour to the circumstances. Applying certain recommendations blindly, without taking account of the context, could be inappropriate or downright dangerous. So please interpret all the advice in this manual as setting out the approach you should adopt in order to resolve a problem in general. Use your common sense and judgement!

CONSULT OTHER SOURCES

The ICRC always tries to balance its operational aims with its responsibility towards its staff. The aim is to reach people affected by conflict and violence so we can help them, while preserving your physical and psychological well-being. As part of its duty of care, the ICRC is continuously developing new systems to ensure the safety of its staff, with the support of a dedicated centre of expertise. That duty of care applies to our national and international personnel at HQ and in the field, people accompanying our staff who are recognized by the ICRC, and operational partners under contract (personnel seconded to the ICRC and external partners involved in ICRC operations, including those of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement).

To work safely, you should read this manual in conjunction with other ICRC documents: The Code of Conduct, general instructions, instructions linked to your field of activity, security regulations applicable to the region where you work, etc. This manual is not prescriptive, and it doesn't replace those documents. However, it is a useful complement to training, regular briefings on your working environment and advice from your management as to what constitutes appropriate behaviour.

This manual is available to other humanitarian organizations, but it doesn't set out to tell them what to do and it doesn't promote a set of standard security regulations.

TEN RECOMMENDATIONS

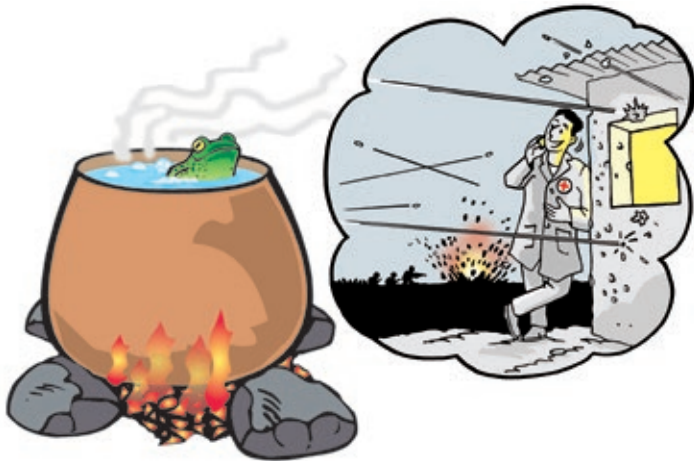
Following these ten recommendations should enable you to do your job safely:

- 1. Take an interest in the context where you work.** Not understanding your environment is like heading into unknown territory without a map: you won't be able to anticipate problems. You need to get to know the culture of the country where you work and the issues at play there. This means taking an interest in the history of the region, its traditions and its social, economic and cultural aspects. That will help you work out how to behave and recognize the red lines you mustn't cross. It will also enable you to identify the threats that exist in your region and take the necessary precautions.
- 2. Be respectful.** Don't try to impose your vision of the world on others. Never underestimate the effect on your security of the image that you project, both at work and elsewhere. An arrogant attitude, a rude comment or a breach of local morals can cause offence and misunderstandings, with disastrous consequences. If you want people to accept your presence and your work, you'll have to show them respect, by adapting your behaviour to local customs and traditions.
- 3. Listen and observe.** Do you get the impression there are fewer people in a particular street or market than usual? Has a local resident advised you to avoid a particular route? Is your colleague unhappy about crossing a particular part of the city? Can you hear shooting in the distance? Listening and observing are essential elements of security. What looks like a minor detail could be a sign of imminent danger. Paying attention to what's going on around you will help you recognize precursors of a threat, anticipate and avoid certain risks and quickly find the safest refuge in case of danger. It may take you a while to get used to observing and listening constantly, but you'll be surprised how fast it becomes a habit.
- 4. Take the initiative.** Any security management system is open to improvement and will require continuous adaptation. In the rush to get things done, it's quite possible that no-one will think to brief a staff member on everything they need in order to stay safe. Whatever your job, take the initiative, and don't hesitate to consult your boss and your colleagues regularly, and to tell them about any worries or concerns. Taking advantage of everyone's knowledge and points

of view will help you contribute to creating a safer environment around you and gradually acquire the right habits. In the same way, it's in everyone's interest that you report any weaknesses or breaches in the security system, and any security incident of which you may be a victim or a witness.

- 5. Obey the security regulations.** Has the ICRC decided that some routes are dangerous and declared them out of bounds? Is it forbidden to take pictures of military installations? Does your job require you to follow particular procedures? The ICRC has drawn up security regulations. They've been compiled in the interests of all – not to make your life difficult! Some of them apply throughout the world, such as the Code of Conduct. Others reflect local conditions and are based on a joint assessment of the risks, such as the security regulations and the procedures to follow in case of a security incident. Make sure you know them. Trust the people who wrote them. And apply them!
- 6. Be rigorous.** Different people have different perceptions of danger. Someone who's grown up in a region prone to violence and danger may be less inclined to see a situation as dangerous. Conversely, someone from a more stable region may see danger where there's none, with the risk that they take unnecessary precautions and are permanently on their guard. So it's important that you behave in accordance with the security regulations that apply to your duty station. If you have to take a rapid decision, with no time to consult your colleagues or your boss, try to weigh the pros and cons of the action you're considering, balancing the intended humanitarian effect against the risks to you, your colleagues and the organization, always respecting the principle of “do no harm”. In case of doubt, it's better to err on the side of caution rather than be a hero.
- 7. Plan and prepare carefully.** You haven't enquired about recent security-related events in the region? You haven't asked for the opinions and support of the communities you're aiming to help? No-one's bothered to check that the vehicles you're going to use are properly equipped and the radios are working? Experience has shown that mistakes like these can have serious consequences for your safety and that of your colleagues. Taking time to properly plan and prepare each field trip and each activity will greatly reduce the risk of a security incident.

- 8. Think about what you publish on social media.** Some threats are visible, others less so. In our increasingly connected world, the image you project online can affect your security. Expressing your personal opinions may offend those who don't share them. Advertising the details of your private life may tarnish the image of the organization. And any information you share online is liable to be used by others, against you or the ICRC. So before you publish anything, ask yourself whether it could cause problems later.
- 9. Use your common sense.** Every situation is different, because it occurs in a specific context. Ultimately, you're the person best placed to decide on the safest approach. When you perceive a threat, trust your judgement and common sense.
- 10. Look after yourself.** You're not taking time to eat properly? You drink water that's actually not fit to drink? You don't take enough time to rest and recuperate? Your health and your security are inseparable. You must look after your physical and mental health. And you must dare to ask for help when you need it. Finally, solidarity is the basis of all humanitarian activity and will be a valuable asset to you in your work. Your colleagues are there to support you, and they expect the same of you.



The boiling frog

It's sometimes said that if you drop a frog into boiling water, it will immediately jump out, whereas if you place it in cold water and then gradually bring it up to boiling point, it won't notice until it's too late. The frog's survival instincts only kick in when things change suddenly.

So see this as a metaphor of the way you could put yourself in danger. You must be on the alert not only for sudden shifts, but also for gradual changes in your surroundings. You must consider not just the visible, easily identifiable threats, but also those that are less apparent. Never get used to living with danger. If you do, you'll unconsciously increase your tolerance to it. And one day, you'll pay the price.

1. KNOW YOUR WORKING ENVIRONMENT

The complex and often unpredictable environments in which you will work bring many security management challenges. Understanding the threats will help you understand why security has to be one of your priorities.

This chapter will look at the main security aspects of the places where the ICRC works and the principles that guide our action. We shall then discuss the ICRC's approach to field security and how difficult but essential it is to be accepted by those with influence – and by the population – if we're to help people effectively.

1.1 A COMPLEX ENVIRONMENT

The nature of armed conflict and the context in which you'll be operating have changed considerably in recent decades, bringing unprecedented challenges for humanitarian organizations. One of those is maintaining close contact with affected communities and helping them safely.

Current trends:

- **There are more armed conflicts, and they're getting bigger.** There are currently almost 100 armed conflicts, involving 60 states and about 100 non-state armed groups. While the number of conflicts between states (international armed conflicts) has remained stable over the past 20 years, the number of internal (non-international) armed conflicts has more than doubled, from fewer than 30 to more than 70.¹ In many countries, several conflicts are underway simultaneously. Violence doesn't stop at the border either – it spills over into neighbouring countries, often destabilizing entire regions. Some conflicts go global, with the added risk of affecting the digital realm through cyber operations. These in turn could disrupt essential services and the work of humanitarian organizations.

¹ These figures are based on the ICRC's legal categorization of conflicts. They are for guidance only and don't claim to be precise statistics of reality in the field.

Community- and identity-based violence are on the increase, as are protest movements – some of them violent, others repressed violently. The world is becoming more unstable. This is causing systemic, long-lasting dysfunctioning in the countries affected, accentuating inequality and vulnerability and forcing people to move, resulting in large-scale humanitarian crises.

International armed conflict ²	Non-international armed conflict	Other situations of violence
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Conflict between two or more states - Occupation (when a territory effectively falls under the authority of enemy forces) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Conflict between government forces and non-state armed groups - Conflict between armed groups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Collective violence that has not reached the level of an armed conflict

p. 69

- **Increasingly fragmented conflicts.** The increase in the number of armed conflicts has been accompanied by an increase in the number of **weapon bearers**, both among states and in the form of non-state armed groups. More conflicts involve multiple belligerents today than in the past. Some situations may involve several dozen armed groups, many of them only loosely structured and hence more difficult to identify. Many states are intervening in internal conflicts, especially as part of coalitions and partnerships. Most of these operations are directed against jihadist groups.
- **Weapon bearers increasingly turning to crime.** The distinction between armed groups and criminal gangs is becoming increasingly blurred, and conflict-related violence often blends with that of organized crime. Such violence is also encouraged by the huge amounts of money to be made from war and by the exploitation of ethnic and religious differences for political ends. In regions where all forms of authority have been seriously weakened – be it political, traditional or social – we are seeing the emergence of groups with purely criminal intentions, answerable to no established authority and appearing to operate completely independently. Their actions make it even harder to understand the context and the power dynamics, and that affects security management for humanitarians.

2 N. Melzer, *International Humanitarian Law: A Comprehensive Introduction*, coordinated by Etienne Kuster, ICRC, Geneva, 2018: <https://shop.icrc.org/international-humanitarian-law-a-comprehensive-introduction-pdf-en>.

- **Long-distance warfare.** Some states are making increasing use of technological proxies,³ or operating via armed groups, rather than getting involved in hostilities themselves. This enables them to maintain a physical distance from the battlefield and avoid the internal cost of deploying their own troops. Increasing use of cyber warfare, remote-controlled technologies such as surveillance and attack drones and the development of autonomous weapon systems are helping to dehumanize the enemy and causing large numbers of civilian victims. This too poses a threat to humanitarians.
- **International humanitarian law still being ignored.** While the value of IHL is recognized in international forums and military doctrine, many belligerents continue to ignore its provisions to an extremely worrying degree. The increasing number of internal conflicts – many of them asymmetric, the increasing number of entities resorting to violence and developments in methods of warfare are coinciding with serious attacks on people who are not or are no longer participating in hostilities, and such attacks generally go unpunished. We're thinking here of deliberate, indiscriminate attacks on civilians; sexual violence; attacks on hospitals, health personnel and patients; torture and ill-treatment; extra-judicial and summary executions and hostage-taking. All of these are causing extreme suffering. Again, this situation poses a threat to the safety of humanitarian workers.
- **Towns and cities especially hard-hit.** Urbanization is continuing, with towns and cities now home to more than half the world's population. Conflicts in urban environments cause large numbers of civilian casualties, destroy communities and lead to mass population movements. Belligerents are using explosive weapons that have wide-area effects in densely-populated areas, with disastrous consequences for civilians. The destruction of such essential infrastructure as electricity and water systems has a domino effect on other services. Conflict creates needs that are all the more acute because so many public services are degraded or absent. Experience shows that people in towns and cities are more dependent on basic services than those living in rural areas. This means that they're even more vulnerable when those services stop functioning.

3 A. Krieg and J-M. Rickli, "Surrogate warfare: The art of war in the 21st century?", *Defence Studies*, Vol. 18, No. 2, January 2018, pp. 113–130.

- **Long-running conflicts.** In most places where conflict occurs, the authorities are unable to provide basic services and infrastructure is seriously degraded, to the point that it can no longer meet people's needs: public order, health, education, food security, water, electricity ... every sector is affected. These conditions can easily lead to a general collapse of society. They make people more vulnerable, contribute to general instability and generate repeated cycles of violence. The boundaries between periods of peace and of war are becoming increasingly blurred. Conflicts are becoming longer, and consist of periods of violence alternating with episodes of fragile peace.
- **The effects of climate change.** Many communities affected by violence are also affected by natural disasters. They're feeling the full force of environmental damage and global heating: pollution, prolonged droughts, torrential rain, floods, cyclones and other disasters. All of these undermine their environment. While these extreme phenomena are not new, their frequency and the way they have built up over recent decades is becoming a major problem in humanitarian terms, especially as regards health and nutrition. They deplete the resources available, exacerbate vulnerability, lead to displacement and accentuate pre-existing violence. Of the 20 countries most vulnerable to the effects of climate change, 13 are also experiencing conflict.⁴
- **Perception and instrumentalization of humanitarian agencies.** The way people see humanitarian agencies has changed considerably. Some are accused – rightly or wrongly – of influencing conflicts, or of serving the interests of their countries. Access for humanitarian workers in the field is also contested by some non-state entities, which question or even reject the very principle of humanitarian action. Some states interpret their sovereignty in absolute terms, claiming that sovereignty means control over humanitarian aid and taking issue with the neutral and independent approach to the giving of aid that many organizations demand – including the ICRC. Some political entities are tending to instrumentalize humanitarian organizations and integrate them into their political and military strategies. Another dubious practice is the imposition of political or social preconditions on the delivery of aid, which inevitably marginalizes certain communities.

⁴ Notre Dame Global Adaptation Initiative, *ND-GAIN Country Index*, University of Notre Dame: <https://gain.nd.edu/our-work/country-index>.

From the above, it is clear that conflict is forever changing. This results in new challenges in terms of operations and security, requiring humanitarian organizations – including the ICRC – to modify their ways of working and their approach to security. We will never be able to say that we have secured once and for all the right to protect people affected by conflict and violence. New technologies in the fields of information, data management and satellite observation will also change both the nature of conflict and people’s perceptions and expectations regarding humanitarians.

The complex and often unpredictable environments in which you will work mean that you’ll never be totally safe. As a humanitarian professional, you must therefore be cautious and be prepared to challenge yourself.

1.2 ARE THE THREATS TO HUMANITARIANS INCREASING?

But does the transformation of our operational environment really mean that the humanitarian profession has become more dangerous and that attacks targeting humanitarian workers have become more frequent? The concerns underlying such questions are justified, but the analyses available reveal a more nuanced situation and don’t provide a clear “yes” or “no”. In fact, the number of humanitarians killed, wounded or kidnapped doesn’t appear to have increased significantly world-wide in the last 15 years. Furthermore, the majority of serious incidents have taken place in a limited number of contexts.⁵

It’s sometimes difficult to put figures on the current situation, because many international organizations have pulled out of regions they consider too dangerous, or else have adopted other ways of working, such as delegating their operations to other entities in the field or operating exclusively with armed escorts. On the other hand, there are many more organizations today than there used to be, which means that more people are exposed to danger.⁶ Improved collection of security incident information by humanitarian organizations may also be influencing the statistics.

5 A. Stoddard et al., *Aid Worker Security Report: Figures at a Glance 2020*, Humanitarian Outcomes, 2020: <https://www.humanitarianoutcomes.org/publications/AWSDfigures2020>.

6 According to *The State of the Humanitarian System* (ALNAP, 2018), there were approximately 569,700 humanitarians in the field in 2017, compared with approximately 450,000 in 2013.

But whatever the statistics may say, humanitarian organizations are facing a worrying lack of security, especially in certain theatres of operations. The blending of criminal gangs and armed groups, and the lack of respect for IHL shown by both state and non-state actors, are resulting in deliberate attacks on humanitarians. There is nothing new about this, but it does seem to be on the increase in certain countries.

1.2.1 WHAT ABOUT THE ICRC?

Being present in the field and maintaining proximity to parties to conflict – and to people in need – form the core of the ICRC's operational identity. This means we often work where other organizations have pulled out, or were never present in the first place. ICRC personnel are therefore more exposed than those of other organizations. We're continually increasing the number of personnel in the field to meet the needs, which also increases the statistical probability of security incidents.

Over the last 25 years, a number of ICRC employees have been killed in attacks targeting the organization, or following kidnappings. Every time this happens, it raises some painful questions about what we could have done to prevent it. It also raises the question of how we adapt the way we manage security to new threats, with the aim of preventing such incidents.

Global trends give no more than a very general impression of the reality. We have to analyse every incident separately, to understand whether it could have been prevented and what can be done to make sure it doesn't happen again. Every security incident is one too many. For the ICRC, improving staff safety is a top priority. Under our duty of care, we do all we can to enable you to work safely.

1.3 THE ICRC AND THE MOVEMENT

1.3.1 THE INTERNATIONAL RED CROSS AND RED CRESCENT MOVEMENT



ICRC

The ICRC is one of the components of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement (hereafter “the Movement”), which also comprises the 189 National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (“the National Societies”) and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (“the International Federation”). The ICRC, the International Federation and the National Societies are independent entities. Each has its own statutes, and no component has authority over the others.



The National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies help their respective governments carry out humanitarian activities. They provide a wide range of services, from emergency response to health and social services. In time of war, the National Societies help the civilian population and, if necessary, support military medical services. One of their great strengths is that they have an extensive network of volunteers. These volunteers are drawn from their communities and are hence part of them. Under the Principles of the Movement, there can only be one National Red Cross or Red Crescent Society in any given country. It must be open to all and must work throughout the country.

The ICRC works closely with the National Societies; they are our key partners. We benefit from their professional skills, their deep understanding of the local context and culture and their knowledge of local languages. In the field, the ICRC carries out many programmes (such as restoring family links) in conjunction with or via the host National Society. National Society volunteers also participate in some of our programmes, especially in the area of assistance.



IFRC

The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies is the umbrella organization of the National Societies. Its role is to facilitate and enhance their humanitarian response. In particular, it helps them prepare for and react to disasters and health emergencies. The ICRC is another of the ICRC’s key partners, especially when a natural disaster occurs in parallel with a conflict.



1.3.2 THE HUMANITARIAN PRINCIPLES

The four principles that guide the ICRC's work

The Movement has seven Fundamental Principles (humanity, impartiality, neutrality, independence, voluntary service, unity and universality). Of these, the first four guide the work of the ICRC. The last three – voluntary service, unity and universality – apply more to the other Movement components, including the National Societies.

Humanity and **impartiality** are essentially ethical principles. They form the philosophical heart of humanitarian action. **Humanity** is related to relieving suffering, saving life and preserving dignity. **Impartiality** encompasses the notions of non-discrimination and proportionality. Discrimination is permitted only on the basis of an objective analysis of the urgency and severity of need. **Neutrality** and **independence** are strategies, or means to achieving the first two principles. They are ways of acting that enhance both access to people in need and political acceptance of humanitarian action.

Theoretically, these four principles of humanitarian action are pretty easy to understand. The principles themselves are rarely disputed, even in terms of cultural universalism. In practice, they pose a number of problems and dilemmas.

Humanity seems obvious but is hard to define. Fundamentally, humanity addresses the universality of human suffering. It also underpins the central idea of humanitarian law, which is to limit the use of violence and not inflict unnecessary suffering. Humanity is not just a matter of protecting people's physical well-being, but also of preserving their dignity and listening to their hopes and dreams. Paradoxically, humanitarian aid can dehumanize the very people it is aiming to help. Recognizing our common humanity definitely does not mean treating people as a mass, ignoring their culture and identity and seeing only their needs. To do so would be to deny their humanity.

Humanity is one of the core values of humanitarian action. Observing the principle of humanity means cultivating proximity, dialogue and compassion. This allows us to go beyond the technical, and place the individual at the centre of our work.

The idea of **impartiality** is often the most difficult to put into practice. When groups clash, impartiality runs up against the notion of subjective justice. "Why help our enemies, when they've done us so much harm?" The idea that all victims are equal is easy enough to accept in moral terms, but there's a tension between that and the reality of conflict, with its emotions, memories of past crimes and hostility between the different sides. It's always difficult to justify "asymmetric" aid, i.e. helping one group rather than another, even when it's based on a thorough analysis of need. The point is, impartiality doesn't mean providing exactly the same humanitarian response to both sides. Impartial action is the main source of friction and incomprehension in the field. While those who write the rules believe that the only legitimate aim of war is to destroy military objectives and capture territory, in practice it often has a punitive element, especially during internal conflicts.

Respecting the principle of impartiality, and taking time to explain it, with concrete examples, can avoid dangerous misunderstandings.

The principle of **neutrality**, which effectively means adopting an apolitical approach, clashes with the interpretation of humanitarian action by external entities and is difficult to communicate. The positions that the ICRC adopts, the nature of our action and the words we use are all inspired by a wish to maintain an equal distance from all sides. There is always a risk that parties to a conflict will politicize and distort

Taking one side or another – or giving the impression that you're doing so – may cause you to be rejected and expose you to major security problems.

humanitarian action. When they do, this can have very negative effects in the field, especially as regards security. Humanitarian action is never conducted in a political vacuum; it's subject to many kinds of pressure and many attempts to subvert or imitate it.

Independence gives humanitarian action a degree of credibility. The ICRC tries never to allow its actions to be dictated by political or financial interests, be they those of states, of donors or of pressure groups. In the field, independence includes evaluating needs without pressure or interference.

If you give the impression that you're defending the interests of a particular group or state, rather than aiming to serve the population, you may be putting yourself in danger.

A daily challenge

Applying these principles has a cost: it requires negotiations and efforts which take time, and which run counter to the idea of pure efficiency. It would be easier and more "efficient", in the usual sense of the word, to only work in government-controlled areas or areas where it's easy to reach those in need. But that would run contrary to the ICRC's principles, mandate and approach, which must always be to get alongside all affected communities so as to be able to help them. This search for proximity – and hence for access – is a challenge not only logistically but also, in many cases, in terms of security.

Furthermore, humanitarians are subject to ever-increasing pressure. Some states attempt to limit the freedom of humanitarians to act, and try to control their work. They may do this by imposing highly restrictive administrative measures, or through anti-terror legislation. Such measures sometimes call into question the very notion of independent and impartial humanitarian action, such as when they specify that certain populations in need are not allowed to receive assistance because they are seen as supporting a terrorist movement, or that certain types of action are to be given priority over others. By remaining faithful to the principle of making no distinction between the people we help on the basis of nationality, race, religion, social status or political affiliation, the ICRC inevitably exposes itself to all sorts of dissatisfaction, which we have to manage every day, at every level of the organization. If we don't, we're likely to suffer the consequences in terms of security.

When principles are maltreated

Nowadays, most humanitarian agencies – including those that form part of the UN system – would claim to follow these principles. Interpretations vary, however, as do the ways in which organizations apply the principles in practice. For certain organizations, such principles are more of a political fig-leaf than a guide. Applying and talking about the principles in such different ways tends to discredit the whole humanitarian sector. And indeed, it's difficult to distinguish those organizations that are genuinely trying to align their actions with these principles from those for whom they are little more than rhetoric.

It would therefore be a mistake to believe that applying the principles of humanitarian action is going to make you accepted and keep you safe, especially given that some entities are opposed to the very idea of humanitarian action.

1.3.3 THE EMBLEMS

The red cross and red crescent emblems are among the most widely recognized and respected symbols in the world. While they primarily represent the protection granted to the medical services of the armed forces, they're also the symbols of the neutral, impartial and humanitarian action of the components of the Movement.

Article 44.3 of the First Geneva Convention gives the ICRC and the International Federation the right to use the emblem under all circumstances, which gives us an important degree of flexibility; the National Societies can only use the emblems indicatively, or protectively when they are carrying out medical activities in support of the armed forces during armed conflict.

Using the emblems protectively or indicatively

Using the emblem for protection requires a greater degree of visibility than does indicative use. Protective use of the emblem is, in principle, limited to armed conflict and specific activities – medical in particular. Any deliberate attack on a person, object or building displaying the protective emblem constitutes a war crime under international law. As there may also be a need for visibility under other circumstances, such as when large numbers of people are gathered, it's considered acceptable to use a large emblem to enhance visibility.

At other times, however, the emblem must be small, and is used purely for **indicative** purposes. It identifies a person or an object as belonging to one of the components of the Movement. Under such circumstances, the *logo* of the organization must be used, and that logo must include the name of the National Society, of the ICRC or of the Federation.

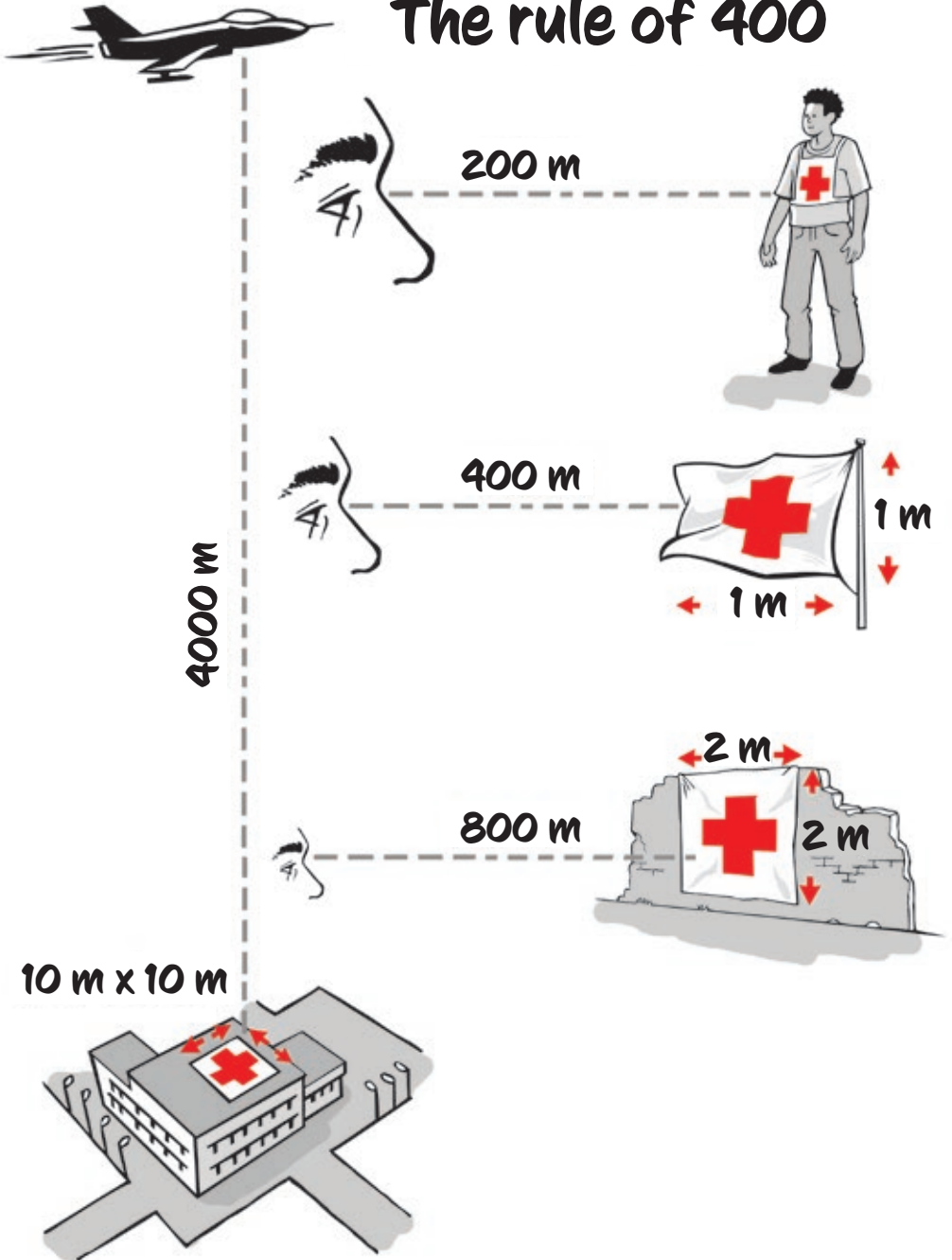
Important: Using the emblem in its protective role is no guarantee of protection. The attitudes and behaviour of all concerned will affect – for better or for worse – the way the ICRC is seen by the population and the parties to the conflict, and the credibility and legitimacy of the emblem itself.

The rule of 400

Distance and visibility:

- An emblem measuring 1 m x 1 m is visible at 400 m, a 2 m x 2 m emblem is visible at 800 m, etc.
- A tabard displaying the emblem is visible at up to about 200 m.
- The emblems on your vehicle are visible at up to about 400 m.
- For an aircraft at an altitude of 4,000 m to be able to see an emblem on a roof, under good conditions, the emblem needs to measure at least 10 m x 10 m. The Swiss army established these figures during tests they carried out at the request of the ICRC in August 2000.

The rule of 400



1.3.4 WHY IS CONFIDENTIALITY SO IMPORTANT?



Confidentiality is in our DNA. And it's enshrined in Doctrine 58. It's an essential tool for getting our job done and it helps preserve your safety, that of your colleagues and that of everyone you come into contact with. Confidentiality stems from the principles of neutrality and independence. It means protecting the information in your possession.

Confidentiality is a key that opens doors that would otherwise remain closed. It will allow you to talk to weapon bearers who probably wouldn't want to discuss things like alleged breaches of IHL and other humanitarian issues if they thought that what they said could be used against them, fall into enemy hands, become public or be used in legal proceedings. People might well refuse to give you information essential to your security if they aren't certain that what they say will remain confidential.

In the absence of confidentiality, you simply won't be able to go to some places. Only if people trust you will you be able to safely reach populations where there's conflict or violence, or visit prisoners. Confidentiality helps ensure that colleagues who are nationals of the country where they operate don't suffer reprisals because of their humanitarian work. It also protects the people the ICRC seeks to help.

The ICRC enjoys certain **privileges and immunities**, which protect the confidential information in our possession. The exact legal protection in this area varies from one country to another.

Duty of discretion

Failure to maintain confidentiality can put people in danger and form a major obstacle to cooperation between you and the entities you encounter in the field. The duty of discretion is one of *your* duties!

What is the “duty of discretion”?

The duty of discretion is an obligation similar to professional secrecy. Chapter IV of the Code of Conduct goes into more detail. It means that you must keep all information you obtain in the course of your work confidential, not only while you’re under contract to the ICRC, but also afterwards. You’re not allowed to give evidence as part of legal proceedings regarding anything you’ve come to know as part of your work, without obtaining the explicit authorization of the ICRC in advance.

It’s not always easy to distinguish between what is confidential and what isn’t. For instance, your opinion on the quality of dialogue with the authorities, your personal observations regarding conditions of detention in a prison, the location of combatants, your telephone conversations with military commanders or the contents of your discussions with the various entities are all information which, if you were to divulge it, could cause major problems. On the other hand, there’s no problem with talking about the difficulties the population is facing or the number of people you’ve helped. Indeed, it may be absolutely essential that you explain what you’re doing, to raise your profile.

The degree of confidentiality of the information in your possession – verbal information, documents, messages, chats, photos, videos, recordings, personal data, etc. – how to handle

*In case of doubt,
assume that information
is confidential.*

it and the security measures applicable are covered by detailed instructions, which your management will be able to tell you about. The ICRC has four levels of security classification: *Strictly Confidential*, *Confidential*, *Internal* and *Public*.

1.4 ICRC SECURITY MANAGEMENT

The ICRC's approach to security in the field is based on three principles:

1. Security management is inextricably linked to the conduct of operations. It is therefore decentralized to a point as close to operations as possible.
2. The ICRC tries to get its presence and its actions accepted by those who can influence the course of a conflict or violence, and does not try to impose them.
3. The ICRC always tries to balance its operational aims with its responsibility to its personnel, but accepts that humanitarian action inevitably involves an element of inherent residual risk.

See ICRC Doctrine 16 (September 2014).

Minimum security requirements

All ICRC offices in the field must draw up a set of *minimum security requirements*, regardless of the specific nature of the context. These are a set of rules such as procedures for updating security regulations, field trip procedures, the requirement to report all security incidents, etc. In addition to these minimum requirements, there may well be other rules, depending on local threats. For instance, ICRC buildings in earthquake zones must comply with earthquake regulations.

1.4.1 ACTIVITIES AND SECURITY – TWO SIDES OF THE SAME COIN

The ICRC makes no distinction between conduct of operations and security management. Why? Because without proper security management we can't reach people in need and help them. Field security decisions are therefore taken by those most closely involved in a particular operation. Security isn't just a matter for managers and security experts; p. 42 it's everybody's **responsibility**, no matter what their position in the organization.

Creating the safest possible working environment is everybody's responsibility, no matter what their position in the organization.

You can call on your management for support, but you can also consult colleagues with specific security responsibilities. If need be, you can

involve security experts to help you resolve specific problems. For instance, before entering a town that has undergone heavy bombing or shelling, you'll need to consult a weapons specialist on how to deal with the threat from mines, unexploded ordnance, etc. Please see Section 12.3 for details of the main support mechanisms available to you.

1.4.2 PREVENTION IS BETTER THAN CURE

The ICRC approach is based primarily on prevention. The aims are as follows:

- **Reduce risk.** (a) Take precautions that will enhance respect for the ICRC (following the Code of Conduct, obtaining security guarantees from parties to a conflict, etc.). (b) Take practical measures (wear seatbelts, equip buildings and vehicles with first-aid kits, have multiple means of communication available, etc.).
- **Avoid exposure to certain risks.** Avoid certain routes by declaring certain areas out of bounds, use cash-transfer systems to avoid carrying large amounts of cash in the field, relocate or evacuate certain staff if there's a risk of the situation deteriorating significantly, etc.
- **Mitigate the consequences of security incidents.** Set up medical evacuation procedures, create a medical/psychological support system for staff, etc.

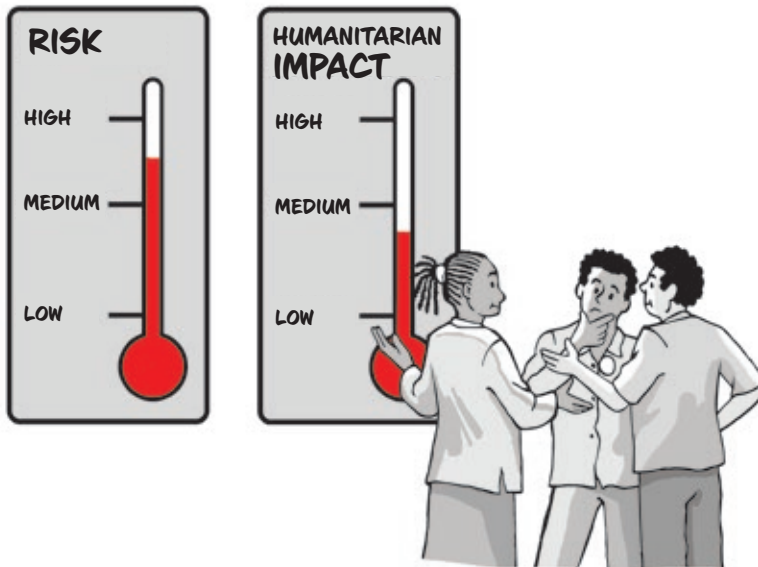
Contingency plans

Like most humanitarian organizations, the ICRC prepares for the unexpected by drawing up contingency plans. This planning tool, which will be different in every context, allows us to prepare for a variety of exceptional situations – such as a significant deterioration in the security situation or a major natural disaster – that would affect the normal response mechanisms of the ICRC or other agencies. A contingency plan lays down procedures to follow depending on the urgency of the situation, along with the action to take in response to it.

1.4.3 BALANCING RISK AND HUMANITARIAN EFFECT

Danger is a permanent factor in the ICRC's operational policy, because we work in areas where there is conflict and instability. The threats we identify will partly determine what we do in a particular region – and how. Our approach is to do all we can to minimize risk, while being aware that there is no such thing as zero risk. There will always be an incompressible residual risk, which all staff have to accept.

Before undertaking a specific action, always compare the risk it involves with its expected benefit in humanitarian terms.



The aim is always to balance the risk against the expected humanitarian benefit, in both qualitative and quantitative terms. In other words, a given risk is only acceptable if it's justified by the expected benefit of the action concerned. So you must always be asking yourself "Is the risk that I'm intending to take justified by what I hope to achieve?" If the answer is "No", then you should probably cancel, postpone or suspend your activity. You should re-assess the situation as often as necessary. Never take risks without assessing them first, and never try to separate warring parties. In order for you to work effectively, fighting must be suspended.⁷

1.4.4 SPECIFIC MEASURES

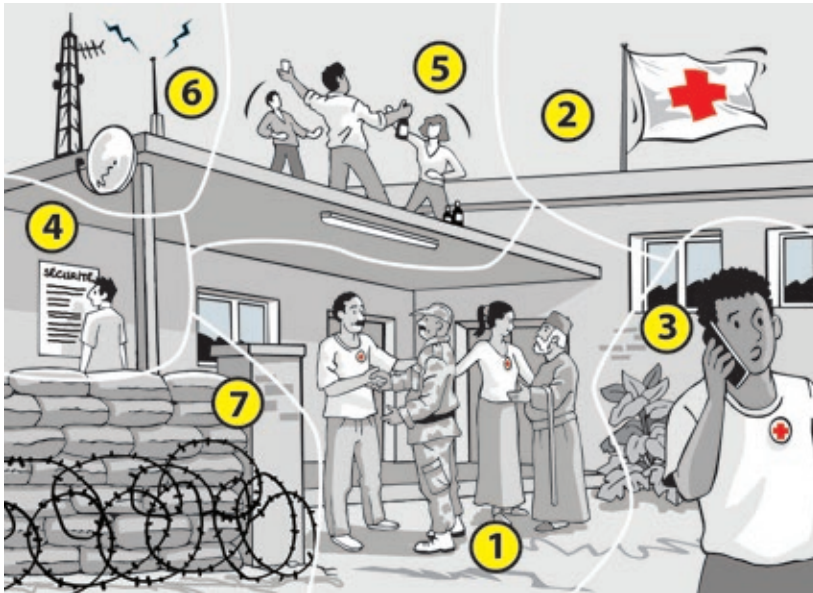
If the situation is particularly dangerous, the ICRC may take specific measures to protect staff. For instance, it may decide on the basis of a **risk assessment** not to send a particular member of staff to an area where their profile (nationality, ethnicity, sexual orientation, etc.) could put them at greater risk than other colleagues (see p. 83). The ICRC may also repatriate the families of expatriates, relocate or evacuate certain staff, or delegate implementation of certain activities exclusively to national staff or a partner organization, if it believes they are less in danger. This approach, known as "remote management", allows the ICRC to continue to operate in environments that are inaccessible to some or all of its personnel. If, despite all the measures taken, the risk remains too high in comparison with the expected humanitarian benefit, the ICRC may decide to suspend its work in certain regions.

p. 80

7 P. Brugger, "ICRC operational security: staff safety in armed conflict and internal violence", *International Review of the Red Cross*, No. 874, June 2009, pp. 431-445: <https://international-review.icrc.org/articles/icrc-operational-security-staff-safety-armed-conflict-and-internal-violence>.

1.4.5 THE SEVEN PILLARS OF SECURITY

Field security management is based on seven closely-related “pillars”.



1. Acceptance 2. Identification 3. Information 4. Security regulations
5. Personality 6. Telecommunications 7. Protective measures

The “Seven Pillars of Security” have also been adopted by the other components of the Movement.

1. Acceptance

The ICRC’s presence and our ability to operate are largely based on acceptance, which means working with the consent of authorities, populations, armed groups and all sides, rather than imposing ourselves. To avoid the risks associated with misunderstandings or rejection, we aim to get ourselves accepted by the parties to a conflict. That means trying to talk to every entity that controls access to an area, and those who influence them. The aim is to obtain their support and to ensure that as many of them as possible accept what we’re doing (or trying to do).

We may supplement this by physical protection or dissuasion (e.g. armed escorts) but such measures are the exception, because they present a problem in terms of image.



Acceptance depends on attitude

Acceptance isn't just a matter of talking to people so we can do our work safely. Being accepted means gaining trust through our **behaviour**. The ICRC has to project a positive image of itself and its work.

p. 111

This involves:

- respecting local customs and traditions
- respecting religious and social taboos
- cultivating respectful, courteous relations not only with the authorities, communities and their representatives, but also with our neighbours explaining the reasons for each of our activities.

And it's just as important that we make the effort to understand how the population and the authorities see the ICRC.

The political, military and social environments may harbour threats, but they can also be a source of support as regards security. We need to take advantage of this. For instance, your neighbours may warn you of threats to your safety, or that soldier at the check point you say hello to every morning may tell you about an imminent problem. Having an extensive network of contacts and support can make a big difference not only when it comes to carrying out your

activities, but also if the situation begins to deteriorate. In principle, the ICRC doesn't protect itself; it's protected by those who support it or understand the value of what it does. Relationships built up over the years become a solid security network.

You have no means of forcing people to let you do your job. Your most effective tools for earning the trust of influencers and communities are your credibility, your ability to explain who you are and what you're doing, and the way you negotiate and generally behave, day by day.

Is this an infallible strategy?

We have to ensure that all who can influence the course of the conflict accept the ICRC. However, direct access to some individuals or groups will be difficult or impossible, despite our best efforts. Furthermore, it can be difficult to work out whether we're accepted, tolerated or rejected, because the number of groups is increasing, many of them are just criminal gangs and many have international influence. And humanitarian action is always going to be a source of tension – the aid we give isn't what people wanted, they think we're favouring the other side, they're suspicious about our intentions, etc. All perfectly natural reactions and we just have to live with them, especially in countries at war.

Getting the ICRC and its operations accepted requires continuous effort from all of us, and we should never imagine the job's done.

The aim is acceptance, but in real-life field situations the lines between acceptance, tolerance and rejection by parties to a conflict are often blurred. And then there are those situations where it just isn't possible to reconcile the interests of the parties and those of the ICRC, as we have learned from some of the serious security incidents of recent years. In other words, we may be attacked not in error, or because of a misunderstanding regarding the way we work, but because someone categorically rejects our humanitarian action.

So please don't ever imagine that acceptance is some kind of magic power. You must be aware that it has limits, otherwise you could run into drastic security problems.

What do politicians and armed groups mean by “acceptance”?

Some entities – especially armed groups – have developed strategies aimed at winning the “hearts and minds” of a population during a military occupation, or a military operation to put down an insurrection. At first sight, their actions may appear similar to the “acceptance” strategies of humanitarian organizations. In fact, they’re very different. “Winning hearts and minds” is merely a tactic, intended to protect a military force or legitimize stabilization measures. It has nothing in common with a strategy that has the purely humanitarian aim of accessing communities affected by conflict or violence in order to help them.

2. Identification

The ICRC endeavours to identify itself unambiguously and to distinguish itself from other organizations – including other Movement components – by using its own **logo**. We use it in most operational contexts to identify ourselves,

It can be difficult for an outsider to distinguish one humanitarian organization from another. Explaining what you do in concrete terms can prevent confusion and can show how we differ from other organizations.

our means of transport and our buildings. To prevent unintentional attacks by a party to a conflict, we may for instance display the logo or one of the emblems on the roof of a building we’re using. We also send our GPS coordinates to the parties, so they can take the necessary precautions. If there’s a need for additional visibility, we fly an ICRC flag on our vehicles and staff wear tabards bearing the logo. We

can take other measures if necessary, such as notifying our movements to the entities concerned and publicizing the ICRC and our work.

Sometimes, however, discretion is the best policy. We may decide to make ourselves less visible (e.g. to not display a red cross, or to use unmarked vehicles) if local conditions and the security situation so require. This may be the case if crime is a major problem or if a red cross or crescent disturbs cultural/religious sensitivities and is likely to provoke a violent reaction.

3. Information

To improve our understanding of the context, we must seek out reliable information regarding changes in the operational context and pass them on to our colleagues (changes in the political situation at the local, national or international level; potential reactions to diplomatic negotiations; changes in the military situation; tension between communities, etc.). This makes

it possible to identify threats, together with factors that could hint at a deterioration in security conditions. Achieving this requires the free flow of information at all levels, between all concerned, including between the field and Geneva.

To help keep everyone safe, we should be continuously collecting security information and passing it on to our colleagues, while respecting the notions of discretion and confidentiality as the situation requires.

4. Security regulations

In addition to the general security directives, each ICRC office will have its own rules concerning security procedures and behaviour, including what to do in case of an incident. These regulations reflect the specific situation and threats in a given context and are based on a collective **analysis** of the context. They are confidential and are updated as necessary.

p. 71

Security regulations are compiled in the interests of all – not to make your life difficult!

It's the responsibility of the person in charge of a given office to update the regulations when required, and to make sure everyone obeys them. Every member of staff is required to know and obey them. If they don't, they are liable to

administrative sanctions. Furthermore, staff from a region other than that to which they are assigned must also obey these rules, even when they are off duty.

5. Personal conduct

The security of the group depends on the attitude and reactions of every member. Security is closely linked to the personalities and resilience of individual staff. Soft skills (knowing how to relate to people and the personal qualities a person possesses) are just as important as know-how. It's important to

Looking after yourself and others helps create a good working atmosphere and team spirit. Both are essential if we are to meet the challenges of humanitarian action.

have a well-developed sense of responsibility towards oneself and others, to listen, to show solidarity and be willing to help. These are all essential characteristics for any humanitarian worker, and maintaining a healthy lifestyle, **managing stress** and knowing one's limits will help everyone.

p. 235

6. Communication

To stay safe, you must have multiple, reliable and efficient means of **communication** available, and you must know how to use them. you'll need

p. 256

You must know the advantages and limitations of all available means of communication, both so that you can communicate under all conditions and to protect confidential information.

reliable communications for such things as notifying the authorities, exchanging information on road conditions, telling people where you are, reporting a deterioration in the situation, reporting a problem or obtaining advice from a medical specialist in case of a security incident.

7. Protection

In this context, “protection” means physical measures intended to enhance your security and that of the ICRC’s buildings, infrastructure and operations. The status of the ICRC most definitely does not protect us against crime or indiscriminate attack.

Some protective measures are obligatory regardless of the context, such as fire alarms or the use of adhesive plastic film on the inside of windows, to reduce glass splinters in the event of an explosion. Others depend on the threats in a given region. Measures to prevent intrusion at sites we use may include walls, barbed wire, bars on windows and doors, reinforced doors, etc. If necessary, we may use guards, or install movement detectors and alarms. In certain areas, the security situation may require us to equip our buildings with **safe areas** to use in case of artillery fire or aerial bombardment, or perhaps to build blast walls using sandbags.

p. 209

But you must remember that no physical protection measures can fully guarantee your safety. Furthermore, excessive or superfluous security measures might detract from our efforts to promote an image of an open, transparent organization. What are they trying to hide? Do they have lots of valuables? The more we build bunkers around ourselves, the more we distance ourselves from the people and communities for whom we work.

No physical protection measures can fully guarantee your safety.

1.4.6 ARMED PERSONNEL, ARMoured VEHICLES AND PERSONAL PASSIVE PROTECTION EQUIPMENT

Armed personnel

Humanitarian organizations sometimes use armed personnel, either to escort their convoys or to guard their infrastructure (offices, warehouses, residences, etc.). They may use the services of private security companies, members of the armed forces or armed groups. A peacekeeping force may escort them as they move about the field. Using armed personnel raises a number of questions regarding the image it projects and the risks involved.

- The image projected may be a source of confusion, as it can be difficult for belligerents and the general public to distinguish combatants from non-combatants. Furthermore, private companies also recruit ex-combatants and former members of the security or police forces.
- A humanitarian convoy accompanied by armed personnel may be confused with a party to the conflict, and be attacked deliberately.
- Armed personnel owe their loyalty primarily to their employer, and not to the organization they're supposed to be protecting. They're the ones who'll decide whether to use force, regardless of any instructions the organization may have issued.

p. 208 In principle, personnel **guarding** ICRC offices and residence are not armed. We also avoid operating under the protection of armed personnel. Our view is that while armed personnel could facilitate the passage of a convoy in the short term, there is the medium-term risk of harming our image, reducing acceptance of the ICRC and undermining the principles on which our action is based, especially those of neutrality and independence. Using an armed escort could give a false sense of security and could also pose a risk in itself, for the reasons mentioned above. It's also harmful to the image of humanitarian agencies as a whole, who are often lumped together in the eyes of outsiders.

However, if the threat is so acute that there is no other way of meeting the urgent needs of a large number of people, the ICRC may use armed personnel to protect its convoys or buildings. This requires prior authorization from the highest levels of the organization.



Armoured vehicles

Armoured vehicles give protection against certain weapons, but not all. They can give you some protection against small-arms fire, blast, shrapnel, anti-personnel mines and improvised explosive devices. However, they don't give sufficient protection against larger-calibre bullets, missiles, artillery, mortar fire or blast and fragments from anti-tank mines or bombs, unless they've been specifically designed to resist such weapons. The heavier a vehicle is, the more protection it affords. But heavier vehicles are less manoeuvrable. Their considerable weight makes armoured vehicles difficult to drive and requires proper training. An untrained person driving an armoured vehicle is more likely to have an accident. Furthermore, its windows can't be opened fully – if at all. This may force the occupants to get out of the vehicle, e.g. at a checkpoint, exposing them to additional danger. An armoured vehicle tends to isolate its occupants from their environment, making them less sensitive to it and distancing them from the population. Finally, armoured vehicles are high-value items, making them very attractive to criminals.

For all these reasons, the sense of security that such vehicles give is often a false one. The ICRC therefore only uses armoured vehicles under exceptional circumstances. As for armed personnel, use of armoured vehicles requires prior authorization from the highest levels of the organization.

Personal protective equipment

For the same reasons, the ICRC doesn't generally use personal protective equipment such as helmets and bullet-proof jackets. If fighting is heavy, it's better to postpone an operation until things calm down. In extreme cases, it may be necessary to temporarily avoid an area altogether. Here again, it's a matter of balancing the expected humanitarian impact against the risk you're proposing to take in attempting to help people in need.

1.4.7 THE DIFFERENT ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Managing and reducing security risks is the responsibility of everyone, at all levels, from senior management to field staff. However, the exact roles and responsibilities as regards security differ according to the type of job you're doing, and at what level.

p. 248 For instance, the responsibilities of a manager or **field team leader** are not the same as those of the people they're supervising. They can delegate certain security-related tasks to others, but they remain responsible for ensuring that those staff carry them out correctly. In other words, managers and team leaders are responsible for supervising, monitoring and verifying the execution of the tasks they have delegated, and must ensure that their subordinates can take informed decisions regarding the risks they face, e.g. by updating them on the security situation as often as necessary. They must also follow-up on security issues and pass on any security-related problems to their management.

Who do I talk to about security?

p. 363 At the ICRC, your management are your first point of contact regarding security. In addition, various mechanisms are available through which you can report any problems in this area, and from which you can obtain the support you need to do your job safely.

1.4.8 SECURITY: EVERYONE'S BUSINESS

If just one member of a group is unaware of the importance of security, the whole group risks paying the price. Managing your security helps not just you and your colleagues, but also the ICRC's operations. It's not just a duty, it's a state of mind. You must make security a priority, and part of your planning.

Whatever your job, it's your duty to contribute to contextual analysis, risk assessment and the implementation of risk-reduction measures. Get informed, and report security problems and incidents to your management, so the appropriate measures can be taken. If no-one is holding regular security briefings, demand that they take place, so you can take decisions on the basis of complete information. It's the ICRC's duty to brief you as thoroughly as it can on the security situation in the area where you're working. The organization is required to brief you honestly about the threats you face, so you can act accordingly. How often security briefings should take place depends on the intensity of the context.

To be able to think ahead, and react appropriately to threats, you need to take the initiative as regards training. Make sure you take up any training the ICRC offers that would be relevant to your job. Take advantage of your colleagues' and partners' experience, discuss security issues and talk to your management about any concerns you may have.

It's everybody's duty to help build a safer environment for all. You are responsible for what you do, on and off duty.

There's no such thing as "zero risk", but experience has shown that you can reduce it to an acceptable level. You can reduce your vulnerability considerably, by the way you live out the ICRC's values, by the way you behave and quite simply by applying the Code of Conduct.

1.5 THE LEGAL FRAMEWORK

The nature of your work means you'll face various threats, especially if you're operating in a particularly dangerous area or conducting sensitive activities such as talking to armed groups labelled as "terrorists". These threats are an unavoidable part of your job.

They include:

- threats to your freedom and your physical or mental well-being (e.g. military or criminal attacks, arrest or detention, ill-treatment)
- financial risks (e.g. fines or civil financial obligations)
- professional problems (e.g. being excluded from a profession)
- administrative problems (e.g. being refused a visa or having your citizenship withdrawn).

There are certain legal provisions that reduce these risks and give you some protection. The next section gives a brief overview of the most important areas of the law in this respect.

1.5.1 INTERNATIONAL HUMANITARIAN LAW

International humanitarian law (IHL) is a set of rules intended to prevent or reduce suffering during armed conflict. It's sometimes called the law of armed conflict (LoAC) or the law of war. The main IHL treaties are the Geneva Conventions of 1949 and their additional Protocols. IHL lies at the heart of the ICRC's mandate. It limits the means and methods of warfare and stipulates that people who aren't participating directly in hostilities (or who are no longer doing so, such as wounded combatants or prisoners) must be protected, and treated humanely. IHL applies to armed conflicts, both international and non-international. It is binding on states and on non-state armed groups.

Its main provisions include:

- rules governing the conduct of hostilities, aimed at preventing or minimizing civilian deaths and damage to civilian property
- the obligation to respect and protect humanitarian personnel and goods,⁸ and to authorize and facilitate the passage of humanitarian aid for civilians in need
- the obligation to respect and protect medical personnel, installations, means of transport and goods, and to respect medical work (e.g. it's illegal to punish health personnel for having provide care impartially)
- the prohibition of arbitrary detention (detention for other than permissible reasons, or detention not in accordance with applicable procedures), hostage-taking and forced disappearance
- fundamental guarantees applicable to any person in the power of a party to a conflict, such as the prohibition of ill-treatment and the right to a fair trial
- the prohibition of certain means of warfare such as biological and chemical weapons, and restrictions on the use of others, such as anti-personnel mines, incendiary weapons and booby traps.

8 J-M Henckaerts and L. Doswald-Beck, *Customary International Humanitarian Law, Volume I: Rules*, ICRC, Geneva, 2006, Rules 31 and 32: <https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/customary-ihl/eng/docs/home>.

IHL will protect you to some extent, and can reduce certain risks, but we have to be realistic: not everyone obeys it as they should – far from it. Take humanitarian access, for instance. This is governed by IHL, and the parties to a conflict aren't allowed to restrict it. Despite this, they sometimes explicitly refuse to allow the ICRC to enter all or part of an area. On other occasions, this refusal may be implicit, when they create legal, administrative or security-related obstacles.

1.5.2 INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS LAW

International human rights law (IHRL) is a set of rules designed to protect individuals against the abusive or arbitrary exercise of power by state authorities. Unlike IHL, IHRL also applies in the absence of armed conflict.

The IHRL provisions relevant to you as a humanitarian worker include the following:

- the right to life, which prohibits the arbitrary taking of life and requires states to take the necessary measures to protect the lives of people under their jurisdiction
- the right to liberty and security of person, which includes the prohibition of arbitrary detention and arrest, forced disappearance and hostage-taking
- the prohibition of torture and of cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment
- judicial guarantees, including the right of access to justice and the right to appeal against any decision.

As with IHL, even though IHRL does give you some protection, states don't always obey it.

1.5.3 PRIVILEGES AND IMMUNITIES

Tools for limiting risks related to your work

In many countries, the ICRC has concluded headquarters agreements⁹ – or laws have been passed – which give the organization privileges and immunities that constitute exemptions from certain domestic laws.

⁹ Headquarters agreements are bilateral agreements between the ICRC and the governments of countries in which it intends to be present. Their purpose is to facilitate our work in those countries.

The purpose of these privileges and immunities is to allow you to do your job with as little risk as possible. They exempt you from certain obligations contained in domestic legislation that could form obstacles to carrying out certain activities that form part of our mandate. For instance: national legislation may prohibit dialogue with armed groups that the authorities consider illegal (dubbing them “terrorists”, “illegal armed opposition”, etc.), whereas the privileges and immunities accorded to the ICRC under a headquarters agreement mean that this prohibition doesn’t apply to you.

In principle, you enjoy:

- immunity from jurisdiction regarding all criminal or administrative proceedings, including testimonial immunity (i.e. you’re not required to give evidence) and immunity from arrest and detention
- freedom of movement, allowing you to enter a territory, move around within it and leave it
- exemption from restrictions, taxes and formalities with regard to immigration (in the case of expatriate personnel).

Immunity from jurisdiction is not granted on a personal basis; it simply allows ICRC personnel to do their job. The extent of that immunity depends on the protection that the state in question has granted to the ICRC.

The inviolability of ICRC premises, property (including vehicles, laptops, etc.), documents and correspondence also contribute to your security.

The privilege of non-disclosure of confidential information

The ICRC enjoys a very specific privilege: that of non-disclosure of confidential information. This privilege, which has been recognized by international courts and tribunals, and is anchored in customary international law (the set of rules based on “general practice accepted as law” and which exists alongside treaty-based law) means that authorities are not allowed to divulge confidential ICRC information, nor to use it in judicial or administrative procedures. For example, the authorities cannot use the information in an ICRC report as evidence for the prosecution or defence in the case of someone accused of war crimes. This also means that no-one can oblige you to testify in such cases. However, the privilege of non-disclosure is not recognized in the same manner in all countries.

The authorities are not allowed to use confidential ICRC information in judicial or administrative procedures.

Protecting confidential information in this way is an essential part of maintaining a constructive dialogue with the authorities and the parties to a conflict, facilitating humanitarian access and enhancing your security and that of those whom you're trying to help.¹⁰ As we said earlier, communities and others could be suspicious of you or the ICRC. They may fear that the information you have access to as part of your work could be used against them and might therefore prevent you from carrying out your humanitarian activities.

1.5.4 DOMESTIC LAW

You must obey the laws of the country where you're working, unless the privileges and immunities mentioned above apply. So if you commit an offence, and the offence is not directly related to your work (e.g. breaking the speed limit, using drugs, assault, sexual violence, etc.) you will face the corresponding penal sanctions.

Working for an international humanitarian organization doesn't exempt you from the laws of the country where you're working.

At the same time, domestic law may help you and even give you additional legal protection. In some cases, domestic human rights law may go beyond the provisions of international law, setting higher standards or interpreting international norms more broadly.

1.5.5 OTHER LEGAL FRAMEWORKS

Finally, there are other legal frameworks that may provide additional legal protection, in particular:

- legal instruments governing diplomatic and consular protection
- international instruments regarding the fight against terrorism that include exemptions for humanitarian activity
- the resolutions of the UN Security Council and General Assembly and of other international organizations concerning humanitarian access and the security of humanitarian personnel

¹⁰ For further information on the ICRC's privilege of non-disclosure, see ICRC, "Memorandum: The ICRC's privilege of non-disclosure of confidential information", International Review of the Red Cross (IRRC), No. 897/898, 2016, pp. 433–444: <https://international-review.icrc.org/articles/memorandum-icrc-privilege-non-disclosure-confidential-information>.

- agreements between parties to a conflict providing for such things as the creation of a humanitarian corridor or a ceasefire to allow humanitarian activity
- operational agreements, memoranda of understanding and similar agreements that the ICRC negotiates with the authorities or the parties to a conflict, to obtain access to a specific area or undertake specific activities.

The legal protection you enjoy and how it's implemented will vary from one country to another, and will depend on whether you're a national or international employee. Ask your management what protection applies to you.

1.6 WORKING WITH OTHER HUMANITARIANS

There are more humanitarian entities than there used to be, and their aims and ways of working vary widely. It's rare for the ICRC to be the only humanitarian organization in a region. Many others may be present, especially during major natural disasters or other humanitarian crises that have hit the headlines. This can be an asset when it comes to meeting diverse needs on a large scale. It can also be problematic as concerns coordination, image and perception.

1.6.1 PERCEPTION AND COORDINATION

Those involved in the violence – and the general population – often have trouble distinguishing between the humanitarian organizations. And it really is difficult for a non-specialist to distinguish between the different components of the Movement, or between the ICRC, UNHCR and IRC. Many emblems are similar, different organizations use identical vehicles and their fields of activity overlap. Agencies with private-sector, religious or military backgrounds also form part of the aid sector. The diversity of collaborations and partnerships contributes further to the confusion, e.g. UN agencies carrying out joint operations with armed forces that are parties to the conflict.

Collaboration between humanitarian organizations is common, but coordination between them often leaves much to be desired. The disparities between identities, visions, objectives, rules, operating principles and affiliations can provoke major difficulties.

So to avoid confusion, and to make sure others don't lump you and the ICRC together with other humanitarian workers and organizations:

- make sure you understand how the ICRC's mandate, principles and ways of working differ from those of other agencies
- take the time to explain to people you meet what it is that makes the ICRC different
- find out with which organizations the ICRC maintains close relations
- be careful about relations with aid agencies whose principles differ from those of the ICRC and the Movement, e.g. those that propagate politics or religion
- listen carefully to what people are saying about the ICRC and talk to local people to find out how we're perceived
- be aware of any reputational problems regarding the "humanitarian community" and tell your management about it.

The image of other humanitarian agencies can affect your security.

1.6.2 THE MOVEMENT: A KEY PARTNER

In the interests of complementarity and efficiency, the ICRC sometimes coordinates its operational response with other local, national or international humanitarian agencies, and works in partnership with some of these. We sometimes delegate certain activities to specialists in the fields of health, water and sanitation, agriculture, etc.

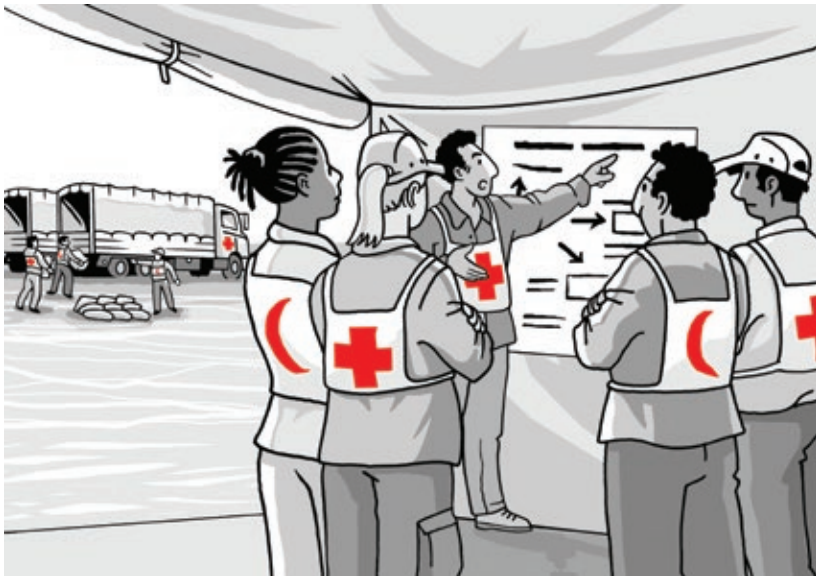
The ICRC also works closely with the other components of the Movement, including the Red Cross or Red Crescent Society of the country.¹¹ Because of its role as an auxiliary of the authorities, the National Society is generally seen as being directly affiliated to the government. At the same time, its proximity to the public and its in-depth knowledge of local culture and context often make it a valuable asset to our security. NS personnel or volunteers may be part of

¹¹ The ICRC doesn't have a monopoly on partnerships with the National Societies; they also work with humanitarian agencies outside the Movement, including UN agencies.

your team when you're carrying out activities of interest to both organizations, such as restoring family links or assistance. Since you'll be working together in the field, you'll be responsible for each other as regards security, and you'll need to be aware of each other's characteristics.

Other Movement components may be operating where you are (i.e. the Federation or a National Society from another country) and you may be

p. 262 **working closely with them.**



1.6.3 SHARING SECURITY INFORMATION

If there's one area in which the ICRC wishes to give its direct partners the benefit of its know-how and take advantage of their experience, it's that of security. Especially if the partner is a member of the Movement. It's also logical to pass on to other humanitarian agencies any information about threats that could affect them. However, when exchanging security information with other humanitarian agencies, we have to follow strict rules regarding information-sharing. This is truer than ever today, as media coverage has become instantaneous. So be careful, especially if the information is **sensitive**, confidential or personal.

Ask your management what information can/cannot be shared, by whom and with whom.

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When a security incident affecting the ICRC occurs, it will be up to management to decide what information can be released outside the organization. The interests of the victim and their family/friends will partly influence such decisions.

Assume that *all* security-related information is confidential.

1.7 KNOW YOUR WORKING ENVIRONMENT: SIX QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF

1. What are the main risks to which I expose myself in joining the ICRC?
2. Am I aware that humanitarian work involves an incompressible risk?
3. What are my role and responsibilities regarding security?
4. Would I be able to explain the Fundamental Principles of the Movement?
5. How does confidentiality help keep me safe?
6. How can the Red Cross or Red Crescent Society of the country where I work contribute to my security?

Further reading

ICRC, *Discover the ICRC*, Geneva, 2018: <https://shop.icrc.org/discover-the-icrc-pdf-en>.

2. BE PREPARED!

Because of the ICRC's mandate and its aim of getting as close as possible to the people it serves, you're going to be facing situations you might not be familiar with. Working in countries that are unstable and exposed to violence means witnessing serious injustices and violations, and being in continuous contact with suffering. In most places, a lack of security will be part of everyday life.

Your ability to anticipate and overcome the difficulties that await you will largely depend on how well-prepared you are – physically, mentally and administratively. The preparation process also involves your family and friends, especially any family members who will be accompanying you officially in your capacity as a member of ICRC personnel. Careful preparation will be even more important if you're going to be working in a region with which you're unfamiliar or if your job is going to require you to spend long periods in the field. Different social and cultural norms, unfamiliar weather and hygiene conditions, different food, a lack of comfort and privacy, physically demanding working hours and journeys, limits on your freedom of movement for reasons of security, separation from loved ones, having to build a new social network ... these will all require you to adapt.

What are the main points you should deal with before taking up your post? That's the question this chapter will at least start to answer. While most topics are of relevance to anyone starting work for the ICRC, others are aimed more at those who'll be working outside their region of origin, and any family members who'll be accompanying them.

2.1 KNOW WHAT YOU'RE LETTING YOURSELF IN FOR



You've decided to commit yourself to humanitarian action. Such work presupposes compassion for people affected by armed conflict or violence, regardless of nationality, race, religion, class or political affiliation. The first **Fundamental Principle** of the Movement is humanity: the Movement exists to relieve human suffering. If the ICRC is to do this, and efficiently, the organization needs you to accept postings to those places where conflict is at its worst, be that in your country or elsewhere.

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So if you've decided to be a humanitarian worker, be aware of what you're letting yourself in for – you have to accept that your working environment will involve a **residual, incompressible risk**, whatever anyone does to reduce the dangers.

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Think about what your commitment to the humanitarian cause really means, including the security aspects.

2.2 HOW TO START WORK WITH A CLEAR HEAD

2.2.1 GET INFORMED



Understanding the multiple aspects of your new working environment will take time, patience and perseverance. Anything you can do to learn about the context will help you get up to speed. This will be particularly important if you don't come from the region where you'll be working. You don't have to become an expert in geopolitics, just to acquire the basic knowledge to get you started. The more you find out about the context where you're going to be working, the more of an interest you take in its culture and traditions, the easier your daily life will be when you arrive.

- Do some internet research, looking at sites, blogs and forums aimed at humanitarian specialists, including the following:
 - embassies (they generally have a section with recommendations for travellers)
 - organizations that specialize in conflict analysis
 - human rights organizations
 - public health agencies
 - sites, forums and groups on social media aimed at expatriates in your country of assignment.

- Read literature that covers your destination country. Literature can give historical, sociological, ethnological, cultural and religious background you won't find in reference works or online.
- Watch films and documentaries.
- Talk to people who know the country.
- If you haven't already had a security briefing about your country of assignment, insist that you get one.

Understand how the ICRC differs from other humanitarian organizations and familiarize yourself with our work and how we operate.

2.2.2 PREPARE YOUR FAMILY

Inform them

You may be ready to face the risks inherent to your humanitarian work, but what about your family? Sure, your job is your business, but it's going to affect your family whether you like it or not. You'll need to be open with your family, and communicate with them clearly. This will become all the more important if you ever have a health problem or an accident, or you're involved in a serious security incident. Imagine how your family would feel if they heard something had happened to you without even knowing what your job involved or which country you were working in.

Step one is to accept the idea that something serious could happen to you, given the dangers of the place where you'll be working. Step two is to prepare yourself for such an eventuality, and that includes talking to your family. If they know your living and working conditions, and how the ICRC handles major problems, they'll be better placed to support you in what you're doing and to react appropriately if something serious happens to you. It's your responsibility to decide which family member(s) should be informed in the event of a serious incident, and what information they should receive. This will make it easier for the ICRC to take the necessary action in the event of

Ask yourself how your family would react if something bad happened to you. What would help them? Use the answers to those questions to help you prepare them for such an eventuality.

an incident (be it a security incident or simply an accident¹²). Tell your family about the kind of environment you'll be living and working in, so they can understand something of your daily life and know how the ICRC will react if ever you're involved in a serious incident. Answer their questions, even if they seem silly or inappropriate. Their concerns are entirely legitimate, and it's completely normal for them to worry about whether they'll be able to keep in touch, for instance, or who will contact them if anything happens to you.

Choose a contact person

You must choose one or more contact persons whom the ICRC can contact if ever you're involved in a serious incident. Tell them exactly what they should do. Give them all the instructions and information they might need if you were unable to take decisions or, in the worst-case scenario, if you were

Taking measures now – and briefing someone you trust on what you would want done – will make things much easier for your family if anything ever happens.

dead. Ideally, your family shouldn't have to take difficult decisions when they're in an emotional state. It's far better if they can refer to wishes you expressed in advance. Bear in mind that some national legislation requires you to choose a close relative as contact person – a parent, grand-parent, child, grand-child or spouse.

2.2.3 GET YOUR ADMIN SORTED OUT

People often forget to put their administrative affairs in order when preparing to go on mission – bills, debts, taxes, insurance, etc. Dealing with all these matters before each new posting will mean you won't have to think about them at the same time as trying to do your job, and your family won't have to look after them for you. This is even more important if your job will take you to remote regions where there's little or no internet or phone access.

Make sure you designate someone to look after your affairs if you were ever to be the victim of a serious incident and unable to look after them yourself, or if you were unable to communicate. Tell this person exactly what they should do if such a situation were ever to arise. And make sure they can carry out your instructions, by giving them copies of your keys, power of attorney concerning

¹² In general, this manual uses the term *incident* to describe an event caused by the deliberate action of someone else (assault, kidnapping, etc.) and *accident* to refer to a non-deliberate event such as a traffic accident or the consequences of a natural disaster. In some cases we use “incident” to cover both types of event.

your bank accounts and passwords for your computers, other devices and password manager

Before starting work, ask ICRC human resources about what insurance cover you have – accident and medical, for you and for your family. Make sure you understand what the ICRC covers and what it does not. Find out whether you need to take out additional insurance yourself, such as personal liability insurance that provides international coverage.

Make sure your financial and administrative affairs are up to date, and leave precise instructions so that someone can look after them if ever you're unable to do so.

2.2.4 “SANITIZE” YOUR ONLINE IDENTITY



p. 128 Anyone who wants to find out about you will probably start by Googling your name. They'll discover all sorts of things – partly through photos you consider completely innocuous – such as what you do in your free time, the causes you support, your religious beliefs, your personal relations, your sexual orientation, your political opinions, your social behaviour, etc. While these things may not be problematic back home, they could be used against you and against the ICRC elsewhere, especially in places where standards are different – and perhaps more conservative. Not everyone shares your ideas and standards.

And if you're ever arrested or kidnapped, the detaining authority or kidnappers won't hesitate to find information about you online, to use against you or for leverage during negotiations.

Before taking up your post, delete anything that could be sensitive or contrary to local taboos.

So take the following precautions:

- “Sanitize” all sites that contain information about you, especially social media platforms.
- Secure your online profiles using secure passwords.
- Tidy up your phone and delete any potentially compromising material.

2.2.5 IS YOUR NATIONALITY A THREAT?

In some parts of the world, your nationality could constitute a risk. Experience has shown that in a region where a conflict is taking place or an armed coalition is present, being a national of one of the countries participating in that coalition can arise suspicions, compromise the ICRC’s neutral image or put you directly in danger.

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So you should ask yourself whether your nationality could be a problem in your country of assignment, and take the necessary action if so. This is even more important if you hold more than one nationality, especially in countries where the ICRC believes there’s a high risk of **kidnapping**. Holding certain nationalities could have a negative effect on the kidnappers’ demands and their attitude to you, and complicate negotiations. The same applies to all family members who accompany you on your posting.

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- Before every new posting, check with the ICRC that your nationality or nationalities are acceptable in the country concerned.
- If you have more than one nationality, tell the ICRC when you join the organization and remind the organization of this point before each new posting.
- Some visa application forms ask for information that would indicate that you have more than one nationality. If you need to fill in such a form, inform the ICRC.
- Take with you only those identity documents that correspond to the nationality under which the ICRC has employed you to work in your country of assignment.
- Make sure you don’t have any documents with you (on your person or in your hold luggage) that could indicate that you have another nationality, e.g. an ID card or a membership card for the National Society of another country.
- Check that the visas and stamps in your passport won’t cause any problems in your country of assignment. If there’s a risk they might, get yourself a new passport.

- Inform the ICRC regarding the nationalities of all family members who will be accompanying you.

If you have more than one nationality, tell the ICRC before accepting a new posting.



2.2.6 KEEPING YOUR FAMILY HAPPY

If your partner or family will be accompanying you, make sure you prepare them for the challenges and conditions that await them in their new home. The experience can be extremely enriching for them, but there will be challenges. Apart from security and health matters, things like a new cultural environment, a language barrier, a difficult climate, pollution, heavy traffic, a high crime rate or a lack of green spaces can rapidly become a source of stress – for them and for you. Each member of your family will have to adapt to the new environment, at their own pace. The balance within your family will change, and the well-being of your family members will directly affect your own.

Understanding the challenges your family will face

Being the “accompanying partner” is not very gratifying. And yet that person plays a vital role in your family’s preparations, the move to the new country and the settling-in process. It’s often the partner of the ICRC employee who has to arrange the new family-support system (finding a doctor, arranging childcare, etc.), at the same time as finding their own place and creating a new social network. One of the biggest difficulties your partner may face is that it may difficult or impossible for them to get a job in your country of

assignment. This may be because of the type of visa they hold, the absence of a work permit, the fact that their qualifications aren't recognized, etc. If they can't get a job, their only support network will be their family. The new environment will also bring big changes for your children. The youngest will need a routine, an environment in which they feel safe and good health care. Older children will have had to leave their friends behind. They'll have to build new friendships, integrate into a new school (and possibly a new educational system) and pick up their extra-curricular activities again.

Prepare your family before you leave home

Your family will need as much information as possible, to reassure them, to avoid disappointments and to help them integrate into their new environment. They need not only to be properly briefed on the risks and the security restrictions, but also to be looking forward to the positive aspects of going abroad, thinking about what they're going to be doing (working/not working, school, the leisure activities available, etc.) and planning ahead so they can deal with any difficulties. So listen carefully to the concerns of all your family members – they're entirely legitimate. It's your responsibility to brief your family on the challenges that await them, to give them the information they need and to help them take leave of people who are important to them and start looking forward to their new lives.

The more your family discusses the move to a new country and the more they're involved in the preparations, the easier it will be for them to integrate.

The ICRC can provide you with several useful documents, such as lists of health facilities, schools, etc. It's also worth contacting the families of expatriates already living in your country of assignment and consulting websites, blogs and expat forums.

Security matters

Your family needs to understand how security-related restrictions will affect their daily lives. In certain large cities with high crime rates, they'll only be allowed to move around by car, with the exception of certain specific neighbourhoods where they can walk. The security situation may require them to use a personal driver. Before you leave:

- Discuss the main security risks with your family, and their effects on daily life.

- Explain the living conditions they can expect, and any restrictions inherent to the context.
- Pass on to them any of the information in this manual that could be useful.

Health and medical issues

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- Tell your family about the health conditions and risks they'll encounter, plus the medical facilities and level of health care that will be available.
- Arrange medical examinations for each of your family members, and check that they've all received the vaccinations they need.
- Take their medical records with you.
- Also take with you any medication they need, if it won't be available in your country of assignment. If you're going to a malaria region, find out what anti-malarial tablets are available there and bring your own supply if necessary.
- Find out what specialists are available, such as dentists, orthodontists, therapists, speech therapists, etc. Some types of care can also be provided via internet (e.g. speech therapy, psychotherapy or psychological support).

Organizational and administrative matters

- Inform your family as to how often your job will take you away from home.
- Ask the ICRC which of your family's expenses the organization will be covering, such as insurance, school fees, domestic staff and plane tickets.
- Enquire about the conditions that will apply to your partner, and especially whether their visa will allow them to work.
- Find out about your future home (photos could be useful).
- Find out whether you'll be able to receive visitors, and if so, under what conditions.
- If necessary, start looking for a school as soon as you know where you're being posted, and get your children signed up as soon as possible. The number of places may be limited, the forms you have to fill in may be complex, there may be strict deadlines and your children may have to take assessment tests to obtain a place at a school. To be on the safe side, we recommend that you sign your children up for more than one school.

- Set up a local support network as quickly as possible (childcare, driver, etc.).
- Find out what documents and **personal effects you should/can take**, and the maximum weight allowed.

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It's your responsibility to brief your family on the security conditions where they'll be living, and to keep them up to date on any developments.

Upon arrival, inform your family regarding the security regulations and explain the behaviour that's expected of them. Finally, don't hesitate to ask the ICRC for assistance, e.g. if you want to take on domestic staff.

2.3 HEALTH PRECAUTIONS

Humanitarian work requires good health – physical and mental. Poor health can be an additional risk factor, especially in places where there are no health facilities, the facilities that exist are unable to provide quality health care, or it's difficult to obtain certain medicines. Being in good health will help you to handle difficult conditions.

Find out about health risks in your country of assignment before you leave and take the necessary measures. This will maximize your chances of staying healthy.

As soon as you know where you're going, find out about any health risks. In case of doubt, consult a doctor or someone at the ICRC with responsibility for staff health.

2.3.1 BEFORE YOU GO



Medical examination

Before each new mission, you should discuss with your doctor whether your physical and mental health will allow you to work effectively under difficult conditions. You must have a medical examination before each new posting, and whenever required by some health-related event, such as an operation, an accident or a prolonged illness. Otherwise, we recommend that you have a medical examination once a year. It's in your interests to be completely honest with your doctor, and not to try and minimize health problems that could resurface later. Difficult conditions in the field, stress and a high workload could worsen any pre-existing condition you may have. And if a serious incident occurs, e.g. if you're taken hostage, any health problems could make the experience more difficult for you to handle and may be a source of additional worry for your family.

So if you know you have health problems (allergies, diabetes, back problems, high blood pressure, recurrent asthma, depression, anxiety, HIV, etc.) tell your doctor, and mention them on the medical forms the ICRC asks you to fill in. It's in your own interest!

Vaccinations

Before going on mission, get all the vaccinations you need and check that any existing vaccinations are still effective. The ICRC may change your country of assignment at short notice for operational reasons, so don't leave your vaccinations until the last minute.

Ask your doctor which vaccinations are required for the region in which you'll be working, or consult one of the sites below. We recommend that you consult a specialist in tropical medicine. In case of doubt, consult someone at the ICRC with responsibility for staff health.

Vaccinations recommended by the ICRC	
Compulsory vaccinations, regardless of country of assignment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Hepatitis A and B - Typhoid - Diphtheria, tetanus and polio - Measles - Yellow fever - Rabies
Other vaccinations that may be required, depending on country of assignment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Meningitis - Japanese encephalitis (for South and South-East Asia)
Also recommended	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Influenza (flu), especially if you'll be working in places where many people congregate, and flu can easily be transmitted, such as IDP camps, hospitals, prisons, etc. Flu epidemics occur at different times of the year in the northern and southern hemispheres. The strain of virus can vary slightly from one hemisphere to the other, and from one year to the next. The vaccine you require will therefore depend on your country of assignment. Flu vaccinations need to be renewed annually.

Anti-malaria precautions

If you're going to be working in a malaria region, talk to your doctor or to an ICRC health adviser about what measures you should take against **malaria**, and whether you need to take anti-malaria tablets. If you regularly take other medication, find out whether there could be any undesired interactions between that medicine and malaria tablets. If anti-malaria tablets are recommended in your case, you should start taking them before you arrive in a malaria region. You must keep taking them until you leave the region and take additional measures, such as wearing clothes that cover your arms and legs, applying mosquito repellent and sleeping under a mosquito net.

First-aid training



p. 370 We strongly recommend that you take a **first-aid** course before you start work in the field. After your initial course, you should take regular refresher courses. This is not some formality. Knowing what to do in an emergency and taking the right decisions promptly can save lives. As a humanitarian worker – and especially as a member of the Movement – giving first aid is the least you should do in an emergency. If you're ever injured yourself, you'll be wanting trained colleagues to help you. Your knowing basic first aid could also benefit your family and colleagues.

*Ask your country's
National Society about
their first-aid courses.*

2.3.2 PREPARATION: NINE QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF

1. Do I know about the risks inherent to my work and have I told my family about them?
2. Will my physical and mental health allow me to carry out the tasks that await me?
3. Are my vaccinations up to date?
4. Do I have all the insurance cover I need?
5. Have I told my family about the potential risks?
6. Have I clearly briefed my contact person(s) on what I want them to do if something happens to me?
7. Have I prepared someone to take over all my affairs if necessary?
8. Have I properly prepared any family members who will be accompanying me?
9. Have I “sanitized” my online identity?

Useful websites	
www.fitfortravel.nhs.uk	Official UK site devoted to travel health.
www.cdc.gov/travel	Official US site devoted to travel health.
www.safetravel.ch	Swiss site containing health advice for travellers (French and German only).
www.tropimed.com ¹³	Comprehensive travel health site, updated daily. In English, French and German.
www.who.int	World Health Organization website, in Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish.

¹³ This site requires a client number and password, which the ICRC will provide to staff on request.

2.4 WHAT SHOULD I TAKE WITH ME?

“What should I take with me?” A question often asked by staff who are about to go abroad. There’s no standard answer, except that you could always have certain documents with you, plus your personal medical and first-aid kit. To decide what to take, you need to take account of the climate, the availability of essential items and medicines, restrictions and security rules imposed by both the country and transport operators and of course your personal needs. Some countries are stricter than others. Items that may be prohibited include alcohol, certain medicines, certain foods, e-cigarettes, etc.

Find out which medical supplies are not available in-country and are not supplied by the ICRC (and which you'll therefore have to take with you).

When you prepare your luggage, take the following precautions:

Documents

- Make copies of all your personal documents and carry them separately from the originals, in case of loss or theft.
- If you have more than one nationality, bring only those identity documents related to the nationality under which you’ve been employed.
- Don’t bring documents indicating that you previously carried out any activity that could be seen as problematic, e.g. ID card issued by a humanitarian agency that has been expelled from the country, press card, police warrant card, military ID card, etc.

Medical supplies

- Bring a first-aid and medication kit adapted to your needs, and to those of anyone accompanying you. In some regions/situations, there may be little or nothing in the way of medicines.
- To be on the safe side, bring enough medication for three to six months.

Miscellaneous articles

- Check with the relevant airlines which articles are prohibited, in the cabin and in the hold. Personal effects sent as freight are also subject to restrictions.
- Don’t bring anything inflammable or dangerous, or which might be seen as being military in nature.
- Don’t bring books on politically, culturally or religiously sensitive topics. Check that the books you intend to bring are not banned in your country of assignment.

Please see **Annexe 12.4** for a list of recommended and prohibited articles, plus recommendations concerning medical and personal hygiene supplies.

Standard items provided by the ICRC

ICRC residences, offices and vehicles are equipped with first-aid kits.

The ICRC provides its staff with the following:

- Mosquito net impregnated with insecticide
- Insect repellent for the skin
- Anti-malaria tablets
- Rapid diagnostic kit for malaria
- Emergency anti-malaria treatment
- Post-rape kit (PRK). Contains medicines which can protect against some of the physical consequences of rape, as long as they are taken in time
- Post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP) for use in case of contact with contaminated blood in the course of your work.

Items to prevent vector-borne diseases such as malaria are issued only in regions where the corresponding diseases are common.

2.4.1 WHAT TO TAKE: FIVE QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF

1. What administrative documents should I take?
2. What documents would be essential if I or a member of my accompanying family were to fall ill or be the victim of a serious incident?
3. What medical and hygiene supplies will be unavailable in-country?
4. What items that are not available in my country of assignment could increase my comfort or boost my morale, help me pass the time or enhance relations with my colleagues?
5. Is anything I'm intending to take likely to be dangerous, or cause problems in the country concerned?

3. UNDERSTANDING THE OPERATIONAL CONTEXT

To reach the population and meet their needs effectively and safely, you need a thorough understanding of the context, the causes of the humanitarian problems and the needs of the communities. This chapter will explain the basic principles of context analysis and why it's essential to your safety. It will then explain how the ICRC identifies the threats inherent in any given context. Finally, it will explain how your personal characteristics can affect your safety.

3.1 ANALYSING THE CONTEXT

3.1.1 WHY ANALYSE THE CONTEXT?



You need a thorough analysis of the issues at play in the context where you work and of the forces involved in order to choose your aims, gain access to communities and carry out your activities safely, and you must keep this analysis up to date. The objective is to understand the processes that are influencing the humanitarian situation and your security. This analysis will enable you to identify those factors that could have a negative effect on security, those that could have a stabilizing effect and the key actors who could

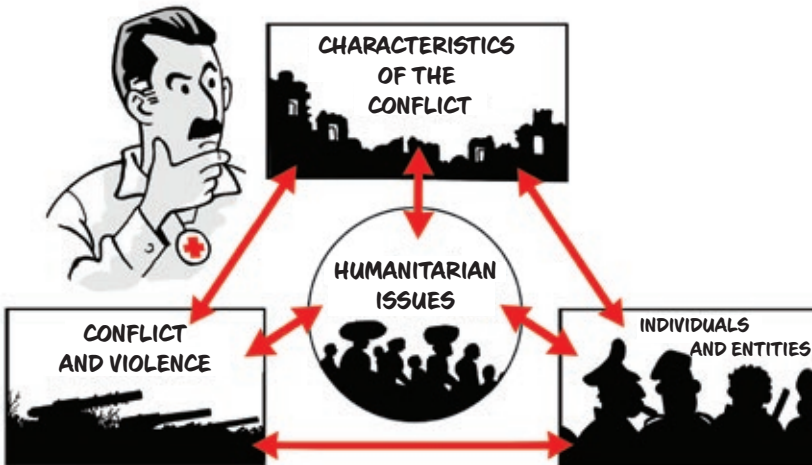
help or harm your operations. Carrying out this analysis is an essential step for your security and for that of the people you want to help. It will enable you to identify the threats that exist in your region and take the necessary precautions. It will also enhance your credibility with your contacts, by showing that you understand the situation properly.

The following pages do not constitute a precise method of analysing an operational context; they merely highlight the points you'll need to cover.

Analysing your operational context means looking for answers to the following questions:

1. What is my working context?
2. Who are the key individuals and entities?
3. How might my presence and my activities affect my working context?

The figure below shows the main factors to take into account.



Characteristics of the conflict	Conflict and violence	Individuals and entities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Historical - Political - Economic - Social - Legal, cultural and religious norms - Natural environment and resources - Infrastructure - Attitudes towards foreigners and aid agencies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - History - Patterns of violence - Issues and objectives (territory, resources, etc.) - Points of divergence and convergence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Influence, power and importance - Interactions (e.g. local, regional or global alliances) - Ability and will to help or harm

3.1.2 INCLUDE STABILIZING FACTORS

Don't restrict your analysis of the operational context to the sources of instability and danger. Things like recent or historical injustices may separate and divide people. But others will unite them: common cultural or religious practices, markets that everyone uses, common know-how and a certain degree of social cohesion. These will survive, even where there's violence. In every society there are those who maintain links between people, even if they can't prevent violence. In particular, women often use their informal influence to maintain social cohesion and ensure that things don't get even worse. Elders, teachers and religious or traditional leaders may play a similar role.

Avoid focusing exclusively on things that could get in the way. Include factors that could protect you and help you get your job done.

3.1.3 EVERYONE'S RESPONSIBILITY. NEVER FINISHED.

Whatever your job title, your perception of the environment is important. You may know something no-one else does. If you don't pass it on, someone else may come to the wrong conclusions, putting you or your colleagues in danger.

A context analysis is useless unless it's continuously updated. This is a permanent process, and it requires everyone's participation. Analysing the environment is not the sole responsibility of your management or your colleagues. Whether you're a guard, an agronomist, a driver, a health specialist or a book-keeper, you have your part to play. Using multiple sources and points of view, along with each individual's way of interpreting

things, will enable you to adapt your activities and security measures to the situation. Listening, observing and telling your management about anything unusual – like the closure of a market that's usually busy – is an essential part of analysing your environment.

3.1.4 HOW DO I GO ABOUT IT?

To stay safe, you need to use multiple sources, consider different points of view – including those that appear weird – and cross check information from local sources against more global analyses. This will give you a balanced understanding of the situation. The hard bits are separating fact from fiction, making sense of the information you collect and analysing it in such a way as to help you achieve your operational aims.

Comparing divergent perspectives

There is often a mine of useful information available within the ICRC. So find out what's available internally before looking outside. Start by using the knowledge, analyses and memories of your colleagues – whatever jobs they may have – and the contents of existing reports. But when you've done that, do also read analyses produced by outside bodies, especially think tanks active in your area. Once you've done all this, you've completed a large chunk of your job. Read the local press, listen to the radio and use information from social media. Get information from communities and the administrative, traditional and religious authorities. Take advantage of the knowledge of the **National Societies**. They have a sound understanding of the issues in the region and of factors that could lead to security problems. Consult your partner organizations, reputable civil society organizations and international organizations with a local presence.

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Technology will give you access to masses of info, and of course you should use it. However, you must compare what you find online with what you see on the ground, whenever possible. Otherwise there's a risk that you'll think you already know everything and understand everything. The information you find online can never replace first-hand information from civil, military, traditional and religious authorities and from communities. You're not going to gain people's confidence, or understand the context and the security situation,

You must base your analysis on several reliable and diverse sources. To avoid wasting time, concentrate on the information you really need to get your job done, and discuss with your management the most efficient way of acquiring it.

from behind your desk. You need to get out there and meet people. In the most dangerous environments, physical proximity won't always be possible. When it isn't, you'll have to get creative, and base your analysis on indirect sources – and make sure you keep your information confidential.

Beware of information overload – go for quality rather than quantity. Disinformation, rumours and propaganda are everywhere, especially during highly politicized conflicts or violence. It's often hard to distinguish fact from fiction. In addition to which, everyone communicates in accordance with their interests, their identity and their understanding of the problem.

Base your analysis on reliable information, and only collect as much information as you really need

As well as being from reliable sources, your information should be directly related to your operations. Collecting information is merely a means to an end. And that “end” is to do your job and do it safely.

Analysing a conflict situation is not a neutral activity; you'll need to be careful. You certainly need to know which **weapon bearers** control or influence a given region, but make sure your information-gathering doesn't go any further than is necessary to carry out your operations. Military information such as the positions of weapon bearers and their infrastructure, or their sources of funding, is highly sensitive. You must never transmit to third parties any

information you obtain on the basis of trust. Not only could you put yourself in danger, but you could also harm people outside the ICRC, including those you're trying to help. Don't compromise your security by using methods that are illegal or inappropriate – or could be seen as such.

Asking over-detailed questions on sensitive topics could give the impression that you're engaged in espionage, and that could put you in danger.

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Identifying the key individuals and entities

Why?

Analysing your operational environment and identifying those who exercise significant influence over it are two sides of the same coin. You need to identify the individuals, groups, organizations, public bodies and other entities that can influence your operational environment. It is they who – directly or indirectly – can facilitate your access in the field and ensure the success of your operations. Conversely, they can obstruct your work and undermine your

security. To minimize risk, you must understand their interests – be they in harmony or in conflict with yours – and the power they have to influence your operations.

This means you need to:

- identify individuals and entities who exercise a positive or negative influence on the humanitarian situation
- understand their interests, especially those that could be problematic for your operations or for which your operations could be problematic
- understand the degree of influence they exercise in the region, including their influence on other stakeholders
- understand the type and extent of interactions between them (alliances, etc.).

Who are they?

The first step is to draw up a list of all those who could influence your working environment – positively or negatively. This includes entities based in your region and outside, including those with a global scope (such as international criminal networks). Don't just list official state representatives and armed groups present in the country or region. For instance, where there are serious ethnic tensions and the state is weak, traditional authorities may exercise considerable power. In other cases, power may be wielded by a religious leader, a mayor, a private company, a youth organization or even – unlikely as it may seem – a group of young bikers. Make sure you include representatives of women and minorities. People directly affected by the situation may also exercise influence – people like hospital directors, members of the community, etc.

Identifying what are often referred to as the “key actors” means looking behind the official role of a group or an individual; somebody with a most insignificant job title may be the influential head of a militia or criminal network.

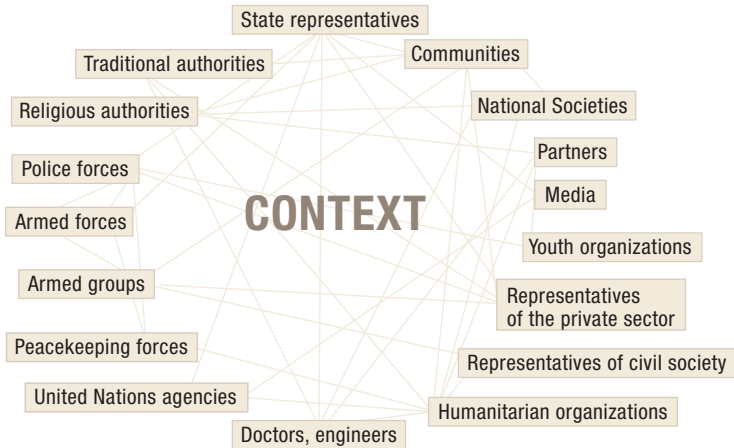


Fig. 1: Examples of stakeholders¹⁴

Who wants what, how and with whom?

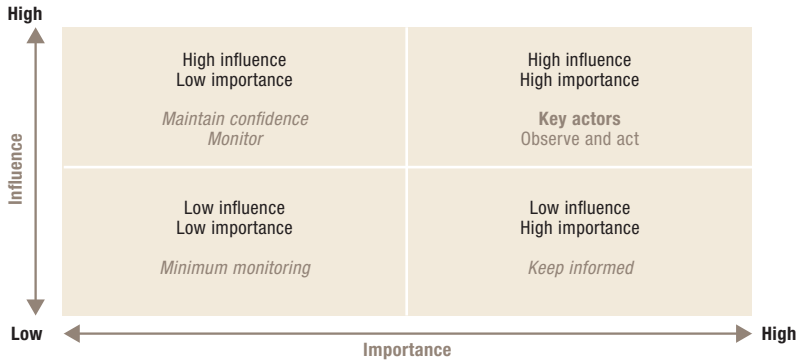
The next step is to identify those who are playing a role in the conflict and the problems of humanitarian concern arising from it, those who benefit and those who are important to the success of your operations. You need to understand their power, their interests, their relationships and the influence they exert. And bear in mind that their true interests may be very different from their official interests. Take account of their relationship with the ICRC, both now and in the past, and ask yourself how your presence may affect their interests – positively or negatively. Ask yourself how they could influence your access in the field and your activities – positively or negatively.

Who do I need to establish relations with?

Once you've drawn up your list of stakeholders, you can decide with which ones it would be useful to try and establish a dialogue on security and humanitarian issues, and – in certain cases – on the planning and execution of your activities. The important thing is to prioritize the most important influencers, without neglecting the others. Some stakeholders may not be relevant to your operations, or have little power or influence. Some won't want to talk to you, in which case you'll need to find intermediaries through whom you can convey your messages.

14. The interactions between entities shown in this figure are not related to any real-life context.

Prioritizing stakeholders – two possible options



Influence: The ability of a stakeholder to help or hinder the achievement of your objectives and to persuade or force others to do likewise.

Importance: The degree of priority you give to satisfying the needs and interests of the stakeholder concerned.

Fig. 2: Prioritizing stakeholders according to their importance and the influence they wield

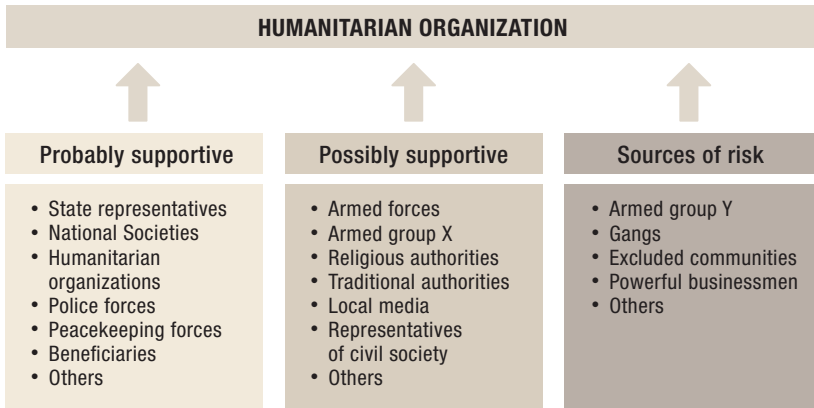


Fig. 3: Prioritizing stakeholders according to the extent to which they could help or hinder your work¹⁵

3.1.5 HOW CONTEXT AND OPERATIONS INFLUENCE EACH OTHER

Context analysis is not limited to understanding factors external to the organization, such as the natural environment, factors underlying the violence, factors that can affect security and the most important influencers. You also need to take account of factors related to the ICRC, such as the way the organization is perceived, its footprint in the region (in economic and

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Analysing the context also means thinking about the effects of your presence and activities on that context.

other terms) its operational capacity to effectively meet the needs and the kinds of activity it's carrying out. You are part of the equation and hence a source of risk. Some of the risks you pose are visible and therefore easily identifiable. Others are not.

Humanitarians have a tendency to think that the work they're doing automatically gives them a good reputation and that they deserve to have people accept them. In real-life, things are way more complex and demand critical analysis. For instance, you'll inevitably be seen as favouring one side while harming or ignoring the other. In a conflict situation, treating wounded ex-combatants is often seen as helping the enemy to return to the fighting, and this can provoke suspicion and resentment. Helping IDPs can cause tensions with resident communities, who consider their own needs to be just as great. Rather than work on the assumption that the ICRC enjoys a good reputation in the region and that your activities are therefore accepted, it's better to be more cautious, or indeed to assume the opposite.

The following points will help you understand the interaction between your operations and the context:

- the image of international organizations in the region, and the general attitude of the population towards them, including towards foreign personnel
- how the presence of international organizations is affecting the local economy (price rises, for instance)
- long- and medium-term effects of the aid provided
- the history and reputation of the ICRC, the components of the Movement and operational partners in the region
- past security incidents involving the ICRC in the region
- the degree to which the various entities understand the ICRC, its principles and its programmes

- compatibility between your humanitarian objectives and the interests of influential entities in the region
- inter-community tensions caused or exacerbated by your activities
- communities, groups or individuals excluded from your activities
- resentment towards the ICRC on the part of individuals or communities.

If you reckon you know everything about your operational context, you're wrong!

3.1.6 CONTEXT ANALYSIS: EIGHT MISTAKES TO AVOID

1. Thinking it's not your job to contribute to context analysis.
2. Basing your analysis exclusively on hypotheses, impressions and personal beliefs, and not on facts.
3. Relying on limited information of dubious quality or provenance, without comparing it with reality.
4. Failing to use information already available within the ICRC.
5. Not testing your point of view against that of your colleagues.
6. Claiming to understand the situation, and not questioning your assumptions.
7. Failing to update your analysis and under-estimating changes in regional dynamics.
8. Thinking that the ICRC's presence and activities will have no effect on the situation.

3.2 RISK MANAGEMENT

Managing security risks is not an individual matter, which is just as well! The heads of ICRC offices are responsible for the security of personnel and operations in their geographical areas. They receive appropriate training on this and are supported by regional technical advisers. The general approach is to supplement the **minimum security requirements** (which apply to all ICRC offices) with security measures appropriate to the risks identified in a specific context.

The ICRC has devised a methodology to be used by the managers of ICRC offices and their staff. This methodology is easy to use, avoids bureaucracy and provides a standard process and tools for assessing security risks. It relies on

the experience and knowledge that staff have acquired regarding the context in which they are working, their expertise, their analytical skills and their ability to assess rapidly-changing situations.

3.2.1 A COLLABORATIVE PROCESS

Security-risk-management starts with an analysis of the operational context. Everyone can contribute to this analysis, from their own point of view. Technical personnel, drivers, engineers, health specialists ... the more diversity there is among the people participating in the analysis, the better we'll understand the context. Information exchange, and participation in this kind of risk-assessment exercise, are not limited to ICRC personnel. Depending on the circumstances, partners such as the personnel of other Movement components can take part, as can the accompanying family members of expatriate personnel.

Your point of view is essential! Make sure you use the opportunities provided for discussing security, and share your understanding of the situation with your colleagues.

3.2.2 METHODOLOGY

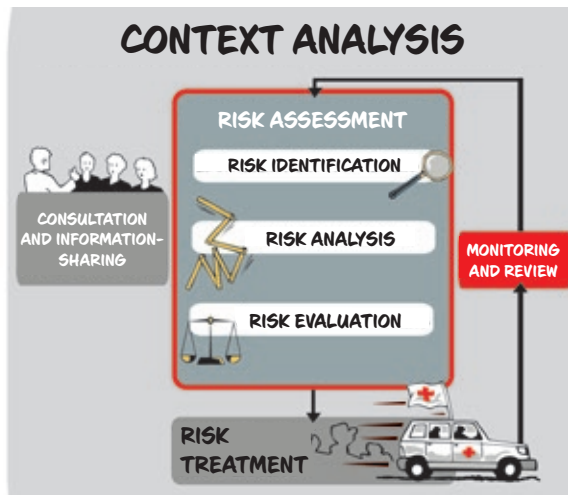


Fig. 4: The ICRC's risk-assessment methodology¹⁶

¹⁶ The ICRC methodology is comparable to that adopted by the International Organization for Standardization in 2009 and updated in 2018 (ISO 31000).

The figure above shows the ICRC risk-assessment process. Whether you're the head of an ICRC office responsible for the security of your team, or an employee going about your daily life, the logic is the same.

RISK ASSESSMENT	Identification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Examine the situation – Identify your goals Describe the external environment in which the ICRC is operating (e.g. general context, sources and actors of conflict/violence, presence and acceptance of humanitarians in general and the ICRC in particular). Describe the internal environment, i.e. the objectives of the ICRC's activities in this context, the field of operations (including logistics), the quality of our network and our reputation, and that of other Movement components if applicable, etc. • Draw up scenarios – Imagine what could happen to a staff member in this environment Identify the sources of risk for the organization. In what ways are our personnel and operations exposed, or in what ways could they be? What are the possible consequences of this exposure? The more details you have (sources of risk, times and places where threats exist, etc.) the more precise your scenarios will be and the more benefit you'll obtain from detailed study of measures to avoid or mitigate the risk, or to respond to it as effectively as possible.
	Analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analyse the risks – Design measures to mitigate the risks identified, and improve any existing measures Assess the effectiveness of measures intended to avoid or limit risk, or to respond to its consequences. Identify any gaps. This stage enables you to identify the level of risk corresponding to each of the scenarios for which decisions will be taken.
	Evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take decisions – Choose the most suitable treatment for the risk identified The manager will need to compare the intended humanitarian effect of activities in a given area with the final risk level (i.e. the risk remaining once all risk-reduction measures have been taken) of the various scenarios. This assessment, which is often difficult, will determine the treatment or action necessary in each case: accept the risk, reduce it, avoid it or transfer it.

You have a method for assessing security risks and common tools for deciding what measures to implement. Use them!

3.2.3 TAKE THE NECESSARY MEASURES

Once you've finished your risk assessment, you need to turn it into a plan of action, to treat the risks you've identified. The plan of action is extremely important. It sets out the priorities, along with everyone's responsibilities regarding the implementation of risk-reduction measures. It also links those measures to specific risk scenarios. For instance, a site will be equipped with a shelter if the risk analysis has identified the risk of occasional shooting, or a

safe room if the risk identified is that of violent intrusion. The plan of action also makes it easier to understand the logic behind the security regulations, which are also based on the joint risk-assessment process.

So as you can see, the joint security-risk-management process is a logical system, which you can easily transpose to the individual level. For instance, before you cross the road you analyse various pieces of information (visual, audible and tactile). Your decision as to whether or not to cross will also depend on the location (urban or rural, traffic following strict rules or utter chaos, etc.). Every day, whatever your job, you'll have to take similar decisions, and what you decide will depend on the context and the situation.

Your assessment of the situation should help you answer the following questions:

- *What risks might I face?*
- *Am I correctly equipped to deal with those risks?*
- *How should I deal with them, in the light of my professional responsibilities?*

3.3 IS EVERYONE EQUALLY AT RISK?



For a humanitarian organization, it's a great advantage to have staff from all over the world with their different and complementary profiles and skills. However, your safety is influenced by the interactions between your identity, the context and your role.¹⁷

Two examples: In a tribal conflict, a member of one of the warring tribes is going to be exposed to greater risk when working among a community from the other tribe than someone with a different ethnic background. A physically disabled person with reduced mobility will take longer to evacuate a building in case of emergency.



1. **Individual identity** (nationality, ethnicity, religion, gender, sexual orientation, disability, age, level of education, experience, political opinions, etc.)
2. **Context** (laws, cultural norms, nature of the conflict, type of organization, working environment, etc.)
3. **Type of activity** (how sensitive the activity is in the specific context, etc.)

Fig. 5: The main factors that influence your vulnerability

So thinking about security also involves thinking about your personal characteristics. The ICRC may therefore take certain risk-mitigation measures, on the basis of an objective risk assessment. This might mean deciding not to involve you in an activity considered hazardous for you, not to send you into a particular area, etc. This decision will always be communicated to

¹⁷ Global Interagency Security Forum (GISF), *Managing the Security of Aid Workers with Diverse Profiles*, GISF, 2018: <https://gisf.ngo/resource/managing-the-security-of-aid-workers-with-diverse-profiles/>.

you honestly and openly. Such measures reflect the ICRC's duty to protect you against predictable risks, including those associated with your personal characteristics.

Whoever you are, the combination of your personal characteristics, your function within the ICRC and the context where you work could affect your security. Be aware of this, and discuss any related concerns with your management.

3.3.1 THE DIFFERENT RISKS THAT LOCAL AND NON-LOCAL PERSONNEL FACE

Some tasks are restricted to personnel from other parts of the country, or expatriates, rather than local personnel. This will generally be the case if the necessary skills are not available locally, if certain sensitive activities are more dangerous for a local person or if using expatriates will be perceived as more neutral and impartial.¹⁸ Whichever your status – local or non-local – it will be an advantage in some situations and a problem in others.

But wherever you come from:

- You are the ultimate judge of your security. It's up to you to find out whether your characteristics could put you at risk when carrying out your functions.
- Discuss with the ICRC the limits of the organization's responsibility towards you and your family, especially in case of arrest or evacuation.
- Make sure you've fully understood the **Fundamental Principles** of the Movement, the way the ICRC operates, and their implications for your security.
- Speak to your management if you don't feel comfortable about playing an active role in a certain activity, working in a certain region, coming into contact with certain individuals or entities or having access to certain information.
- Clarify with your management the level of detail you need to acquire when collecting information, and collect only the information you absolutely need.

¹⁸ As of summer 2020, the ICRC had 20,003 employees, of whom 18,759 were working in the field (i.e. outside Switzerland). Of those, 2,654 were international (mobile) and 16,105 were national (resident).

- When you run up against difficult individuals in the course of your work, explain that certain decisions lie outside your field of responsibility.

Know your limits. Knowing when not to act – or to stop what you're doing – might save your life and the lives of others.

- If you or anyone you know is subjected to pressure, intimidation or reprisals from a community, the authorities, an armed group, an intelligence service or any other entity, immediately inform a member of management whom you trust.
- If the attitude of a colleague seems inappropriate given the local culture and norms, have a quiet word with him or her. If necessary, speak to your management about the problem.

3.3.2 GENDER

Many people mistakenly believe that women are exposed to greater security risks than men. While it's true that gender influences interactions and that women are generally more exposed to **sexual violence** than men, it's not true that female humanitarian workers are more vulnerable than their male colleagues.

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The way a person is perceived and the risks linked to the image they project depend primarily on their attitude and the degree of tact they show in dealing with others. A detailed understanding of local socio-cultural dynamics, a well-developed ability to listen, sensitivity, open-mindedness and a respectful and professional attitude all have a greater influence on the safety of a humanitarian worker than does their gender. In many contexts, a professional but humble young woman on her first humanitarian assignment will gain the respect of a community more easily than a young man who is arrogant and lacking in respect.

It's your responsibility to find out about the socio-cultural rules that apply in your context, including the gender-specific rules that men and women are expected to obey, so that you can behave accordingly.

There are no recommendations that apply only to women or only to men. The recommendations below are valid for everyone.

- Respect the social and cultural norms that apply where you work.
- Find out about the preventive and reactive measures you can take regarding sexual violence.
- Dress in accordance with local rules, even if you feel that to do so is an infringement of your freedom.
- Find out whether you need to take specific precautions where you live.
- Find out whether you should avoid moving around on your own at night.
- If travelling by taxi is permitted, use the official taxi companies recognized by the ICRC.
- If someone is harassing or threatening you, immediately contact your management or someone you trust. You can also ask the **Ethics, Risk and Compliance Office** for advice.

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3.3.3 SEXUAL ORIENTATION

Tolerance is one of the values of the Movement, but the norms of certain societies and the laws of certain countries are another matter. In certain contexts, being openly in a relationship with someone of the same sex could put you in danger. In some countries, homosexuality is prohibited under national or religious law, and is subject to penalties.¹⁹ However, the way these laws are implemented depends on the norms of the society concerned. Some societies are relatively permissive, even though homosexuality is illegal.

The ICRC can inform you, on the basis of an objective analysis, whether a given sexual orientation poses a security risk in your region of assignment and if so, what measures you can take to limit those risks:

- Get informed. If you know what risks are associated with your sexual orientation, you can take the necessary measures.
- Find out about the laws and social norms in your country of assignment.
- Decide whether you need to consult your management about your concerns regarding your sexual orientation.
- Adapt your behaviour to conform to the norms of the society in the country or region where you're working.

¹⁹ For reports and maps concerning sexual orientation laws, see ILGA World, *Sexual Orientation Laws in the World*, 2020: <https://ilga.org/map-sexual-orientation-laws-december-2020>.

- Be careful on social media. You are being watched, and anything you say can be used against you.
 - If anyone harasses you, be it the authorities or a colleague, don't let them provoke you. As far as possible, remain calm and polite. Immediately inform a member of management whom you trust.
 - Sexual orientation is part of a person's private life. Don't endanger a colleague by outing them.
-

You must distinguish between your personal beliefs, the values of the ICRC and the laws and norms of the country in which you're working.

3.3.4 AM I MORE AT RISK THAN MY COLLEAGUES? SEVEN QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF

1. What are the potential implications of my personal characteristics for my security in the legal and socio-cultural context in which I'm going to be working?
2. Am I prepared to accept the restrictions that the ICRC may impose on me?
3. To what extent is it difficult for me to apply the Fundamental Principles of the Movement?
4. Do I believe that I'm capable of doing what's asked of me?
5. Do I have the impression that I'm at greater risk than my colleagues?
6. Would it be safer for me not to take part in certain activities?
If so, have I talked to my management about this?
7. What impression do I make on colleagues, authorities, members of the community, etc.? Could that impression cause problems?

4. WEAPON BEARERS

You'll have contact with members of the armed forces or armed groups, either as part of helping people in need or simply because of the violence around you. It's important to remember that the Red Cross idea all started when Henry Dunant organized first aid for soldiers wounded at the battle of Solferino in 1859 and then persuaded political leaders to protect the victims of war. In other words, soldiers were the first beneficiaries of the ICRC. And the ICRC still helps weapon bearers today, by providing IHL training, giving first-aid courses, treating them when they're injured, visiting them when they're taken prisoner, tracing missing members of their families or quite simply helping the communities to which they belong.

As well as exercising considerable influence over the humanitarian situation, weapon bearers can either help or hinder your operations, because they play the leading role in any war zone. You might have a few prejudices against weapon bearers. You might have had negative experiences with them. But if you work for the ICRC, you're going to have to put your personal opinions and prejudices aside, because working safely in areas where there are weapon bearers means gaining their trust.

This chapter describes the weapon bearers you're likely to encounter. It explains how to approach and talk to them in order to ensure your security in the field, and outlines the main challenges.

4.1 WHY TALK TO WEAPON BEARERS?

The ICRC's mandate means we have to talk to everyone with influence over a region. We would only be doing half a job if we limited ourselves to government-controlled areas. So we also talk to non-state armed groups. There are three reasons for seeking dialogue with all weapon bearers:

1. Ensure that the presence and activities of the ICRC and its partners are known and respected, as **acceptance** is one of the pillars of security management.
2. Safely access people in need, including detainees and the wounded.
3. Promote compliance with IHL and respect for humanitarian principles, to reduce violations and mistreatment.

As well as exercising considerable influence over the humanitarian situation and your access in the field, weapon bearers often benefit from the ICRC's activities. They're also the people with whom you'll need to discuss violations of IHL and mistreatment, bilaterally and in confidence.

4.2 WHAT KINDS OF WEAPON BEARER ARE THERE?

Weapon bearers vary widely in terms of aims, culture, numbers, command structures, military capability, ways of operating, the territory they control and the ways in which they are supported and financed. They may or may not be defending a state. Some may have a well-defined ideology, while others have vague demands and simply conduct operations whenever an opportunity presents itself. Others are involved in organized crime networks. Some operate under centralized control, whereas others have a more horizontal structure, consisting of independent sub-groups.²⁰

4.2.1 ARMED FORCES



20 ICRC, *The Roots of Restraint in War*, ICRC, Geneva, 2018: <https://shop.icrc.org/the-roots-of-restraint-in-war-pdf-en>.

The terms “armed forces” or “government forces” refer to the forces of a state. These may be the regular forces of the country in which you’re working or those of foreign countries involved in the conflict, possibly as part of an international coalition.

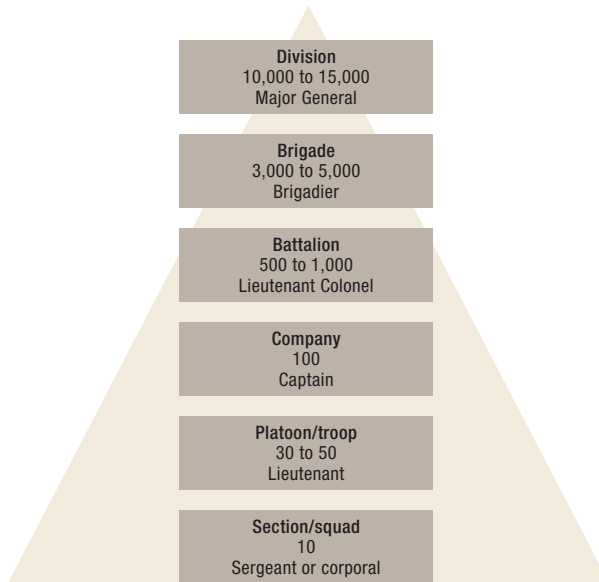
The armed forces of a country are divided up into a number of *services* – most often the army, the navy and the air force. The ICRC mainly comes into contact with the army, which consists of various *arms*, such as infantry and artillery, each with its own role, equipment and skills. The armed forces have a hierarchical structure with a clearly-defined, top-down chain of command. Armed forces personnel are subject to strict military discipline, with written rules that are applied in a uniform manner. Military personnel who contravene these rules are subject to penalties imposed by internal military justice systems. When they’re not conducting military operations, these personnel live in camps and therefore have little contact with the civilian population. Most armed forces personnel have undergone military training, which includes the basics of IHL.

In theory, all personnel wear the same uniform with visible insignia, which makes it easier to identify them. However, members of armed groups often wear the uniform of a government force, making identification more difficult. Another advantage of a government force is that the most senior commander can enter into commitments that are binding on the force as a whole. If senior officers respect the work of the ICRC, there’s a good chance that their troops in the field will respect you. However, it’s best to err on the side of caution, and assume the opposite. You can also expect the armed forces to have a basic understanding of what humanitarian work involves. Military logistics are often used after a natural disaster, to deliver aid or rebuild infrastructure.

But be aware that not all armed forces operate in such a structured fashion. The fact that a force is fighting in the name of a state, and that its personnel wear clearly identifiable uniforms and insignia, may project an impression of discipline, efficiency and professionalism that’s entirely false. In fact, commanders may have far less control over their troops than it would appear, resulting in extremely undisciplined conduct. Some elements of the armed forces may even align themselves with armed groups, unbeknown to their chain of command. This may be because troops are dispersed over a wide area that’s difficult to control, or because of rivalries between clans/ethnic groups or simply because they’re receiving little or no pay. In many contexts,

the armed forces have only recently been formed, or have absorbed former members of armed groups. Most of their troops will therefore be young, lacking both experience and professionalism. Some may have been conscripted against their will, and therefore don't identify with the aims of the entity they represent.

The structure of a typical army²¹



While there are differences between armies around the world, their structure is fairly similar, at least as concerns the infantry: three sections (or squads) of about 10 soldiers make up a platoon of 30 to 50, three platoons make up a company of about 100, three companies make up a battalion of 500 to 1,000, three battalions make up a brigade of 3,000 to 5,000 and three brigades make up a division of 10,000 to 15,000. Historically, the infantry regiment – consisting of two or more battalions – was of considerable importance. Today, the infantry regiment tends to be a historical or ceremonial entity rather than a fighting formation.

21 Source: ICRC, *Engaging with State Armed Forces to Prevent Sexual Violence: A Toolkit for ICRC Staff on How to Engage State Armed Forces in Dialogue on Preventing Sexual Violence in Armed Conflict*, ICRC, Geneva, 2020: <https://shop.icrc.org/engaging-with-state-armed-forces-to-prevent-sexual-violence-a-toolkit-for-icrc-staff-on-how-to-engage-state-armed-forces-in-dialogue-on-preventing-sexual-violence-in-armed-conflict-pdf-en>.

4.2.2 ARMED GROUPS



An armed group is an armed entity not officially acting on behalf of a state. The term covers a wide variety of groups, with different aims, structures, codes of conduct, sources of funding, military capabilities and territorial control. They include local militias, opposition groups, gangs and jihadist groups – both local and international. Such a group is designated a *non-state armed group* when it's a party to a non-international armed conflict and hence required to comply with IHL.

The more decentralized an armed group, the more difficult it is to identify its leaders and the more susceptible it is to outside influences – religious, social, political or economic.

In general, armed groups can be divided into three broad categories according to the way they're organized:²²

- a) Centralized
- b) Decentralized
- c) Community

Centralized armed groups

Some armed groups are structured like armed forces, with a vertical hierarchy, a clearly-defined pyramidal chain of command, a clear code of conduct and easily identifiable uniforms and badges of rank. Their senior commanders therefore exercise considerable authority and firm control over their troops. Such groups possess a clear ideology, a common vision and strong allegiance to their central authority. However, that doesn't necessarily mean they don't

²² ICRC, *The Roots of Restraint in War*, *op. cit.* (see footnote 20).

participate in criminal activities. They're subject to strict discipline and live away from the civilian population. Their personnel have undergone rigorous training and generally have some knowledge of IHL. However, communication within the group isn't always optimal, so there's a risk of commanders' orders not reaching fighters on the ground.

Decentralized armed groups

Most of the time, the combatants you meet will be operating in a much more horizontal mode than described above, and will be far less centralized and structured. In practice, most non-state armed groups consist of alliances of smaller groups, with the commander of each group retaining a large degree of decision-making power and responsibility.

These are small, isolated groups, operating independently and in accordance with customary rules. Their commanders enjoy considerable power and act as warlords, with a wide range of aims, such as righting local grievances, defending territory ... or simply getting rich. The members of such groups probably won't have had any real military training, which contributes to their poor level of discipline. As there is little supervision, fighters on the ground frequently ignore their commanders' orders. There is generally a culture of impunity.

Contrary to appearances, these small groups often belong to an alliance involving other groups, each of which has its own structure, history, aims and funding. Such an alliance may present itself as a single fighting force, promoting a common ideology, perhaps created in response to circumstance or opportunity. In practice, however, the planning and coordination of military operations are pretty loose. An alliance may change as opportunities arise, without compromising the cohesion of the whole. It may also operate as part of a wider movement, strengthening its position not only locally but also regionally or even globally.

The continuous changes in such alliances, their decentralized nature, the fact that the groups are small and the way they work can often give the impression of chaos. On top of which, their members often wear a mixture of uniforms, possibly stolen from government forces, which makes it difficult to identify them or to see that they're connected with one another. Such an impression is deceptive, however. Despite their apparent lack of organization, these groups do have a certain degree of structure. They're capable of mounting highly effective operations and it's difficult for their enemies to defeat them, both

because they're highly adaptable and because no sub-group is indispensable to the survival of the whole.

Community-based armed groups

You may also meet people who are members of an armed group without your knowing. At first sight, there's no difference between them and any other member of their community. When they're not actually fighting, they don't carry weapons. They just get on with their day-to-day activities. Community-based groups of this kind (local militias, self-defence groups, etc.) are formed spontaneously. They generally consist of anything between ten and fifty young men, with a totally horizontal structure. Their leaders may change frequently. Their rules are shared orally, and will depend on local values and traditions. Such groups are generally defending the interests of their communities, but they may be instrumentalized in support of other armed groups or to fight for control of local natural resources. Their internal cohesion is based on initiation rites. Most of them don't wear uniforms, but they may display visible signs of belonging to the group, such as scarification, tattoos or body ornamentation.

4.2.3 OTHER WEAPON BEARERS

Private security companies

These are sometimes hired to carry out military operations, secure key installations – including the sites of humanitarian organizations, gather intelligence, train military or police personnel, etc.

Police forces

There are various types of police, with various names, roles, structures and mandates. But whether we're talking about the civil police, criminal investigations department, military police, guards, gendarmerie, carabinieri or intelligence service, the basic role of a police force is to serve the community and protect those under their responsibility against those acts that are considered illegal.²³ It's therefore their job to apply the law by exercising the powers of maintaining order, arrest and detention, search and seizure and the use of force, including arms. In some cases, police powers may be exercised by armed forces personnel (in uniform or plain clothes), even though they've received no training in police work.

²³ United Nations, *Code of Conduct for Law Enforcement Officials*, United Nations, 1979: <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/LawEnforcementOfficials.aspx>.

Peacekeeping forces

A peacekeeping force is the military component of a peacekeeping operation, working alongside the civilian and police components. Such a force will have received a mandate from the UN Security Council to maintain or restore peace and security in the country where it's deployed. It generally consists of military contingents provided by one or more states. The tasks of a peacekeeping force will depend on its specific mandate, but they're becoming increasingly multi-dimensional. Tasks may include monitoring the application of a ceasefire agreement, maintaining order, disarming and demobilizing combatants or protecting the civilian population. As part of protecting the civilian population, such a force may for instance carry out medical evacuations or take measures to improve security conditions, to enable humanitarian aid to be distributed in safety. A peacekeeping force may participate in activities to promote the rule of law and consolidate peace, such as reforms of the police, judicial system and prison system. Increasingly, peacekeeping forces operate under a "robust" mandate that authorizes them to make more extensive use of force, especially against armed groups.

Obviously, a peacekeeping force isn't a threat to you in itself, but the diversity of its civilian and military mandates may lead to confusion among the public, especially if the peacekeeping force is taking a direct part in a conflict, as a belligerent. This may have a negative effect on how people see your humanitarian action, which claims to be neutral, impartial and independent. The public could become hostile to your work, especially if the peacekeeping force is unable to protect them.

4.3 CHARACTERISTICS OF COMBATANTS

Two ICRC studies²⁴ have shown that the behaviour of combatants has the following characteristics:

Obedience to authority: Generally speaking, people are happy to obey any authority they perceive as legitimate, even if some of the things they're

24. D. Muñoz-Rojas and J.-J. Frésard, *The Roots of Behaviour in War: Understanding and Preventing IHL Violations*, ICRC, Geneva, 2004: <https://shop.icrc.org/he-roots-of-behaviour-in-war-understanding-and-preventing-ihl-violations-pdf-en.html>. ICRC, *The Roots of Restraint in War*, ICRC, Geneva, 2018: <https://shop.icrc.org/the-roots-of-restraint-in-war-pdf-en>.

expected to do are contrary to their own beliefs. This is particularly true in the case of a combatant, who is under military authority, which is generally stricter than civilian authority. As a result, combatants usually do what's required of them. Their obedience is strengthened by their military training and by their having prepared – alongside others – to face an enemy who has often been demonized and dehumanized.

A combatant is a normal person. It just so happens that his job requires him to carry a gun and that he's particularly loyal to his group. That doesn't mean he has no moral values.

Peer pressure: In general, combatants are motivated not by hatred or fear, but by peer pressure – loyalty to their comrades, the need to defend their collective reputation and a desire to contribute to the group's success. They submit to internal regulations – or, depending on the nature of the group, to rules set out by the wider community – and respect their commanders. Their loyalty to their comrades is strong, and precepts such as “leave no-one behind” are deeply rooted in their psyche. The shared experience of combat creates bonds that are sometimes stronger than those between family members. “Brotherhood” is a more powerful reason for fighting than patriotism or ideology.

Moral values: It would be a mistake to assume that a combatant does not exercise independent moral judgement. The “I was only obeying orders” defence has been rejected by numerous courts and tribunals. While military training does aim to inculcate habits and reduce the degree to which a combatant makes their own moral judgements, their behaviour is still influenced by the moral values and unspoken rules of their culture and society. In other words, combatants don't just blindly follow orders. Their personal ethics or “soldier's honour” may cause them to act in conformity with IHL, especially when operating without direct supervision.

Religion: Belonging to a particular religion may greatly intensify the loyalty of combatants to their group. It has been observed that a person's religious beliefs often have a more powerful effect on their behaviour than IHL. For instance, Muslim combatants are generally more inclined to follow the precepts of Islamic law than those of IHL. However, these two branches of law have many points in common, notably the showing of restraint with regard to civilians and the prohibition of certain methods and means of warfare.

4.4 ANALYSING WEAPON BEARERS

What you do about security will depend on the weapon bearers of influence in your area. You'll need to look at the specifics of each one. To ensure that they accept your presence and your work, and to stay safe, you have to discover who they are, their aims, how they're organized, who influences them, and the quality of their relations with the ICRC. For instance, if the entity in question has no clear hierarchy, and the chain of command is dysfunctional, there's little chance of what you say to a commander getting through to their subordinates. Or if they're just a gang of criminals, of which the members operate more or less independently, you'll have to devise a strategy that will ensure that they don't obstruct your work. Analysing weapon bearers will also enable you to understand the extent to which they're contributing to humanitarian problems, and how they could help mitigate them.

Draw on the experience of your more experienced colleagues. They'll be able to tell you about the weapon bearers operating in your area and will probably know the history of their relationships with the ICRC.

Your first priorities will be to understand their structure and find out what kind of relationship the ICRC has had with them so far.

1. **Structure:** This will determine how the entity behaves in the field. It will influence their military capability and the authority of their commanders over their personnel. Understanding the structure will enable you to identify the decision-makers and the type of authority they exercise. Their own documents may be useful, such as a manifesto or political programme, a list of commanders, documents showing how units are organized, codes of conduct, military manuals, website and public statements. This stage is essential; it will help you understand how to obtain **security guarantees**, and from whom. It will also indicate whether outside entities – including the community – influence the group. If they do, you may be able to use them as intermediaries through which to transmit messages regarding security, and call on them for support if necessary.

- 2. Interaction with the ICRC:** The history of our relations with a weapon bearer will have a significant influence on how much we trust each other. If you know the history, you'll also know the level at which dialogue with the ICRC has taken place, and the quality of that dialogue. A review of the history will also help you understand the obstacles that have arisen in connection with this weapon bearer, and the successes that have been achieved. It's also important that you know about any security incidents involving them, whether they affected the ICRC, our partners or other humanitarian organizations. Examining their past interaction with the ICRC will reveal the degree to which they appear to accept, tolerate or reject your presence and your activities.

The memory of events involving the ICRC – be they positive or negative – will have a major influence on the degree of respect that a weapon bearer shows you.

Analysing weapon bearers	
Key indicator	Security-relevant factors related to this indicator
Structure of the group	
Ideology, strategic aims and motivation (political, economic, ethnic, religious or other)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – How the identity of the ICRC, what it represents and your personal profile could lead to problems. – Whether your humanitarian objectives could clash with the objectives of the group.
Decision-making Type of hierarchy, command and control capabilities including discipline and sanctions, internal communication, education and training, etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Who to talk to about security. What your notification strategy should be. – Who gives orders to the fighters on the ground, how effectively those orders are transmitted and to what degree they are carried out. – The ability of the group to implement (or ensure implementation of) decisions relevant to the ICRC.
Means of identification Uniforms, insignia, badges of rank, scarification, body ornamentation, etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Identifying members of the group and the decision-making power they wield.
Extent of the group's territorial influence (and any influence they exercise outside the region)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Which group to contact to obtain security guarantees for a given area. – Whether you need to obtain the support of other colleagues or parts of the ICRC, including HQ.

Analysing weapon bearers	
Key indicator	Security-relevant factors related to this indicator
Structure of the group	
Degree of interaction/isolation (with respect to the authorities and the community)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The degree to which your activities are accepted, which is an essential factor in ensuring your safety and that of the people you're trying to help. - Whether and how the group benefits indirectly from your activities. - Local sources of influence and support, so you can mobilize them if necessary.
Outside alliances, influence and sources of support States and other weapon bearers – local, regional or global	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Entities that the ICRC can call on for support if necessary. - Whether the group is affiliated to or inspired by broader networks – this could constitute an additional threat in the field.
Relations with the ICRC	
History and degree of engagement in the past	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The amount of trust that has been built up and the obstacles encountered in the past.
Ease of access to the group's area of influence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The degree to which the ICRC and our activities are accepted.
Reliability of our contacts with the group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The appropriate communication and notification strategy.
Security incidents (whether they involved the ICRC or other humanitarians)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Awareness of past incidents as a factor to take into account when planning security and logistics.

4.5 CHALLENGES



As you'll have gathered by now, working safely requires you to overcome a number of challenges, in order to maintain relations with all weapon bearers and ensure that they accept your activities.

Meeting weapon bearers: It may be difficult to physically meet up with certain weapon bearers, either because the environment is dangerous or because the roads are of poor quality, damaged or simply non-existent.

- Talk to your colleagues about the logistics, and about the most appropriate and effective ways of reducing the risks involved in meeting up with weapon bearers. Technology is an option, but a video call can never replace a physical meeting.

Knowing who's who: You're approaching a checkpoint manned by soldiers wearing the uniform of the government forces. As it happens, those men are members of a local militia wearing army uniforms, and their "mission" is to rob anyone travelling along that road. You're talking to a commander? Wrong. He's just a soldier, with no power to take decisions. Or a teacher? Outside the classroom, he's a member of a local militia. Working out who belongs to which group is often more complicated than it appears. In particular, the wearing of a uniform (or the absence of a uniform) and/or badges of rank can be deceptive. While it's important to know the rank of the person you're talking to, because

it shows where they stand in the hierarchy, it's just as important to know what post they occupy. That will tell you about their responsibilities, their role and their influence within the group.

- If no-one has already done so, map the various armed forces and armed groups, with the aid of your colleagues, and update this document regularly.
- Find out what uniform each group wears and note other features that could help you identify its members, such as scarification, tattoos, body ornamentation or language.
- Whenever you talk to a member of the community, assume that one of their friends or family is a fighter, that they support one of the parties to the conflict or that they themselves are a member of an armed group. And one of your resident colleagues may have a brother or cousin who holds a senior position in the armed forces or an armed group.

Distinguishing between apparent objectives and actual objectives: The true aims of an armed group are sometimes very different from the ones they talk about. Their seemingly noble cause may be a front for what is primarily a financial/criminal enterprise. But you're going to have to learn to live with some uncertainty on this point, because it would be unwise to ask too many awkward questions.

- What you can be certain of is that you'll be in real danger if your activities risk harming the interests of local armed groups.
- Never ask where they get their money.
- Never even hint that you think they could possibly be involved in anything criminal, even (or especially!) if everyone knows they are.

Identifying the decision-makers: If a group has no clear hierarchy, it may be difficult to understand who's giving the orders, who takes the decisions and who influences the group. In some cases, people outside the group – such as religious leaders or powerful businessmen – have more influence over a group than its official commanders.

- You may well be able to get messages across to a group via your contacts with civilian, traditional and religious leaders, and with the community – especially if the armed group has close links with the community.

Obtaining security guarantees: The armed groups with which you need to maintain relations are often decentralized and fragmented, forging alliances with other groups as the opportunity presents itself. This means that one faction may be unaware of what another is doing, and will have no idea about any security guarantees another faction might have given you. It could even be that the security guarantees given by one faction clash with the interests of another – they might not want you and your activities in their zone of influence.

- A detailed analysis of the armed groups in your area will enable you to devise a strategy for obtaining security guarantees from them.
- When you meet combatants in the field, ask them who they take their orders from, if the circumstances justify asking the question.

Respecting the security concerns of armed groups: Some armed groups operate in secret. They may be reluctant to meet up with you, either because they fear for their security or reputation, or because they're currently conducting a military operation. In particular, they may be worried that their enemies could track your movements in order to locate and attack them; armed groups have sometimes accused the ICRC of having unintentionally facilitated military operations against them.

Don't be too pushy; accept any request to postpone a meeting. This is important for your security and that of your contact.

Dealing with a lack of communication: There may well be groups whose aims are purely criminal and with whom you have no contact. Some armed groups may refuse to talk to you, either because they disagree with the ICRC's principles, or because they believe you to be too closely linked with the state or other entity, or because they see the ICRC as a tool of the West.

Governments sometimes oppose contact between the ICRC and certain armed groups, block any humanitarian aid that could be of direct benefit to them (e.g. treating their wounded) or prohibit access to areas under a group's control. They may see these armed groups as criminals or terrorists, or they may be concerned that dialogue between a humanitarian organization and a group will give their enemy a degree of recognition. In fact, IHL makes a clear distinction between dialogue and status (see Article 3 common to the Geneva Conventions).

The ICRC will probably have to take the matter up at a higher level to resolve such problems. Having said which, don't underestimate the importance of your contacts in the field. A traditional or religious leader, a businessman, a detainee you visit, a livestock herder, a nurse or a simple member of the community may be able to directly influence the armed group you're trying to contact.

Alcohol, drugs and “uncontrolled elements”: You may also run up against uncontrolled – and uncontrollable – entities and individuals. A drunken combatant may open fire. Combine the drink with drugs and you have a real problem, especially if the fighters are young. A combatant may also bear a grudge against the ICRC, or against you personally. He may be annoyed because you helped his enemy, or because you haven't been quick enough to help his village. Or he may be angry with the ICRC because the organization sacked a member of his family or community.

- Never try to talk to a fighter who appears to be drunk or on drugs; he could easily lose his temper and become aggressive. Anything you say is liable to upset him and make him lose control. If he wants to talk, let him do so briefly, but don't prolong the discussion.
- if there are fighters in your area who are known to be permanently under the influence of alcohol or drugs, ask your management about how to deal with them – or whether to avoid them.

The first step in becoming accepted is to treat everyone you meet with humanity, empathy and respect, whatever their function and whatever side they're on.

4.6 CONTACT WITH COMBATANTS



Your aim is to gain the trust of your contacts, whether you're exchanging a couple of words at a checkpoint or undertaking long-term dialogue as part of your operations. Maintaining good relations with combatants is often a balancing act; you'll need tact, a listening ear and common sense. If it doesn't click between you, you're not going to get far. This means that your image and attitude will generally be much more important than your gender, your nationality or your job title. See the work of the ICRC as a continuous thread; the behaviour of your predecessors will have shaped the organization's relationship with the individuals and entities in the area, and your behaviour and that of your successors will become part of the same process. Trust has to be created at both personal and organizational levels.

It's not easy to find the right balance between your role as an individual and your role as a representative of the ICRC. While you do need to maintain a healthy dose of professional distance, your personality will have just as much impact as will the official statements of the organization. Your personal contacts can be valuable, but they're not without risk – for you and for the ICRC. You may be held to blame

The image you project and your interpersonal skills are essential tools for gaining the trust of your contacts, and so are your conformity with the ICRC's principles and operating procedures.

for decisions that are not your responsibility, or the government may accuse you of getting too cozy with a particular armed group. And when you're away, dialogue may come to a halt – and operations likewise.

Who should I discuss security with?

The ICRC establishes different types of relationship with weapon bearers, depending on the activity concerned and the subject to be discussed. This is all part of our multidisciplinary strategy. The aim is to build dialogue at all levels, from the soldier on the checkpoint to the most senior people who take the strategic and political decisions.

The structure of the armed force or group concerned, the subject to be discussed and the position you occupy will all determine at what level you approach them and who you speak to. The combatants you speak to need to know who you are and what you're doing in their region. If they start to trust you, it is they who will probably give you the most up-to-date information regarding security in their zone, and they will tell you from whom they take their orders.

4.6.1 EXPLAIN WHO YOU ARE AND WHAT YOU'RE DOING

It's perfectly understandable if combatants have trouble working out who you are and what you're doing in their area. They'll undoubtedly encounter many humanitarian organizations, and it's difficult to distinguish the one from the other. If they've never met you before, it's perfectly normal if they're suspicious at first – even a little aggressive. Bear in mind that their role requires them to be on the alert at all times. Your concerns may well be very different to theirs. It's also natural and understandable for each side to fear that humanitarian aid will help the other.

p. 274 Be it at a **checkpoint** (security situation permitting), over a cup of tea under a tree, at an official meeting or during an information session, actively promoting the work of the ICRC in the area will help gain everyone's trust. So make the most of every opportunity to explain who you are and what you're doing. The best way of getting your message across is to illustrate the impartial nature of your work by (for instance) explaining that your medical activities benefit the wounded on all sides or talking about the ICRC's role as

*Say what you do,
and do what
you say!*

a neutral intermediary during prisoner exchanges. You'll probably be surprised how little people know about the ICRC's principles and our work, even in countries where we've been operating for decades. The mere fact that combatants don't know what you're actually doing in their area is a potential source of misunderstanding and discontent, and that can be dangerous. Finally, you must remember that combatants will be watching what you do in the field. They'll expect your deeds to match your words, and they'll expect you to fulfil your commitments towards them. It's not unknown for an influential armed group to publicly withdraw the security guarantees it had provided for the ICRC, on the grounds that we hadn't kept our promises.

4.6.2 THE IMPORTANCE OF INTERPERSONAL SKILLS

There's no magic formula for gaining the trust of a combatant. You need to adopt the same attitude as you would when dealing with the police or the public, and you need to show the signs of respect that are customary in the area. Above all, remember that the values, experiences and concerns of the person you're talking to may be different to yours, but that they're just as important. Remember also that a combatant is expected to be loyal to their superiors and comrades. To understand another person, you must adapt to their way of thinking. The best way to ensure communication is to show empathy and respect.

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In particular:

- **Be respectful:** Follow the rules of politeness and show the signs of respect usual in the area. Don't judge the person and don't claim to understand their situation. Be careful not to belittle or humiliate them, and do nothing that could cause them to lose face, especially in front of their comrades. You'll only make your own life difficult if you're arrogant, you imply that their cause is worthless or you insinuate that they're just a criminal.
- **Listen:** Prioritize active listening over speaking. Listen to what the person is saying and take the time to answer their questions.
- **Be clear and concise:** The other person's time is valuable, especially during a conflict. They may well be taking a risk by agreeing to meet you. So be clear, concise and disciplined. Solid teamwork will facilitate dialogue. Inappropriate behaviour by a single team member can undermine it. Banging on and on about one particular point is likely to irritate the other person. Know when to drop a subject.

- **Show empathy:** If you try to understand the other person's point of view and put yourself in their position, you'll be better able to tailor your arguments in such a way as to find a solution acceptable to all. Good dialogue is never a one-way street. If you just keep talking and don't listen to the other person, your discussion will remain superficial, and you may even annoy them.
- **Keep calm:** In many societies, losing your temper also means losing the other person's respect forever. Conversely, not letting yourself be provoked, but just patiently defending your humanitarian objectives, will help you gain the other person's trust.
- **Be open:** It's important to project a consistent image of the ICRC to all weapon bearers, and not hide the fact that you talk to a wide range of entities – including the enemies of the person in front of you. Otherwise, they may suspect you of espionage, or of playing a double game. And be careful not to show more respect to one group than to another, to avoid giving the impression of partiality.
- **Be discreet:** Only talk about subjects that are directly relevant to your operations. Don't ask about the group's military tactics or intentions, nor about their sources of funding. Treat the information they give you with the necessary discretion, and never pass on to one party any information obtained from the other. Remember that security-related information is confidential.
- **Be flexible:** As long as it won't harm your image, having the occasional drink or meal with your contacts will be more useful than limiting yourself to purely formal meetings. Be friendly, within sensible limits.
- **Think of your language:** Adapt your mode of speech to that of the other person, to avoid misunderstandings. Don't try to impress them with legal terminology. Avoid humanitarian jargon and acronyms. If you're working with an **interpreter**, look at your contact while the **interpreter** is speaking, and make sure the interpreter is passing on your message as accurately as possible.

- **Make best use of your colleagues:** If speaking the local language is essential to resolving a particular problem, and you don't speak it, ask a local colleague to help (as long as they have no objection). Conversely, it's best to get an expatriate colleague to communicate unwelcome decisions or turn down certain requests, such as when **someone asks to travel in one of your vehicles**. If you don't have an expatriate colleague with you, emphasize that the decision comes from the organization, not you. In many cases this will defuse the situation and avoid your being put under pressure.

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If circumstances permit, take advantage of every opportunity to talk to the combatants you meet. Ask them about security in the area.

4.7 WEAPON BEARERS: TEN QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF

1. Am I familiar with the weapon bearers in the region, and their characteristics?
2. Can I distinguish between the different weapon bearers?
3. Do I know what kinds of relationships the ICRC has with them, and what activities we've carried out that have benefited them?
4. Am I confident about my ability to talk to them? If not, have I told my boss?
5. Could my behaviour arouse suspicion, or could some people see my actions as not being impartial?
6. Do I know who to ask for security guarantees, so I can access the community safely?
7. When I meet combatants, am I in the habit of talking to them about the ICRC's principles and mandate, and about our activities in the area?
8. Do I pay sufficient attention to their security-related comments and hints?
9. Might certain weapon bearers be unhappy about the activities I'm planning?
10. Before starting an activity, have I informed the influential weapon bearers in the area, and obtained their support if necessary?

Further reading

Centre of Competence on Humanitarian Negotiation, *Field Manual on Front-Line Humanitarian Negotiation*, V 2.0, 2019: <https://frontline-negotiations.org/home/resources/field-manual>.

ICRC, *The Roots of Restraint in War*, ICRC, Geneva, 2018: <https://shop.icrc.org/the-roots-of-restraint-in-war-pdf-en>.

ICRC, *International Humanitarian Law: Answers to your Questions*, ICRC, Geneva, 2015: <https://shop.icrc.org/international-humanitarian-law-answers-to-your-questions-pdf-en>.

ICRC, *Engaging with State Armed Forces to Prevent Sexual Violence: A Toolkit for ICRC Staff on How to Engage State Armed Forces in Dialogue on Preventing Sexual Violence in Armed Conflict*, ICRC, Geneva, 2020: <https://shop.icrc.org/engaging-with-state-armed-forces-to-prevent-sexual-violence-a-toolkit-for-icrc-staff-on-how-to-engage-state-armed-forces-in-dialogue-on-preventing-sexual-violence-in-armed-conflict-pdf-en>.

D. Muñoz-Rojas and J-J. Frésard, *The Roots of Behaviour in War: Understanding and Preventing IHL Violations*, ICRC, Geneva, 2004: <https://shop.icrc.org/he-roots-of-behaviour-in-war-understanding-and-preventing-ihl-violations-pdf-en.html>.

5. YOUR BEHAVIOUR

Your job will involve building relationships of trust with authorities, weapon bearers and communities, and acting as an ambassador for the Movement's principles and values, both at work and in your private life.

Security is primarily a question of acceptance and perception, and hence depends primarily on personal behaviour. Your interpersonal skills and attitude will affect people's opinions of you and of the ICRC. Inappropriate behaviour risks provoking suspicion or mistrust. By "inappropriate behaviour" we mean here behaviour that is contrary to local customs and traditions or which fails to respect religious beliefs, human dignity, the Fundamental Principles of the Movement or the rules set out in the Code of Conduct. Your colleagues will doubtless have numerous tales to tell of embarrassing, wrongful or downright dangerous situations: culturally-inappropriate behaviour, neo-colonial or arrogant attitudes, racist comments, excessively close relations with belligerents, etc.

This chapter explains how your behaviour can promote social acceptance, and hence security, and how it can harm the ICRC's reputation, and hence put you in danger. It emphasizes the importance of respecting local cultural and religious standards, and of behaving in accordance with the Code of Conduct, so as to project a positive image of the ICRC.

5.1 THE CODE OF CONDUCT

The aim of the ICRC Code of Conduct is to promote respect and security for all. It serves as an ethical reference on how to behave throughout the world and how to act with integrity, respecting the

Principles of the Movement – especially humanity. It also sets out the ethical standards and values that the ICRC promotes. The subjects it covers include the

*Obey the Code of Conduct!
By doing so you protect your safety,
that of your colleagues and that
of the people you are trying to help.*

requirement to obey the laws of the country in which we work,²⁵ and to respect the religious beliefs, customs and traditions, rules, practices and habits of the population; the duty of discretion; the prohibition of all forms of harassment, abuse of power and sexual exploitation, including the prohibition of using the services of prostitutes or engaging in any sexual activity with a minor; prohibition of fraud and corruption and the prohibition of using drugs. The security regulations also contain detailed rules that reflect the local situation.

ICRC staff are required to follow the ethical standards and rules set out in the Code of Conduct. Its proper application depends on everyone reporting any **wrongful behaviour** of which they may be a victim or witness.

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5.2 CULTURAL SENSITIVITY: AN ESSENTIAL QUALITY

5.2.1 BEHAVING IN ACCORDANCE WITH LOCAL CUSTOMS

If you're working in a region other than your own, you'll integrate much more easily if you make the effort to understand what behaviour is considered socially and culturally acceptable and unacceptable. If you show cultural sensitivity and respect towards the people you encounter, they'll probably be more inclined to cooperate. You'll also be able to decode what's going on around you more readily and communicate more effectively.

The ICRC's largest operations take place in countries where religious and traditional beliefs play a decisive role.

There are as many representations of reality as there are people, and each has its own traditions, religions, beliefs in good and evil spirits, rules of politeness, morals, practices, etc. A mark of respect in one culture may be disrespectful in another. For instance, in some cultures it's important to take the time to greet people and make small-talk before getting down to business, whereas in others you should get to the point quickly, as chit-chat is seen as a source of inefficiency and a waste of time. How to greet a man or a woman, or show respect to the elderly, differs from one culture to another. In some communities, it's rude to

²⁵ Except where otherwise provided under the ICRC's privileges and immunities, or where the Code of Conduct stipulates otherwise, e.g. in the case of the prohibition of using the services of prostitutes.

display the sole of your foot when sitting down, or to eat or drink with your left hand. In some societies, telling people you're an atheist can cause you to lose their respect.

Be aware that you'll not be welcomed with open arms everywhere you go. People may be suspicious of you because you're a foreigner, or belong to a particular nationality, ethnic group or religion, or simply because you work for an international humanitarian organization. And don't go thinking that people are automatically going to trust you just because you're there to help them.

Most cultural *faux pas* can be avoided by asking for and following the advice of colleagues from the region.

- When you start a new assignment, ask to be fully briefed on the local customs, culture and taboos.
- Take an interest in local ethnological, cultural and religious practices; read novels, watch films and documentaries, carry out research online, take part in cultural events and learn from your colleagues.
- Don't try to impose your views on others, and don't interfere in the social or political aspects of the country where you're working.
- Show respect for local religious beliefs, customs and habits.
- Avoid disapproving or offensive comments on the political, social, cultural or religious aspects of the country. Find out whether you need to follow certain rules during religious festivals.
- Avoid promoting your religion.
- Ask your colleagues to let you know if they feel your behaviour is inappropriate, and don't hesitate to have a friendly word (in private) with any colleagues whose behaviour you find inappropriate.
- Ask your management about the channels via which you can report to the ICRC any behaviour which you believe contravenes the Code of Conduct.

Showing disrespect for local culture will reinforce the views of those who are already unhappy about your presence.



5.2.2 WORKING IN A MULTICULTURAL ENVIRONMENT

Working for an international organization means working with colleagues from all over the world. As of summer 2020, 159 different nationalities were working for the ICRC. This diversity is a real advantage when it comes to implementing your programmes, but it can also present a few challenges. What if you believe in witchcraft, but your colleague only believes what they see? Or their jokes make you uncomfortable? Or you want to say your prayers, but your team leader doesn't want to stop the vehicle? You're bound to run up against this kind of problem, and there will inevitably be misunderstandings, as your beliefs, values and habits could well be very different to those of your colleagues. On top of which, there may be barriers on account of language differences or because you have different jobs.

You didn't take up humanitarian work so you could impose your outlook or your way of seeing things on others.

While it's perfectly normal to sometimes find it difficult to work with colleagues from another culture, or even to feel a little frustrated from time to time, you can make things easier if you try to understand and take account of everyone's perspectives and cultural sensitivities. You can help things go smoothly by being open-minded, examining your assumptions, questioning your way of thinking, showing that you're listening and showing respect. This will also promote cohesion and the flow of information within your team, both of which are vital for everyone's security.

5.2.3 RELATIONS BETWEEN MEN AND WOMEN

How much physical distance to leave between you and another person is one of the things you'll need to re-learn in every culture. If you don't, you're likely to make people uncomfortable, or even aggressive. Just think how you feel when someone you don't know chooses to sit or stand very close to you, even though there's plenty of room.

To avoid getting into difficulties, you'll need to observe local customs regarding interaction between men and women who aren't closely related. Social contact with the opposite sex could be problematic. For instance, in a very traditional society, a male colleague giving driving lessons to a female colleague outside working hours could lead to problems with her family. Things like suggestive looks or sexist jokes are in any case **sexual harassment**. Getting too close to someone of the same sex could lead someone to think you're homosexual, which could be a problem in a society where homosexuality is not accepted.

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In some societies, touching the person you're talking to is completely normal, whereas in others it would be totally unacceptable. What may seem like perfectly natural gestures of friendship, affection or compassion – like putting your hand on someone's shoulder, taking their hand, hugging them or kissing them in public – can make people feel very uncomfortable. It can be difficult to know what to do. How do you comfort someone in a “culturally-appropriate” manner when they're pouring their heart out to you? The best option is probably to keep a certain distance and show your compassion by listening actively, showing that you understand their suffering and telling them you want to do something about it.

- Find out whether there are any taboos concerning relationships and physical contact – both with the opposite sex and with the same sex.
- Observe the behaviour of local people of the same gender as you; if they always sit at a certain distance from others, do likewise.
- Show respect to the people you meet by maintaining a certain distance.
- Make sure that no-one could ever think there was anything sexual about your attitude or actions. In this area it's not your intentions that count; it's what other people think.

Make sure you maintain the distance required by local cultural and religious standards.

5.3 MAKING A GOOD IMPRESSION

5.3.1 A FEW SIMPLE THINGS TO DO

Some acts are clearly contrary to the ethics and values of the ICRC. But more minor things can also cause problems. Rudeness, a lack of respect or sensitivity, a scornful attitude, inappropriate clothing or a series of different inappropriate attitudes ... any of these can cause problems. Thanks to social media, such things can be blown up out of all proportion, with disastrous results for the ICRC.

Bear in mind that what's OK in one situation is not necessarily OK in another. You may well lose the respect of all around you if you lose your temper in public, for instance. Taking photos from your terrace might upset the neighbours if they feel you're infringing their privacy. Driving through a village at top speed in an ICRC vehicle is not only dangerous, but may also get you into trouble with the local population, especially if you drive with the windows open and music blaring.

The points below might seem like plain common sense, but observing some of your colleagues will reveal such sense to be less common than you'd think.

- Always think about the image you're projecting.
- Don't lose your temper or show anger in public.
- Never be condescending or scornful, and never humiliate anyone.
- Don't draw attention to yourself.
- Be modest – don't be a know-it-all.
- Avoid displaying signs of wealth.
- Don't abuse your status as an employee of an international organization.
- Drive calmly and courteously, and at a speed appropriate to the conditions.

*Always be polite,
discreet and
respectful.*

5.3.2 HOW YOUR APPEARANCE CAN PUT YOU AT RISK

Personal appearance – and especially what clothes to wear – can be a controversial topic; some people believe that the way they dress is a matter of personal freedom. You may not like the fact that the ICRC has to impose a certain dress code. Some items of clothing may be prohibited and others may be compulsory. In certain areas, for instance, men will have to wear long trousers and a long-sleeved shirt, while women will have to cover their hair. If that's the case where you work, just think about how you feel back home when you

What counts is not how you see yourself, but how others see you.

see someone wearing the clothes of another culture or dressed in a manner you consider sloppy, extravagant or indecent. It's the same everywhere – your appearance will have a major influence on the way people judge you. The less attention you attract, the safer you'll be.

Dressing appropriately

There have been endless examples of humanitarian workers dressing inappropriately: miniskirts or shorts in an area where “normal clothing” means hiding the entire body, a plunging neckline and skin-tight jeans when visiting detainees, flip-flops at a meeting with the regional governor, wearing a military-themed T-shirt while conducting a needs assessment for villagers who've just lost all they have to rampaging soldiers, etc.

It's your responsibility to choose the right clothes for your working environment, the job you do and the people you're going to meet. Dressing too casually can easily be seen as a lack of respect and dignity. Wearing visible signs of wealth, such as valuable jewellery or an expensive watch, may not only attract the attention of criminals but also be interpreted as a sign of arrogance, and be humiliating for people in need. Certain clothes may be seen as offensive or provocative, or may give the impression of “loose morals”.

- Follow the ICRC dress code for the area where you work.
- If you're not from the area, ask colleagues who are familiar with local customs what you should wear.
- Match your clothes to local cultural and religious standards, to the people you're likely to meet and to the kind of work you do.

- Dress more plainly, simply and discreetly than you would normally, and avoid anything that could be considered flashy.
- Never wear anything that looks at all military, such as clothing or caps with military insignia or images.

Clothing that's absolutely fine back home may be anything but fine in the area where you're working.

Tattoos, piercings and religious symbols

Tattoos, piercings and earrings (in the case of men) are frowned upon in some places, and may negatively affect the degree of respect that people show you. In certain countries, for instance, tattoos are associated with crime. Having images visible on your skin may be illegal – especially in the case of religious symbols. Or they may be considered obscene.

Enquire about the local rules regarding tattoos, jewellery and religious symbols. Displaying your religious affiliation may cause problems in some contexts. Wearing a piece of jewellery in the form of a religious symbol or fixing a religious symbol to the mirror of your car may offend those of a different faith. Displaying a religious symbol could cause people to question the non-religious nature of the ICRC and even put you in danger, especially in areas where there's serious tension or violence between religious communities.

So if you're working somewhere where tattoos, certain types of jewellery or religious symbols could meet with intolerance or hostility, don't wear such jewellery or symbols, and hide tattoos under your clothing.

5.3.3 YOUR PRIVATE LIFE



This section is aimed primarily at staff assigned to a country other than their own, and to visitors staying in ICRC residences.

When they're not actually working, some humanitarian personnel – especially expatriates – have a tendency to ignore the suffering and poverty around them. They forget that they represent the ICRC 24 hours a day, seven days a week, and do things that could harm the ICRC's image or put them directly in danger.

Relaxation and a social life are essential to your well-being, but you need to show restraint. In particular, you must avoid over-emphasizing the gap between you and the local population. Nothing wrong with the occasional party, but avoid annoying your neighbours with loud music or other noise at night, or by a steady stream of vehicles coming and going at all hours. It's best not to park your vehicle in front of any restaurants, bars or clubs that are considered disreputable. In fact, it's better not to go there in the first place! It will also harm your image if you visit a military base for social reasons, outside working hours. Bear in mind that the Code of Conduct (III.2) prohibits "the purchase of sexual services" at all times, even when you're on leave or on holiday abroad.

Just assume that because you're a humanitarian worker, whatever you do will become known sooner or later.

Finally, be aware that your “private” life is never totally private. What you get up to in your residence could well become public knowledge. It’s perfectly normal for the domestic staff and guards who look after your residence to talk about you to their families and their community. And your neighbours may well be watching you. If you fail to show them respect, they’re likely to be less willing to help you if you ever need them.

5.3.4 ALCOHOL AND DRUGS

Excessive consumption of alcohol can affect your health in many ways. Drugs and certain medicines will amplify its effects. Alcohol reduces your ability to concentrate and your powers of discernment, and slows your reactions. You

If you don’t feel good, talk to someone you trust, or to a health professional. Drink and drugs are not a solution.

may well over-estimate yourself and take risks that you wouldn’t have taken otherwise. It also renders you more vulnerable to certain threats. And in contexts where alcohol is culturally inappropriate or downright illegal, drinking alcohol in public can be seen as a sign of disrespect, can tarnish your image or even be a criminal offence.

Excessive consumption of alcohol can seriously affect your security and that of others. Alcohol abuse is incompatible with work in a conflict zone, where you must always be vigilant and capable of reacting quickly and effectively to any threat. The ICRC has a zero-tolerance policy on drinking and driving and on the possession and consumption of drugs. See Code of Conduct, II.B.3 regarding drugs.

- If you go out for the evening in a context where alcohol is allowed, decide which of you is going to stay off the alcohol and drive the rest of you home. Make use of the services of an official driver if one is available.
- Don’t accept alcoholic drinks from strangers.
- Never leave your drink unattended; someone could spike it with drugs.

5.4 FRAUD AND CORRUPTION

Humanitarian operations involve introducing large amounts of resources into contexts where they are scarce. This sometimes gives the impression that our reserves are endless. This influx of resources can disturb existing power relationships and open the door to misuse. The temptation to indulge in fraud, corruption, collusion, etc. is even stronger during a conflict or other humanitarian emergency, and in countries where bribery is common and corruption is rife.²⁶ People may use pressure, psychological blackmail or threats to induce you to commit fraud. You may also be tempted to use ICRC resources for yourself.

5.4.1 WHAT DO WE MEAN BY “FRAUD AND CORRUPTION”?

Definitions of “fraud” and “corruption” vary from one country or legal system to another. These terms are often used to describe various dishonest practices aimed at obtaining an unauthorized benefit, such as money, goods or services, for oneself, one’s organization or a third party.²⁷ The distinction between what does and does not constitute fraud or corruption is sometimes a fine one. Some examples of actions that are considered fraud or corruption:

- Using ICRC vehicles for private purposes without permission.
- Invoicing for goods or services that have not been received.
- Falsifying documents (such as inventories) and forging signatures.
- Misappropriating property (fuel, relief goods, etc.).
- Using your position to solicit or accept bribes or gifts in cash or kind, including sexual favours, in exchange for a favourable decision (e.g. the awarding of a contract) or humanitarian aid.
- Bribing a third party in order to pass a checkpoint or access a region, place of detention, etc.

As well as undermining your strictly humanitarian mandate, fraud and corruption pose a threat to your security and that of our beneficiaries. The ICRC therefore has a zero-tolerance policy regarding all forms of fraud and corruption.

²⁶ See Transparency International, *Corruption Perceptions Index*, 2020, 2020: <https://www.transparency.org/en/cpi/2020/index>.

²⁷ For further details as to what the ICRC sees as fraud, please see: ICRC, *Code of Conduct Policies: Prevention of and Response to Sexual Misconduct, Fraud and Corruption*: https://collab.ext.icrc.org/sites/TS_GCOI/Activities/GCOI%20FINAL%20PRODUCTS/REPOSITORY%20OF%20PUBLICATIONS%20PDF/4348_002_Code_of_conduct_policies_EN.pdf. [Available to ICRC staff only].

5.4.2 ACT WITH INTEGRITY

In addition to behaving with integrity, in accordance with the Code of Conduct and other directives issued by the ICRC, taking the following measures will reduce the risk of fraud and corruption:

- Observe ICRC administrative procedures carefully; the need to act quickly in an emergency never justifies doing otherwise.
- Find out about the internal mechanisms for reporting this kind of wrongful act.
- Take any allegation of corruption or inappropriate behaviour on the part of colleagues or the organization seriously. If you are subjected to pressure, or you witness corruption, speak to your management or someone you trust, so that you can decide together what should be done about it.

Observing ICRC administrative procedures is a means of preventing fraud and corruption.

5.4.3 GIFTS AND BRIBES

Should you refuse any gift you might be offered in the course of your operations? The difference between a bribe and an honest, acceptable gift lies in the intention. If the aim is to influence your decisions or obtain some kind of advantage, that's corruption. If that's not the aim, and the person simply wishes to thank you for your presence and support, that's not corruption. Openly accepting a symbolic material gift that's generally considered acceptable in the context, to maintain good relations or mark an important occasion, is generally no problem, as long as the type of gift and its value are appropriate to the local context and nothing is expected in return. Indeed, refusing such a gift could be seen as a lack of respect and good manners, and could offend the other person. However, you must always refuse gifts in the form of cash.

- Ask your management about when it's OK to accept a gift and when it's not.
- Inform your management about all gifts you receive.

You may be tempted to pay a bribe or offer a small gift to get through a checkpoint, facilitate your operations or accelerate certain administrative procedures. Don't. Even in an emergency. It's not just that it's contrary to ICRC policy. It also creates a precedent that could tarnish the ICRC's image and that of other humanitarian organizations, and could harm our work. In any case, experience has shown that it's possible to operate in countries with a high level of corruption without paying bribes.

- Make sure you always have all the documents and authorizations that anyone could ask for.
- Learn how to be patient. If you're obviously impatient, the other person will be more likely to try and pressure you into paying a bribe.
- A smile, a pleasant manner, a little humour (if appropriate!) and a couple of minutes' discussion are often all it takes to persuade the other person to drop the idea of a bribe. And they'll be all the more likely to let you through without one if you treat them with respect and kindness.
- Explain why you can't pay a bribe (without using that word). Memorize a few simple phrases that don't sound like accusations, such as "My organization doesn't allow me to pay for that."
- If the person insists, tell them you wish to speak to their superior. That often has a dissuasive effect, because people don't want their boss to get involved.
- If a government entity forces you to pay what you consider to be a bribe in exchange for a service, insist on a receipt.

Never pay a bribe to avoid complications, or facilitate your operations, unless it's the only way of escaping physical danger.

5.5 PHOTOS, VIDEOS AND SOUND RECORDINGS



It's tempting to take photos or make video/sound recordings during your work, especially with your smartphone making it so easy. But be careful. Not everyone sees images the same way, and the rules vary considerably from one society and context to another. For instance, the idea that taking a photo steals the soul of the person is still widespread in certain cultures. So you could put yourself or someone else in danger without realizing it.

And in sensitive or conflict environments, it's best to be even more careful. Images, audio and other material stored in your camera, phone, drone or any other device could be used against you. You risk being accused of espionage or of trying to obtain military secrets. You also need to be careful outside work. Your neighbours might not like it if you take pictures of the area from your residence.

Photos, videos and sound recordings: basic principles

The ICRC Code of Conduct states that “Employees are prohibited from taking photographs, filming or making audio recordings in the course of their duties, irrespective of the medium used, unless their work so requires or they obtain express approval from the ICRC.” Such approval would be granted, for instance, if your job involves communication. Taking photos or making video recordings inside ICRC buildings is permitted. See the Code of Conduct, Section II.B.5.

You may feel that taking photos or making video/sound recordings during your work is perfectly safe and could be useful to the ICRC.

Precautions to take:

- Inform the ICRC of your intentions.
- Inform the ICRC of the existence of the material once you’ve created it.
- Find out about the rules that apply, in both professional and private contexts.
- Always obtain the consent of the people concerned in advance. Before creating an image of a child, obtain the consent of a parent or of an adult with responsibility for them. Observe the specific rules that apply to other sensitive categories of person, such as detainees and people receiving medical treatment.
- Respect cultural sensitivities. Don’t take photos that reinforce stereotypes of already vulnerable communities.
- Ask yourself whether the image you intend to create is genuinely useful, whether it could put anyone in danger and whether creating it would be considered acceptable in your country of origin. If you were back home, would you take pictures of children in a school playground or of someone you didn’t know lying in a hospital bed? Probably not.
- Never take pictures of military infrastructure or activities, police stations, prisons, airports (including the runway), checkpoints or other potentially sensitive objects.
- Make sure your phone, laptop and other media contain no images that could get you into trouble.
- Don’t use a drone unless you’ve obtained authorization from the ICRC and checked the rules that apply in your context.

Before pulling out your phone or other device, ask yourself whether it’s the right time and place.

5.6 INFORMATION SECURITY

Protecting your security includes protecting the information in your possession. Be careful when you collect, share, store and archive sensitive information. Third parties can get hold of your information using techniques as simple as stealing your documents or listening to your conversation in a bar. They may also resort to more sophisticated methods, such as monitoring your online activity, collecting your metadata, hacking your social media accounts to steal your identity or accessing information you've stored online.

p. 164 Furthermore, a **cyber attack** can knock out your communication systems. How you communicate, handle information and use technology can constitute a threat not just to you and the ICRC but also to the people with whom you come into contact.

5.6.1 PREVENTING LEAKS



Even without sophisticated technology, someone who wants to get their hands on your information can take advantage of your carelessness or naivety. Your computer and your phone are particularly vulnerable. They're attractive to thieves and it's possible to extract huge quantities of information from them using a USB drive or a memory card.

So make the task of such individuals as difficult as possible, by taking the following measures to prevent theft of your devices and leaks of sensitive data:

- Be discreet and modest. The more you show off your expertise on topics considered sensitive in the region, the more suspicion you'll arouse.
- Don't discuss sensitive topics in public areas, by phone or by radio.
- Manage all sensitive documents entrusted to you responsibly, in accordance with the ICRC system of security classification (Strictly Confidential, Confidential, Internal and Public). Keep them under lock and key. Don't leave them on your desk, on the printer or in an unlocked drawer.
- Shred sensitive documents before disposing of them.
- Lock your office door when you leave the premises and lock your laptop when you're not using it. Treat storage devices such as USB drives and external hard drives with the same care as your computer as far as security is concerned.
- Take with you into the field only those documents that you absolutely need for the activity planned.
- Never leave your laptop, phone or a sensitive document in an unattended vehicle.
- Treat other people's phone numbers as **confidential**. Keep them secure and don't pass them on to anyone without the permission of the person concerned.
- Check that the data on your computer, phone, USB drive, external hard drive, etc. are encrypted. If they aren't, consult a specialist.

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If you suspect that people from outside the ICRC have accessed sensitive data in your possession, or have tried to do so, speak to your management.

What do we mean by “sensitive information”?

- Any information which, if divulged, could cause harm to a person such as the source of the information, a beneficiary, a contact or the colleague of a contact.
- Information, the disclosure of which could harm the image of the ICRC or have a negative impact on its capability to carry out its operations.
- Information related to security. Certain personal data.

5.6.2 USE SOCIAL MEDIA RESPONSIBLY



Social media are an excellent means of communicating on humanitarian matters and describing the ICRC and our work. However, whatever you publish online – photos, comments or even a link – can be taken out of context, misinterpreted and used to harm you or the reputation of the ICRC. What you post might be perfectly innocent in one society or context, but not in another. And on social media, it's hard to draw a distinction between a person's private and professional lives. It's easy to identify you as an ICRC employee. Anything you say can be attributed to the organization, including things you published before you even started in the humanitarian field. Someone could hack your account and publish posts and comments in your name. Furthermore, certain types of information on social media could be used against you if ever you're arrested or kidnapped.

It's pretty simple: if you don't want a post, comment or photo to end up in the media or in the hands of third parties, don't publish it. See the Code of Conduct, IV.1 to IV.4.

- Before starting work for the ICRC, and before each new assignment, delete any material that could offend the people with and for whom you'll be working, could call into question the neutrality, independence or impartiality of the ICRC or could be compromising.

- On all social media platforms, avoid discussing political or sensitive topics and don't criticize the government or other entities of influence in the region.
- Think carefully before supporting any campaigns on social media.
- Don't publish any information that's even remotely related to security in general, the security of the ICRC or that of your colleagues, without first obtaining permission from your management. Don't post any comments regarding the military or security situation in the area.
- Don't disclose any sensitive or confidential information.
- Before posting anything, obtain the consent of any person concerned, and of the ICRC if necessary.
- Don't publish any offensive, hateful or discriminatory comments, and respect the opinions of others. Don't say online what you wouldn't say face-to-face. Don't publish any pornographic material.
- Protect your privacy by choosing the appropriate settings on your social media accounts, so as to secure your information as thoroughly as possible. Restrict the range of people who can see what you post, e.g. by setting visibility to "Friends" rather than "Public".

Before posting anything on social media, ask yourself whether it's really useful, and what effect it could have on how people see you and the ICRC.

5.7 WHAT TO DO IF YOU EXPERIENCE OR WITNESS WRONGFUL CONDUCT

You can help enhance the security of your working environment and prevent wrongful conduct and violations of the Code of Conduct. What to do if you experience or witness wrongful conduct will depend on the circumstances, i.e. the seriousness of the act, the urgency of the situation and its effects on your security and that of others.

- **Inadvertent *faux pas* on the part of a colleague**, such as a comment or attitude that's inappropriate in view of local customs: have the courage to speak to your colleague in private. By explaining to them discreetly and sensitively why you find their behaviour problematic, you're giving them a chance to do better in future.

- **Something more serious**, or simply a situation that worries you: talk to someone about it, rather than bottling it up. You may want to talk to a colleague, or perhaps to someone else you trust. “More serious” would include exploitation, sexual violence or other inappropriate sexual behaviour towards a colleague or a member of the community, fraud or corruption. If the situation does not demand immediate action, you can also report inappropriate behaviour or submit a complaint to the Ethics, Risk and Compliance Office. The ICRC’s IntegrityLine website (<https://icrc.integrityplatform.org/>) was set up for just this purpose. Appendix 12.3 describes the various internal support mechanisms available to you.

How can the Ethics, Risk and Compliance Office help you?

Are you hesitating (for cultural reasons or for fear of reprisals or harm to your career) to report possibly wrongful behaviour on the part of a colleague, such as intimidation, corruption, harassment, sexual abuse or any other violation of the Code of Conduct? You can communicate your concerns to the ICRC’s Ethics, Risk and Compliance Office (ERCO), anonymously if necessary. ERCO will use the information you provide to investigate the behaviour reported, discreetly and impartially. It will take every precaution to ensure that you don’t suffer any reprisals. In particular, ERCO will keep your identity confidential. If your report is confirmed, sanctions proportional to the severity of the acts committed will be applied to the person or persons concerned. Those sanctions may include dismissal.

Persons from outside the ICRC can also report possible wrongdoing by ICRC staff to the Ethics, Risk and Compliance Office.

5.8 BEHAVIOUR: TEN QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF

1. Do I know enough about local cultural and religious norms?
2. What are the social norms regarding relations between men and women?
3. Could the image that I project provoke suspicion, misunderstanding or rejection?
4. Do I tend to try to impose my values on others?
5. Am I sufficiently discreet?
6. Is there any risk of my clothes attracting attention or causing offence?
7. Do my colleagues view me as a person of integrity, or could they see any of my actions as corruption?
8. Am I familiar with the information security rules?
9. To what extent could taking photos or being active on social media be harmful to me or to the reputation of the ICRC?
10. Am I familiar with the internal mechanisms for reporting possible wrongdoing?

Further reading

ICRC, Code of Conduct for Employees of the International Committee of the Red Cross, ICRC, Geneva, 2018: <https://www.icrc.org/en/document/code-conduct-employees-icrc>.

ICRC, A Guide to what you Can and Cannot do While You Work for Us, ICRC, Geneva, 2020: <https://shop.icrc.org/a-guide-to-what-you-can-and-cannot-do-while-you-work-for-us-this-is-an-easy-to-read-guide-to-the-code-of-conduct-for-people-who-work-for-the-icrc.html>.

ICRC, *Code of Conduct Policies: Prevention of and Response to Sexual Misconduct, Fraud and Corruption*, Geneva, 2019.

6. SPECIFIC THREATS

This chapter outlines the main security threats you may encounter in the field. It explains how you can protect yourself against them and respond to them. Some threats occur in all contexts (e.g. petty crime or cyber threats). Others, such as mines and earthquakes, only arise in certain regions. The **risk-assessment** process mentioned in an earlier chapter, and which your office will repeat regularly, will reveal the nature of the threats to which you are exposed and their severity. The ICRC will also use that assessment to take the appropriate security measures and draw up security regulations for your context.

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The recommendations in this chapter are of a general nature. You'll need to adapt them in accordance with your environment and the circumstances. To decide what preventive measures to take, and how to react to a threat, you should:

1. Refer to the security regulations applicable to the area where you work.
2. Make sure you know your office's contingency plan.
3. Ask your management for advice and share with them any concerns you may have.
4. Suspend your activity in case of doubt.
5. Use your common sense, weighing the potential humanitarian benefit of your activity against the risk involved.

6.1 CRIME

6.1.1 ROBBERY AND BANDITRY

Crime is a potential threat everywhere, at all times. Quite apart from the material aspect, any form of robbery can be a traumatic experience, especially if it occurs in your presence, if you're threatened or if it involves violence. This type of criminal is often prepared to do anything to steal your phone, your wallet or your designer sunglasses. They may be armed, drunk and/or under the influence of drugs, even in the case of children. The threat they pose goes well beyond that of losing material items.



How do robbers operate?

Contrary to popular belief, robbers rarely rob at random – even the youngest of them. They generally operate in a rational, planned, organized fashion. They may operate singly or in gangs, but they'll select places and situations where they can rob you without getting caught, and they'll target the most attractive and most vulnerable individuals. In other words, a robbery is rarely a case of bad luck or simply “being in the wrong place at the wrong time”.

While this sort of crime isn't limited to fixed locations, knowing the most dangerous areas and situations can enable you to avoid them or at least be more careful. In large cities, for instance, gangs (which may include children) often pounce where traffic has to slow down, e.g. at traffic lights or where traffic jams occur. Deserted, poorly-lit areas are also ideal.

You must also realize that simply working for an international organization and hence owning things that are unobtainable locally – or unaffordable for many – means that people will see you as “rich”, especially if you're an expat. This makes you an attractive target.

Factors that can make you vulnerable to robbery

- Working for a humanitarian organization
- Being from outside the country or region
- Not being alert
- Behaving ostentatiously
- Displaying objects of value
- Looking like an easy target
- Failing to plan and prepare your movements
- Always taking the same route
- Failing to obey the security regulations

Preventing robbery

Anti-robbery precautions fall into three categories:

- Limit your exposure, e.g. by avoiding certain places.
- Limit the potential booty, e.g. by not carrying objects of value.
- Prevent or dissuade, by maximizing the number of barriers that a robber would have to overcome, e.g. by always locking your vehicle.

*Getting robbed
is not simply
“bad luck”!*

1. When you're moving around

You can reduce the risk of robbery considerably, by being discreet and vigilant and by avoiding routes and areas that are known for high levels of crime.

Avoid risky situations

- Avoid places and routes that have been declared out of bounds, and respect any curfews.
- Before taking a new route, or going somewhere you haven't been before, consult colleagues who are familiar with the area.
- Avoid going out on your own at night, and avoid poorly-lit areas.
- If possible, travel by car if you have to pass through areas where pedestrians are frequently robbed.
- Park your vehicle somewhere safe, and always lock it.
- Only use taxi firms recommended by the ICRC.

Be discreet

- Don't draw attention to yourself unnecessarily.
- Don't wear objects of value, or objects that could be seen as such, e.g. a watch, jewellery or designer sunglasses.
- Don't let people see your smartphone, and keep it where it would be difficult to steal it.
- Be discreet when planning your movements.

Avoid routine

- Don't be predictable. It's easier for a criminal to prepare an attack, and they're more likely to be successful, if they know your daily routine, your routes and the places you go to regularly.
- Whether you're driving or on foot, try to vary your routes and the times at which you travel.
- Try not to be the first to drive along a route in the morning.

Be vigilant

- Be on your guard at airports, near stations, in crowded areas, in isolated areas, at tourist spots, in markets and on public transport.
- Take care in public places such as bars and restaurants, especially if they're popular with expats, and beware "chance" meetings.
- Take care whenever traffic is moving slowly. Always lock the doors and windows of your vehicle to prevent intrusion.
- Some "accidents" may have been staged, to divert your attention so you can be robbed.

Be careful with money

- Avoid carrying large sums, but always have a little cash on you to placate any robbers.
- Exchange currency via the ICRC or in official banks, not on the street or with individuals.
- Don't carry large amounts of money in the field unless you have first looked at all the options for **transferring the money** by other means. Even then, you must first obtain permission from your management.
- If you have to withdraw money from a cash machine, do so during daylight hours and if possible take someone with you to stand guard. Use a machine located in a busy street and make sure no-one's following you.
- Look out for credit card scams. Don't let your card out of sight when making a purchase.

2. In the office and at home



The measures the ICRC takes to protect its offices and residences are ineffective if you don't do your bit. Furthermore, not all thefts involve illegal entry; some are committed by people who are already inside. Leaving cash or objects of value lying around will encourage theft and make things easier for thieves.

- Lock all doors, gates and windows that should be locked, especially at night or when you leave.
- Keep objects of value and important documents under lock and key. If a safe is available, use it.
- Look after your keys carefully, and report the loss of any key.
- Report any weaknesses in security systems to the person responsible. A faulty lock can have serious consequences.
- Follow the procedures laid down for receiving visitors and only admit authorized persons.
- Find out how to sound the alarm if you suspect an intruder.
- If your family is living in an ICRC residence, rehearse the action to take with your partner and your children, so everyone knows what to do.

When thefts occur in offices or residences, the carelessness of an employee is usually a contributory factor. Be on your guard at all times.

A colleague or a member of domestic staff is sometimes suspected of theft, usually wrongly. This can have serious consequences, both for them and for you. To prevent such situations from occurring:

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- Always ask the ICRC for advice before taking on **domestic staff** yourself.
 - Give domestic staff clear instructions: to whom they can open the door and when, who to admit and who not, how to manage housekeeping money, etc.
 - Before accusing a colleague or a member of domestic staff of theft, always speak to someone you trust within the ICRC.

Reacting to a robbery

Robbers may react unpredictably and become violent if you don't do as they say, especially if they're under the influence of alcohol or drugs. Any sign of resistance or sudden movement may provoke a violent reaction. The robber may think you're looking for a weapon or some other means of resisting or escaping. Your reaction will have a major influence on what happens.

- Assume that every criminal could be armed.
- Cooperate, as calmly as possible, and given them whatever they ask.
- Don't resist, in order to avoid provoking violence.
- Avoid sudden movements.
- Don't play the hero.
- Report any robbery to the ICRC immediately. Incidents of this nature give an important indicator as to the level of crime, and knowing about them allows us to adjust our security measures.

Defending your property

Remember:

- Your life is more valuable than your property, your money or any other material item.
- Any attempt to resist could put you in danger.
- Becoming angry, aggressive or insulting, or showing fear, could all cause the situation to deteriorate.

6.1.2 EXTORTION

As the employee of a humanitarian organization, you'll often be an attractive target for people who want to extort money from you or obtain an advantage related to the work you do. You may be subjected to intimidation or blackmail

in an effort to obtain a financial advantage, goods or services. Someone may threaten to reveal compromising information about you and also threaten to harm you or your family if you refuse to cooperate.

Giving in to the blackmailer's demands may look like the best solution, but generally it's anything but. Once you've met the first of their demands, they'll want more. They'll present you with a new list, accompanied by threats of what they'll do if you refuse. You're now in a vicious circle, from which it will become more and more difficult to escape.

To ensure that things don't get that far, you should be discreet about what assets the ICRC has, and seize the initiative at the first sign of intimidation or blackmail:

- Report any aggressive or threatening behaviour.
- If someone is putting you under pressure, explain that the ICRC's money and goods don't really belong to the organization; they belong to the people we're there to help, and if the blackmailer takes them they may well be stealing from their own community.
- If someone is subjecting you to intimidation, consult a person within the ICRC whom you trust.

If you're being blackmailed in connection with your work, don't wait until the situation deteriorates. Get help from the ICRC as quickly as possible. The sooner you act, the easier it will be to get you out of trouble.

6.1.3 ARMED ATTACKS AND AMBUSHES

It is during field trips that you are most vulnerable. In unstable, dangerous regions, your vehicle or convoy may be attacked on the road. In most instances, it's a matter of common banditry. In such cases, the primary aim of the attackers is not to harm you, but to steal your personal possessions, to rob your convoy (of money, aid supplies, communications equipment, mechanical components, etc.) or to steal your vehicle. However, in exceptional cases you may indeed be the target – their intention may be to take you **hostage**, injure you or kill you.

The basic approach is generally to take the victims by surprise, having planned a safe escape route for use once the deed is done. One frequently-used method is to force a vehicle or convoy to slow down or stop, either by threatening to

p. 146 **open fire**, or by using an obstacle (car, truck, motorbike, tree trunk, etc.), setting up a false checkpoint or simulating an accident. Another method is to ram a vehicle, forcing it to stop. Having immobilized the vehicle, the attackers often use intimidation/submission techniques such as forcing the occupants to kneel facing the vehicle with their hands on their heads, or to lie down with their faces to the ground. They may hold guns to their heads or hit them, to discourage resistance.

The attackers may be inexperienced and may have chosen you at random, or they may be operating deliberately, in a carefully planned, organized and coordinated fashion. They'll generally choose a spot where the lie of the land makes it difficult or impossible to escape, such as a steep mountain road. If you back up or accelerate, they may open fire. Whatever the circumstances, this is a dangerous situation, one that you should make every effort to avoid, but one for which you have to be prepared.

How to reduce the likelihood of being attacked or ambushed

A well-planned attack or ambush is difficult to predict. There'll be little or nothing to raise your suspicions and cause you to turn back.

The aim is to take you by surprise, but there are a few things you can do to reduce the risk of becoming a victim:

- Keep yourself up to date on the risks that the ICRC has identified in the area, and follow all instructions given.
- If a route has been declared out of bounds, don't use it.
- **Don't carry large amounts of money unless you have first looked at all the options for transferring the money by other means.**

Be as discreet as possible.

- Try not to be the first to drive along a route in the morning.
- As far as possible, vary your routes and the times at which you travel.
- Avoid travelling by night, and respect any curfews.
- Stay well away from vehicles

of the armed or security forces.

They might well be targeted. If you're too close, you'll be caught up in the ensuing gunfight.

- Look out for anything unusual, such as the absence of vehicles coming the other way on what is normally a busy road.

Experienced drivers generally know the likely spots for an armed attack or an ambush, plus possible alternative routes. Listen to what they say and follow their advice.

- Think carefully before offering to help someone who's broken down – it could be a trap.
- Be suspicious of **checkpoints that look improvised** or have only recently been set up. In case of doubt, stop. If possible, reverse until you can turn round and go back the way you came.

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Reacting to an ambush or armed attack

An ambush or armed attack is an extremely dangerous situation. However, if the attackers are targeting your personal property, the goods you're carrying or your vehicles, rather than you personally, your chances of emerging unscathed are high, as long as you and your team react correctly. The best option will depend on the circumstances (number of attackers, their intentions, weapons and tactics, terrain, type of convoy, etc.). Be aware that reversing or accelerating may not only cause them to open fire, but may also cause you to lose control of the vehicle. Turning round will make you an easy target. We therefore recommend that you don't try to escape, unless they're firing directly at you and you believe that you're in a life-or-death situation.

Always assume that anyone who tells you to stop is armed.

Otherwise:

- If the attackers tell you to stop, do so immediately.
- Keep your hands visible and avoid any sudden movement.
- Don't speak, unless the attackers tell you to.
- Cooperate with your attackers and do what they tell you. Obey their instructions to the letter and hand over any items they demand.
- Don't move off until your attackers have left (circumstances permitting), unless they tell you to.

Should you negotiate?

In many cases, negotiation is not an option. But that's a matter of judgement. The rule is not to try and negotiate if the attackers are nervous, aggressive and clearly want to get away as fast as possible. In certain exceptional cases negotiation may be appropriate, e.g. to prevent the attackers from harming a member of your team. In such a case one person should conduct the negotiations, with everyone else avoiding involvement.

6.2 RIOTS AND CIVIL DISTURBANCES



6.2.1 CROWD VIOLENCE

A crowd can very quickly become threatening and get out of control. Violence can erupt before you know what's happening, in the form of rioting, attacks or looting. It may be the result of a simple rumour or misunderstanding, or of a concrete event such as an attempted coup, the assassination of an important person, an increase in the price of fuel or other basic goods, the announcement of the closure of an IDP camp or a whole string of minor events that have increased tension to the point of no return.

The anger of the crowd may be directed against the humanitarian sector, the ICRC or even you personally, e.g. because you're a stranger or belong to a different ethnic group, or because you've just been involved in a traffic accident. **Your activities** can also be a source of tension, especially if people don't understand them for cultural reasons, or a particular community feels disadvantaged or neglected. And a badly-managed distribution operation can rapidly turn into a very nasty situation.

How to anticipate and prevent crowd violence

There's always a risk of a group or crowd becoming violent, but it's often possible to anticipate such a situation.

- **Stay away from large groups of people:** If a demonstration begins or a fight breaks out, get away as quickly as you can, so you don't become a target. Whatever you do, don't start **taking photos** or making video recordings. This could provoke the crowd or the people involved, putting you in serious danger. p. 124
- **Keep your ears open:** Listening to communities and their representatives will enable you to pick up on any disappointment or resentment in time. They generally know when something's brewing. If free media exist in your context, keeping an eye on local media and social media will help ensure that you know about any resentment that may be developing, and that you know who it's directed at.
- **Communicate clearly:** The more disinformation there is concerning the ICRC, the greater the risk that someone will attack you. This makes it essential that you inform the population pro-actively and clearly explain what they can expect of you, what you're doing, how and for whom.
- **Plan:** Any event that involves bringing together a large number of people, such as a community-information session or an **aid-distribution operation**, must be carefully prepared. You should involve local community representatives in all the important phases of any activity intended to benefit their community. Take precautions that will enable you to deal with any tension that could arise, e.g. set up crowd-control measures in the case of a distribution operation. p. 298
- **Be open to criticism:** If a group feels disadvantaged by your actions, taking the time to listen to their criticisms and look for solutions together generally allows tension to be defused in time.

Listen and think ahead, so you can recognize any resentment towards you in time.

Defusing the situation

If the anger of the crowd is directed against you, negotiating with anyone who appears to have some influence on them may calm the situation – unless the point of no return has been reached, in which case this option may be dangerous. If you're not familiar with the region, ask the advice of local colleagues before trying to negotiate. They'll probably have a clearer idea than you of what's being said and will be in a better position to identify any leaders. They'll also know the mistakes to avoid.

The earlier you take action, the better your chances of preventing the situation deteriorating.

p. 332 Possible ways of **defusing the anger** of a crowd:

- **Negotiate with the leaders:** Try to identify and negotiate with anyone who has influence over the group. It may be that they're not present, and that you'll need to ask them to come. Arrange for it to be these people who communicate with the crowd rather than you – the message will be more credible.
- **Listen respectfully, but remain firm:** Emphasize that you've taken notice of their grievances and are willing to look for a solution, but not under threat or coercion.
- **Move away from the crowd:** If possible, negotiate at a certain distance from the group, so that you're not under direct pressure. Ideally, arrange to resolve the points of dispute another day. Make sure you don't make any promises you won't be able to keep.
- **Identify an escape route:** As early as possible, work out the safest way of escaping if that should become necessary.

If the situation deteriorates

An angry crowd can quickly become very difficult to control, even for well-trained security forces.

If you believe yourself to be in danger, and if attempts to defuse the situation are either pointless or have already failed:

- Make yourself as inconspicuous as possible and immediately move to a safe location.
- As soon as you feel able, report the incident to the ICRC.

6.2.2 LOOTING

In unstable areas, the situation can deteriorate rapidly, descending into temporary anarchy. ICRC hospitals, warehouses, offices and residences may be looted, despite all security precautions. Everything may disappear in a very short space of time. **Humanitarian convoys are also subject to looting.** Even if the looters originally only intended to steal, there's always the risk that they'll attack you, either because of group dynamics or because of drink/drugs.

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If there's an imminent threat of looting, the best thing is to evacuate before the looters arrive, after protecting items or limiting the items available to them, e.g. by reducing warehouse stocks or transferring some vehicles to what appears to be a safer location. In practice, however, it's not always possible to anticipate this kind of situation.

If looting occurs

Trying to stop the looters or reason with them could be extremely dangerous. In most instances, it's best to keep out of the way and let them get on with it. The risk of personal harm increases over time, as the quantity of items available to the looters diminishes. Just as in the case of robbery and banditry, the principle is simple:

Don't resist. Let them take whatever they want!

If you're in an ICRC building, it may be best to either leave rapidly or move to a secure location, such as a strong room if there is one. The only other option is to negotiate with the looters. You should only do so if your physical safety or that of your colleagues is in danger, or if you believe that negotiating will enable you to retain something essential to your security, such as a vehicle in which to escape or a satellite phone with which to call for help.

In general:

- Keep calm, don't become angry, and make yourself inconspicuous.
- Try to hide your fear, so as to avoid reinforcing the looters' sense of domination over you and thereby encouraging them to attack you.
- Try to retain a working means of communication.
- Re-establish contact with the ICRC as quickly as possible.

Should you negotiate?

- In many cases, negotiation is not an option.
- Don't do anything that could anger the looters.
- If circumstances permit, and you think it worth trying, try to negotiate with the person who appears to have the most authority over the group.
- Rapidly designate the person among you who is most suited to conducting the negotiations.
- If you're not taking a direct part in the negotiations, keep out of the way. Don't get involved, and don't panic.

Don't play the hero. Your life and the lives of your colleagues are worth far more than your property or that of the ICRC.

6.3 WEAPONS



Weapons are a major threat to your safety and security, whatever their level of sophistication and whatever the level of violence. However, some situations are more dangerous than others. The threat is more acute if fighting is under way or has very recently stopped, near military targets such as bases and strategic infrastructure, and in areas with high crime rates. Mines and explosive remnants of war (ERW) are a hazard in many combat zones, often for years after fighting has ended. And of course, there's always the risk of armed robbery.

This section will help you understand the threat from the main types of weapon you're likely to encounter. It gives practical recommendations on how to avoid getting caught up in fighting and how to avoid falling victim to mines, booby traps or ERW. You should read this section in conjunction with Appendix 12.2, which describes the various types of **weapon** and the wounds they cause.

6.3.1 GENERAL APPROACH

Understanding the threat

Start off by reading the assessment of operational risks drawn up by your office, and the security regulations based on that document. You don't need to become a weapons expert, but you do need to know what kinds of weapon are available to local weapon bearers, how and when they're likely to use them and what events can indicate that recourse to weapons is imminent.

You're not a weapons expert and you don't need to become one. Get advice from your management or a specialist colleague if necessary.

Before every field trip in a conflict zone, ask yourself which parties are present, what their intentions are and what weapons they have. Identify any likely targets in the area where you're going to be working – along the routes you intend to take, at the locations where you plan to carry out your activities and at those where you intend to spend the night. These precautions are even more essential when visiting an area for the first time.

Prevention

When it comes to security, good planning is more effective than good reactions. If you get caught up in fighting, you'll have a range of munitions coming your way, from all parties and all directions. You'll need an extremely cool head, quick reactions, considerable experience and a sound knowledge of your environment in order to react appropriately.

It's far better to plan your movements and activities in such a way as to avoid times and locations where there's a high risk of attack.

Taking the following precautions will significantly reduce the risk:

- Stay well away from obvious military objectives and targets.
- Avoid locations where attacks are likely, and times at which attacks are liable to occur.
- Carry suitable communications equipment, with spare batteries or a charger.
- p. 252 • Try to obtain **security guarantees** from weapon bearers before passing through areas under their control.
- Be careful in areas where fighting has recently occurred. It may be necessary to obtain advice from a specialist before entering such areas.
- Identify the best place to seek safety in the event of an attack, both in ICRC buildings (offices, warehouses, residences, etc.) and in other buildings where you work, such as hospitals.
- If you're driving through a risky area: turn off any music, reduce the volume on your VHF and HF radios to a minimum, stay alert and drive with your window slightly open, as this makes outside sounds more audible.
- If you're near the front line, or if you decide that it's safer to be visible, wear a tabard that identifies you at a distance and if you spend the night somewhere, mark your location with the ICRC **logo**. The GPS coordinates of ICRC buildings should be communicated to armed forces likely to be conducting air operations in the area.
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6.3.2 PHYSICAL ATTACK

In this context, “physical attack” means any attack using an object held in the hand, such as a stick, club, knife, machete or bayonet.²⁸ These weapons may cause blunt trauma (in the case of sticks and clubs) or penetrating wounds (in the case of knives, machetes, bayonets, etc.). The weapons used for physical attacks are easy to obtain, hide and use. On the other hand, this kind of attack requires the attacker to get close to their victim, exposing them to counter-attack.

There are self-defence techniques, but you need a great deal of training, practice and skill to use them successfully. Otherwise, there's a risk that you'll put yourself in additional danger. But you will have to decide what to do in the event of such an attack, depending on the circumstances.

²⁸ A bayonet is a short sword fixed to the barrel of a rifle or similar weapon.

Reducing the risk of a physical attack

- Be aware of your surroundings – don't let yourself be distracted.
- Avoid locations where attacks are known to occur frequently.
- Keep a good distance between you and any potential attackers.
- If an attack looks imminent, try to run away, calling for help as you do so.
- Identify emergency exits and other escape routes.

Avoid areas where criminals are known to operate and crowded situations where there's a risk of trouble.

6.3.3 TERROR ATTACKS

Wherever you work, there's always the risk of a direct, indiscriminate attack, be it in the street, in a supermarket or elsewhere. One simple precaution is to always note the locations of escape routes when you're in a public place such as a market, supermarket, place of worship, stadium, restaurant, cinema or hotel.

Reacting to a terror attack

The best reaction is to get as far away from the danger as you can, but that isn't always possible.

While it's not a universal solution, the “**Run, Hide, Tell**” approach may save your life. The faster you decide on a course of action, the more likely it is to be effective. You are the only person who can decide whether to try and neutralize the attacker – under certain circumstances, this may be the only option.

1. **Run:** Get yourself to a safe place, exposing yourself as little as possible on the way. If conditions allow, help others to escape, or at least dissuade them from approaching the source of danger.
2. **Hide:** If you can't escape, shut yourself into a room and lock/barricade the door. If that isn't possible, hide behind a solid object. Turn off the sound on any devices you're carrying (including the vibrate function on your phone). Turn off any lights that are on.
3. **Tell:** Warn others, as long as this won't put you in additional danger. Once the police or security forces arrive, do exactly what they tell you. Don't run towards them and avoid making any sudden movements. Raise your hands to show that you're not carrying a weapon.

6.3.4 SMALL-ARMS FIRE



By *small-arms fire* we mean exchanges of fire between combatants using handguns or long weapons, firing such weapons into the air in celebration, or indiscriminate fire from such weapons. By *small arms* we mainly mean pistols, rifles, machine-guns, shoulder-fired anti-tank weapons and grenade launchers. These weapons are designed to hit their target directly, which generally means that the person using them can see the target.

They cause injury or damage by kinetic energy (in the case of bullets), by fragmentation (e.g. in the case of hand-grenades) or by a particular effect resulting from the way they're designed (e.g. in the case of certain anti-tank rounds, which are specially designed to pierce armour). Projectiles may cover just a few tens of metres (in the case of a pistol bullet) or as much as a kilometre (in the case of an anti-tank round).

How a weapon is used affects the threat it poses. Projectiles don't always hit their targets. Those that miss will continue their flight, posing a danger to anyone who gets in their way – often for a considerable distance. For instance, a rifle bullet that misses its target located 100 m away will continue for several hundred metres, retaining its capacity to kill or injure. And bullets can ricochet in any direction, which poses an additional threat – especially in built-up areas.

Am I safe in or behind a vehicle?

No. A normal vehicle will not protect you against bullets (even pistol bullets), rockets, grenades or fragments. Any of these can pass right through the bodywork – or destroy it in the case of a rocket or grenade. And flying glass can cause severe injuries. Hiding behind a car, Land Cruiser or truck provides almost no protection. While a vehicle gives you protection from **view**, it gives you no protection from **fire** – the shooter can't see you, but his bullets can still hit you. And do bear in mind that however fast you drive, a bullet will always be faster.

Dealing with the threat from small-arms fire

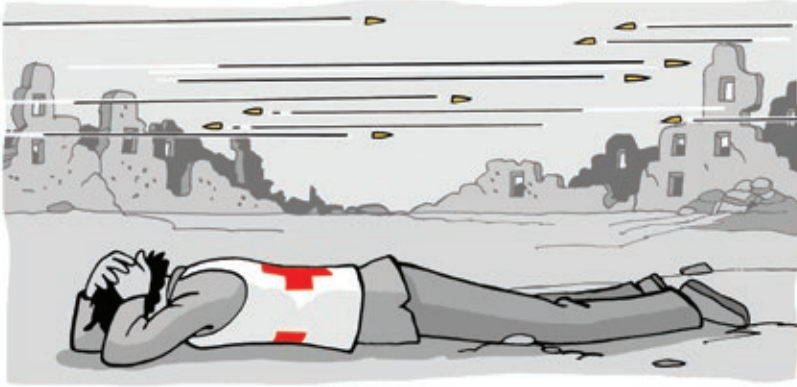
The best form of protection against bullets is not to be where they are. However, you might find yourself in the middle of a firefight, you might be exposed to ricochets or bullets that have missed their target, or you might become the target of a sniper or criminal. The following recommendations can reduce the risk involved, as long as you're not actually the target.

A tree, a fence or a light wall can hide you from the shooter while you look for cover, but they don't actually protect you. Protection against small-arms fire requires something like rock, concrete or a solid wall.

If you find yourself in the middle of a firefight

How to react will depend on where you are, how far you are from the nearest cover, how far the shooters are from you and whether they're aiming at you or not.

- **If shooting is taking place:** Get away, as fast as possible. Take cover behind a rock, a concrete structure or a solid wall. “Bomb-burst” (scatter) in as many directions as possible. This may confuse the shooters long enough for you to take cover. Zig-zagging as you run doesn't make you any harder to hit.
- **If you're in the open and there's no cover from fire:** Drop to the ground, face down, and keep your body and head as close to the ground as possible. Try to work out where the shooting's coming from, and identify a safe location nearby. Once you've identified such a location, move to it while keeping as low as possible – as long as this appears to be less dangerous than staying where you are.



- If your vehicle comes under fire: The best option is probably to stop, get out and take cover. Continuing along the road or reversing will make you an easy target.
- If you're in a building that has safe zones: Take refuge there.
- Once you're reasonably safe: Take the time to analyse the situation. The fact that shooting has stopped doesn't necessarily mean it's safe to come out.

6.3.5 ARTILLERY FIRE AND AIR STRIKES

Artillery fire



For these purposes, “artillery” also includes mortars. These are known as indirect-fire weapons, because their crews can’t see the target, either because it’s too far away or because there are obstacles in the way, such as woods or hills.

Artillery and mortars generally cause damage and injury by blast, fragmentation and kinetic energy. However, some are designed to cause fires, produce smoke, light up an area at night or disperse **chemical or biological agents**.

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The accuracy of these weapons depends on a number of factors. Guided or “intelligent” systems are generally more accurate, but even they are not perfect. Never assume you’re safe just because you’re not the target. Even if your vehicle or building is displaying the protective emblem clearly, the person firing the weapon may be several kilometres away and unable to see it.

Air strikes



By “air strike” we here mean the use of any weapon from an aeroplane, helicopter or drone. The weapons used include bombs, missiles, rockets and cannons. They generally operate by blast, fragmentation or incendiary effects. It’s also possible to disperse chemical or biological agents using airborne weapons.

In some cases, the person firing the weapon can see their target. In others, the bomb or missile is guided by an inertia, laser or electronic system. Aerial bombardment using non-guided munitions can be extremely inaccurate. The fact that an air strike is taking place at some distance from you is no guarantee that you're safe. The firing of a missile is often inaudible because of the distance, so the first you know of the attack is when explosions begin.

Dealing with the threat from artillery, mortar and air strikes

Never assume that you're safe just because you're not the target. The safest option is probably to get away, if that's possible and if doing so doesn't put you in even more danger. But you may have to take cover if bombs, shells or other heavy munitions start landing close to you.

In the case of indirect-fire weapons, the main threats are blast, fragmentation of the munition itself (e.g. the shell) and the debris projected by the explosion.

How best to react will depend on where you are, where the firing/bombing is coming from, where the bombs or shells are landing and what shelter options you have nearby.

In general, and assuming you're not the target:

- If you're in a building with a shelter designed to give protection against indirect impact, go to that shelter as quickly as possible. As far as ICRC buildings are concerned, only shelter facilities are designed to protect you against the indirect effects of artillery, mortar and missile fire.
- If no such facility is available, take refuge in an improvised shelter, preferably in a solid building with a strong roof. Choose a location that offers maximum protection, such as a stairwell or cellar. Stay away from windows, anything else that could shatter and any flammable items, such as gas bottles. No ICRC shelter offers protection against sustained attack, and even the strongest structure can collapse if it sustains a direct hit from a bomb or shell.



- If you can't get to a safe location, protect your vital organs. The best position is on your back (to protect your organs from behind), with your arms and elbows folded over your head and your ears covered. Bring your knees up to your chest (to protect your organs from the front) and open your mouth so you can breathe out (this helps protect your lungs against damage due to the effect of pressure). If you can't adopt this position, lie face down on the ground. This position gives less protection to your vital organs.

6.3.6 MINES, BOOBY TRAPS AND EXPLOSIVE REMNANTS OF WAR

Mines and booby traps

These are generally placed in carefully-chosen locations. They are often hidden, buried or covered by vegetation or rubble. They may also be placed in and around houses or other buildings that have been abandoned.

Mines are often used to protect important installations, such as military bases or camps, defensive positions or strategically-important infrastructure such as power stations, water-supply systems, roads, bridges, etc. Those who lay mines will generally try to anticipate the reactions of enemy forces and civilians. For instance, a bridge across a shallow river may be mined, but so may the riverbanks adjacent to it, so as to kill or injure anyone who attempts to cross the river while avoiding the bridge. Mines are very rarely laid singly; if you find one, there are probably others nearby. They can also have moved since they were laid, as a result of rain, floods or mudslides.

Mines and booby traps generally kill or injure by blast, fragmentation or a combination of the two. Their central feature is that they are detonated by the victim. In other words, they can be set off by your actions or by the passage of your vehicle, via a pressure plate, a trip-wire, an infra-red detector or some other detector. Contrary to popular belief, anti-personnel mines don't emit a click when you step on them and only explode when you lift your foot.

Booby traps generally consist of a hidden explosive device, or an explosive device connected to an object designed to attract the victim. They may be linked to military items (rifles, ammunition, etc.) or to apparently innocent objects such as food, household articles or toys. Even corpses may be booby-trapped.

The fact that mines and booby traps are generally invisible makes them all the more dangerous. You must be on your guard at all times when working in areas where their presence is known or suspected. Assume that any object in a conflict zone may be booby-trapped if the area has not been cleared by specialists. The same applies to most areas abandoned by the population, even once they start to return.

Explosive remnants of war (ERW)

These are munitions that have not exploded and have been abandoned during or after fighting. They include the projectiles contained in weapons that comprise sub-munitions, artillery shells, mortar bombs, grenades and other explosive munitions that have failed to explode during a conflict. They also include ammunition stocks abandoned by the belligerents. In the best case, ERW will be on the surface and hence visible. Unfortunately, they are often buried, or hidden by vegetation or rubble. They are often unstable and liable to explode if anyone moves them or even touches them. As a result, they pose a serious threat to both the public and humanitarians.

There's a flourishing scrap-metal industry in many countries, and this may tempt people to harvest ERW with a view to recycling the metal they contain. Even after they've been handled many times, such devices can still contain explosives and can still be highly dangerous. So if someone proudly offers to show you their collection of souvenirs, decline their kind offer and explain the dangers involved.

Dealing with the threat from mines, booby traps and ERW



Mines, booby traps and explosive remnants of war are extremely dangerous. In case of doubt, consult an expert. Talk to the local population; they generally know the places to avoid.

- Take well-used roads and paths. Try not to be the first to drive along a route in the morning. Before using a new route, check to see whether the local population is using it.
- Where you know or suspect that these items are present, stay on the road. If possible, use roads with hard surfaces, as there's less risk of mines being buried in them. Stay off the verges – they may be mined. Be suspicious of obstacles that may hide mines, such as a large branch in the middle of the road.
- Look out for markers indicating the presence of mines, booby traps and explosive remnants of war, and obey all related signs.

Be on your guard wherever there has been fighting, especially in urban areas.

- If you think there are mines, booby traps or ERW at a particular location, don't approach them. Get a specialist to inspect the area. Report the matter as soon as possible, mark the position of the object without taking any risks and note the location on a map for reporting and future reference.
- Never touch anything that you think could be a munition, weapon or other explosive device. Never agree to look after such an item for someone else.
- If you work in the medical field, report all cases of patients with injuries caused by mines or ERW.

If you think you're in a minefield:

- *Stop!* Don't move unless there are compelling security reasons for doing so, e.g. you're under fire. If you absolutely have to move, move only as far as necessary to escape the immediate danger. Call for assistance, and stay where you are for as long as necessary, until a planned rescue operation can be organized by specialists.
- If one of your colleagues is injured or in danger, don't rush over to help them, even if they beg you to. Where there's one mine there are probably others. You do nobody any favours by becoming the next victim.

6.3.7 THE THREAT FROM CHEMICAL, BIOLOGICAL, RADIOLOGICAL AND NUCLEAR HAZARDS

Without going into detail on what is a highly complex topic, this sub-section will give you some understanding of the threat and explain how to recognize the signs of contamination. It also offers some advice on reducing your exposure to radiological or chemical agents if they've been deployed.

Reducing the threat from chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear (CBRN) hazards can demand complex measures. Unless you've undergone suitable training and unless procedures appropriate to the specific situation have been drawn up, it's best to not operate in an area if you think CBRN weapons have been used.

Understanding the threat

CBRN weapons are designed to kill, injure or cause illness. The nature and seriousness of the harm done to people and the environment will depend on the type of agent and the amount of exposure. These two factors will also determine when symptoms appear. Many CBRN agents cannot be detected by

the senses, whereas others can, under certain circumstances (see below). These agents are only a threat if they're removed from the sealed containers in which they're stored, and released into the environment.

Chemical agents. These are toxic chemicals, either produced legally for industrial purposes or deliberately designed for use as chemical-warfare agents. The dispersal of these substances has serious consequences, for both people and the environment, especially when they're deliberately released by a weapon such as a rocket, bomb, shell or improvised explosive device (IED). The same applies if they are deliberately or accidentally released from an industrial container. Such substances can be released accidentally during manufacture, storage or transport, or as a result of a natural disaster. Any facility storing toxic chemicals is susceptible to damage in an attack.

Chemical-warfare agents are prohibited, are not available in large quantity and have only been used in a limited number of armed conflicts in recent years. However, toxic substances are in widespread use for industrial purposes, in agriculture and for purifying drinking water. The most common are chlorine (water purification), ammonia (fertilizer), potassium cyanide (mining) and phosgene (plastics).

Biological agents: Biological substances generally take the form of natural or genetically-modified micro-organisms (viruses, fungi or bacteria) or toxins (toxic substances produced by organisms). If released into the environment they can cause death or illness. Certain biological substances have caused epidemics, such as Ebola, swine flu/SARS (HxNx), Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) or anthrax, which is endemic in cattle. A biological weapon works by distributing a strain of a virus, usually one that already exists.

Radiological agents: These are radioactive substances. They may be of natural origin or have been manufactured for industrial or medical purposes. For instance, such substances are used in gamma knife radiotherapy to treat cancer, in equipment to sterilize blood and in X-ray equipment. This means that bombing or shelling a hospital or factory may release radioactive substances if such equipment is damaged by explosions. In such a situation, chemical contamination may occur at the same time.

Whether CBRN contamination is intentional or accidental, the measures to take will depend on the type of agent and the degree of exposure.

Radioactive substances are also found in certain types of ammunition. Some, such as depleted uranium shells, are designed to penetrate armour. These cause radioactive contamination in the immediate vicinity of the point of impact. However, the greatest threat from this type of munition is probably the toxicity of the uranium rather than its radioactivity. Humanitarian personnel engaged in forensic work need to be particularly careful. If they disturb the soil around the point of impact, they may ingest dust particles containing depleted uranium. Bodies may also be contaminated.

It would also be possible to add a radioactive source to a conventional bomb. This is known as a “dirty bomb”. Such a bomb would scatter radioactive material as it exploded. The aim would not be to destroy structures, but to contaminate a zone – and its inhabitants – by direct radiation and by ingestion and inhalation of radioactive substances. Deploying such a bomb would require a great deal of organization, to obtain the radioactive material, to build the bomb and to deploy it. The risk of such a bomb being used in practice is therefore very low.

Nuclear threats: These threats are related to the emission of radioactive material during detonation of a nuclear/atomic weapon (which derives its energy from nuclear fission), or a thermonuclear weapon (which uses the fusion of atomic nuclei).

The use of such weapons is unlikely, and these devices are closely monitored, both by states and by the International Atomic Energy Agency. If ever there were to be credible indications that someone was likely to use nuclear weapons, your only option would be to leave the region concerned, so we shan't discuss them further in this manual.

Indicators of possible contamination

One party to a conflict sometimes accuses the other of using CBRN weapons and deploying the associated agents against the population. If such accusations are made, it will be necessary for specialists to verify whether they're justified and, if so, to establish the exact type and extent of contamination. The same is true in the case of an epidemic. You can sometimes detect certain CBRN agents using the senses, under certain circumstances, but not always. Most chemical-warfare agents are essentially odourless, and they may not cause immediately obvious symptoms. In the case of biological warfare agents, the onset of symptoms may be generic (e.g. fevers and general illness that could be

confused with a wide range of naturally occurring diseases). In this case, days or weeks might be needed to detect and confirm the type of disease outbreak. Indications of exposure to radiation may not be immediately apparent owing to delayed onset of symptoms.

However, indications that a CBRN incident *may* have occurred include:

- smell and signs of explosives or smoke
- unexplained odours (bitter almonds, peach kernels, newly mown hay or green grass)
- unexplained symptoms in a large number of people (possibly including you), such as headache, nausea, vomiting, breathing difficulty, convulsions, dizziness, disorientation, blisters, skin discolouration, burns, etc.
- hospitalization of a large number of persons with the above symptoms
- sudden increase in deaths of people or animals
- personnel wearing protective equipment.

Caring for contaminated patients and conducting forensic activities in a contaminated area requires special procedures.

The greater the number of the above-mentioned signs you detect, the more likely it is that a CBRN incident has taken place. If you work in a hospital and you receive a significant number of patients with the above symptoms, you must take measures to protect yourself before starting to treat them, otherwise you risk becoming a casualty yourself.

Exposure to CBRN agents

You can be exposed to CBRN agents not only at the time and location of release but also later and at other locations if you enter a contaminated area. Furthermore, areas that were not initially contaminated may become contaminated later by contaminated persons or objects.

The possible exposure routes are as follows:

- inhalation of agents present in the air
- contact with the eyes, skin or open wounds
- consumption of contaminated food or water
- transmission from hand to mouth after touching a contaminated object
- transmission from person to person
- contact with/absorption of persistent agents
- inhalation of persistent agents in suspension.

Procedures

In regions where the ICRC considers the CBRN threat to be significant, appropriate procedures will be added to the security regulations. If necessary, the ICRC will organize training for personnel who are particularly exposed, such as medical staff. The organization will also issue them with personal protective equipment.



Dealing with (suspected) radiological contamination

Radiation is invisible. Its effects on health are not usually immediately visible. Those effects depend on the dose, the distance between victim and source, and the duration of exposure. Radiation is attenuated by physical obstacles. In some cases, it takes only a few hours for radiation levels to fall significantly. You're safer inside a building than outside, or in a vehicle.

If you suspect that radiological contamination has occurred:

- Don't evacuate unless told to do so. Take refuge in an inner room (as close as possible to the centre of the building), behind the densest possible materials, to shield you from radiation.
- Protect your nose, mouth and skin against radioactive dust using cloths. Close and seal all windows and exterior doors with duct tape and plastic sheeting. Block all keyholes and cracks with cotton wool or wet rags

and tape, using a water-soaked cloth to seal gaps under doors. Shut down air-conditioning vents or flows, fans and central heating systems.

- Avoid physical contact with others.
- Decontaminate yourself: remove your shoes and clothes, place them in at least two plastic bags, one inside the other, tightly sealed, and mark the bags to indicate that they contain contaminated items. Carefully wash your body from top to toe, including hair, preferably with soap and hot water. Avoid rubbing your skin.
- Avoid consuming food or water that could be contaminated.
- Contact the ICRC immediately, and try to obtain reliable information regarding the situation.
- Consult a doctor as soon as possible. The treatment necessary will depend on the type of substance involved.

Dealing with (suspected) chemical contamination

If you're exposed to chemical agents or toxic industrial products, your first priority is to limit the effect on your health. You can take several measures, especially if you're on the edge of the affected area.

- First of all, evacuate! Get out of the area immediately, protecting your nose and mouth and avoiding contact with the substance.
- If you've been issued with an Escape, Self-Protection and Decontamination Kit, now's the time to use it! If not, cover your nose, mouth and skin with a cloth.
- Get to as high a point as possible, at right angles to the wind direction. If you're in a vehicle, close the windows and switch off the ventilation, air-conditioning and heating.
- If evacuation is impossible, seek refuge in a building, preferably on an upper floor. Close and seal all windows and exterior doors with duct tape and plastic sheeting. Block all keyholes and cracks with cotton wool or wet rags and tape, using a water-soaked cloth to seal gaps under doors. Shut down air-conditioning vents or flows, fans and central heating systems.
- Avoid physical contact with others.
- Decontaminate yourself: remove your shoes and clothes, place them in at least two plastic bags, one inside the other, tightly sealed, and mark the bags to indicate that they contain contaminated items. Carefully wash your body from top to toe, including hair, preferably with soap and hot water. Avoid rubbing your skin.

- Avoid consuming food or water that could be contaminated.
- Contact the ICRC immediately, and try to obtain reliable information regarding the situation.
- Consult a doctor as soon as possible. The treatment necessary will depend on the type of substance involved.

6.3.8 WEAPONS: FIVE QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF

1. What types of weapon do weapon bearers in the region have, and what are the threats associated with them?
2. What are the belligerents' most likely targets?
3. Might any areas in the region be mined?
4. Do I know the best places to seek shelter from attack in the buildings I use?
5. Before entering an area where fighting has recently taken place, do I need to consult a weapons specialist?

6.4 CYBER THREATS

What would happen if someone got at your private data, your email, or your online shopping or bank accounts? Identity theft is a frequent occurrence, and the consequences for the victim can be serious. Criminals can use information stolen from multiple websites to impersonate you, enabling them to take out a loan, obtain a credit card or order goods and services without your knowing.

Password theft can also have serious implications for your work: an individual or entity could access sensitive information or use your identity to make statements in your name, or that of the ICRC. Such actions could harm the reputation of the ICRC and put you in danger. And you can imagine the consequences if ill-intentioned third parties got hold of sensitive information about the people the ICRC is helping.

6.4.1 PROTECTING YOURSELF AGAINST CYBER THREATS

Hackers will most often use tricks to get at your data. The simplest approach (for them) is to take advantage of your curiosity or inattention. You should protect your data just like you'd protect your home against burglars: lock everything that can be locked, and never open the door to strangers.

- Don't use personal systems to communicate on work matters.
- Don't send sensitive information via communication systems that aren't secured by the ICRC. In some countries, messaging systems are under constant surveillance, and your messages are easy to intercept.
- Choose a different, complex password for every system you use. Your password should consist of at least ten characters and include a mixture of upper case letters, lower case letters, digits and special characters. Don't use obvious things like dates or the names of towns. Even better: use passwords with at least 20 characters. Don't give them to anyone, don't write them down, and change them regularly. To store your passwords safely, use a password manager – a system that acts like a safe for passwords.
- Never use a USB drive originating with a person outside the ICRC; it could be used to spy on you or to install malware on your computer.
- Always assume that your communications can be intercepted, whatever system you use. So think carefully before saying, writing or posting anything sensitive.
- In particular, communications via public connections in places like airports, restaurants and hotels are very easy to intercept, whether you use Wi-Fi or a cable.

Don't make life any easier for hackers: use only ICRC-approved communication systems and keep them secure.

Use of information technology facilities

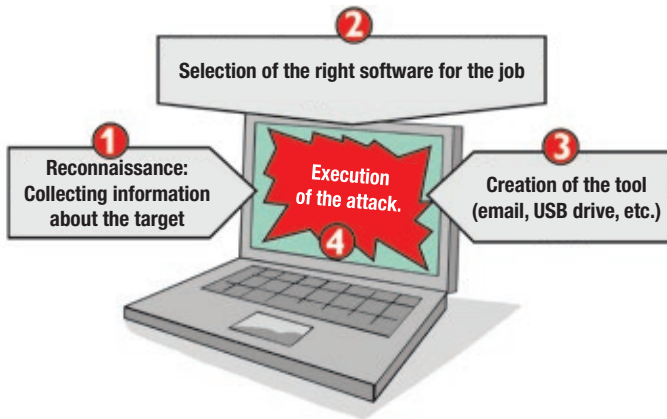
The ICRC Code of Conduct (V.2) stipulates that you must use only those IT tools provided or authorized by the ICRC for the exchange of work-related information. The aim is to ensure optimum information management and reduce the risk of hacking.

6.4.2 CYBER ATTACKS

Cyber attacks are a reality and they constitute a threat to all, including humanitarian organizations. Past experience has shown that such attacks can do considerable harm, particularly if they cripple basic services essential to the population. Knocking out the IT system of a hospital could make it extremely difficult to provide medical care, for instance. If your communications systems are hacked, the consequences may go way beyond the implications for your personal security. A cyber attack can disrupt your operations, harming the people with whom you work. So we all share responsibility for taking the necessary precautions.

Who is responsible for these attacks? There are “newbie” hackers, generally young people, who attack random targets, often just for fun. Then there are individuals with a political, religious, environmental or other cause (hacktivists). And cyber criminals, who act for profit. Finally, states and other entities may attack systems for various reasons, including espionage.

A cyber attack consists of a number of phases:



One of the most common hacking tools – and one of the easiest to spot – is the simple spam email, perhaps aimed at tricking you into revealing your password. This is known as *phishing*. These emails may also include malware (*malicious software*) in the form of an attachment. Malware is a threat not only to your PC but to the whole network you’re connected to. The best form of malware protection is to be careful about opening emails.

Other points to be aware of regarding email:

- Identity theft is an integral part of phishing. Don't be lulled into a false sense of security by the sender's name or email address.
- Be suspicious of messages that claim to be urgent or include threats aimed at making you forget the need for prudence. The same applies to emails asking you to support a worthy cause or sign a petition.
- Always think twice before clicking a link or attachment and never click a link or attachment in a suspicious email.

Be suspicious. If you receive an email you weren't expecting, and which seems not to be connected with your work, don't open it.

6.4.3 INSTANT MESSAGING AND FILE STORAGE SYSTEMS

Be careful about instant message and file storage systems. While they are widely used, they are not designed for sharing or storing confidential information. You lose control of any information you entrust to them. Furthermore, information that could be important for future ICRC operations is lost to the organization because it isn't archived. This deprives us of information essential to our institutional memory. You have no idea where the data are stored, and under what legal jurisdiction, and you run the risk of them being divulged to third parties. The ICRC's privileges and immunities protect our information against **forced disclosure** in court, but only on condition that it is stored in our own systems. In other cases, a court or tribunal can force a service provider to disclose information that could harm our operations, and hence harm you.

- Consult the ICRC as to which instant messaging and file storage systems to use – and which ones to avoid – and the precautions to take when using them.

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Facebook

The Facebook App on your phone asks for around 50 permissions involving access to your data. If you let it, the App can access your GPS data, your text messages, your contacts and everything in your calendar.

6.4.4 PROTECTING YOURSELF AGAINST CYBER THREATS: EIGHT RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Use only tools and applications authorized by the ICRC. In case of doubt, consult an ICRC IT specialist.
2. Don't use instant messaging systems for sensitive data.
3. Don't send sensitive information by unencrypted means.
4. Choose a strong password, and don't use the same one for multiple communication systems.
5. Don't click links or attachments if you don't know where they come from.
6. Never use a USB drive originating with a person outside the ICRC.
7. Store your information in the right places: don't save work-related data in the cloud or on private disks and devices.
8. Limit your personal exposure online.

6.5 SEXUAL VIOLENCE

The extent to which humanitarian workers suffer sexual violence is underestimated, as such incidents very often go unreported. But studies have shown the numbers to be significant. According to a survey conducted by the Humanitarian Women's Network in 2016 involving 1,000 women of all origins working in humanitarian organizations, over half had been subjected to sexual violence perpetrated by other humanitarian workers and 4% had been raped by them. While most victims of sexual violence are women (of all origins and all levels of education), that doesn't mean men are immune. People who are homosexual – or thought to be – are most at risk.

Sexual violence is never justifiable and never acceptable, no matter where you're working. It's contrary to the ICRC's ethical values and standards. The ICRC does not tolerate any form of sexual violence, whether perpetrated against its staff or by its staff.

This section explains the nature of the threat. It explains how to limit your vulnerability and how to react if you or one of your colleagues suffers sexual violence.

Some definitions

- **Sexual violence:** In this manual, “sexual violence” covers any non-consensual sexual act, ranging from sexual harassment to rape. By “non-consensual” we mean that the victim did not wish the act to take place and it was carried out by means of psychological or physical compulsion, or by a combination of the two. Sexual violence does not necessarily involve non-sexual violence. For instance, being forced to look at pornographic material or sex acts is also sexual violence.
- **Sexual harassment:** Sexual behaviour that is not desired by the person who is the victim of it and that violates their dignity. Sexual harassment includes any unwanted words, gestures or acts that cause the victim to feel uncomfortable or worried and threaten their well-being. This includes such things as offensive or embarrassing comments with a sexual connotation, inappropriate looks and facial expressions, and unwanted physical proximity. Sexual harassment generally includes the use of techniques aimed at intimidating or humiliating the person, or making them feel guilty. It may have psychological effects that lead to physical symptoms, and these may only emerge a long time after the acts were committed.
- **Sexual assault:** Any sexual act imposed on someone without their consent. This includes all kinds of physical act, such as sexual touching or removing clothing against a person’s will, and acts involving sexual penetration such as rape.

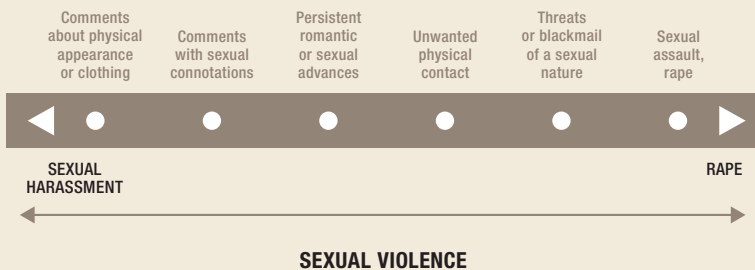


Fig. 6: Continuum of sexual violence²⁹

²⁹ Figure inspired by: Global Interagency Security Forum (GISF), *Managing Sexual Violence against Aid Workers: Prevention, Preparedness, Response and Aftercare*, GISF, 2019, p. 5: <https://gisf.ngo/resource/managing-sexual-violence-against-aid-workers/>.

6.5.1 REDUCING THE RISK OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE

Understanding the threat

Who are the perpetrators? It's a mistake to think that weapon bearers are the main threat where sexual violence is concerned. Studies have shown that the greatest threat to humanitarian workers comes not from strangers but from people they know. Most perpetrators of sexual violence against humanitarian workers are male humanitarian workers, and in many cases these men are further up the hierarchy than their victims. There is nonetheless a significant threat from outside as well, particularly from weapon bearers.³⁰

What are the most dangerous situations? While sexual violence occurs in all societies, it's particularly prevalent in certain situations, such as:

- regions affected by armed conflict
- areas where the rule of law is weak or non-existent
- highly patriarchal societies
- wherever sexism and homophobia are prevalent
- in societies with particularly high levels of violence against women
- wherever the perpetrators can act with impunity
- festive occasions where the abuse of alcohol and the consumption of recreational drugs are widespread
- wherever individuals exercise almost complete control over others, such as arrest, detention or hostage-taking.

If you're concerned about the risk of sexual violence, and the subject wasn't covered during the security briefing you received when you took up your post, contact your health adviser or any other person you trust within the ICRC.

Limiting your vulnerability

No-one is immune to sexual violence. A person's vulnerability depends on their

personal characteristics (nationality, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, etc.), their position within the organization and their location.³¹

³⁰ Source: D. Mazurana and P. Donnelly, *STOP the Sexual Assault against Humanitarian and Development Aid Workers*, Feinstein International Center, Tufts University, 2017: <https://fic.tufts.edu/publication-item/stop-sexual-assault-against-aid-workers/>.

³¹ See Global Interagency Security Forum (GISF), *Managing the Security of Aid Workers with Diverse Profiles*, GISF, 2018: <https://gisf.ngo/resource/managing-the-security-of-aid-workers-with-diverse-profiles/>.

The first line of defence against sexual violence consists of understanding and obeying the Code of Conduct, knowing how to recognize sexual violence and knowing the internal mechanisms through which to get help.

- Don't hesitate to tell a colleague – discreetly – if something they do makes you feel uncomfortable, e.g. if they give you a hug “hello” and you don't want them to.
- Find out who you can go to for help – inside or outside the ICRC – if you're unsure, you feel uncomfortable about something or you experience sexual violence.
- Find out about the ICRC mechanisms for reporting such incidents.

Obeying the security regulations and taking certain basic precautions can considerably reduce the risk of your being targeted. For instance, moving around in a group will make you less vulnerable. Sleeping in a room with no direct access from the outside reduces the risk of intruders.

Other precautions:

- Be especially careful of people who are under the influence of alcohol or drugs. And be aware that alcohol and drugs can make you less careful, affect your judgement and hence increase your vulnerability. Drug-taking is prohibited under the ICRC Code of Conduct.
- Do everything you can to prevent anyone **entering your residence**, or at least to slow them down. In particular, lock your doors, windows and gates at night, and familiarize yourself with any alarm systems.
- If you intend to stay in a remote area for several days, find out whether your team should take a post-rape kit, in addition to a first-aid kit (see below). You must take a post-rape kit with you if you expect to be more than 48 hours away from the nearest ICRC office, as the medicines in the kit have to be taken within 72 hours of a rape occurring.

6.5.2 REACTING TO SEXUAL VIOLENCE

Deciding whether to react

In some cases, it will be totally obvious that what has happened constitutes sexual violence. In other instances, things may be less clear. How can you decide whether what you experienced was sexual violence or not?

Quite simply, if somebody's behaviour makes you uncomfortable because you perceive it as sexual, it's possible that you've experienced some form of sexual violence.

- If somebody wants you to do something you don't want to do, say "No!" (if you can do so safely).
- If you feel uncomfortable, don't keep it to yourself. Tell someone you trust, as soon as possible – whether they work for the ICRC or not. They may be in a better position to assess the seriousness of the situation and help you to think about what's happened, support you and help you take any necessary steps.

If a situation makes you uncomfortable because it could potentially involve something sexual, don't feel you have to deal with it on your own. Speak to someone you trust.

We all share responsibility for creating an organizational culture where sexual violence can never occur. If you fail to react to an act of sexual violence by a colleague – however minor it may be – you make it harder for the victim to say anything and you give the perpetrator the feeling that what they're doing is OK. In many situations, simply saying that something is not acceptable – while taking care not to offend the people concerned – is enough to put a stop to it.

Reacting to sexual assault or rape

It's impossible to know in advance how you'll react to an immediate threat of sexual assault or rape. Your reactions will depend on a whole host of factors, which your brain will evaluate in a fraction of a second, such as where you are, the number of attackers, what means they have at their disposal to force you to do their will, whether you know them and how well and whether it's possible to call for help or escape. Your defence mechanisms will activate, to maximize your chances of survival.

In other words, there's no "good" or "bad" way of reacting. Most people who have experienced this type of situation react in one or more of the following ways:

- **Active resistance:** Running away while shouting for help, fighting back, struggling, punching or kicking the attacker, biting them, etc.
- **Passive resistance:** Trying to dissuade the attacker, offering something material (money, your watch, etc.) in exchange for your "freedom" or using some kind of trick to escape.

- **Freeze:** Offering no resistance. The brain often causes a victim to adopt this strategy when there are no other options and submission represents the only hope of survival.

Your first priority is to survive. The second is to minimize physical harm from the sexual assault or rape.

If you're forced to witness rape

You may be forced to witness rape, either directly (visually) or indirectly (by hearing the incident). This is an extremely distressing situation, above all because you're powerless to prevent the attack. If you find yourself in such a situation:

- Consider the possibility of reasoning with the attackers or negotiating with them.
- Avoid doing anything that could put you in danger.
- If there's nothing you can do to prevent the attack, focus all your mental energy on how best to help the person afterwards. Experience has shown that adopting this attitude can make it easier to cope with such a situation.

6.5.3 FINDING SUPPORT AFTER SEXUAL VIOLENCE

It's perfectly normal to feel ashamed, guilty and humiliated after suffering sexual violence, and to fear the judgement of others and the reactions of family and friends if they find out. It's totally understandable if you want the incident to remain as confidential as possible. It's for you to decide who you tell about the violence you've experienced, and exactly what you tell them.

If you experience rape or sexual assault, contact a health professional as quickly as possible. They are bound by medical secrecy and a duty of confidentiality.

The first priorities are to find a place where you feel safe and to obtain medical care and psychosocial support. You know best who you feel comfortable with, and who you can ask for help. This may be a friend, a colleague, your health adviser, your manager or some other person. However, we do recommend that you contact a doctor or nurse as quickly as possible, so you can obtain suitable care. Doctors and nurses are bound by medical secrecy, so no information about what has happened to you, or about your health, will be disclosed to anyone else without your prior consent. This means you can talk about what has happened to you entirely in confidence.

In case of rape, the ICRC will provide you with a post-rape kit for dealing with some of the urgent medical threats that can arise. To be effective, the medicines it contains must be taken within 72 hours of the attack. A rape kit must be used under the close supervision of a health professional. They will be able to inform you as to the role of each medicine, the precautions to take, the correct dosage and any possible side-effects.

6.5.4 SUPPORTING A COLLEAGUE WHO HAS EXPERIENCED SEXUAL VIOLENCE

It's important to know how to react if a colleague tells you they've experienced sexual violence. First of all, you need to offer them an opportunity to be heard and the feeling that they're safe. Your role is to listen to their wishes and their needs, and to help them get in touch with professionals who can support them, if possible. Unless the person requires urgent medical attention, it's vital that you don't take decisions for them. Be aware that the effects of sexual violence on a person may vary according to their beliefs, culture and identity. In addition to harming their physical and psychological well-being, sexual violence may threaten their safety and their future as a member of society. The victim is therefore the person best able to decide which measures are right for them. This means you must obtain their consent before taking any action.

The first step is to help the victim find a health professional of their choice within the ICRC; they are best qualified to guide them in choosing the right course of action.

- Make sure the victim is safe – and feels safe.
- Show compassion and empathy.
- Help them recognize their own needs.
- Listen to their story without calling it into question, and show that you believe them.
- Don't ask questions about exactly what happened and don't try to get them to give a complete account. Just listen, without pushing them to speak.
- Discuss the available options in terms of medical and psychological support, and give them objective information that will help them take the right decisions.
- Ask if they would like you to help them deal with immediate practical things, e.g. by taking them home or giving them clean clothes.

Be very careful not to say anything that could come across as blaming or criticizing the victim. Only one person is to blame: the perpetrator.

All the information they give you is strictly confidential, as are the identities of the victim and the presumed perpetrator. However, if the victim wishes to remain silent, and you believe that this is putting them or others in danger, ask your manager for advice, without identifying the victim.

Messages to convey to the victim of sexual violence	Things to avoid
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What can I do to help you? - You are not alone. There are professionals who can look after you, confidentially, and can help you take whatever steps are necessary. - Whatever you may be feeling is completely normal. - Don't blame yourself for what happened – the only person to blame is the perpetrator. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Trying to obtain a detailed account of what happened. - Expressing any doubt as to the truth or accuracy of what the person tells you. - Playing down the seriousness of the incident. - Suggesting that it's impossible that the presumed perpetrator would "do such a thing". - Suggesting that it's probably all a simple misunderstanding, which can be sorted out by speaking directly to the perpetrator. - Making false promises. - Taking decisions for the victim.

6.5.5 WHAT ABOUT PROSECUTING THE PERPETRATOR?

Whether or not to report a rape to the police and whether or not it's in your interests to start legal proceedings against the perpetrator are difficult decisions. you'll need to discuss your specific case with professionals. There are many factors to take into account, including the difficulty of clearly identifying the perpetrator, collecting and preserving physical evidence that can be used in court, the laws of the country concerned, the existence of traditional justice systems, the integrity of the judicial system in the country concerned, the extent to which rapists enjoy impunity in court, etc. These factors may all render any legal proceedings not only unrealistic but even dangerous for you and your family.

Don't rush into anything. Talk to somebody competent and objective who can help you decide whether or not it's in your interests to prosecute the perpetrator.

If the perpetrator is a colleague, you can request an internal investigation by contacting the ICRC **Ethics, Risk and Compliance Office**. If your complaint is upheld, the perpetrator will be subject to administrative sanctions.

6.5.6 SEXUAL VIOLENCE: FIVE QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF

1. Can I correctly identify those acts that constitute sexual violence?
2. What does the ICRC mean by “zero tolerance” regarding sexual violence?
3. How can I reduce the risk of becoming a victim of sexual violence?
4. Who can I ask for help?
5. How can reporting sexual violence to the ICRC help to prevent further such incidents?

6.6 ARREST



One cannot totally exclude the possibility of the authorities arresting you for reasons linked to your humanitarian work. There could be many possible reasons for arresting you: involvement in a road accident, interaction with armed groups that the authorities consider illegal, accusations of using your activities to carry out espionage, etc. While some arrests occur as part of an official judicial procedure, this is not always the case. An arrest may result from a misunderstanding, it may be a political manoeuvre or it could be intended as intimidation. It is of course possible that your arrest is completely legitimate and has nothing to do with your work, e.g. if you're suspected of murder.

6.6.1 PREVENTIVE MEASURES

While it's generally impossible to anticipate arrest, there are a few things you can do to make it less likely:

- Don't go thinking that you're above the law, just because you work for an international organization. Obey local laws unless to do so would be incompatible with your work for the ICRC. If the ICRC enjoys privileges and immunities in the country concerned, the organization can invoke them to mitigate the consequences of any breach of national legislation linked to the exercise of your functions.
- Obey the Code of Conduct.
- Be open and honest with everyone you encounter. Take the time to explain to them what you're doing and to develop a constructive dialogue with them.
- Avoiding commenting publicly on political or military situations and events, unless you're authorized to do so by the ICRC. The duty of discretion forms part of the ICRC Code of Conduct. Check that **what you post online** has no political connotations and isn't controversial in the country where you're working. Bear in mind that anything you publish could be used against you if ever you're arrested.
- Don't take photos of potentially sensitive subjects, such as military or police buildings and activities, checkpoints, etc.
- Don't use a drone unless you've obtained authorization from your management in connection with work.

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6.6.2 ARREST

If you're arrested by any authority (be it a state authority or that of a non-state party to an armed conflict) you're immediately entitled to certain procedural safeguards, such as being informed without delay of the reasons for your arrest and of any accusations against you. If you're prosecuted, you also have the right to be presumed innocent, the right not to be obliged to give evidence against yourself or to plead guilty and the right to defend yourself, and you're entitled to other fundamental guarantees. In practice, however, the procedural safeguards recognized and applied by the authorities don't always correspond to those laid down in international law.

To reduce some of the difficulties resulting from arrest, and to prevent abuse:

- Do what the detaining authority tells you and be respectful towards them.
- If possible, don't sign any document if you don't understand the language in which it's written or the meaning of its contents.
- Try to find out why you've been arrested. Explain the ICRC's mandate, and the purely humanitarian nature of our work.
- Ask (calmly) to be allowed to contact your family, the ICRC and, if appropriate, your embassy or consulate. If you can't contact them direct, ask the detaining authority to tell them that you've been arrested.
- If you have a lawyer, ask to be allowed to contact them. If you don't have one, ask for adequate legal assistance.
- Ask that a lawyer be present during any questioning. If that's not possible, ask for a representative of the ICRC, your embassy or your consulate to be present. If necessary, ask for an interpreter.
- Ask to be visited by the ICRC.
- If you need medical care, tell the detaining authority.
- Do your best to maintain personal discipline. Try to keep yourself occupied with positive thoughts and mental exercises.
- If possible, do regular physical exercises.
- Keep your surroundings as clean and hygienic as possible.
- Prepare yourself mentally for the possibility that your situation may last longer than you initially expected.

Your priority is to let the outside world know where you are, who is holding you and why, so that someone can help you.

6.6.3 WHAT THE ICRC WILL DO IF YOU'RE ARRESTED

The ICRC's response will depend on several factors. The organization's options will depend mainly on:

- the type of detaining authority (police, immigration, intelligence service, armed forces, etc.)
- the reasons for your arrest
- the legal framework that applies
- any connection between your arrest and your humanitarian work
- the quality of the dialogue between the ICRC and the detaining authority.

Exactly what the ICRC will do depends on many factors, in particular the connection between your arrest and your humanitarian activities and the crime of which you're accused.

In certain cases – and especially if your arrest is directly linked to your work – the ICRC can try to get you released by invoking any privileges and immunities that may apply. The organization will use whatever legal resources it has, together with diplomatic channels if necessary and appropriate. In parallel with this, the ICRC will stay in close contact with your family, to support them and keep them informed of progress. In some circumstances, the organization may be able to do little more than visit you and verify that you're being treated correctly and that your conditions of detention are acceptable.

6.7 KIDNAPPING AND HOSTAGE-TAKING

Being taken hostage is an extremely difficult experience, both psychologically and physically. However, the threat is limited to certain specific regions, and the number of humanitarians who are kidnapped is small in comparison with the number in the field.³²

Most kidnappings are purely criminal affairs, with the aim being to obtain a ransom. Political kidnappings are less frequent. On some occasions, there may be a dual motive – financial and political. Furthermore, the kidnappers' demands may change during the course of negotiations and in the light of whatever opportunities arise. It's not unusual for a kidnapping victim to be transferred from one group to another, involving a move, often under difficult conditions. How long the person remains in captivity will vary according to the situation and the aims of the kidnappers. Captivity may last a few hours or days. But it can also last several months or even several years in exceptional cases.

In areas where kidnapping is considered a non-negligible risk, the ICRC takes preventive measures and has procedures in place for reacting to such incidents.

³² For detailed statistics, see A. Stoddard et al., *Aid Worker Security Report 2020: Figures at a Glance*, Humanitarian Outcomes, 2020: <https://www.humanitarianoutcomes.org/AWSR2020>.

6.7.1 PREPARE YOURSELF – AND YOUR FAMILY

p. 55 If you're working in an area where a kidnapping threat exists, you must prepare yourself and your family for the possibility that it could happen to you. Furthermore, knowing in outline what the ICRC will do to secure your release and look after your family will help you concentrate on your own survival if ever you're in this situation.

- Find out about the kidnapping threat in the area where you work.
- Tell your family about the risk, and tell them what you want them to do if you're kidnapped.
- Find out about the ICRC's policy on hostage-taking and how the organization responds (see below), and brief your family on these points.
- Make sure that the contact persons whose names you've given to the ICRC have all the information they'd need if you were to be taken hostage.
- **Limit your online footprint**, make sure your profiles are secure and check there's nothing online that a kidnapper could use against you.
- When you take up a new assignment, ask your management about any administrative measures you should take with regard to the kidnapping threat.
- Keep your personal documents in a place that's safe, but accessible to the ICRC if necessary.
- Keep your first-aid training up to date.

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6.7.2 HOSTAGE SURVIVAL

Your behaviour in captivity can have a positive effect on your situation, even if you don't control many factors. You therefore need to know and understand the stages of captivity and the difficulties you'll face if you're ever in such a situation.

Experience shows that the most dangerous moments are the time of abduction, the hours immediately afterwards and the time of release.

The major challenges

According to former hostages, the most difficult aspects were:

- Not knowing what was going to happen, or how long the situation would continue.
- The feeling of powerlessness and total loss of control over one's own life.
- The worry of not knowing how one's family would cope with the situation.

Abduction

The first 72 hours are particularly critical, especially because everyone is under stress.³³ Your kidnappers will probably be highly nervous and on edge. They may become highly aggressive if they encounter resistance, or unexpected obstacles. You must expect to be threatened with weapons, to experience violence and to be threatened with rape. Your kidnappers may blindfold you, and they may move you several times. Everything will probably happen very fast, without your knowing what's going on. Some former hostages say they were under extreme stress and in a state of high alert, while others report having felt totally detached and dissociated from what was happening.

Unless you're absolutely sure you can escape safely during the abduction itself – probably the best chance of escape you'll have – you should simply accept the situation for the time being. Try to overcome your shock, fear and distress as quickly as possible. This will enable you to get your breath back and to be more attentive to your kidnappers' demands.

- Stay as calm as possible.
- Follow the kidnappers' instructions and remain passive.
- Avoid sudden movements and ask permission before moving, even if it's only to remove your seatbelt.
- Speak only if you're told to, and don't become aggressive.
- Avoid looking directly at your kidnappers.
- Be sensitive to body language and non-verbal messages; your kidnappers probably won't speak your language.

33 J. Leach, *Survival Psychology*, Palgrave Macmillan, London, 1994.

During captivity

Your kidnappers have total control over you. Whether you're on your own or with others, and whatever your physical conditions of captivity, you're going to need all your physical and mental strength to handle this situation.

- Try to accept the fact that you're now in your kidnappers' hands.
- Prepare yourself mentally for the possibility that your captivity may last for months. This will help you deal with daily life, and will spare you many psychologically traumatic disappointments.
- Follow the kidnappers' instructions.
- Don't call anything they say into question, and don't argue with them. At the same time, don't believe everything they say. They may well try to manipulate you using lies with the aim of giving you false hope, making you afraid or even turning you against your own organization.
- Try to keep hold of anything you have with you for as long as possible, and don't discard personal items even if they don't appear to be useful.
- Your kidnappers are likely to move you to another location without warning; make sure you have all essential items within easy reach so you can take them with you.
- Don't allow yourself to become convinced that you've been abandoned by the ICRC or your family. Kidnappers often try this tactic in an attempt to intimidate their victims.

Remain convinced that everything is going to work out. Draw on all your physical and mental strength. Your adaptability and resilience will enable you not only to survive this physical and psychological challenge, but to recover once you're free again.

Physical health

- If you need medical care or have severe allergies, tell your kidnappers as soon as possible. Give them precise information, so they can give you the medicines you need, as far as possible.
- If circumstances permit, take daily physical exercise, even if space is limited. This will also have a positive effect on your mental well-being. If possible, explain to your kidnappers that this is very important for you.
- Accept the food and drink they give you. If at all possible, eat and drink all they offer, every day. Build up a stock of drinking water if you can.
- Keep your surroundings as clean and hygienic as possible. If circumstances permit, try to obtain access to a source of water, and a toilet. Ask for hygiene articles.

- If you feel that your living conditions could be improved, set priorities and discuss them with your kidnappers. If you're in a group, try to draw up a joint list.

Mental health

Stimulating and exercising your mental faculties will help you get through this experience. A conscious effort is needed in this respect. Keep your mind active by whatever means may suit you. Some prisoners have spent long periods composing music in their heads, writing poetry or designing their ideal house. Many have thought about the time after captivity, when they'd be free again, and have found this to be very helpful. Those who had access to writing material, books or a radio have reported that these were of great benefit.

- Always remember that the ICRC – and in many cases the authorities of your home country – will be in contact with your family. They'll keep them up to date regarding the situation and will do what they can to support them (see below).
- Try to keep yourself occupied with positive thoughts and mental exercises. Don't allow yourself to lose hope, nor to become over-optimistic.
- Do all you can to maintain personal discipline. This will help you overcome the difficulties inherent in your immediate surroundings and to cope with enforced inactivity.
- Try to keep a record of time. If possible, follow a daily routine.

The relationship with captors

The relationship between you and your kidnappers will have a major influence on your conditions of detention. They are the only people who can decide to treat you well, or to release you. They may well see you as insurance against attack. So if you respect them, there's a good chance that they'll respect you.

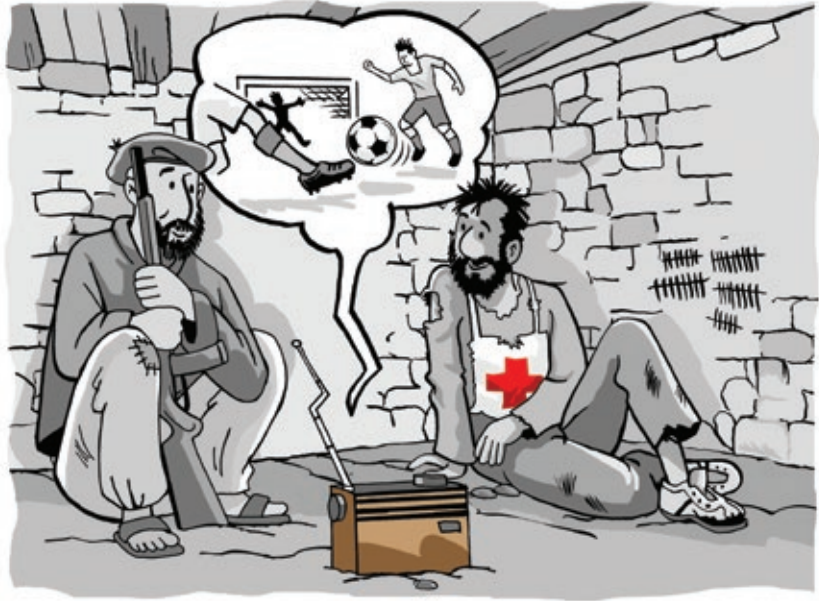
And by establishing a good rapport with them, you can ensure that they see you as a human being rather than just a commodity to be exchanged. Altering your behaviour to fit in with their cultural practices may also improve relations.

Try to establish a good rapport with the kidnappers: your treatment is entirely in their hands.

The Stockholm and Lima syndromes

Observation of long-term hostages has shown that some develop positive emotions and empathy towards their captors, or even come to identify with them. This paradoxical phenomenon is known as the Stockholm syndrome. Some kidnappers experience the Lima syndrome, developing empathy for their prisoners and developing almost a “brotherly” relationship with them.

- Don't antagonize your captors – they have you in their power. Don't attack them, physically or verbally.
- Maintain a professional attitude towards them, and behave in a culturally-appropriate manner.
- Remain calm at all times. Don't become angry or level accusations at them. Avoid making sudden movements in their presence.
- Address all requests to the leader of the kidnappers, calmly but firmly, and without trying to make them feel sorry for you.
- Decide whether it would be wise to try and promote the work of the ICRC – or not. If you think it could be useful, talk to your captors about concrete ICRC activities that could benefit them directly, such as care for the wounded, visits to prisoners, help for families separated by conflict, etc. Family, children and sport are good topics of conversation.
- Politics and religion are not!
- If your captors try to hide their identities, don't tell them you've recognized them.
- Never threaten to give evidence against them once you're released.



If you're part of a group of hostages

- Designate the most suitable person to represent the group and speak on your behalf. This will reassure the members of the group and will channel pressure and fear. It will enable you to coordinate your requests, show solidarity and speak with one voice. It's also a means of preventing your captors manipulating you and turning members of the group against each other.
- Share whatever information you have with each other.
- Be prepared for the possibility that you may be separated from the group.

Audio/video recordings and phone calls

You should expect the kidnappers to make sound or video recordings of you. They may put you in direct contact with your family or with the entity responsible for negotiating your release. If this happens, you may be allowed to send a personal message. While this will probably be a very difficult experience for you, it does help to advance the process of negotiating your release.

It's good to be prepared for such an eventuality, so you'll be ready to send your family the messages you find most important. Your kidnappers will probably only tell you just beforehand, and you won't have much time (between a few tens of seconds and a minute).

- Have a 30- to 60-second message to your family prepared in your head. You might want to tell them about your health, ask for things you need, reassure them, tell them you love them, send best wishes for a special event, etc.
- Do exactly what your kidnappers tell you: say and do exactly what they ask, even if you disagree with the content of the messages you're supposed to pass on.
- Speak clearly and directly, avoiding any hints.
- Make no reference to the kidnappers unless they tell you to.
- Don't negotiate with the person you're talking to.

Carefully prepare a few things to say to your family, so you aren't taken by surprise if the opportunity presents itself.

Should you try to escape?

Trying to escape could cost you your life. On the other hand, under exceptional circumstances, escaping could save your life. The ICRC recommends not trying to escape, as this is a highly dangerous option. If you fail, you risk being punished and having to endure worse conditions of detention. However, if an opportunity to escape presents itself, if you feel you're sufficiently fit and if you're absolutely certain that you'll succeed, you are the only person who can decide whether the risk is acceptable or not.

Reacting to a rescue operation

What appears to be an armed attack could be an attempt to free you. Your first reaction should be to protect yourself and obey any instructions given by the personnel carrying out the rescue operation. Be aware that they may not immediately identify you as a hostage, and may initially think that you're one of the kidnappers. It's also possible that they don't speak the same language as you.

- Avoid any sudden movements. Raise your hands so they can see that you're unarmed.
- Call out your name so they can identify you – they may not immediately recognize you.

Negotiations

The ICRC will do everything in its power to negotiate your release. Be aware that your kidnappers may try to convince you otherwise. When they contact the ICRC or another entity to negotiate, the first step will be to obtain proof

that they are holding you and that you're alive. This proof, known as "proof of life", is an important factor in creating the confidence needed for any negotiations. It may take a number of forms: a video, a photo, a recording of your voice or personal information that clearly identifies you.

It's ICRC policy not to pay a ransom to obtain the release of an employee. To do so could put all our staff in danger, together with those of the Movement and other humanitarian personnel working in the region – and perhaps elsewhere – as paying a ransom could give hostage-takers the impression that humanitarian personnel were an easy source of revenue. If the hostage-takers' demands are financial, the ICRC's position on this issue could therefore affect the duration of negotiations. However, the ICRC will do all it can to ensure a positive outcome and will mobilize the means available to it that it deems most appropriate. The organization discourages rescue operations, because of the high risk to life that such endeavours present.

*Your job
is to survive,
not to negotiate
your release.*

- We strongly advise against trying to negotiate your release. This will only complicate matters by interfering with the negotiations that are already under way.
- Avoid speculating as to what steps the ICRC, your home country or your family might be taking, and avoid discussing the subject with your kidnappers.

Release

Your release and the time immediately preceding it are a period of high risk, as the kidnappers are likely to be especially tense and nervous. You should therefore be particularly careful. Be prepared for delays and disappointments. You may be handed over to an intermediary who will in turn hand you over to the people who are to receive you.

- Pay very close attention to the orders that your captors give you and do exactly as they say.
- Don't make sudden moves that could increase their nervousness and cause them to panic.

Being a hostage is a difficult experience, both psychologically and physically. It will probably take you some time to return to normal life. But keep positive – with proper support, you'll get there!

Immediately after your release, everybody will be wanting to talk to you. The expectations of the authorities, and perhaps of the media, will be at odds with your need for peace and quiet. You'll also have to wait a little longer before you can see your family.³⁴

6.7.3 HOW WILL THE ICRC REACT?

As soon as the ICRC hears of your abduction, your release will become one of the organization's top priorities, and the most senior levels of management and governance will be mobilized. A crisis-management team will be set up at ICRC HQ in Geneva. The team will be made up of ICRC staff with experience in managing such situations, who will work unceasingly to secure your release. To achieve this, they'll coordinate closely with staff in the field and mobilize every other entity that might be able to help. If necessary, the crisis-management team will coordinate their efforts with your home country or other authorities.

Don't allow the kidnappers to convince you that you've been abandoned by the ICRC or by your family. The ICRC will be working non-stop to get you released and will coordinate its efforts with other bodies. The organization will maintain close contact with your family and provide them with continuous support.

In parallel with these efforts, the ICRC will establish close relations with your family via a person specially trained in these matters. They'll maintain continuous contact with your family and inform them of any important facts that become known to the ICRC. They'll provide support and advice right through to your release, and beyond if need be. It's perhaps worth mentioning that your salary will continue to be paid throughout your period of captivity. The ICRC will also look after certain personal administrative matters for you.

34 S.A. Perone et al., "Psychological support post-release of humanitarian workers taken hostage: the experience of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)", *British Journal of Guidance & Counselling*, Vol. 48, No. 3, 2020, pp. 360–373: <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/03069885.2018.1461193>.

The absolute need for confidentiality

When a kidnapping occurs, it's essential that no member of ICRC staff publish anything about the kidnapping or about the person or people concerned. This also means not creating public support groups on social media or discussing the situation of the abductees anywhere online. We recommend that the family and friends of the abductees also avoid such action. Managing a kidnapping requires maximum confidentiality. Harming relations with the kidnappers, the abductee's family or anyone else (such as representatives of the abductee's home country) could delay negotiations or even have a negative impact on the outcome of the situation.

6.7.4 HOSTAGE-TAKING: TEN THINGS TO REMEMBER

- 1.** Prepare yourself and your family for the possibility that you could be taken hostage.
- 2.** If it happens to you, prepare yourself mentally for a long period of captivity.
- 3.** Try to develop good relations with your kidnappers: show them respect and behave in a culturally-appropriate manner.
- 4.** Don't antagonize them and don't be aggressive towards them.
- 5.** Do your best to develop a routine and to maintain personal discipline.
- 6.** If possible, do regular physical and mental exercises.
- 7.** Prepare personal messages for your family in your head, in case you're given an opportunity to communicate with them.
- 8.** Focus your energies on self-care; it's not your job to secure your own release.
- 9.** Remind yourself that the ICRC will not forget you, will work for your release and will support your family for as long as the situation requires.
- 10.** Stay positive!

6.8 NATURAL DISASTERS

6.8.1 GENERAL

Whether they're of meteorological or geological origin, natural disasters can cause enormous damage and harm. You'll be able to see some of them coming, but others occur suddenly, leaving you no time to think about how to react. Having said which, natural disasters aren't always random, and the regions exposed to this type of threat are generally known, which does allow you to prepare to a certain degree.

The predictable consequences

The main short-term consequences of a major natural disaster are:

- A large number of victims: apart from those killed and injured, many people don't know what has happened to members of their families.
- A breakdown in food and water supplies.



- Communication systems overloaded or out of action.
- Difficulty moving around: main roads are damaged, destroyed or blocked by people trying to flee.
- Chain reactions: for instance, an earthquake may be followed by a tsunami, violent storms, landslides or a volcanic eruption.
- Related risks: fire, electrocution, gas explosions, cholera, etc.

- Operational capacity of humanitarian organizations reduced – possibly to zero.
- Pressure from the community to provide humanitarian aid. People are left to fend for themselves, often under very precarious and stressful conditions. They expect you to respond to urgent needs such as medical care, food, water, shelter, news of their families, etc. If they're disappointed because they don't immediately receive the aid they need, they may become aggressive towards you.
- Looting: looting is common in the hours and days following a natural disaster, as people are often left to take care of themselves.

Be ready for anything, any time

The general approach if you work in a region prone to natural disasters differs little to that for managing other risks: know the threats, prepare to respond, know the warning mechanisms, know how to react during an incident and know what precautions to take immediately after.

Talk to your family about preparing for natural disasters and what to do if one occurs.

- Find out about the natural disasters that could affect you.
- Familiarize yourself with local warning systems.
- Find out whether there are any smartphone apps that could alert you to an impending natural disaster. If such apps exist, try to establish how reliable they are.
- Always carry a list of people to contact in case of emergency.
- Make a note of places where you could seek refuge, plus escape routes and means of evacuation.
- Make sure you have a backup means of communication for use in an emergency (satellite phone or radio), that you know how to use it and that you know the communication procedures to follow.
- Keep your first-aid training up to date.
- Prepare yourself for the possibility that you'll have to evacuate.³⁵
- Find out whether you should maintain a stock of food and water and, if so, for how many days.
- Prepare an emergency bag, and make sure it's always within reach.
- Take an active part in practice exercises.

³⁵ For the ICRC, these procedures are set out in the security contingency plan.



Emergency bag

You should create an emergency bag, containing a set of essential items to take with you in case of evacuation or other emergency. Use a waterproof plastic bag and ensure that it weighs no more than 10 kg. Fill it with the items listed below, adding a means of communication and personal first-aid kit at the last moment.

- Torch and spare batteries
- Whistle (to attract the attention of rescuers)
- Dust mask and protective goggles (in volcanic regions)
- Copies of important personal documents (passport, ID card issued by the organization, driving licence, vaccination record book, etc.)
- List of contacts
- A small amount of cash
- Personal medication
- Water bottle or thermos, plus water-purifying tablets
- Enough water for 24 hours (1.5 litres) and non-perishable food (biscuits, cereal bars, etc.)
- Strong, waterproof clothing appropriate for the climate
- Basic hygiene supplies

The effects of a natural disaster on the security situation

Any large-scale natural disaster is bound to have a major effect on the security situation. In addition to posing direct threats such as fire, electrocution, collapse of infrastructure, looting, etc., a disaster in a conflict zone may either worsen the violence or, on the contrary, bring a degree of stability by shaking up the conflict dynamics.

You should therefore carry out a brief security-risk assessment before resuming operations following a major natural disaster. This will enable you to identify any measures that may be essential to keep you out of danger. Don't take shortcuts with your security, even if the needs of the population are extreme and demand a rapid humanitarian response. Once things have calmed down a bit, you can expand and deepen your risk assessment.

If you arrive in an area following a disaster, enquire about the security situation and the precautions you should take – your management may well be too busy dealing with the humanitarian needs to brief you properly.

6.8.2 EARTHQUAKES

Earthquakes are unpredictable. However, we do know which regions are subject to them. So if you're working in an earthquake zone, it's best to be prepared, even if you're unlikely to experience one. And despite the fact that if one does occur, things will never go quite as expected. The most powerful earthquakes are among the most destructive of all natural disasters, especially if the epicentre is close to a densely-populated area.

Earthquakes are generally followed by aftershocks. These may occur hours, days or even months after the mainshock. While they are less violent, aftershocks can cause structures to collapse that have been weakened by the mainshock. They're also a major source of stress for the population, and may cause panic. Earthquakes can cause landslides, heavy rain and flooding. In coastal regions, they can cause **tsunamis**.

Understanding the threat

Contrary to common belief, you're much less likely to be buried under the ruins of a building than you are to be seriously injured by things falling or flying, such as windows, objects, furniture, etc. In many cases, solid buildings remain standing, or at least don't collapse completely. This means that simple

measures such as setting up your home appropriately and fixing furniture to the floor or the wall to stop it moving may save your life.

The most significant threats following an earthquake are the collapse of buildings and infrastructure (roads, bridges, etc.), gas explosions and electrocution (as a result of fallen power lines). Windows, facades and roofs are often the first parts of a building to collapse, so the area next to a building is particularly dangerous.

Earthquake precautions

You can mitigate the consequences of an earthquake by being well-prepared.³⁶

- Find out what you should and should not do during and after an earthquake. Take an active part in simulation exercises and share your knowledge with your family.
- Take the time to walk round your places of work and your home, identifying the best places to take shelter in each room. Think about whether to move or secure objects to prevent injury, e.g. if there's a mirror hanging over your bed.
- Note the locations of fire extinguishers and escape routes.
- Report any cracks in ICRC buildings.
- Find out where any emergency supplies are held.

*Identify
the safest
places to seek
shelter.*

During an earthquake

An earthquake may be so violent as to knock you over before you can react. Moving, trying to get to another room or trying to exit the building is dangerous. The recommendation is to drop to the floor/ground as soon as you feel the first shock and then crawl to a safe location that you have identified in advance, protecting your head and face as you do so: **Drop, Cover, Hold on**. You'll be better protected against falling debris, and if the building collapses your chances of

The first shock tells you nothing about the severity of the earthquake. Seek shelter as soon as you feel an earthquake starting.

survival will be higher if the space around you creates an air pocket. The only exception to the "Drop, Cover, Hold on" rule is if you're in a building that doesn't meet earthquake standards, such as the ground floor of a building made of unbaked bricks (adobe) supporting a heavy ceiling. If you're in a building like that, get out into the open as fast as you can.

³⁶ The ICRC has drawn up a list of measures to take, depending on the earthquake risk in a given region.

Reacting to an earthquake

Whether you're inside, outside or in a vehicle:
stay there, and protect yourself against falling and flying objects.

If you're inside:



Drop to your hands and knees.

Cover your head and face with your arms and crawl under a sturdy piece of furniture.

If there's no furniture nearby, crawl to an interior wall (away from windows), protecting your head and face.

Hold on to your shelter (and move with it if it shifts) until shaking stops.

If you have no shelter, protect your head and face with your arms.

If you're in bed: stay there, and protect your head with a pillow.

If you're outside

Stay outside: Try to reach an open area with no trees, buildings, vehicles, lamp-posts or power lines.

If you're in a car

Stay in your vehicle: Stop wherever you can, preferably in the open, away from anything that could fall. Avoid stopping near a bridge, tree, power line, lamp-post or building, or in a tunnel.

If you're trapped under debris

- Cover your mouth with a handkerchief or a piece of clothing, and try not to move.
- Don't strike a match or use a lighter; you may use up the oxygen in your air pocket.
- Make a noise by knocking, ideally with metallic objects, so that rescuers can find you.
If all else fails, shout for help, but be aware that this may cause you to inhale dust.

What NOT to do

- Don't use the lift.
- Don't seek shelter in any of the following locations:
 - A doorway; contrary to popular belief, doorways are generally no more solid than any other part of a building. Furthermore, it's difficult to hold on to a doorway and it won't protect you against moving objects.
 - On a balcony
 - Close to a window or exterior wall
 - Next to a building
 - Anywhere there is a risk of falling/moving objects, such as trees, power lines, cars, etc.

After an earthquake

The main threats are collapsing structures, gas explosions and electrocution. Once the shaking has stopped, expect aftershocks and act with care.

- Make sure that your colleagues, your family and you yourself are safe.
- If you can, give first aid to the injured.
- Be careful not to touch any power lines, or any object in contact with them – you could electrocute yourself.
- Because of the risk of a gas explosion, avoid producing any sparks. Don't touch any switches, and don't create any flames. If you suspect a gas leak (smell of gas or gentle hissing sound), leave the building immediately.
- Leave the building cautiously, watching out for anything that could collapse or fall.
- Don't enter any damaged buildings, even if that means spending the night outside.
- Try to obtain information regarding the situation.
- Be careful if you drive anywhere, as roads, bridges and tunnels may have suffered serious damage.

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6.8.3 TSUNAMIS

A tsunami is a series of waves in the ocean, caused by an earthquake, landslide or undersea volcanic eruption. As they approach the coast, the waves are slowed, with the water accumulating to form a wall that may be several tens of metres high. A tsunami can destroy everything in its path and cause flash floods. They generally carry heavy debris, which they transport several hundred metres inland.

Any low-lying coastal area can be affected by a tsunami. However, the risk is much higher in the Pacific Ocean and its neighbouring seas and oceans, because of the numerous powerful earthquakes in the area. While scientists can't predict exactly when a tsunami will occur, they do know where they're most likely. Warning systems exist, but they don't always work.

Characteristics of a tsunami

- A tsunami consists of a series of waves, which arrive at intervals of 5 to 60 minutes. Often, the first wave is not the highest. A tsunami can remain a threat several hours after the arrival of the first wave.
- An earthquake may be a sign that a tsunami is about to arrive.
- A tsunami caused by an earthquake may arrive before a warning can be given.
- If the water along the coast suddenly draws back as if being sucked up by the ocean, a tsunami is on its way.
- You can't outrun a tsunami – they move too fast.

Tsunami precautions

- If you receive a tsunami warning, all you generally need do is move away from the coast and onto high ground.
- Familiarize yourself with local warning systems.
- Identify the best place to seek refuge if a warning is given, and the best way of getting there – which will probably be on foot rather than by car, as the roads will be blocked by traffic.
- Tell your family where to go if a tsunami warning is given.

During a tsunami

- Think about where you're going. Move calmly and cautiously. It's better to walk quickly than to use a vehicle, so as to avoid traffic jams, debris and other obstacles.
- Go to the muster point designated by the ICRC if possible.
- Don't assume that the danger is over once the first wave has receded: it may be followed by even bigger ones.
- Don't go near the coast to watch the waves. Stay away from rivers and streams.

If you're on the beach or near the coast and you feel strong or prolonged shaking, if the sea withdraws from the coastline, if you hear a sound similar to that of a train or if a warning is given, move inland quickly and head for high ground.

After a tsunami

Even when the waves have finished, the danger isn't over. The affected area will generally be flooded and buildings, infrastructure and electrical networks damaged. Water and mud may be carrying electricity or contaminated by sewage, or by chemicals from the soil. The water may also bring dangerous objects and substances such as military munitions and toxic chemicals, plus reptiles and other wild animals.

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- Make sure that your colleagues, your family and you yourself are safe.
- If you can, give first aid to the injured.
- Avoid all moving water.
- Stay away from flooded buildings.
- Be careful not to touch any power lines, or any object in contact with them – you could electrocute yourself.
- Be very careful if you absolutely have to enter a building. Threats include damage to the structure, short-circuiting electrical systems, hidden damage and wild animals.
- Try to obtain drinking water. Avoid drinking floodwater.
- Try to obtain information regarding the situation.
- Be careful if you have to drive, as structures weakened by the water may collapse under the weight of your vehicle.
- Once you're somewhere safe, clean and disinfect everything that has been in contact with floodwater.

6.8.4 FLOODING

Flooding is the submersion by water of an area that's usually above water level. Flooding may develop suddenly or gradually. Possible causes include heavy or prolonged rainfall, an exceptionally high water level in a river or stream, an exceptionally high tide, a cyclone, a tsunami, the rupture of a dam or dyke, etc. In Asia, flooding often occurs during the monsoon season. Flooding is especially dangerous when it occurs suddenly, with little or no warning. This kind of flood can involve large amounts of water, carrying heavy objects.

Water: more powerful than you think!

Moving water just 15 cm deep is enough to knock you over. 60 cm is enough to cause most cars to float.

Flood precautions

Be prepared:

- Identify places where you could take refuge, plus escape routes.
- Familiarize yourself with local warning systems.
- Find out what procedures you should follow in case of evacuation.
- Always have an emergency bag ready to go.
- Before driving, always check the weather forecast and road conditions. If heavy rain is forecast, be aware that the situation could worsen suddenly.

Secure your building:

- Turn off the electricity to prevent the risk of electrocution or fire. However, if the building is already flooded don't switch off the electricity, as that also involves an electrocution risk.
- Turn off the main gas tap. Don't turn it back on yourself once the danger is past: call in a specialist.
- Protect entrances and openings with sandbags. Protect windows with plywood or similar.
- Move objects of value to an upper floor.
- Secure any heavy/dangerous objects that the water could move, inside the building and outside.

During a flood

If flooding occurs	
If you're inside <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Get yourself somewhere safe. - Keep in contact with the organization. If necessary, keep your family up to date on developments. - Try to obtain information regarding the situation. 	
If you're outside	
On foot	By car
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Get to high ground and stay there. - Don't walk around in moving water that comes over your ankles: you risk being swept off your feet, even if the water isn't deep. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - If you come to a flooded area, turn back and find a safer route. - Drive just fast enough to create a small bow-wave in front of your vehicle. This will prevent the engine from flooding and your tyres from losing their grip. - Drive with your windows open, so you can get out through the window if necessary. - If your vehicle starts to lose contact with the ground and begins to float, open the doors to let water in and make your vehicle heavier. - If your vehicle stalls, abandon it and seek refuge on high ground.

After a flood

Even when the waters have receded, the danger isn't totally over. There may be more flooding, and landslides may occur. Buildings, infrastructure and electrical networks may have been damaged. Water and mud may be carrying electricity or contaminated by sewage, or by chemicals from the soil. The water may also bring dangerous objects and substances such as military munitions and toxic chemicals, plus reptiles and other wild animals.

- Make sure that your colleagues, your family and you yourself are safe.
- If you can, give first aid to the injured.
- Avoid all moving water.
- Stay away from flooded buildings.
- Be careful not to touch any power lines, or any object in contact with them – you could electrocute yourself.
- Be very careful if you absolutely have to enter a building. Threats include damage to the structure, short-circuiting electrical systems, hidden damage and wild animals.
- Try to obtain drinking water. Avoid drinking floodwater.
- Try to obtain information regarding the situation.

- Be careful if you have to drive, as structures weakened by the water may collapse under the weight of your vehicle.
- Once you're somewhere safe, clean and disinfect everything that has been in contact with floodwater.

6.8.5 VOLCANIC ERUPTIONS

A volcanic eruption is a geological phenomenon in which a volcano emits any or all of lava, tephra (solid fragments of burning rock), gas and ash. There are various types of volcano, and they pose different threats. Lava flows, falling rocks and ash, pyroclastic flows³⁷ and gaseous emissions³⁸ are all directly linked to eruptions. Secondary phenomena may include mudflows, lahars (mudflows composed of ash and water), landslides and tsunamis.

Scientists monitor those volcanoes that are known to be dangerous. In most areas where there's a volcano threat, maps have been compiled showing the risk, and warning systems have been set up.

Understanding the threat

Lava flows have a mean temperature of 1000°C and affect a defined, limited area. They present a moderate risk to the population, as long as people have had time to evacuate. They're generally accompanied by falling rock fragments and ash. The rocks can cause serious injury, break windows and set fire to buildings. The potential effects of **volcanic ash** include respiratory problems and contamination of unprotected water sources. If ash accumulates on roofs, it can cause them to collapse. Rain in conjunction with ash can cause major mudflows and landslides. **Pyroclastic flows** are a major threat, as they move at very high speeds. Leaving the area is the only possible response to pyroclastic flows.

Precautions in regions of volcanic activity

If you live or work near an active or dormant volcano, find out what types of eruption are possible and be ready to evacuate at any time.

³⁷ Fast-moving currents of hot gas and volcanic matter. They can reach temperatures of over 800°C.

³⁸ While odourless and non-toxic, CO₂ is still dangerous. As it's heavier than air, it tends to accumulate along the ground, and can cause suffocation at concentrations of more than about 10% or 20%. Gas masks give no protection against CO₂.

- Take an active part in simulation exercises and share your knowledge with your family.
- Familiarize yourself with local warning systems.
- Identify high ground to which you could escape, and avoid areas downwind of the volcano.
- Be ready to evacuate at any time, and always have an emergency bag ready to go.
- Acquire a pair of goggles and an anti-dust mask.

During a volcanic eruption

Reacting to a volcanic eruption

Seek refuge inside a building, protect your skin and airways and listen to the news to find out what's happening.

If you're outside

- Seek refuge inside a building and avoid low-lying areas where gases could accumulate.
- Stay away from lava flows, even if they appear to have cooled down on the surface.
- If ash is falling, avoid driving: you won't be able to see properly and ash will choke your engine, causing it to stall.
- Stay away from rivers and streams, and look out for mudflows.

If you're inside

- Stay inside and avoid low-lying areas where gases could accumulate.
- Don't go outside unless you absolutely have to, in which case protect yourself with an umbrella, a pair of goggles and a dust mask. If you don't have these, use a piece of cloth.
- Close windows, doors and other openings (such as fireplaces/flues).
- Check that water is safe before drinking. If there's ash in the water, allow it to settle, and use just the clear water.

Protect yourself

- Cover your skin with suitable clothing, to prevent irritation and burns.
- Protect your eyes with goggles, and don't wear contact lenses, as there's a risk of scratching your cornea.
- Protect your nose and mouth with a dust mask or a piece of damp cloth, to make it easier to breathe.

After a volcanic eruption

- Make sure that your colleagues, your family and you yourself are safe.
- If you can, give first aid to the injured.
- Don't assume that the danger is over once the eruption has stopped. Remain alert – there may be secondary risks.
- Try to obtain information regarding the situation.

Don't allow ash to accumulate on the roofs of buildings. Wearing a dust mask and goggles, remove it using water. Be careful – the mixture of water and ash will make surfaces slippery.

6.8.6 CYCLONE

A cyclone³⁹ is a violent storm with winds of up to 360 km/h, involving whirlwinds and rainfall. The winds are at their most violent close to the eye of the cyclone, which is the calm area at the centre around which air rotates. Cyclones bring varying quantities of rain. Some very intense cyclones are comparatively dry, whereas others, while less intense, are accompanied by torrential rains that can cause flooding. This may weaken buildings and infrastructure and cause landslides.

Cyclones occur in tropical regions, and are feared on account of the destruction they cause. Those regions in which the threat is most severe have set up systems to monitor cyclones and predict their movements.

Cyclone precautions

The precautions to take with regard to cyclones are similar to those for earthquakes, such as maintaining a stock of food and water. A very intense cyclone is capable of destroying everything in its path, making it difficult or impossible to move.

- Familiarize yourself with local warning systems.
- Identify a solidly-built building where you could take refuge if a cyclone warning were given.
- Find out how to secure your own building. It's generally recommended that you cover openings with sheets of plywood or similar material, to prevent objects being blown into the building (especially shards of glass) and that you secure any object that could be blown around and cause injury or damage.
- Be ready to evacuate at any time, and always have an emergency bag ready to go.

During a cyclone

- Don't go outside: seek refuge in a building or stay there if you're already inside. Go to the sturdiest part of the building, ideally a room with no windows. If the room does have windows, stay as far away from them as possible.
- Don't take refuge in the cellar if you believe there's a risk of flooding.

³⁹ The terms “hurricane”, “cyclone” and “typhoon” refer to the same meteorological phenomenon. The term used depends on the part of the world in which the phenomenon is observed.

- Don't use a naked flame (candle or paraffin lamp) for light.
- If the building starts to collapse, protect yourself using whatever's available (mattresses, rugs, blankets, etc.) and hold on to a fixed object, such as a water pipe or a heavy bed.
- If you're driving, stop in an open space, well away from trees, power lines, lamp-posts, rivers and streams.
- Be suspicious of an apparent return to normal – don't assume the cyclone has passed. The "calm" could be because you're now in the eye of the cyclone, in which case the high winds are about to start again!

After a cyclone

- Look around you for anything that could collapse or fall.
- Be careful not to touch any power lines, or any object in contact with them – you could electrocute yourself.
- Don't enter any damaged buildings.
- Make sure that your colleagues, your family and you yourself are safe.
- If you can, give first aid to the injured.
- Try to obtain information regarding the situation.
- Avoid using damaged infrastructure, such as bridges, and look out for falling trees. Avoid areas liable to flooding.

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The most significant threats are collapsing buildings and infrastructure (such as bridges), falling trees and electrocution (as a result of fallen power lines). You should also expect flooding and landslides.

7. STAY SAFE, IN THE OFFICE AND AT HOME

Working in a potentially violent environment means you need to feel safe in ICRC buildings. Location is important, as is giving the parties to the conflict the exact GPS coordinates, to ensure buildings aren't attacked. By "buildings" in this context we mean any sites the ICRC occupies – offices, warehouses, workshops or residences, although this chapter will look mainly at offices and residences. Ideally, buildings shouldn't be sited near potential military targets, to avoid collateral damage and allow for efficient evacuation if necessary.

You should take further measures to protect against crime, banditry, fighting nearby, everyday risks such as fire, and the effects of natural disaster. Some measures – such as alarm systems, walls or fences, strong rooms or blast walls – will only be needed if specific threats have been identified. Others are compulsory for all buildings the ICRC uses. These include fire precautions, security film on the windows, safe areas to use in case of emergency and emergency equipment. Bear in mind that no security measure is guaranteed to keep you safe, especially if armed conflict is going on around you. The level of protective measures required at an ICRC site will be identified by means of the risk assessment for that site.

This chapter outlines the basic principles you should follow to ensure your safety in ICRC offices and residences. It explains the measures the ICRC takes to secure its buildings and how the behaviour of users can enhance or degrade their effectiveness. Points covered include how to prevent intrusion, how to react to fighting nearby and how to protect yourself against hazards related to fire, gas and electricity.



7.1 BASIC PRINCIPLES

7.1.1 DEFENCE IN DEPTH

“Defence in depth” means creating multiple layers that will increase the time and effort that an unauthorized person must expend in order to enter your office or your residence, clandestinely or by force. If the threat demands it, buildings will be protected by a fence, a perimeter wall or barbed wire. If necessary, openings will be fitted with bars, to prevent intrusion. In certain locations, security systems such as CCTV cameras, automatic and manual alarms, etc. will detect unauthorized entry – attempted or actual. If they’re to be of any use, these systems must be installed, maintained and used correctly.

Passive security

In areas where violence is occurring, the ICRC's general approach to the physical security of its buildings is to create multiple, independent, concentric layers of protection, like the layers of an onion. These multiple layers enhance your security by building in redundancy. This means that your security doesn't depend solely on the quality of the perimeter wall, for instance. It also keeps any threats as far away as possible from the zone in which you live or work, while not making the place look like a fortress. The trick is to ensure that the physical protection measures give you an adequate level of security, while not harming the perception and acceptance of the ICRC. If those measures are overdone or over-visible, they could isolate you from your environment, separate you from the communities with and for which you're working, or make people suspicious of the ICRC.

You can also help to prevent unauthorized access to the buildings you use, or at least to slow down any intruder, so that you can either get away or else take refuge in a secure area. A serious incident is often the end result of a series of minor errors, each of them due to a lack of vigilance: forgetting to lock doors and gates, leaving keys lying around or leaving a window open, for instance.

- Always close doors and windows when you leave.
- At night, lock all doors and gates that are supposed to be locked.
- Treat your keys as strictly personal items; never leave them unattended.
- Report the loss of any key to the organization.
- Don't leave items of value on public view – store them somewhere safe.
- Make sure that domestic staff and anyone sharing your accommodation are vigilant as well. If you notice them being careless, remind them (politely and discreetly) of the basic rules they should be following.

7.1.2 ACCESS CONTROL

This is an essential security precaution. The principle is to identify all persons and vehicles entering the premises to verify that they don't pose a threat, and to issue a warning if they do. While this is mainly the job of the guards, it's also your responsibility to make sure people don't just walk in, and to report anyone who appears

Only allow people from outside the organization to enter a building in accordance with the rules concerning visitors.

suspicious. Your neighbours can constitute an effective surveillance system. Make an effort to cultivate good relations with them. If they know you and are kindly disposed towards you, they're much more likely to inform you or take action in the event of a problem than if you've been disrespectful to them and they've no idea why you're even there.

7.1.3 GUARDS

Guards may be employed directly by the ICRC or by a security company. Their main duties are to control access to the sites the ICRC occupies, dissuade petty criminals and other undesirable visitors from entering, inform you of any unusual occurrence and give the alert if necessary. The system is not infallible, and can give a false sense of security, especially if it's not managed properly. Guards are therefore just one element of your security.

Unarmed guards

The ICRC's approach to security is based primarily on the principle of acceptance. The guards working for us are therefore not armed, except in exceptional circumstances and with the authorization of HQ. Their job is primarily to protect you against petty criminals, warn you of any threat and call for backup if necessary. It's not their job to protect you in case of armed attack, popular uprising or looting – and they don't have the capability.

Even though selecting and managing guards is not your responsibility, it's important that you be aware of their role and the limits of their tasks.

Furthermore:

- Don't ask them to do things that are not in their job description, like going to the market for you or carrying your luggage to your room.
- If you find a guard asleep, wake him and inform his superior. Also inform his superior if you have the impression that he's not doing his job, or isn't where he should be.

Take the time to establish good working relations with the guards, but without distracting them from their duties.

7.1.4 THE THREAT FROM BLAST

Blast is the result of an explosion. In turn, the explosion may be the result of a domestic gas accident or of fighting in a conflict zone. Blast from an explosion can shatter windows, and the resulting glass fragments can cause more injuries than the explosion itself. The simplest precaution is to apply specially-designed self-adhesive plastic film to the inside of windows and glass doors. Being clear, it doesn't affect vision through the glass. This type of anti-blast film is obligatory in all buildings that the ICRC occupies.

If this plastic film isn't available and it's an emergency, apply ordinary clear adhesive tape to the entire interior surface of the glass, or fix a mosquito net to it. This isn't as effective as anti-blast film, but it will reduce the amount of flying debris.

There are other measures you can take to reduce the threat from blast, such as building blast walls out of sandbags. It's best to park vehicles and store fuel and gas away from occupied buildings, and to protect them against projectiles and blast, to minimize the consequences of explosions or small-arms fire. Having furniture in the wrong place can also be dangerous, so think carefully about where you put things.

Windows, mirrors, furniture, fuel and gas bottles are all potential sources of danger in a conflict zone.

7.1.5 SAFE AREAS, SHELTERS AND STRONG ROOMS

If the security situation deteriorates suddenly, or people break into your building, you'll need to get to a safe place immediately, or escape if that's the best option. This means you need to know the locations of emergency exits and protected areas. You also need to know how and when to use them.

Protected areas are intended for occasional, temporary use. What type of area is provided will depend on the threats in your region, so they'll vary considerably from one site to another. The ICRC has three types of protected area:

- **Safe areas** to protect against occasional small-arms fire.
- **Shelters** to protect against fire from heavy weapons.
- **Strong rooms** to protect against violent intrusion.

Find out what escape routes and protected areas are available, and where they are.

Type of protected area	Aims and limitations
<p>Safe area</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Protects against stray bullets during occasional episodes of small-arms fire and against fragments from mortar bombs, rockets and grenades. - Does not protect against sustained, aimed small-arms fire; direct hits from mortar bombs, rockets or grenades; violent intrusion. - Is intended for very short-term use. <p>Every ICRC building should have a safe area; this is part of the minimum security requirements.</p>
<p>Shelter (sometimes known as a “shelter facility”)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Is designed to give protection during sustained military operations. Protects against direct small-arms fire and the indirect effects of heavy weapons (mortars, artillery and rockets). May also protect against a single direct hit from a heavy weapon in case of indiscriminate use of such weapons nearby. - Does not protect against sustained attack, nor against violent intruders whose intention is to kill or injure. - Is intended for a maximum of 12 hours use.
<p>Strong room</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Protects you against a person or persons who enter the building by force with the intention of kidnapping, injuring or killing you. Its purpose is to prevent the attackers from reaching you, or at least to slow them down sufficiently to give the armed forces or police time to act. In some areas, it may be a long time before such forces arrive. Indeed, it may be impossible to obtain outside help. A strong room must therefore be designed to protect you until the intruders leave. - It shouldn't be easy for someone from outside the organization to find your strong room – the idea is that they simply won't find you. That means that its location should be kept secret. <p>A strong room often serves as a safe area or shelter.</p>

7.1.6 ESSENTIAL EQUIPMENT

In many situations, it will be very useful to have emergency equipment appropriate to the threats identified in your region: backup communications equipment, fire extinguishers, first-aid kits, generators, torches, ICRC flags and tabards, food and water, etc. However, none of this kit will be of any use

Find out what emergency equipment is available, where it is and how to use it.

if you don't know where it is and how to use it. Or if it isn't where it should be when you need it. In addition, you should prepare a **personal emergency bag** for use in case of evacuation or other emergency.

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7.1.7 PROVIDE THE GPS COORDINATES OF YOUR BUILDINGS TO THE BELLIGERENTS

To avoid coming under accidental attack from a party to the conflict, the ICRC communicates the GPS coordinates of its buildings to the entities involved. These buildings include our offices, residences occupied by international staff, warehouses, ICRC-operated medical facilities, etc. This measure, which supplements other preventive measures such as marking our buildings (including the roof) with the ICRC logo, illumination, etc., enables weapon bearers to identify humanitarian infrastructure and not attack it. So your security depends on the accuracy of the coordinates you provide. Any error could be fatal.

You may need to take the coordinates of a building for these purposes. Bear in mind that GPS coordinates are accurate to approximately one metre, but that accuracy depends to a great extent on the quality of the equipment used and the number of satellites you can access. The decimal coordinates provided by a smartphone or some other devices may not be sufficiently accurate.

Before taking GPS coordinates, find out what equipment and methods to use and what type of information to collect.

7.2 IMPROVING SITE SECURITY



Everyone has a role to play in improving the security of the buildings the ICRC occupies. However good the official ICRC measures may be, they're only one link in the chain. Quite apart from which, the political context and the conflict dynamics – and hence the security situation – may change faster than the ICRC can adapt its security measures. Many factors can compromise your security, and the devil's in the details – things like a faulty light, a roof that's easy to climb onto or bushes where an intruder can hide.

So don't just blindly trust existing security measures – keep questioning them. For instance, you should be asking yourself what the various alarms are for, and whether they actually work. What's supposed to happen when you hit that panic button in your room? And does it? Look for visible problems. Have you noticed loopholes in the procedures for handling visitors? Are there cracks in the building? Are the power sockets old and dangerous? Might the bars over your windows prevent you from escaping in an emergency? Are there enough fire extinguishers? Any problem you fail to report may come back to bite you or a colleague.

- Take the time to make regular inspections of your places of work and your residence. This will help you understand the logic of the existing security systems and perhaps identify a few weaknesses.

- If you feel that some additional security measure is necessary, or that an existing measure is either insufficient or creates a risk (e.g. a window with bars that don't open from the inside), tell your management.
- Consider moving or securing objects that could cause injury in an explosion.

Finally, you aren't the only one who might be affected by a burglary, fighting nearby or a fire. Such an incident would also endanger domestic staff, families and visitors staying in ICRC residences. Make sure anyone living with you has received all necessary security information and knows what to do if there's a problem.

Report any inappropriate or missing security measures and anything unusual, suspicious or potentially dangerous.

7.2.1 STAYING SAFE IN THE OFFICE AND AT HOME: FIVE QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF

1. Do I have the impression that I'm safe in ICRC buildings?
2. What alarm systems are there for which threats? Do I know the difference between them?
3. Do I know the locations of the recommended evacuation routes, protected areas and emergency equipment?
4. Do I know what to do if someone tells me we have an intruder in the building?
5. What should I do if I hear shooting nearby?

Further reading

ICRC, *Passive Security – Technical Guidance for ICRC Premises in the Field*, ICRC, Geneva, 2016:
<https://shop.icrc.org/passive-security-technical-guidance-for-icrc-premises-in-the-field-pdf-en>.

7.3 DOMESTIC STAFF

In addition to the guards, colleagues such as cleaners, domestic staff and gardeners play an essential role in maintaining the security of ICRC buildings. They're going to be the first to spot what's going on at the office or in your home and to pick up on anything unusual, anyone suspicious hanging around and any other potential threats. They also form an interface between the ICRC and the local community, and can alert you to any changes in the local security situation. They probably know a lot more about your professional and private life than you think, and they're a handy source of information for people outside the organization. This means that the ICRC's reputation will depend in part on what they say about you.

Just like the guards, cleaners, domestic staff and gardeners are important to the ICRC's security.

7.3.1 ENGAGING PERSONNEL PRIVATELY

Normally, the ICRC will engage domestic staff in the field. This may not always be the case however, especially in a capital city. You may therefore want to employ staff such as a nanny, cook, housekeeper, driver or gardener yourself. If you do, you should take certain precautions. Giving someone from outside the ICRC access to your residence could involve certain dangers, which you need to guard against. While you'll be entirely responsible for any personnel you may employ, any major problems with them could affect your security, that of your family and that of the ICRC. This makes it important to do things correctly.

Recruitment: You can only trust your future employee if you've recruited them carefully. While their professional qualifications are important, those should not be the only criteria. It's also essential to obtain references, both from people in your own social circle and from local people.

Contract: The quality of the contract of employment has a major influence on the quality of any employer-employee relationship. It must conform to domestic employment legislation (health insurance, taxes, social security, leave, end-of-service benefits, etc.). The contract must set out not only the tasks the employee is to perform, but also the limits of each party's responsibility, plus the conditions for giving notice that each party must observe. To avoid any misunderstandings, it's a good idea for both sides to

express their expectations orally, and for you to clarify the limits to what you can offer as an employer. You should also explain in general terms what the ICRC's doing in the area.

Ethics: You have moral obligations towards the people you employ, in addition to your legal obligations. Your attitude towards your employees must at all times reflect the values that underlie your humanitarian work. This means treating them fairly, and in accordance with domestic legislation, international law and the ICRC Code of Conduct. Bear in mind that the loyalty your personnel show you will depend in part on your attitude. By behaving fairly towards them and showing concern for their well-being you'll indirectly contribute to your own security.

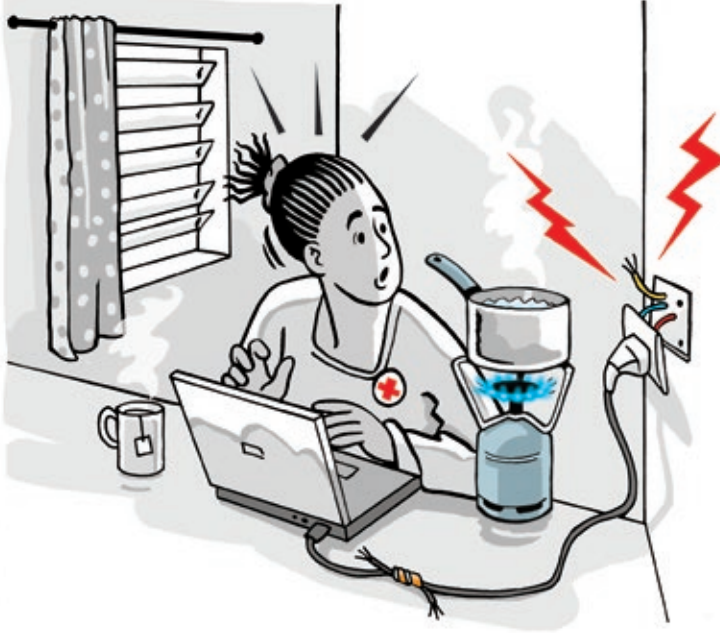
Security: It's your duty to brief your employees on the security measures they must take in connection with their jobs. Explain to whom they should open the door and when, how to manage keys and the telephone, how to use the cooker and the oven, what information they should treat as confidential, when they should alert you to a problem and how, what to do in case of emergency, etc.

Disputes: Try to engage in constructive dialogue in case of dispute or conflict. Don't wait until the situation has deteriorated before asking for advice. Unresolved differences – even if they appear insignificant – can get to the point where they threaten your security. Ad hoc solutions suited to local usage and custom may be more appropriate than formal procedures. You should therefore seek advice from the ICRC and from people who know the region well.

Before taking on any staff, ask the ICRC for advice. Submit the contract of employment to the organization for verification and enquire as to the usual salary for the job.

7.4 FIRE, ELECTRICITY AND GAS

Staying safe means not only taking precautions against threats from your working environment but also being aware of the everyday dangers related to fire, electricity and gas.



7.4.1 FIRE

Fire can break out anywhere, any time. Fires can be caused by faulty electrical installations or appliances, defective heating systems, incorrect handling of flammable materials, overheated oil or fat in the kitchen or simple carelessness. In many places there'll be no point relying on the emergency services, as the fire brigade won't have the capacity to operate effectively. So it's better to do all you can to avoid getting into such a situation in the first place, and to know how to react if something does go wrong.

Standard ICRC fire precautions

- **Smoke detectors:** Alert you to the presence of smoke before it reaches dangerous levels. Some of them are battery-powered, so you'll need to change the batteries regularly.
- **Fire extinguishers:** Their role is to increase your chances of extinguishing the fire before it gets too far. In other words, they're only effective while the flames are still confined to a small area. Kitchens are also equipped with fire blankets.
- **Evacuation systems and emergency exits:** There should always be a second way out, in case the first is blocked by fire or smoke. Buildings may also have external fire escape stairs or ladders, depending on their design.

Fire prevention

Preventing fires from starting and knowing how to stop a fire spreading could save lives.

- If smoking is prohibited, don't smoke.
- Note the locations of emergency exits.
- Report all defects in fire-fighting equipment.
- Be careful when using candles, matches, cookers, stoves and other inflammable items or materials.
- Don't place anything that could get hot on anything inflammable.
- Don't place anything inflammable near your cooker, and make sure you turn it off before you leave. When cooking, don't overheat oil or fat.
- Store all inflammable substances in a safe place.

Reacting to a fire

Most fires start off small, and can be extinguished if they're detected in time. For that reason, you should never ignore a smoke alarm, even if you think it's a false alarm.

What to do:

1. Warn others

- Call for help.
- Warn people who are in danger.

Stay calm. Assess the size of the fire and the number of people affected.

2. Protect yourself

- Close doors and windows.
- Leave the premises via an emergency exit (unless they're all blocked by smoke), protecting your face with a cloth.
- Don't use the lift. Don't take refuge in the basement.
- If you're trapped inside, seal the cracks under the doors with blankets or clothing – wet if possible – to keep smoke out.
- If there's fire in the room where you are, protect yourself under blankets, coats or other non-synthetic materials.
- Wait near a closed window and call for help.

3. Extinguish the fire

- If the fire hasn't become too large, and you can do so without putting yourself in danger, attempt to extinguish it with whatever's available.
- If the source of the fire is gas, attempt to close the gas tap.

The characteristics of fire

- **Smoke is opaque:** You may be trapped inside simply because you can't find an exit.
- **Smoke is more likely to kill you than flame:** Inhaling toxic gases from the fire can be fatal.
- **A fire causes intense heat:** The temperature can reach several hundred degrees in a few seconds.
- **Fire is fast:** An entire building can catch fire in under five minutes.

7.4.2 ELECTRICITY

While the ICRC ensures that the buildings occupied by its staff are not actually dangerous, you should never assume that the electrical system is totally safe. A fault, unnoticed damage or defects, a poor-quality electrical appliance or a water source too close to electrical equipment can all result in electrocution. And the electricians in some of the places where you'll spend the night in the field (hotels, schools, etc.) will probably not be up to standard. That doesn't mean you should get used to living in places with dodgy electricians, but it does mean you should take certain precautions.

For a start, water and electricity do not belong together. Something as simple as turning on a tap or taking a shower can kill you if you touch a source of electricity at the same time. The quality of the sockets, extensions, adaptors and electrical appliances you use will also affect your safety. So be on your guard.

Electrical appliances

- Make sure that all electrical appliances you use – including your own – are of good quality. And check that they're compatible with the local electricity supply.
- In case of doubt, consult an ICRC expert.

Bathrooms and kitchens

- Make sure there are no electrical sockets near water sources (taps, showers, etc.).
- If you get an electric shock from the water when you turn on a tap, inform the person responsible for safety immediately.

Sockets

- Don't overload the wiring by plugging multiple appliances into the same socket.
- Try to avoid using extensions and multiway adaptors. If you have to use them, get the person responsible for safety to check them for you, as poor-quality cables and adaptors can be dangerous.
- Unplug appliances such as computers, TVs and chargers when not in use.

Reporting

- If you have any doubts about an electrical installation, report it to the person responsible.
- Report any defects, and check that the problem has been fixed.

- Report any incidents, even if they appear minor – you may prevent a much more serious one.

Don't hesitate to ask an ICRC specialist to check that your personal electrical appliances are safe.

7.4.3 GAS

A gas leak can cause an explosion or fire if a source of heat is present. Gas is toxic if inhaled in sufficient quantity, and can also cause death by asphyxiation. A defective or damaged gas system, failure to operate an appliance correctly or contact between gas and a source of flame can have serious consequences, not just for you but also for those around you.

If you have a gas cooker or gas heating in your residence, make sure you use it correctly.

- Check that gas bottles are stored correctly.
- Clean the burners on your cooker regularly. A blue flame is a sign that all is well.
- If you're going to be away for a number of days, turn off the main gas tap.
- Be especially careful in case of a natural disaster.

Reacting to a gas leak

- Open doors and windows to ventilate the room, turn off the gas tap and avoid doing anything that could cause a spark (and hence an explosion) such as turning a light on or off, operating any other switch or circuit-breaker, or using a telephone.
- If the gas is already burning, there's no further risk of explosion. In this case, turn off the tap that controls the flow of gas to the appliance or the main gas tap if possible, make adjacent surfaces wet, evacuate the building and get help.

7.4.4 FIRE, ELECTRICITY AND GAS: SEVEN RULES TO FOLLOW

1. Note the locations of emergency exits.
2. Note the locations of fire-fighting equipment and find out how to use it.
3. Before taking a shower in an unfamiliar bathroom for the first time, check that there's no risk of electrocution.
4. Only use high-quality electrical appliances.
5. Handle gas with care.
6. Make sure your family and domestic staff know what to do.
7. Report all defects, damage and incidents.

8. STAYING HEALTHY

Health and security are inextricably linked. However, some humanitarians are so busy looking after others that they forget to look after themselves. If you're going to stay healthy in what will often be a demanding environment, you'll have to take certain precautions and adopt a healthy lifestyle. Or as healthy a lifestyle as circumstances allow. This chapter will explain how to help others while remaining healthy – both physically and mentally. It describes the main health risks to which you may be exposed, how to react to them and who to contact in case of need.

8.1 LOOKING AFTER YOUR PHYSICAL HEALTH



An infection, a parasite, an insect bite or too much sun can have serious consequences for your health, especially if there are no doctors or health facilities nearby. So what should you do to **maintain your physical health**? Which illnesses do humanitarian workers face most often? How can you avoid getting ill? And if you do get ill, what should you do until you can see a doctor?

8.1.1 WHEN YOU TAKE UP A NEW POST

Taking a few basic measures when you start a new job can avoid a lot of problems later. These measures will help you remain effective long-term and will save valuable time if you ever become ill or suffer a medical emergency.

Health advisers

The ICRC has health specialists you can talk to about any health-related problems or questions. You can also contact them if you need psychological support and of course if you become ill or have an accident. They will refer you to an external medical specialist if necessary.

Get informed: When you start a new job, make sure you know the health risks and the support and treatment options in the area.

- Make sure someone briefs you on the health situation and the types of medical facility available to you.
- Find out who your physical and mental health advisers are.

p. 340 **Medical emergencies:** To ensure that you're prepared in the event of a medical emergency:

- find out what procedures to follow
- always carry a list of phone numbers for the people and services to contact
- find out what health-care facilities are available, and where they are
- learn first aid
- always carry copies of your blood-group card and a list of any allergies or specific medical requirements you may have.

p. 65 **Vaccinations:** Make sure you've had all the vaccinations you need. If you haven't, or you're not sure, speak to your health adviser.

Specific health requirements: If you have any health problems, you must inform your health adviser about them and mention them on the medical forms you fill in when taking up your post.

Medicines and medical supplies: Find out what standard items the ICRC provides and make sure you always have a stock of any medicines and basic supplies you need.

- **First-aid kit:** Find out where the first-aid kits are kept in the buildings and vehicles you'll be using, and how to use them. Check that they contain everything they should. Whenever you remove an item from a first-aid kit, inform the person responsible for it so the item can be replaced.
- **Mosquito nets:** If mosquitoes carry disease in your area, you must always sleep under a mosquito net that's in good condition. Impregnate your mosquito net with a Permethrin-based insecticide to increase its effectiveness. The insecticide remains effective for several months, as long as the net isn't washed. Repair any holes or tears, even small ones. If that's not possible, get a new net, because a damaged one is useless. Always take a mosquito net with you if you're going to be sleeping away from ICRC accommodation.
- **Specific supplies:** Depending on the type of work you'll be doing, you may need protection or hygiene supplies such as masks, gloves, hand-disinfecting gel, etc. to protect you against illness. Speak to your management if you don't have the supplies you feel you need.
- **Emergency treatment kits:** Before any longer stay in a remote area, you must check with your management whether you need to take a **post-rape kit**, which also includes post-exposure prophylaxis for use in case of contact with contaminated blood. If you'll be working in a malaria zone, your team should also carry a rapid diagnostic test for malaria and a personal treatment kit (see below).

8.1.2 ILLNESSES AND HEALTH PROBLEMS IN THE FIELD

Vaccines don't protect you against every illness, and are definitely no excuse for not taking all necessary precautions to prevent illness. A healthy lifestyle is the most important tool for preventing common diseases. You must also protect yourself against mosquito and other insect bites, especially in regions where tropical diseases are endemic.

Always take it seriously if your temperature rises above 38°C, and not just in areas where there's a risk of malaria

and dengue fever. This kind of temperature can be a symptom of various illnesses, including very serious ones. You should also see a doctor as soon as possible if a fever continues or gets worse.

If you have any doubts about your health, consult your health adviser.

Acute diarrhoea

In areas where sanitary conditions are poor, illnesses related to food or water are very common. They generally take the form of acute diarrhoea, possibly accompanied by stomach cramps, vomiting or fever. These conditions can be caused by any of several micro-organisms contained in contaminated food or water. Diarrhoea isn't dangerous in most cases, but it can be completely incapacitating.

Prevention: Good personal hygiene and food hygiene are the best preventive measures.

- Always wash your hands with soap and water before you eat. If water is not available, use disinfectant gel.
- Only drink water that's safe to drink (bottled, boiled or filtered, or disinfected using chlorine tablets or iodine).
- Check that bottles containing drinks are properly sealed.
- Use only safe drinking water for cleaning your teeth.
- Peel raw fruit and vegetables, and wash them in drinking water. The rule is simple: **Cook it, boil it, peel it or forget it!**
- Choose thoroughly-cooked food that's still hot, rather than anything raw. Avoid eggs, meat or seafood that are raw or underdone.
- Avoid ice-cubes, ice-cream and fresh cakes unless you're sure they come from a safe source.

Treating diarrhoea: In most cases, the symptoms will disappear on their own in two or three days, without any treatment.

- Compensate for lost fluid promptly, by drinking oral rehydration solution.
- Stick to simple, solid food such as white rice (you can also drink the salty water in which it's been cooked) and bananas (to replace the potassium you'll have lost).
- As long as your stools don't contain traces of blood or mucus, take an anti-diarrhoeal such as Loperamide, following the indicated dosage, but only for a short time. Be aware that Loperamide blocks but doesn't cure!
- In case of fever, bloody stools or heavy diarrhoea for more than two days, consult a doctor. You may need a course of antibiotics.

You can make your own oral re-hydration solution by dissolving eight teaspoons of sugar and one teaspoon of salt in a litre of drinking water.

Excessive exposure to heat

Exposure to high temperatures can cause severe dehydration, heatstroke or sunstroke, which is very dangerous as it affects the body's internal cooling system, including the ability to sweat. In extreme cases, heatstroke can be fatal.

Symptoms: Heatstroke has a number of symptoms:

- Body temperature greater than 40°C
- A change in mental state or behaviour (confusion, agitation, difficulty speaking, irritability, delirium, convulsions or coma)
- Skin hot, red and dry
- Headache, nausea, stomach ache and vomiting
- Rapid, shallow breathing with a substantial increase in heart rate

Treatment in case of excessive exposure to heat

- Move to as cool a location as possible.
- Consume cold drinks.
- Wipe yourself down with a sponge and ask someone to fan you.
- Pour cold water on your body to dissipate the heat and allow it to evaporate.

Prolonged exposure to heat, or exposure to very high temperatures, can cause a potentially fatal stroke. If your symptoms continue, consult a doctor as quickly as possible – it could be an emergency!

Vector-borne diseases

Malaria

Malaria is a parasitic disease common in tropical and sub-tropical regions. It's transmitted by bites from Anopheles mosquitoes, which are active between sunset and sunrise. If left untreated, it can lead to serious complications, which can even be fatal in extreme cases. Every year, 30,000 people who have travelled to a malaria region suffer from malaria.⁴⁰ You can take a number of basic preventive measures to greatly reduce the risk of infection.

Symptoms: The first symptoms – fever, sweating, shivering and headaches – generally appear seven days after infection. They may be moderate at first, and then worsen after a few hours or days.

⁴⁰ K.M. Angelo et al., "Malaria after international travel: a GeoSentinel analysis, 2003–2016", *Malaria Journal*, Vol. 16, 20 July 2017.

Prevention in regions where malaria is endemic: There's currently no vaccination against malaria. You can protect yourself by avoiding mosquito bites. Some people will also need to take anti-malaria tablets preventively. People who live in a malaria zone don't need to do so. However, they may lose their immunity to malaria if they leave the region for a few months, so will need to be vigilant for three weeks after returning.

- Cover your skin as much as possible, and wear light-coloured clothing.
- Use a DEET-based insect repellent on all exposed skin. It should contain between 20% and 40% DEET or 20% Picaridin. The higher the concentration of DEET, the longer the protection – 20% = 3 hours, 30% = 6 hours, 40% = 10 hours.
- As malaria-carrying mosquitoes are mainly active at night, always sleep under a Permethrin-impregnated mosquito net that's free from holes or tears. If you intend to sleep in the field, take such a net with you.
- Ensure that the openings in your office and home are equipped with fine mosquito nets.
- Ensure that there are no areas near buildings where mosquitoes could reproduce (any buildup of water, pond, etc.).
- If your doctor has prescribed malaria tablets, take them without interruption. Make sure you take them with you on field trips and when you go on leave.
- If you're going to be working more than 48 hours away from the nearest place that offers quality medical care, make sure your team is carrying a rapid diagnostic test for malaria and always carry your emergency anti-malaria treatment kit.

If you have malaria symptoms

- Ask a doctor or a reliable laboratory to test you for malaria.
- If you're in an isolated area, away from proper medical facilities, use the rapid diagnostic test.
- If you can't get tested by a laboratory, and either you can't carry out a rapid diagnostic test or you've taken a test but you're not sure the result is valid, start taking your emergency anti-malaria treatment as soon as possible after symptoms appear.
- Even if you feel better, you must consult a doctor as soon as possible.

If you're in an area where malaria is endemic and you contract a fever (i.e. a temperature of more than 38°C), you should always check that you don't have malaria, preferably by consulting a doctor.

Dengue fever and dengue haemorrhagic fever

Dengue fever is a viral infection transmitted by bites from *Aedes* mosquitoes, which are active day and night but especially at sunrise and sunset. The illness is present in tropical and sub-tropical regions throughout the world, especially in urban and semi-urban areas. Global prevalence of dengue fever – and hence the risk to travellers – has increased massively over the last few decades. While the first occurrence generally has no serious consequences, a second occurrence can be fatal, as the person's immune system is likely to react to the virus more aggressively the second time. The disease can then develop into a more severe dengue haemorrhagic fever, of which the complications can be fatal.

Symptoms: Similar to flu – high temperature (40°C), sometimes accompanied by severe headaches, muscle and joint pain, pain behind the eyes, nausea, vomiting, swelling of the glands or skin eruptions. These symptoms appear four to ten days after infection and generally last for two to seven days.

Prevention in regions where dengue fever is endemic: There is currently no vaccination against dengue fever, although research is in progress. Protecting yourself against mosquito bites remains the best form of protection. If you've already had dengue fever, make sure you inform your doctor.

Treatment of dengue fever symptoms: There is no specific treatment for this disease. Early detection and access to suitable medical care may save your life in the unlikely event of complications.

- Get plenty of rest and drink lots of fluids.
- Consult a doctor as soon as possible for blood tests, and make sure you inform them if you've already had dengue fever previously.

Zika virus disease

Zika virus disease, also known as Zika fever or simply Zika, is a viral infection transmitted by bites from *Aedes* mosquitoes, which are active day and night but especially at sunrise and sunset. You can also become infected if you have unprotected sexual intercourse with someone who's carrying the virus, even if they have no symptoms. Infection during pregnancy can have serious consequences for the foetus and cause congenital defects of its central nervous system, one of the most serious being microcephaly. Other than the risk to unborn babies, Zika generally has no serious consequences for the person infected and they recover without treatment.

Symptoms: Most people display no symptoms. However, symptoms including moderate fever, skin eruptions, conjunctivitis, muscle or joint pain, malaise or headache may appear between 3 and 14 days after infection.

Prevention in regions where Zika is endemic: There is no vaccination and no treatment for Zika. The best form of protection is to avoid mosquito bites and take appropriate precautions during sexual intercourse. People who contract the illness generally recover after five to seven days, without treatment.

- If you're in an area where there's a risk of Zika and you're pregnant, or intending to become pregnant, or if you fear you may transmit the illness to someone else, consult your doctor.

Viral haemorrhagic fevers

Viral haemorrhagic fevers are rare diseases that involve massive bleeding and haemorrhage. The best-known are Lassa, Ebola and Marburg fevers, which occur in some parts of Africa. They're caused by viruses transmitted to humans via different vectors, depending on the type of fever. In particular, these include mosquitoes and ticks, the faeces and urine of rats and other rodents (in the case of Lassa fever) and contact with infected animals or the consumption of their flesh (in the case of Ebola). Ebola and Marburg fevers are also transmitted through close contact with an infected person, especially their bodily fluids (blood, urine, stools or vomit).

Symptoms: The initial symptoms of a haemorrhagic fever are generally similar to those of flu. The illness may remain at this level, or it may develop into the haemorrhagic form. The amount of bleeding varies from a simple nosebleed or bleeding of the gums to massive haemorrhage associated with organ failure, often leading to death. Ebola is particularly likely to be fatal.

Prevention: The WHO approved a vaccine against Ebola in 2019, but it's not yet known for how long this vaccine gives protection. All staff in regions affected by an Ebola-type haemorrhagic fever must be vaccinated if their work puts them at risk.

- As a general precaution, avoid contact with sick animals and animal carcasses, and protect yourself against vectors such as mosquitoes, ticks and rats.
- If you have to work in an area where any of these diseases is endemic, consult your doctor.

- If you have to travel to a region affected by an epidemic of haemorrhagic fever, consult the ICRC regarding the procedure you should follow. The organization has drawn up a protocol for staff working in such regions and will supply you with protective equipment.

Treatment: No treatment is currently available for the infection itself; it's only possible to treat the symptoms (see below).

Cholera

Cholera is an acute diarrhoeal infection caused by ingestion of food or water contaminated by the bacterium *Vibrio cholerae*. This is an extremely serious disease, which affects both adults and children. If left untreated, cholera can kill in less than 24 hours. Transmission is closely linked to poor sanitation and a lack of access to clean water. The poorer areas of large cities, IDP camps and prisons are particularly at risk.

Symptoms: Symptoms remain mild to moderate in most cases. However, severe watery diarrhoea can develop between 12 hours and 5 days after the ingestion of contaminated food or water. This severe diarrhoea will result in severe dehydration. If that's not treated, it can result in death.

Most infected persons have no symptoms. However, the bacillus will be present in their stools; if these are discharged into the environment, they can infect others.

Prevention: Improved water and sanitation, together with effective social mobilization, will help to prevent the disease occurring and will reduce transmission if it does break out. Oral vaccines are a further measure.

- If you're in a high-risk area, ask your doctor or health adviser whether you need to be vaccinated against cholera.
- If you have to work in an area affected by a cholera epidemic, check that you've been vaccinated and carefully follow the procedures laid down by the ICRC.

Treatment: Most people display no symptoms. If symptoms do appear, they're generally mild and can be successfully treated using oral rehydration salts. In severe cases, rapid intravenous rehydration and prompt administration of antibiotics will be required.

- In case of severe watery diarrhoea, compensate for lost fluid by drinking oral rehydration solution.
- If diarrhoea becomes increasingly frequent and watery, consult a doctor immediately.

Respiratory infections

These are common infections that affect the airways, including the nasal passages, bronchi and lungs, especially during rapid changes in temperature. Stress and fatigue make you more prone to this type of illness. Colds and flu are two common types of respiratory infection.

Symptoms: Whether caused by a virus or bacteria, the early symptoms of a respiratory tract infection are fairly similar. A prolonged cough, possibly lasting several weeks, shortness of breath, fever and possibly pain when taking deep breaths are all symptoms of an acute respiratory tract infection.

Prevention: Vaccines give protection against some respiratory diseases, such as flu. Staying at home if you have symptoms will prevent you from infecting others.

- If you work in places with large numbers of people, where the flu virus can be transmitted easily, you should get yourself vaccinated against it.
- Follow the basic rules of hygiene – in particular, wash your hands regularly, with soap.

Treatment: Whether to take antibiotics or antiviral medicines depends on whether the infection is of bacterial or viral origin, and this will have to be determined by a doctor.

- If you have one or more symptoms of a respiratory infection or a cough that lasts more than three weeks, it's time to consult a doctor.

Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) and atypical pneumonia

Over the last 20 years, at least three types of virus belonging to the same family of Coronaviridae have been identified as causing various types of severe lung disease in humans, generally known as “atypical pneumonia”. The viruses concerned are SARS-CoV, MERS-CoV and SARS-CoV-2 (which causes COVID-19). These viruses cause fatal epidemics and pandemics.

In humans, MERS-CoV, SARS-CoV and SARS-CoV-2 are mainly transmitted by the droplets expelled when someone coughs, sneezes or talks. Some people who already have a chronic respiratory illness, a cardio-vascular disease or obesity, who are immunodepressed or have uncontrolled diabetes, together with older people, are particularly susceptible to contracting severe forms of these illnesses.

Symptoms: The symptoms of pneumonia are fever, a dry cough, headaches, muscle pain and difficulty breathing. Some people carrying the virus may be “asymptomatic”, i.e. they have no symptoms. This means they can spread the infection without their knowledge.

Prevention: There is currently no vaccine against the various forms of Coronavirus. Research is underway to find out more about this issue and to develop ways of preventing and treating these illnesses. Basic hygiene measures, such as washing your hands with soap regularly, will help to reduce the risk of infection and limit transmission of the virus.

Treatment: There is no treatment for the various types of Coronavirus; supportive care is all that can be provided.

Epidemics and pandemics

Some infectious diseases spread rapidly, creating epidemics (e.g. SARS in 2003, Ebola in 2014, Lassa fever, etc.) or rapidly affect entire continents or the world, creating pandemics (e.g. Influenza A (H1N1) in 2009 and COVID-19 in 2020).

If the ICRC is working in areas affected by fatal epidemics, and in case of a pandemic, the organization will modify its operations, primarily in accordance with the pathology of the illness, the needs of the population and the threat to its staff. The ICRC will draw up ad hoc protocols, which will include the use of PPE for hazardous work. If an epidemic or pandemic occurs, you should therefore follow the instructions that the ICRC will issue.

Tuberculosis

Pulmonary tuberculosis, more commonly referred to as simply tuberculosis or TB, is a bacterial infection of the airways. It's more easily transmitted in enclosed, densely-populated environments such as certain prisons. However, it's unusual for someone with TB to pass it on to another person who's in good health.

Symptoms: During the initial phase of the illness, most people display no symptoms. The symptoms, if they appear, are coughing (possibly with blood), weight loss, night sweats and fever.

Prevention: If you're deployed to a region where TB is endemic, follow official health guidelines.

Treatment: Treatment of active tuberculosis requires multiple types of antibiotic. Treating multiple drug-resistant TB (MDR-TB) is more complex and the prognosis uncertain. It's difficult for people to get diagnosed and treated in certain countries where the health system is inadequate.

Bilharzia

Bilharzia (or schistosomiasis) is caused by parasitic larvae (cercarias) found in contaminated fresh water such as lakes or rivers with a slow-moving current, ponds, swamps, etc. The larvae enter the body via the skin during direct contact with the contaminated water. If left untreated, the disease can affect the bladder (resulting in blood in the urine) or the intestines (causing pain and diarrhoea) and lead to multiple complications. It cannot be passed on directly from one person to another.

Prevention in zones where the disease is endemic

- Don't swim or walk in fresh water and don't wash your hands, feet or laundry in it.
- If you think you may have been in contact with contaminated water, dry yourself by rubbing your skin vigorously with a towel or other cloth to reduce the risk of infection and consult a doctor as soon as possible.

If infection occurs:

- Clean and disinfect the area. Apply a bandage to immobilize it.
- Drink clean drinking water, in small sips.
- Consult a doctor.

Skin infections and wounds

Even small cuts, grazes, bites and other wounds can quickly get infected, especially in hot climates.

- Remove any dirt and small foreign bodies, even from small wounds.
- Wash the wound with drinking water and then apply an iodine-based antiseptic.
- If the infection spreads outwards from the wound (i.e. if the skin becomes reddened and inflamed), get medical advice as soon as possible.

Sexually transmitted diseases

HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases know no borders. They don't depend on the region where you work, but they do depend on your behaviour. And bear in mind that alcohol is known to make people more likely to indulge in risky activities. You can be carrying a sexually transmitted disease without having any symptoms yourself. This means you can infect others without realizing it. You must therefore take the precautions necessary to avoid getting infected or infecting others.

Working for the ICRC with HIV/AIDS

Access to HIV/AIDS testing, advice for people with HIV and antiretroviral therapy has improved significantly in recent years. However, there are still many people who have HIV/AIDS but aren't aware of the fact. Furthermore, it's not possible to obtain continuous treatment everywhere in the world, and people who are infected are often alone, stigmatized and unsupported.

The ICRC has taken a number of measures to reduce the likelihood of staff becoming infected, to ensure that they can obtain personalized, confidential advice and to ensure that they have access to antiretroviral therapy. So if you wish to take a test, or you know you're HIV-positive or you simply don't feel you can talk about the subject to family or friends, don't hesitate to ask your health adviser for advice. It's part of their job to answer your questions in confidence, to give you advice, to give you the possibility of taking an HIV test if necessary and to ensure that you have access to uninterrupted treatment for HIV/AIDS.

Exposure to contaminated blood

As a humanitarian worker, you risk coming into contact with blood or bodily fluids, especially if you work in the medical or paramedical fields.

The main infection risks are:

- blood or other infectious fluids coming into contact with cuts or grazes on your skin
- blood, blood-tinged fluid or other infectious fluid splashing the mucous membranes of your mouth, nose or eyes
- injuries from needles or sharp instruments contaminated by blood.

All of these potentially infectious fluids can transmit HIV, hepatitis B or hepatitis C.

If you've been exposed to blood or bodily fluids:

- Don't panic! The risk of infection from a single exposure to blood contaminated with HIV is low. HIV is more likely to be transmitted through a blood transfusion or during unprotected sex.
- Contact your health adviser immediately. They'll tell you what to do, and in particular will tell you whether you need to take antiretroviral medication, depending on your situation.

Post-exposure prophylaxis

Post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP) is emergency medical action intended to prevent infection if it's suspected that a person has been exposed to HIV. It involves taking antiretroviral medication, starting as soon as possible and in any case within 72 hours of exposure to the source of risk. You should only take post-exposure prophylaxis on the advice of a health professional.

PEP kits are available in all ICRC offices. Any team expecting to spend a number of days in a remote area must take such a kit with them. PEP forms part of the post-rape kit.

8.1.3 PHYSICAL HEALTH: SIX QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF

1. Have I been properly briefed on the health situation in the region and the types of medical facility available to me?
2. Do I know who to contact at the ICRC regarding health matters?
3. Are my vaccinations up to date?
4. Have I mentioned any health problems I may have when filling in ICRC health forms?
5. Am I following basic hygiene rules?
6. Am I taking sufficient precautions against getting ill?

8.2 LOOKING AFTER YOUR MENTAL HEALTH



Humanitarian action is rewarding and stimulating. Helping to relieve the suffering of others gives meaning to life and encourages you to strive to do more and better. However, being confronted by suffering, witnessing cruel injustices and violations – possibly against your own family or community – having to cope with violence and fearing for your own safety and that of your colleagues ... all these factors are potential sources of distress. Your compassion and your deep desire to alleviate suffering – which are essential elements of humanitarian endeavour – will sometimes run up against your own limitations or those of the organization, possibly becoming a major source of frustration.

Your working conditions will also affect your mental well-being. And as with any new job, there will be a period of adaptation, which may not be easy.

Your mental health needs as much looking-after as your physical health. At the ICRC, depression and other mental health problems are among the main causes of absenteeism and medical evacuation. This section will focus on stress. What is stress? Is stress always a bad thing? At what point does stress start to affect your health? The next few pages will explain the different types of stress and how people react to them. You'll also learn how to prevent stress, how to spot the first signs that stress is becoming a problem and how to overcome stress-related problems wherever possible.

8.2.1 STRESS – A NORMAL PART OF LIFE

Stress is a normal, spontaneous, adaptive reaction on the part of an organism to an external event or constraint that disturbs its equilibrium. It's a natural mechanism whereby physical and mental resources are activated, so that the organism (e.g. you!) can react to a situation. Stress is triggered by hormonal reactions in the brain, which cause increased heart rate and faster breathing, and prepare the muscles for action. To cope with stress, you have to be able to return to your initial state of calm and equilibrium at some point. In other words, stress in itself is not a dangerous thing, or something to be avoided at all costs. On the contrary, stress can be your friend if it helps you adapt to unforeseen situations.

A certain degree of stress is essential as a means of motivating us to act and function correctly. Stress is a positive and stimulating type of energy, and plays an essential role in getting us to make the necessary effort and operate effectively.

8.2.2 WHO IS AFFECTED BY STRESS

Stress affects everyone, regardless of their nationality or culture. It occurs most often when someone feels they lack the internal resources needed to handle a situation. This means that a situation one person finds stressful will be stress-free for another. A person's tolerance will depend in part on their genetic heritage, their personality, their past, their experiences and the social support available to them. For instance, past experience of poverty, suffering and violence may make a person more resistant to stress. Equally, such experiences may make them more sensitive to it.

Everyone handles difficulties in their own way, but we all have a certain point beyond which stress starts to become problematic. Certain factors push us closer to that point: a feeling that we're not in control and that the situation is unpredictable, repeated exposure to aversive situations or the feeling that our physical or mental well-being are threatened.

Understanding and acknowledging the factors that are stressful for you, and knowing your personal needs and limits, will help you work out how to manage stress.

8.2.3 WHEN STRESS BECOMES A PROBLEM

Understanding how stress works will help you manage it. When the brain identifies a situation as stressful, the organism goes through four phases:

1. **Alert:** The initial reaction to any stressful situation. Heart rate and breathing rate increase, and you become more focused.
2. **Resistance:** Occurs if stress continues. Cortisol, a stress-related hormone, comes into play.
3. **Exhaustion:** Occurs if stress continues further. The body becomes flooded with hormones, is kept at a high state of alert and becomes exhausted. This exhaustion increases the risk of certain illnesses, by reducing the capacity of the person's immune system.
4. **Recovery:** Once the cause of stress is removed, the person rapidly enters a recovery phase. They relax, and may feel very tired. This phase allows the body to stock up on the resources needed to return to its original state of equilibrium.

Stress becomes a problem if a person is exposed to stress factors too frequently, or too intensely. Under such circumstances, the recovery phase can't start, and the person becomes increasingly unable to cope. Furthermore, studies have shown that the negative effects of stress become worse if the person sees them as problematic. In other words, your perception of stress will influence the way your body reacts to it and your ability to cope with the situation.

When you feel unable to keep up and no longer in control, that's when you're going to feel stressed. If those feelings continue, become too intense and are leading to depression, you must ask for help.

The different types of stress

- **Cumulative or chronic stress:** You can visualize cumulative stress as several thin layers. Each “layer” is one minor problem. But once they all pile up on top of you, you feel under pressure. The problems can stem from various aspects of life: work, health, physical surroundings, money, relationships, etc. If you minimize and ignore these worries, and allow them to build up over time, they’ll start to affect your equilibrium. This kind of stress is all the worse because you’re unaware of its sources. A high level of chronic stress can lead to burnout, especially if you no longer see any sense in your work.
- **Burnout:** The result of chronic stress at work that hasn’t been managed properly. Burnout has three features:
 - exhaustion or lack of energy
 - withdrawal
 - negativity or cynicism regarding one’s work and a reduction in effectiveness.
- **Traumatic stress** (or potentially traumatic stress): This results from exposure to a potentially destructive event more serious than those that the individual is mentally equipped to handle. Possible causes include a car accident, an armed attack, a natural disaster, an explosion, verbal threats or ill-treatment. The event itself may or may not be traumatic: different people will perceive the same event differently, depending on their personality and the circumstances. The fact that someone has experienced a serious incident doesn’t necessarily mean that they’ll develop a trauma-related pathology. They’ll show completely normal signs of distress for some days or even weeks after the incident. However, if those signs of distress continue, the person could be suffering from traumatic stress. Furthermore, a person can suffer traumatic stress without actually being the victim of an incident; witnessing it may be enough.

- **Vicarious trauma:** Listening to people recounting their experiences, looking at images and reading reports can all cause vicarious trauma. The helper absorbs the traumatic events experienced by others, and through their empathy they develop trauma-related reactions similar to those of the actual victims.
- **Compassion fatigue:** Compassion, or empathy, is the ability to understand another person's feelings at an emotional level, and to be aware of what they are experiencing. It makes us conscious of the nature and intensity of another person's suffering. Studies have shown that feeling the suffering of others while being unable to see any sense in it or do anything to alleviate it over a long period can eventually affect a person's equilibrium and lead to a state of saturation and exhaustion.

8.2.4 STRESS IN THE OFFICE

One often imagines that humanitarian workers are subject to stress only because of the hard realities they face in the field, while forgetting that their working conditions also have a major effect on their mental health. Just as a pleasant working atmosphere and strong team spirit can have a positive influence, excessive workload, a lack of support, insufficient resources and tensions/conflicts with colleagues can wear a person down over time and have a seriously harmful effect. Working in a multicultural environment will also require some adjustment, and that can be difficult at first.

If you're starting to see your work as a major source of stress:

- Take time to think about why this is, and what you can do about it yourself. Should you delegate some of your tasks to others? Is it time to become a bit less of a perfectionist, or less demanding towards yourself? Should you ask your colleagues for support?
- Don't hesitate to share your concerns with your boss, so you can work together to find a solution that keeps everyone happy.

Find out about the various support mechanisms available within the ICRC – and use them.

If things are difficult with one or more of your colleagues:

- Try to sort things out with the person or people concerned, before things get worse and the atmosphere becomes toxic. If necessary, ask someone you trust for advice, or use the support mechanisms.

8.2.5 THE WARNING SIGNS

Different people show psychological distress in different ways. Knowing how it manifests itself in you is an essential tool in maintaining your equilibrium. Paying attention to the symptoms of stress in your mind and body, recognizing your emotions and listening to changes in your behaviour may help you see when the moment has come when you just have to give yourself time to recover, or ask for help.

If you ignore your own needs, and fail to maintain a healthy lifestyle, you'll become steadily more exhausted. That may cause you to take unnecessary risks that put you and others in danger.

The main warning signs

Body

- Sleep disorders (insomnia, unusually long periods of sleep, nightmares)
- Headaches
- Fatigue
- Digestive problems
- Weight gain or loss
- Skin problems
- Muscle tension and pain

Behaviour

- Withdrawing into yourself, avoiding things that seem difficult
- Isolation
- Silence
- Over-activity or procrastination
- Not looking after yourself
- Taking risks
- Eating much more or much less
- Abuse of alcohol, or increased consumption
- Taking drugs

The main warning signs	
Emotions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A tendency to be easily moved, or indifferent - Excessive fear - Guilt - Lowering of self-esteem - Inability to relax - Irritability and anger - Loss of sense of humour - Cynicism - Denial - A feeling of powerlessness - Despair
In your head	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Difficulty concentrating, finding words, writing or calculating - Forgetfulness - Indecision - Confusion - Lowering of self-esteem - Inability to make balanced judgements - Dizziness - Intrusive memories - Flash-backs
Spiritual	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Discouragement - Feeling that life has no meaning - Feeling remote from your values or your religious beliefs - No longer feeling connected to your community - No longer feeling connected to nature

8.2.6 DEALING WITH STRESS

Recover more effectively

Dealing with stress means managing your exposure to stress factors as well as you can, and taking measures that allow you to rediscover a feeling of calm, and of being in control. You'll need to adapt the recommendations below in accordance with the means available to you and the constraints of your working environment:

- Commit yourself to active self-care.
- Maintain as varied a diet as possible and eat as regularly as possible. Make sure you get enough magnesium, because your body uses more of it when you're under stress. Many foods contain magnesium: leafy green vegetables such as spinach, manioc, bananas, beans, lentils, split peas, wholemeal cereals and nuts (peanuts, walnuts, hazelnuts, almonds, pistachios, etc.).
- Keep hydrated – drink two to three litres of water a day.

- Try to get enough sleep. The effects of losing two hours of sleep remain with you for eight days!
- Get regular physical exercise, especially if the security situation prevents you from going out. Avoid sitting for too long: walk, go up and down stairs or do exercises. If “real” sport is impossible, you’ll need to improvise. A game of badminton or football at the office, a yoga session with colleagues, etc.
- Create some personal space for yourself, even if it’s limited. Somewhere you can be alone. Use it for activities related to your personal values: art, a spiritual/religious activity, relaxation techniques, watching films, reading, listening to music, etc.
- Don’t ignore your need for rest & recuperation. Respect it, and take the days off to which you’re entitled.
- Rather than spending hours alone online, cultivate social contact – at work and outside. And make sure work doesn’t dominate your every conversation! Social rituals and contact with your family – even at a distance – will also help you maintain your equilibrium.
- Try writing and art – these are good ways of expressing the stress you’re feeling, and can be beneficial.
- Try and see things positively and constructively. Accept that there are things you simply can’t change, and focus your energy on the things you can.
- Show compassion, which implies a feeling of caring and a desire to help the person who’s suffering. Compassion has been shown to enable us to relate to the suffering of others, without being dragged into a state of distress ourselves.

And remember that laughter helps us put things into perspective – it can be a good way of handling certain problems.

Abdominal breathing

It may seem simple, but breathing properly is a great way to recover more effectively.

- Sit or stand with your back straight. Place one hand on your chest and the other on your belly.
- Breathe in deeply through your nose so that your belly expands. The hand on your belly will rise, while the hand on your chest will barely move.
- Now breathe out through your mouth, very slowly, expelling as much air as possible, by contracting your abdominal muscles. The hand on your belly will move, while the other will remain almost immobile.
- Once you've expelled all the air you can, hold your breath for a few seconds and then repeat the exercise.

What NOT to do

Some kinds of avoidance behaviour really are not your friends when it comes to handling stress. They just give you the impression you're dealing with it:

- Work occupies the mind. You can also use it to fill your free time and ignore your personal worries. But working too hard for too long and not taking your days off can become an addiction. Being a workaholic will wear you out physically, mentally and emotionally.
- Consuming more tobacco, coffee, alcohol or chewables is a good sign that your personal balance is off. From a certain point onwards, these substances all have a tendency to hide fatigue and signs of stress rather than promote natural recovery.
- Developing techniques that enable you to forget painful events or the difficulties of everyday life is necessary and healthy. Trouble is, trying to forget something can degenerate into completely denying it ever happened. So don't be alone with your painful experiences; talk to someone you trust, or a health professional.
- Screens are a source of endless distraction. But studies have clearly shown that overdoing your screen-time can harm your physical and mental health, leading to sleep problems, lack of concentration, mood swings, etc.

8.2.7 IF YOU'RE FEELING BAD

Looking after yourself also means recognizing and accepting that you don't feel good and that you need support. If you're still struggling to maintain your equilibrium, don't carry on trying to fix things on your own. Talk to someone you trust, or a health professional. If your mental state remains poor, or gets worse, you should definitely consult a professional without further delay.

*Know your limits.
Acknowledging that
you don't feel good is
not a sign of weakness.*

8.2.8 STRESS: SIX QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF

1. How can I protect myself against the negative effects of my environment?
2. Are there any changes in my behaviour that might be signs of serious mental health problems?
3. What could I do to get back to feeling calm and in control again?
4. Am I a source of stress for others?
5. Can I still cope with other people's suffering?
6. Do I have a person I can talk to about my doubts, and the things I've been through?

9. ACCESS TO PEOPLE IN NEED

Getting access to people in need is always going to be a challenge. You're particularly vulnerable to security incidents when you're moving around, especially by road, and even on routes you use regularly. There's no shortage of potential problems: you'll be using roads in poor condition, negotiating your way through military checkpoints, crossing multiple front lines to reach communities in need and dealing with all the unexpected problems that could slow you down. You'll be confronted with one question or dilemma after another: Should I postpone this field trip, delaying the delivery of much-needed aid? Should I go anyway, knowing that things are highly unstable? Should I take a different route? Go back the way I came? Etcetera.

This chapter contains advice on how to avoid dangerous situations.

- What must you consider when planning and preparing a field trip?
- How do you go about notifying weapon bearers, moving in convoy and staying in contact with your colleagues back at the office?
- How do you get through a checkpoint safely?
- How do you choose a safe place to spend the night?

Those are the main topics we cover in the next few pages.

9.1 PREPARING FOR A FIELD TRIP

This chapter deals with field trips by road.

Taking time to properly prepare each field trip will greatly reduce the risk of an incident. Analysis of security incidents affecting the ICRC has shown that many of them could have been avoided, or the consequences could have been less serious, if the planning and preparation process had been more thorough.

Errors that have had serious consequences in the past include:

- failure to properly include team members in the planning phase, and failure to share information fully
- failure to take account of everyone's views and concerns
- security guarantees that were obtained in haste, or which were not sufficiently reliable
- equipment missing from vehicles
- communication equipment that was inappropriate to the situation or was not working.



9.1.1 DON'T TAKE SHORTCUTS!

Thorough preparation will enable you to do the following things (among others):

- optimize your resources (human, logistical and other)
- analyse the threats in the light of the latest developments and information, and modify your plans accordingly
- anticipate the unexpected
- inform key individuals and entities of your presence and obtain **security guarantees** or other authorizations from them
- use the knowledge of your colleagues, Red Cross and Red Crescent volunteers and anyone else

- coordinate your aims with those of your colleagues and, if relevant, of other humanitarian organizations
- brief your management on your intentions, thereby accelerating the decision-making process in case of problems.

Detailed planning of your route and your aims, coordination with all relevant entities, preparation of vehicles and equipment, briefing and debriefing of all team members – all these phases are essential. Pay attention to the little details: an incomplete first-aid kit or not having the tools to change a wheel could be catastrophic.

Properly planning and preparing your field trip is first and foremost a matter of self-discipline. It requires close coordination between everyone involved. While it is the responsibility of the team leader to supervise the planning and preparation process, every member of the team has their role to play. If just one piece of the jigsaw is missing, the whole team may be in trouble. A field trip is a collective activity that demands commitment from each individual, from the driver through to the person responsible for monitoring the team's movements.

Appendix 12.5 lists the main points to remember when planning a field trip.

The team leader's role

You may be a team leader at some point. What does that involve? The team leader has to coordinate the tasks of the team members with one another, supervise the team, give instructions in response to the situations that arise and take the necessary decisions if problems arise. They also ensure the security of the team. While it's true that security is everybody's business, the team leader has a particular responsibility in this area.

Among other things, the team leader must:

- Get the green light for the intended activity and route, both internally and from the authorities.
- Brief and debrief the team: a) Ensure the rapid and effective exchange of information regarding security in the area concerned. b) Explain the main threats. c) Remind the team of the most important measures to take. d) Check that no-one has any objection to the intended actions, and take the necessary steps if they have.
- Remind the team of the rules regarding communication and behaviour, plus the procedure to follow in the event of a problem or incident.
- Support the team members, to ensure that the activity proceeds as planned.
- Supervise and monitor implementation of delegated tasks.

9.1.2 SET REALISTIC TARGETS

Humanitarians have a tendency to put themselves under pressure. They often set themselves over-ambitious targets, in a bid to achieve short-term rather than long-term results. They also fail to plan enough time for unplanned encounters or unexpected events like punctures, with the result that they run short of time, lower their guard and take unnecessary risks. And it's not unusual for several teams to turn up at the same location because they failed to coordinate beforehand and optimize their movements.

When drawing up your plans:

- Don't put yourself under pressure by creating an over-ambitious timetable.
- Aim to arrive at your destination at least an hour before nightfall.
- Build in time for talking to people you meet on the way.
- Reserve time for the unexpected.

9.1.3 BRIEFINGS AND DEBRIEFINGS

Before and after every field trip, the team leader must gather all the participants so they can pool the information they have. These briefings and debriefings are essential to the success of the field trip. They are therefore obligatory. They ensure that everyone, including new staff and participants from outside the ICRC, is fully informed of the most important aspects of the field trip, including those related to security. They also provide an opportunity for everyone to express their opinion and thereby help to build a more complete overview of the situation.

To achieve their aims, these sessions must take place in a constructive, inclusive atmosphere. If no-one feels empowered to give their opinion, raise objections, call the team leader's plan into question or express their doubts, briefings and debriefings are pointless. It's also important not to exclude members of the team whose contributions will be vital to the success of the field trip, such as the drivers. And be careful not to exclude people who don't have a full command of the working language you're using – you must find a way of enabling them to participate.

Briefings and debriefings are only effective if you feel free to express your opinion and if you listen to the opinions of your colleagues.

The briefing

The briefing is an opportunity to inform all field trip participants regarding the latest developments in the area, including those of relevance to security, and to explain the objectives of the trip. This is also the time to define the roles and responsibilities of each team member, to clarify the time available for achieving the aims of the trip and to check that all preparations have been made and all necessary authorizations obtained. The briefing is also the last chance to check that no-one has any objections regarding the route, the intended activities or security matters.

A well-prepared briefing session will normally last no longer than 15 minutes. Ideally, it should take place the day before departure, to give everyone enough time to prepare properly.

Briefing	
Participants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Everyone taking part in the field trip, whatever their role and their level of responsibility - Persons from outside who will be joining the field trip, such as partners and visitors - The person who will be responsible for monitoring the movements of the team from the office
Best time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The day before departure
Information to pass on	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The aim of the field trip - Risk assessment and any particular measures to be taken - Reminder of driving safety rules (seatbelts, appropriate speed, spacing, etc.) and any context-specific rules on behaviour (dress, etc.) - Route, time and distance - Timings (departure, breaks, halt for overnight stop) - Name of convoy leader (if relevant) - Name of person who will represent the team to persons encountered en route (if other than the team leader) - Name of person responsible for communicating the team's movements to the ICRC, and how often they are to check in - Roles and responsibilities of each team member - Names of persons to contact in case of emergency - Location at which the team is to spend the night
Checklist	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The driver knows and approves of the planned route, as do all other team members - All necessary authorizations have been obtained, both internally and from the authorities, along with security guarantees - The equipment of every vehicle is suited to the terrain, and would enable the occupants to deal with such unplanned occurrences as a breakdown or accident - Everyone knows how to use the communications equipment available, and has access to the charging equipment for it - Everyone has the telephone numbers of the persons who are to be contacted in case of emergency - Everyone knows the procedure to follow in case of an incident and the locations of medical facilities in the area
Before ending the briefing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Comments, questions and answers - Summary of the main points

The debriefing

The debriefing session is the time to pool everyone's experiences and draw conclusions. It will be a mine of information, because each member of the team will have their own personal impressions and will have obtained information from different sources. The debriefing will also show whether you need to change your operational approach and whether you need to take specific measures, especially as regards security. This is therefore the time to report any problems encountered, gather suggestions for the future and review the aims that were achieved. The debriefing session will highlight any information that needs to be passed up the hierarchy and any action that needs to be taken. It facilitates the writing of internal reports, such as the field trip report and reports on any security incidents.

If the team is tired, and immediate follow-up is not essential, the debriefing can wait until the following day. How long it takes will depend on the situation. If there's nothing particular to report, it can be very short.

Debriefing	
Participants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Everyone who took part in the field trip, whatever their role and their level of responsibility - The person who was responsible for monitoring the movements of the team
Best time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The day after the team returns from the trip, at the latest
Information to be shared	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Summary of objectives achieved - Obstacles encountered - Key events in the region - Proposed measures regarding future field trips in the region - Specific follow-up required
Before ending the debriefing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Comments and questions - Thanks to the participants for their contributions - Summary of points requiring follow-up - Summary of points to mention in the field trip report

9.1.4 PREPARING A FIELD TRIP: TEN QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF

1. Are my aims realistic, given the time available to me?
2. Have I taken account of unexpected occurrences and factors that could stop me achieving my aims?
3. Do I believe that I have sufficient information regarding the security situation in the area where I intend to be?
4. Have I made sufficient use of my colleagues' knowledge, and have I called on them for support?
5. Have I coordinated my field trip with other departments?
6. Have all authorizations been obtained – both internal and external?
7. Have all participants in the field trip been invited to the briefing?
8. Have I expressed any doubts and fears I may have? If so, have they been listened to?
9. Are the vehicles equipped with everything I may need?
10. Do I feel confident, and ready to hit the road?

9.2 ANNOUNCING YOUR MOVEMENTS AND YOUR ACTIVITIES



All entities that could have a significant effect on your security – especially armed forces and armed groups – must be fully informed of your movements and

activities in their areas. The aim is to obtain security guarantees, so as to avoid finding yourself in the middle of a military operation or coming under fire from combatants who don't know who you are or what you're doing in their area. This process will also give you a clearer idea of who accepts your presence, who tolerates it and who rejects it, and hence enable you to adjust your security management.

All parties must have given you their green light in principle before you head off on a field trip, deliver aid or launch a new activity. Sometimes, this will require considerable effort. Notifying a **weapon bearer** requires you to have

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In unstable areas, notifications are an integral part of preparing a field trip. They must be issued systematically and repeatedly, whether orally or in writing, as agreed with each entity.

already created a relationship of trust with them, and that's not always possible. Furthermore, not all weapon bearers have a centralized chain of command. So this is a long-term undertaking, and it's never finished. What you actually receive is never really a security *guarantee*, even if we call it that. It's simply security *clearance*, and a certain degree of danger will always remain. You have the green light only in principle. It remains your responsibility to check that the fighters on the ground have received the message. Ultimately, it is they who will decide whether to let you through or not.

9.2.1 CHECK YOUR GUARANTEES

Promises from senior commanders may count for nothing on the ground, especially if you're dealing with a decentralized group. Even if an agreement is the fruit of long negotiations, it may not hold in practice. A weapon bearer might not have the procedures or means of communication necessary to ensure that orders from commanders are transmitted effectively to fighters on the ground. A commander may not have had time to inform their fighters.

So even if the weapon bearers controlling the region have approved the passage of your convoy, and a ceasefire has been agreed, it's perfectly possible that no-one has told one particular unit you're coming.

Because they don't know who you are, they may threaten your convoy. How can you avoid this happening? There's no simple answer. For a start you must plan your field trip carefully, contact all entities concerned and try to obtain

Don't worry about seeming over-insistent. "Wasting" time getting reliable security guarantees will save time later and will enhance your safety.

all the necessary authorizations and security guarantees, well in advance. Once you've obtained your authorizations, check that all troops on the ground have been correctly informed. And then check again. This is a tedious process but it's essential, given the challenges faced by weapon bearers in the field. Notifying them in haste is dangerous. What's also dangerous is sending a notification by SMS or WhatsApp and treating the automatic acknowledgement of receipt as your green light.

9.2.2 HOW DO I OBTAIN SECURITY GUARANTEES?

- Ask about the standard procedures for obtaining security guarantees in your area.
- Clearly identify all entities who need to be informed about your movements and about the goods you're transporting.
- Decide on the most appropriate and effective way of notifying each entity. In particular, decide what level of the chain of command you need to contact.
- Clearly explain the aims of the field trip and how it will proceed (vehicles, partnerships with other organizations, destinations, types of goods to be transported, etc.).
- Take account of the time that your contact will need to properly inform their fighters on the ground.
- The day your field trip is due to start, check that the security guarantees obtained are still valid, because things can change very quickly.
- The fact that a commander has given you security guarantees does not necessarily mean that their fighters have been properly informed of your movements. Once you get into the field, you may well have to remind personnel on the ground of the type of authorization you've obtained from their commander, and you may have to re-negotiate access.
- If fighters try to prevent you from continuing your journey, try to find out why. Don't just push on regardless. It could be that they've been informed of an imminent threat that was unknown to their commander when they gave you the green light, and that they're acting in your best interests.

Always check that the security guarantees you've obtained from a weapon bearer really have been passed onto their fighters on the ground.

9.2.3 WARNING OR OBSTRUCTION?

Someone may advise you not to enter a particular area on the grounds that it's dangerous. You may have the impression that this is just a tactic aimed at preventing you from carrying out your operations. And indeed, it can be difficult to tell whether someone's "advice" stems from a genuine desire to protect you or from some ulterior motive. The person concerned may know of a military operation that's imminent or underway. Your presence could compromise that operation and/or the operation could put you in danger. On the other hand, they might be trying to keep you out of their area or prevent you from helping communities they see as the enemy. Whatever your impression, don't just ignore a warning of this type. If the person is indeed trying to keep you out of an area for their own reasons and not in order to protect you, they may well resort to rather more dissuasive methods and even attack you if you ignore their warning.

If someone tries to dissuade you from taking a particular route, discuss the matter with your management so that you and they can analyse the warning, cross check with other information and decide together whether it would be wise to continue or not.

9.2.4 NOTIFYING WEAPON BEARERS: FIVE QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF

1. Are the means used to notify weapon bearers the right ones for each entity?
2. Have weapon bearers in the area given reliable security guarantees, or have they simply taken note of my passage through the area under their control?
3. Have they hinted that the route I plan to take is particularly dangerous?
4. Do they have the means, and have they had the time, to tell their fighters that I'm coming?
5. Do I need to check once again that the guarantees they gave are still valid?

9.3 COMMUNICATIONS

Being able to communicate with your base and your colleagues at all times is essential to your security. Communications systems enable you to exchange information about changes in the situation, tell others where you are and call for help if you need it. The ICRC makes a range of systems available to you, depending on your situation: VHF and HF radio, landline, mobile phone, satellite phone and internet. Thanks to the redundancy these systems offer by virtue of being based on different technologies, you should always be able to communicate, even in difficult situations. When the threat is particularly high, someone will be on permanent radio watch, enabling you to contact your base at all times.

9.3.1 THE MAIN COMMUNICATION SYSTEMS



Smartphone

The number of people without a mobile phone is diminishing rapidly. They're easy to use and have multiple features (GPS, camera, internet, apps, etc.), making them useful tools. However, mobile phones also pose a few safety risks, in that they're not entirely reliable, especially in remote or unstable regions, or during natural disasters. You may find yourself with no signal and hence unable to communicate. During a natural disaster or a conflict, the

A smartphone isn't as innocuous as it looks. Before taking it out, tell the other person that you intend to do so and check that they have no objection to your using it.

suspensions, even if you don't use them. Certain functions and Apps may also pose a **cyber security** risk.

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Radio

In unstable regions, radio is an essential means of communication for monitoring your movements in the field, knowing where other ICRC vehicles are and passing on security- or safety-related information, such as road conditions, vehicle breakdowns, etc. Radio also acts as a backup if the mobile phone network goes down.

The ICRC uses two types of radio:

- **HF (high frequency):** Medium- and long-distance communications, especially between your vehicle and your base (i.e. the ICRC office responsible for supervising your movements). The quality of HF communications depends on a number of factors, most of which are outside your control. These include the time of day: communications will be better on certain frequencies during the day and on others at night. The solution to this is to use different frequencies at different times. And before you can communicate using an HF radio, remember to tune the set to its antenna if it's fitted with an antenna tuning unit. This both improves your chances of getting through and protects the transmitter part of your radio against damage. Don't give up if you don't get through first time – you'll sometimes need to call several times before establishing communications.
- **VHF (very high frequency):** Generally used to communicate with colleagues at short range. The maximum range between two hand-held radios is about 2 km, and between a hand-held and a base station it will be about 5 km. The higher you are (or more precisely, the higher your antenna is), the greater your range. Obstacles such as trees or buildings can block VHF signals – either you hear nothing at all or the signal seems to be “breaking up” or distorted. The solution is simply to move a few metres, find a higher location or move into open space.

How do I use a radio?

Every radio has a *pressel switch*, a button on the microphone of a vehicle radio or on the side of a hand-held radio that you press to speak and release to listen. This means that if you're speaking you can't hear the other person, and vice-versa.

- Make sure your radio is on the correct channel and is set to the correct mode.
- Listen out for five seconds before transmitting, to make sure the channel is clear.
- Press the pressel switch, then speak.
- Hold the microphone approximately 5 cm from your mouth.
- Speak clearly, and not too fast.
- Release the pressel switch when you've sent your message.

Only transmit information essential to the operation underway. If you chat unnecessarily, you may prevent a colleague from sending an urgent message. And anyone can listen in to what you're saying.

Satellite phone

The main advantage of a satellite phone is that you can communicate with any other phone from any location in the world. It's a good backup system for any part of the world, as long as the authorities haven't prohibited its use. Bear in mind that satellite phones are becoming increasingly popular, which means that satellites can become saturated, preventing you from making your call. So a satellite phone should just be one of your means of communication. You should always have at least one other option, such as another satellite communications system, HF or VHF radio, or a mobile phone if there's an adequate network.

You can only communicate using a satellite phone if there's a line of sight between you and the satellite. You therefore need to move away from trees and ensure that there's nothing overhead (such as a roof) that could block the passage of the signal between you and the satellite. Mountains and hills can also obstruct the signal.

9.3.2 MAKE SURE SOMEONE KNOWS WHERE YOU ARE AT ALL TIMES

It's essential to your security that you be able to contact your base or your colleagues, and that they be able to contact you. When necessary, a continuous radio watch will be maintained from a radio room. The radio room is where all communications with personnel on field trips are handled, along with information regarding any emergencies. In the most unstable contexts, radio operators will be on duty 24 hours a day. The radio operators' job is not to take decisions, but to collect information and pass it on accurately to the relevant person, so they can take the necessary action. The radio operator needs to know where you are and be able to contact you at all times. This means that before setting out you must inform the radio operator of your intended route, the number of vehicles you're using and the identities of their occupants.

Agree all procedures with the radio operator before starting your field trip.

9.3.3 BASIC POINTS REGARDING TELECOMMUNICATIONS

Telecommunications equipment and systems won't keep you safe on their own. If they're to be of any use, you need to use them properly.

Ask for training

- If you haven't been trained on the specific communications equipment available to you, insist that you receive such training.
- Find out the details of each means of communication, especially their advantages and disadvantages and the precautions to take when using them. You need to know their limits, so you can communicate securely and protect confidential information.
- Before going into the field, find out what communications equipment you should take. Make sure you know how to use it and that it's working.
- In high-risk contexts, make sure you always have two means of communication with you, so that if one piece of equipment breaks down, or you can't use your mobile phone (because you have no signal or the network's down), you have a backup.
- If you're intending to use a pay-as-you-go mobile phone, make sure you have enough credit.

Always have at least two independent means of communication with you, and test them before you leave.

- The batteries in some equipment don't last long, so make sure you have chargers with you.
- Always carry a phone list of people to contact in case of emergency.

Speak clearly and concisely

- Whatever equipment you use, think before you speak. Write down the main points of what you want to say beforehand, so you can be brief and concise.
- Verify that the other person has understood your message. In case of doubt, ask them to read it back to you.
- If need be, use the phonetic alphabet (see **Appendix 12.7**).

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Be discreet

- Always assume that a third party is listening. Don't say anything you wouldn't want overheard.
- Avoid using your radio or phone when you're at a checkpoint or anywhere else that someone might consider a sensitive location.

Look after your communications equipment

- Your communications equipment is highly attractive to others. Keep it out of sight and store it in a secure place.
- Report any faults to the person responsible as soon as you return to your office.
- Report the loss of any equipment.

Seven rules for communicating effectively, by radio or by telephone

Preparation — Think before you speak, and plan your message.

Discipline — Listen out before transmitting.

Brevity — Keep it short.

Rhythm — Use short, complete sentences, and speak with a natural rhythm.

Speed — Not too fast, and not too slow.

Volume — No need to shout.

Discretion — Don't transmit any sensitive information unless it's absolutely essential.

9.3.4 KEEPING IN TOUCH: FOUR QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF

1. **Who:** Who should I contact within the ICRC?
2. **When:** When/how often should I call?
3. **Why:** Under what circumstances should I call?
4. **How:** What means should I use?

9.4 IDENTIFY YOURSELF



The **ICRC logo** identifies you and distinguishes you from the personnel of other organizations. It's also a means of preventing parties to the conflict attacking you by mistake. However, the ICRC logo alone is not sufficient to identify you. You'll soon realize that many of the people you talk to don't know the ICRC and our activities, even though our vehicles are constantly on their roads. Many will assume you're a doctor. So as well as identifying yourself, you should also seize every opportunity to explain **what you do**, using simple, concrete examples. This will gradually make you more accepted in the area.

Find out about the means of identification that are appropriate to the area where you're working.

- **Identify yourself!** Unless being identifiable is problematic in the area where you're working, wear an official ICRC badge or T-shirt when you're on duty, so people know who you belong to.

- **Protect yourself!** If you're near the front line, or if you decide that it's safer to be visible, wear a tabard that identifies you at a distance, fly an ICRC flag on your vehicle and display a large version of the logo on any building you're using.
- **Do you feel the ICRC logo could put you in danger?** There are indeed areas where the ICRC logo is not welcome, for various reasons. Discuss the question with your management. It may be necessary to find other means of identification, or not to identify yourself at all.
- **Other means of identification.** Radio signals, thermal paint, transmission of **GPS coordinates** or media announcements regarding specific activities can all help to ensure that people know who you are. Again, discuss with your management the means of identification to use in the light of the threats identified. One means of identification doesn't exclude another, of course. In conflict zones, we generally give the GPS coordinates of our buildings to the belligerents **and** paint our logo or one of the emblems on the roof **and** announce our movements, etc.

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9.5 WORKING WITH A PARTNER

p. 48 The context and the type of agreement between the ICRC and each partner will determine the security framework and hence the ICRC's responsibility for the partner's security. If an entity is operating directly under the responsibility of the ICRC, it must follow our procedures and security regulations.

If you're thinking of carrying out an activity jointly with a partner, don't assume that your collaboration will be of limited duration, or that your partner knows the region and the threats, or that they would know what to do in the event of a problem. That would be a mistake, and one that could prove fatal given the way your security is interwoven with theirs.

If you're intending to go into the field with a partner:

- Define each party's roles and responsibilities with regard to security, precisely and in advance.
- Turn the complementarity between them and us into an advantage and share knowledge with them.
- Discuss with them the precautions to be taken and the way to behave, in the light of the threats identified.

- Make sure you know how to explain to the people you encounter who your partner is and why you're working together. Also make sure that they know how to explain the nature and work of the ICRC in a few words.
- Involve your partner in the planning and preparation of your activity as early as possible, and invite them to briefings before all field trips.
- Take all possible precautions to prevent your partner from running any risk.
- If your partnership provokes hostile reactions, talk to your management.

Any partner taking part in a joint activity must, as a minimum, take part in the briefing for the field trip, regardless of the type of agreement we have with them.

It's recommended that you invite anyone from outside the ICRC who will be accompanying you on a field trip to the corresponding **briefing** session, whether they're a government representative, an employee of a company or a donor.

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9.5.1 WORKING WITH A PARTNER: EIGHT QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF

1. Would it be useful for me to know the type of agreement signed by the ICRC and the partner with which I'm carrying out joint operations?
2. Have I involved my partner sufficiently in the process of planning the activity?
3. Have I made use of their knowledge in planning the activity?
4. Am I planning to invite them to the briefing for the joint field trip?
5. Have I properly informed them regarding the objectives of the planned activity and the security aspects?
6. Have I discussed with them what precautions to take and how to behave?
7. Is my partner capable of presenting the ICRC in a few words and explaining our work in the area?
8. Could the presence of this partner cause additional risk, either because of its allegiance or because of the profile of its staff?

9.6 ON THE ROAD



p. 344 **Traffic accidents** are among the leading causes of death around the world. They're also among the leading causes of death – and injury – among humanitarian personnel. The poor state of the roads and the chaotic traffic in some of the places we work don't account for all those deaths and injuries. Many of them are the result of bad driving and failure to obey basic driving rules born of arrogance, over-confidence or the expectation of impunity. Such attitudes seriously endanger the public and tarnish the ICRC's reputation, as our vehicles are the most visible sign of our presence. It's difficult to remain indifferent to a brand-new Land Cruiser roaring along the road at high speed, raising a choking cloud of dust.

If you don't drive sensibly, you're a danger to yourself and others.

Speed and danger

Any increase in speed, however small, significantly increases both the risk of an accident and the seriousness of any accident that may occur. It's essential that you adapt your speed to the conditions, especially in areas where the roads are bad.

9.6.1 USE THE SKILLS OF A PROFESSIONAL DRIVER

Our experienced drivers generally know the region well. Many know the local language. People you encounter on the road will often speak to them first. In addition to their driving duties, drivers may have specific responsibilities and tasks, e.g. when moving in convoy. Sadly, their knowledge is often badly under-used and their views given too little consideration within the team. In the case of several of the serious incidents that have affected the ICRC, the worst could probably have been avoided if their concerns regarding the security situation or the chosen route had been taken seriously, and if the information in their possession had been included in the analysis of the situation.

Drivers are a mine of information and their knowledge is of immense value to your security.

Is driving yourself really a good idea?

If you drive yourself, you're more vulnerable, especially if you're not from the area. Whenever possible, the ICRC therefore uses professional drivers who have been trained in accordance with the organization's requirements. In certain contexts, expatriate staff are not allowed to drive. Depending on the circumstances, you may not be allowed to drive ICRC vehicles, even when off duty. If that's the case, the ICRC will provide duty drivers who are available day and night.

9.6.2 A FEW SIMPLE BUT IMPORTANT PRECAUTIONS

Being a humanitarian does not entitle you to ignore the Highway Code!

If you're not a professional driver but are authorized to drive certain vehicles, it's still best not to do so unless absolutely essential. If you do need to drive, you must do so in a cautious and responsible manner, and obey the security regulations. If ICRC security regulations are more stringent than local law, the security regulations take precedence. And bear in mind that you enjoy no immunity if you break local traffic laws.

Eight rules that apply everywhere in the world

1. To be authorized to drive an ICRC vehicle, you must have taken the *Fleet Safety E-learning* successfully and have passed an ICRC driving test. The same applies each time you take up a new posting.
2. You mustn't drive after consuming alcohol, medication that could affect your ability to drive, or drugs. Apart from which, the consumption of drugs is prohibited at all times under the Code of Conduct (II.B.3).
3. You must wear your seatbelt.
4. Maximum permissible speed is 80 km/h for heavy vehicles, including trucks and 4x4 vehicles such as the Toyota Land Cruiser, and 100 km/h for light vehicles. The introduction of an ICRC speed limit of 80 km/h throughout the world has significantly reduced the number of road accidents involving ICRC staff.
5. You mustn't carry weapons.
6. You mustn't carry items unrelated to operations (including letters or packages from outside the ICRC) without specific permission.
7. Expatriate personnel are not authorized to drive motorbikes.
8. Personnel authorized to drive motorbikes must wear helmets.

In addition to obeying the above rules, you must familiarize yourself with the equipment on your vehicle before moving off. As well as being handy, knowing where to find the toolkit and how to change a wheel may one day save your life. Taking the precautions listed below will also increase your chances of reaching your destination without mishap.

Drive cautiously

- Adjust your speed to the type of vehicle and the circumstances (context, road conditions, visibility, traffic conditions, etc.).
- Maintain sufficient distance from the vehicle in front – the greatest danger is in front of you.
- Drive calmly and courteously, and respect other road users.
- Anticipate hazards.

Be alert

- Plan to take a 15-minute break every two hours.
- Avoid distracting the driver unnecessarily (talking, radio, etc.) – let them concentrate.
- Don't use your phone while driving.

Follow procedure

- Observe the rules concerning the identification of your vehicle.
- Communicate with the person responsible for monitoring your movements, in accordance with the agreed schedule.
- Don't drive at more than 60 km/h if you have magnetic stickers on the bodywork of your vehicle or you're flying the ICRC flag.

Reduce the risk of **theft, armed attack or ambush**:

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- Avoid carrying objects of value and don't leave any desirable items on view.
- Don't drive outside urban areas at night unless you absolutely have to.
- In heavily built-up areas, lock all the doors and windows of your vehicle to prevent intrusion.
- Keep a good distance from the vehicles of weapon bearers.
- Think carefully before offering to help someone who's broken down – it could be a trap.
- If a route seems too dangerous, don't just push on – turn back.

Park in a safe place

- Park your vehicle in what you consider to be the safest location, while also making sure the location you choose won't harm the image of the ICRC.
- Always park your vehicle so you're ready for a quick getaway.
- Make sure you don't block the exit of another vehicle, and that no other vehicle is blocking your exit.
- If you use a car-park for which you're supposed to pay, don't leave without doing so.
- When you get back to your vehicle, be suspicious if anyone tells you it's been damaged. They may have set up a simulated accident to scam you.

You triple the risk of an accident if you use your phone while driving. You multiply that risk by 23 if you type a message.

9.6.3 BEFORE DRIVING: THREE QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF

1. Am I in a fit state to drive?
2. Am I familiar with local driving conditions and am I sure that I can handle them?
3. Would it be better to use a professional driver?

9.7 MOVING IN CONVOY

The word “convoy” generally conjures up images of a long column of Land Cruisers and trucks conducting a large-scale aid operation. But a convoy can consist of just two vehicles. In high-risk areas or difficult terrain, it’s often best to move in pairs of vehicles. That way, if one vehicle breaks down or gets damaged, the other can rescue or tow it. Apart from which, a lone vehicle is a very tempting target for the unscrupulous. That doesn’t mean you always need to move in convoy – the decision will depend on the threat and on the purpose of your journey.

Whatever the size and nature of the convoy, driving with other vehicles demands constant discipline, careful application of the agreed rules by all crews and full commitment on the part of all those involved in the logistics aspects.

The convoy leader’s role

In principle, primary responsibility for a convoy lies with the convoy leader, who may also be the team leader. Their job starts long before departure and ends long after arrival. In particular, the convoy leader must be completely up to date on the most recent security developments in the area. They’re responsible for ensuring that all vehicles obey all rules. It’s usually their job to communicate with all entities encountered on the way. The convoy leader will travel in the lead vehicle and will be assisted by at least one other person, who will travel in the rearmost vehicle.

The recommendations below are aimed primarily at the team leader, convoy leader and drivers. They are additional to the usual precautions and rules, and will need to be adapted to the number and types of vehicles, any partners involved, the goods that are being transported and the route to be taken.⁴¹ For instance, the distance between vehicles will depend on road conditions; on a sand track, the dust that the vehicles churn up will require that you leave more space between them than usual.

The briefing session for everyone in the convoy – including the drivers – is essential to the convoy's success. The debriefing afterwards will help enhance the security of future operations.

Before leaving

- Inform all participants of the destination, the types of goods you're carrying and the rules they have to follow.
- Make sure you've received all clearances and security guarantees required, both for the convoy and for the goods it's carrying.
- Check that all vehicles are in good running order and correctly equipped.
- Assign a fixed position within the convoy to each vehicle.
- Identify each vehicle in accordance with the applicable rules – including any rented vehicles.
- Remind everyone of alternative routes, and of routes that must not be used. Also reiterate the action to be taken in case of breakdown or accident. Check that everyone knows the maximum permissible speed.
- Agree in advance where you're going to stop for breaks.
- In the case of a long convoy passing through dangerous or remote areas, ensure that the team includes a vehicle mechanic with the equipment and materials necessary to deal with breakdowns and accidents.

During the journey

- Place the slowest vehicle at the front of the convoy and the fastest at the rear – the slowest vehicle determines the speed of the convoy.
- Make sure you can always see the vehicle ahead of you and the vehicle behind.
- Don't overtake within the convoy.
- Drive as close together as circumstances permit, so that other vehicles can't insert themselves into the convoy.

⁴¹ In certain regions, the ICRC sometimes forms combined convoys with other organizations.

- Make sure the first and last vehicles communicate with each other in accordance with a pre-arranged system, and that they keep each other informed of the situation and of any problems.
- To ensure the efficient passage of information, communicate among yourselves in one single language if possible.
- Pass through check points in a group.

9.8 WHO CAN YOU CARRY IN YOUR VEHICLE?

In principle, ICRC vehicles are for ICRC staff only. For these purposes, “ICRC vehicle” means any vehicle used by the organization (car, bus, motorbike, boat, etc.), including rented vehicles. In practice, you may have to deviate from this rule on occasion. For instance, your operations may require you to carry an engineer from outside the ICRC or a representative of the ministry of health, evacuate a casualty to a health facility, etc.

But carrying non-ICRC passengers must be the exception. It could cause security and perception problems, especially in situations of conflict or violence. You may not know what links your passenger has with local weapon bearers, for instance. And if you carry combatants or other people directly involved in the conflict, you’ll give the impression of favouring one side over the other, which would be contrary to the **principles** for which the ICRC stands. You also become a potential target, and your vehicle may be intercepted and your passenger arrested. Carrying non-ICRC passengers may also cause insurance problems.

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Acknowledgement of risk

ICRC security regulations generally specify who may use and travel in our vehicles. If operational needs justify the carrying of adults who are not ICRC employees, it’s usual practice to have them sign an *Acknowledgement of Risk Form*, which informs them of the risks to which they could be exposed. Where possible, you should also report their presence to those persons who should be informed.

9.8.1 REQUESTS FOR TRANSPORT



You'll probably receive regular requests for a lift. Before deciding whether to say yes or no, always ask yourself the following six questions:

1. Does this person have any other transport options?
2. Are they armed?
3. Will they be exposed to additional risks by travelling in my vehicle?
4. Could their presence compromise the security of the team?
5. Could their presence compromise the principles or the reputation of the ICRC?
6. Would a refusal be compatible with my position as a humanitarian?

Ask around within the ICRC to find out whether any precedents still pose a problem, and whether there are any particular rules covering this issue.

9.8.2 REFUSING TO TRANSPORT A MEMBER OF THE PUBLIC

If you remain firm and explain the reasons for your decision skilfully and politely, you should be able to resolve the situation without too many problems. Obviously, if the person already has some idea of the ICRC's principles and working methods, this will be much easier. In some situations, giving them printed matter about the ICRC and our work can help to defuse the situation. Conversely, you can get yourself into all sorts of trouble with a poorly-argued refusal or one that could be interpreted as arrogant. You can also harm the reputation of the ICRC. Finally, you should definitely avoid explanations that could offend the other person, such as: "We're not a bus service." or "We're

If you decide that it's not possible to transport the person, take the time to explain why, with concrete examples.

not an ambulance.” And in a context where the concept of insurance doesn’t even exist, don’t tell someone “You’re not insured in case of accident.”

9.8.3 REFUSING TO TRANSPORT SOMEONE CARRYING A WEAPON

It’s highly likely that combatants will ask you to transport them. One could simply say that you should never transport combatants except at gunpoint or under duress, but that would be a little too easy. In practice, rejecting this kind of request requires tact, patience and perseverance, especially in areas where there are few transport options.

There is definitely a risk to transporting a soldier or a member of an armed group, especially if they’re carrying a weapon. First, you could endanger your neutrality and impartiality by being seen as supporting one side or the other. Second, you could create a direct security risk; while you’re

The rule is simple: no weapons in ICRC vehicles, ever.

carrying combatants in your vehicle you may run into their enemies and be targeted by them. Third, your passenger’s enemies could intercept your vehicle and execute them in front of you. Fourth, you could be accused of carrying weapons for one of the parties to

the conflict. In contexts where rumours are more readily believed than facts, and in our increasingly connected world, such an accusation could take on unimaginable dimensions and last for years afterwards, compromising your operations in the region.

9.8.4 TRANSPORTING A CASUALTY

We don’t recommend transporting sick or injured people in vehicles not equipped for the purpose and without health personnel on board. The journey could make their condition worse, and you’ve neither the training nor the equipment to care for them. However, the ICRC’s mandate means that sometimes you will have to transport casualties. Furthermore, you are first and foremost a humanitarian. Refusing to transport a person in urgent need of treatment would be morally indefensible in an area where there’s no ambulance service or where transport is scarce and/or dangerous. If someone were to ask “Should I drive a woman who’s about to give birth to the nearest health facility?” your humanitarian instinct would be to say “Yes”, and quite rightly so. Not to do so could even constitute failure to assist a person in danger.

However, before deciding whether to evacuate a casualty or person in urgent need of medical treatment to a health facility:

- Ask those present whether there are any other transport options, and try to establish whether the person is in a fit state to be transported.
- If admission to a health facility requires the patient to present specific documents (a medical certificate, for instance), check that the person has them.
- Contact an ICRC health specialist for advice, especially regarding transport conditions and the nearest health facilities.
- Try to determine whether the route you intend to take poses particular dangers, especially if the patient is a wounded combatant. If you don't, you could endanger your life and that of the patient.

Before coming to a decision, weigh the information available to you carefully but rapidly, taking account of the urgency of the situation, any other options available and the potential risks for all concerned.

If you do decide to evacuate the person to a health facility:

- Try to obtain their oral consent before doing so (if they're conscious).
- Explain the limits of the ICRC's role to the person (or their family/friends/comrades). Make sure it's clear who will pay for treatment, to avoid any misunderstandings or resentment towards the ICRC at some point in the future. This point should also be discussed with some responsible person at the health facility to which you take the patient.
- Never carry a wounded combatant's weapon. If necessary, ask one of their comrades to take it off them. Never do so yourself.
- Decide whether it would be appropriate to transport one or more accompanying persons, while avoiding transporting combatants. If circumstances permit, get any passengers to sign Acknowledgement of Risk forms.
- Report the presence of additional passengers to anyone who needs to know.
- Drive at an appropriate speed. Driving fast over bumps and potholes could cause your passenger more pain, worsen any bleeding and displace injured limbs.
- Get the vehicle disinfected afterwards if necessary.

9.9 PASSING THROUGH CHECKPOINTS



Checkpoints and roadblocks are points along a route at which persons – generally armed – monitor and control the movements of persons and goods. During a conflict, they allow the belligerents to prevent enemy or unauthorized personnel from entering their area, control the movement of goods and possibly apply tolls. They may be operated by security services or sub-contracted to private security companies.

There are many kinds of checkpoint. Some are long-term, others temporary. A checkpoint may be a fairly sophisticated inspection and monitoring installation with a permanent structure, chicanes and barriers. But it may also be an improvised affair consisting of a piece of wood with nails sticking out of it and pieces of string running off to the sides of the road, designed to puncture the tyres of anyone who fails to stop. Or simply a branch laid across the road. Mines may be laid at the side of the road, to prevent vehicles from driving round the barriers. In other words, you may encounter a wide range of situations.

Whatever its nature, a checkpoint is always a sensitive location, at which things can quickly go wrong.

Checkpoints don't always have a military role. There are also police roadblocks, customs posts, administrative inspection posts, rain barriers,⁴² etc. So not all are operated by armed personnel. Unscrupulous armed individuals also set up unofficial "tollgates" in an attempt to extort money from passing civilians. Checkpoints may also be used to **stop a convoy so it can be attacked and robbed**, or to facilitate an ambush. This chapter will not describe how to react to an ambush, although following some of its recommendations will reduce the risk of your running into one.

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9.9.1 MILITARY CHECKPOINTS

The difficulties you encounter at a checkpoint will depend in part on the persons operating it, their past experience with the ICRC (positive or negative), how often you pass through the area and your ability to **communicate**. If you have to pass through a series of checkpoints, this may make your task more difficult. The same applies if you have to cross front lines. The "no-mans land" between the last checkpoint of one side and the first checkpoint of the other may be especially dangerous; as neither side controls this area it's a target for both. You'll need to take extra precautions in this type of zone, such as increasing the spacing between the vehicles of your convoy.

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The emotional state of the people guarding the checkpoint when you pass through also plays a major role. Fatigue, stress, nervousness and fear for their own security and that of their comrades will all influence their reactions, as will how long they've already been on duty and the time of day. In isolated, quiet regions on the other hand, they're likely to be utterly bored, with only alcohol and drugs to keep them amused; a humanitarian vehicle may offer a welcome distraction and an opportunity for a chat.

Before starting your journey

Before venturing into a conflict zone or taking an unfamiliar route, you must find out whether there are any checkpoints and if so, who operates them and what uniforms or insignia could identify them. Use every reliable source available, and consult colleagues who know the area.

Familiarize yourself with the procedures in force.

⁴² On beaten-earth roads, rain barriers are used to close roads during the rainy season to give them time to dry, so that vehicles don't damage them.

- Find out about any problems your colleagues may have encountered at checkpoints in the past.
- Make sure that the units responsible for checkpoints along your route know you're coming.
- Give details of your route to the colleagues responsible for monitoring your movements, and find out whether you need to contact them before and after each checkpoint.
- Nominate a spokesperson in advance.
- Always have your identity documents and authorizations to hand, along with a supply of ICRC communications material.
- Find out whether the checkpoints close at certain times, so you're not caught out by a curfew.

Passing through a checkpoint

Getting through a checkpoint is never a mere formality, even if you have all the necessary authorizations and the authority responsible for the checkpoint knows the ICRC. Always consider the possibility that the persons on the checkpoint might not know they're supposed to let you through. There's also the risk that instructions haven't been passed down their chain of command correctly, or that personnel have changed, or that other unexpected factors may delay you. It's always wise to assume that anyone operating a checkpoint is armed.

Being arrogant and assuming that you've a "right" to pass the checkpoint is the best way of getting yourself into trouble. Conversely, being respectful and polite, explaining calmly why you're there and being patient will increase the chances of things going smoothly.

- As you approach a checkpoint, turn off the radio and any music, and open the windows slightly so you can hear instructions and background noises.
- Turn off your communications equipment – it could arouse suspicion.
- Slow down without stopping completely, and quickly assess the situation. Listen carefully to anything your colleagues are saying.
- If there are other vehicles between you and the checkpoint, keep your distance.
- Don't leave any attractive items on the dashboard, such as telephones or designer sunglasses.
- Take off your sunglasses and cap, so your face and eyes are clearly visible.

- Carefully follow instructions and gestures indicating the location at which you should stop.
- After stopping, leave the engine running and stay in your vehicle unless you're told to do otherwise. If you're part of a convoy, maintain a certain distance between your vehicle and the next.
- Be alert, but without being tense. Remain humble. Open the window and greet the checkpoint personnel politely, in the local language if possible.
- Be respectful and cooperative.
- Avoid any sudden movement. Keep your hands clearly visible.
- If asked (and only if), show your identity documents and the relevant authorizations. If necessary, say where you're going.
- If circumstances permit, briefly outline what the ICRC is doing in the area. If appropriate, hand out information leaflets that might interest the personnel.
- Move off immediately once you receive permission to do so. Don't hang around, but don't give the impression of being in a hurry either.

Always stop at checkpoints, even if you have all the necessary authorizations.

At night

You're much more vulnerable at night. Don't pass through a checkpoint at night unless you absolutely have to. If you do:

- Check whether you need to fly the ICRC flag on your vehicle and illuminate it, to make it easier to identify you.
- As you approach the checkpoint, switch off your headlights and leave just your sidelights on, so as not to dazzle the personnel.
- Turn on the inside lights so that all the occupants of the vehicle are clearly visible. That way, you're less likely to be seen as a threat.

If you run into problems

Despite all the authorizations you collected beforehand and despite your world-class negotiating skills, the personnel on the checkpoint may refuse to let you through. You may be tempted to offer a little gift or even a **bribe**. Don't. Not only is that kind of thing contrary to ICRC policy, it also creates a dangerous precedent that could harm the ICRC's reputation and could make it more difficult for the vehicles of the ICRC and other humanitarian organizations to get through checkpoints in future. If the personnel on the checkpoint refuse to let you pass:

- ask to speak to their boss

- consider the possibility of contacting someone further up their chain of command with a view to getting them to exert pressure
- ask your own management for support if appropriate
- if they still won't let you through, protest – but without becoming aggressive – and turn back
- if you're threatened with a weapon, do exactly as you're told, without hesitation
- inform your base as soon as possible so they can give you advice, inform vehicles that might take the same route in time and take whatever measures may be necessary.

If checkpoint personnel ask to search your vehicle

It could be that the personnel on a checkpoint will demand to search your vehicle, even though your movements and the goods you're transporting have been duly notified to their chain of command. Is it a simple misunderstanding? Are they trying to intimidate you? Or do they genuinely want to check that what you're carrying doesn't present a risk to their security? Whatever the reason for the request, you should try and dissuade the personnel from carrying out a search, unless you feel you're under direct threat. One problem with a search is that it may delay you considerably, putting you under time pressure and perhaps forcing you to continue your journey after nightfall, with all the additional dangers that represents.

What the law says

IHL does authorize the parties to a conflict to search your vehicle to verify that you're only carrying humanitarian goods. At the same time, however, they are required to facilitate the passage of humanitarian aid and mustn't obstruct your movements arbitrarily. In addition, their right of search may sometimes be limited by the ICRC's privileges and immunities. In certain contexts, the ICRC enjoys inviolability of its property – including its vehicles. If that's the case, government entities – including the armed and security forces of the state in question – are not legally permitted to search you. However, that doesn't apply to armed groups, unless the ICRC has negotiated similar protection with them.

What should you do?

If someone wants to search your vehicles, you're unlikely to dissuade them by quoting IHL, especially if they don't have a particularly high level of education. You may have more success if you put forward simple, concrete arguments, explaining who you are, what you're doing in the area, what you're carrying and why it's important that you not be delayed.

- Look at whether their reasons for wanting to search your vehicles appear justified.
- Calmly point out that the work you're doing is purely humanitarian.
- If you think it may help, tell them who you've been talking to in their chain of command.
- If you're not getting anywhere, consider contacting someone further up their chain of command with a view to getting them to exert pressure.
- Ask your own management for support if appropriate.
- If you can't convince them, cooperate and let them search your vehicles.
- Report the incident to your management as soon as possible.

If you just can't dissuade someone from searching your vehicles then cooperate, but report the matter to your management as soon as possible.

9.9.2 ROADBLOCKS SET UP FOR CRIMINAL PURPOSES

Be suspicious of improvised or new roadblocks, especially in isolated or heavily wooded areas, on difficult roads where you have to drive slowly such as steep mountain roads, or in urban areas known for their high crime rates. If a checkpoint is new, or is not normally there, then by definition you won't have any security guarantees for it. It may be a criminal operation.

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Your knowledge of the context should enable you to tell whether it's an official checkpoint or a roadblock set up by armed criminals. If it's the latter, then at best you risk losing your personal possessions and the goods you're transporting. At worst, you risk being taken hostage, wounded or killed. If you're unsure:

- Try to stop well away from the roadblock. Wait for a while, and observe the situation carefully from a distance.
- Quickly ask your colleagues what they think.

- If the road is busy, let other vehicles pass you, and watch to see whether they get through OK. Another option is to wait for a vehicle coming the other way, and ask its occupants whether it's safe to proceed.
- If you think it's safer to turn back, trust your intuition. If you can do so safely, back up until you reach a point where you can turn round and then do so. Don't leave the road if you think there's the slightest risk that the area to the side could be mined.
- If everything seems to indicate that the roadblock is not a criminal enterprise, continue your journey and follow the recommendations regarding checkpoints above.

Look out for the slightest changes in your operational context, such as unusual checkpoints. Trust your instincts and those of your colleagues.

9.10 PROTECT CONFIDENTIAL INFORMATION

During a routine inspection at the airport, a prison visit or a meeting with the authorities, someone may attempt to obtain confidential information from you or confiscate your laptop, phone or documents. If anyone outside the ICRC gets their hands on our confidential information, that could harm the image of the organization, negatively affect your ability to carry out your operations and, above all, endanger you and anyone with whom you've been in contact. It's therefore essential that the authorities respect the fact that the information in your possession is protected against disclosure in any form. Remember, the ICRC enjoys the **privilege of non-disclosure** of confidential information, plus protections that mean no-one from outside the ICRC has the legal right to access such information without the permission of the organization.

Disclosing confidential information could have serious consequences for your operations and your security.

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What should you do?

To reduce the risk of your ending up in this kind of situation, only carry the documents you absolutely need for the job you're doing. If possible, leave your laptop in the office. If anyone tries to obtain confidential information or asks you to hand over your documents, communications devices, computer or other

data medium, do your best to refuse their request, unless you feel you're under threat.

- Explain calmly who you are and what you're doing in the area.
- Explain why **confidentiality** is essential if you're to work safely in the area, and give concrete examples. Also explain that:
 - people will only trust you if they know you'll keep information confidential
 - the information in your possession is protected under international law (and under the law of the country you're in, if that's the case)
 - under your contract of employment, you're required to keep all information confidential.
- If it seems appropriate, ask the person to submit a formal request to the ICRC.
- If you're not getting anywhere, consider contacting someone further up their chain of command with a view to getting them to exert pressure.
- Ask your own management for support if appropriate.
- If you can't convince them, cooperate and hand over what they demand.
- Report the incident to your management as soon as possible.

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Immediately report to the head of your office any request for confidential information and any confiscation – or attempted confiscation – of a document, communication device, computer or other data medium.

9.11 SPENDING THE NIGHT IN THE FIELD

The nature of your operations will sometimes mean you have to stay in the field overnight. Depending on circumstances, you might be sleeping in a hotel, a guest house, a public building such as a school, the buildings of another humanitarian organization or a religious community, or simply camping out.

9.11.1 CHOOSING YOUR ACCOMMODATION

Even when the choice of places to stay is limited, you must choose where to spend the night on the basis of security considerations, and not on the basis of price or level of comfort. The first step is to find out whether the ICRC has drawn up a list of recommended places to stay. If not, take the following factors into account:

- **Consult your colleagues:** Discussing the options will give you a clearer picture of their advantages and disadvantages, and of the steps you need to take for everyone to feel safe.
- **The neighbourhood:** This can be a source of danger or of protection. Avoid areas known for their high crime rates and buildings located close to a potential target, such as an army camp or a police station. The natural environment could also pose a threat. Conversely, the local community may well provide effective protection, especially in the countryside.
- **Perception:** A building connected with a particular group or individual may provide additional safety ... or expose you to additional danger. For instance, spending the night with a traditional leader highly respected by the local community may enhance your acceptability to that community. On the other hand, if there's serious tension between religions in the area, staying with a religious community could be highly dangerous, even though that wouldn't be the case under normal circumstances. Similarly, it's generally not a good idea to stay overnight in a military camp, but sometimes that may be the only option.
- **Passive protection:** Unless you're going to be sleeping in a tent, the place you choose should provide sufficient protection against intrusion. It should be possible to lock all windows and doors. Your accommodation should also give as much protection as possible against any natural hazards. In an earthquake zone, for instance, it should give sufficient protection against earthquakes, or should at least not be a source of additional danger.
- **Escape routes:** It must be possible to evacuate your accommodation quickly and safely in an emergency.

9.11.2 ENHANCING YOUR SAFETY

Once you've decided where you're going to stay, decide who you need to inform of your presence, either for security reasons or as a matter of courtesy. For instance, it might be a good idea to inform the local police chief or army commander, and to involve the local community. Think about ways of making your temporary abode safer. It will probably offer much less in the way of physical security and safety than an ICRC building (no guards, less protection against intruders, lower fire safety standards, etc.).

Informing weapon bearers and the authorities of your presence, and getting the local community involved, can help keep you safe and ensure that you're up to date on the latest developments.

Consider taking some or all of the following precautions, depending on the situation:

- Identify the place where you're staying by displaying the ICRC logo – unless that would put you at more risk!
- Obtain the support of the community. They'll probably take the presence of visitors very seriously, and will discreetly do all they can to ensure nothing happens to you.
- Try to establish contact with your neighbours.
- Find out in what ways your accommodation is vulnerable.
- Identify emergency exits and ways of escaping from the area.
- Secure the windows and doors of the room in which you're sleeping. Use locks if fitted, otherwise use padlocks. Close and lock the shutters, wedge a chair under the door handle, etc.
- Keep curtains or blinds closed during the hours of darkness.
- Select members of the community to act as lookouts (in exchange for a suitable fee).
- Put your cash and documents somewhere safe, and don't leave any desirable items on view.
- Take all necessary precautions when using electricity or gas.
- Don't open your door unless you know who's on the other side.
- If you're staying in a hotel, avoid taking a room that's easily accessible from the outside.
- Don't set up camp without asking permission from the local authorities and the community.
- Always park your vehicle in the location you consider safest, facing so you can get away fast if you need to.

9.11.3 CHOOSING THE BEST PLACE TO SPEND THE NIGHT: SIX QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF

1. Am I up to date on the most recent events that could affect security in the area?
2. Could staying at the place I've chosen harm the reputation of the ICRC or put me in danger?
3. Are the neighbours and the neighbourhood a source of protection, or a threat?
4. How would we get out of the building – and the area – if there were a problem?
5. Would it be easy for someone to steal things from the place where I'm intending to stay?
6. Are my colleagues happy with the chosen accommodation?

9.12 MEETING JOURNALISTS

Journalists may ask you for interviews. As long as you take a few basic precautions, developing contacts with media representatives can have many advantages. They can be a means of attracting public attention to a humanitarian issue or one of your activities, or of promoting the Fundamental Principles of the Movement. Journalists can be excellent sources of information, be it first- or second-hand.

Good media coverage can boost your public image and so make you better accepted in the region (although media coverage can also have the opposite effect). As a result, it can be worth maintaining contact with journalists. However, the security of the people you're trying to help – and your own – must always take precedence over the needs or curiosity of the media.

Most journalists – and especially those who work for major media outlets – operate in accordance with solid ethical principles, respect the work of humanitarians and understand the security issues they face. Most of them will therefore accept any limitations you impose.

If a journalist asks you for an interview

- Make a note of their contact information or ask for their business card.
- Refer them to your communication coordinator.

Should you give an interview yourself? In some cases, it may be better for you to give an interview yourself rather than call on a communication specialist. If

you work in the medical field, for instance, it would be logical for you to describe the health situation you're dealing with, rather than having someone else do so. In highly sensitive contexts, and after a security incident, only the ICRC communication coordinator will be authorized to communicate with journalists.

Before agreeing to give an interview, inform your boss and consult your media liaison officer. As well as giving you basic advice on how to be interviewed and helping you prepare, they can brief you on the editorial position of the media outlet concerned, the history of their relations with the ICRC and any prior experience with the journalist who's asking for the interview.

- Clarify the nature and objectives of the interview, and whether it will be recorded or broadcast live.⁴³
- Ask the journalist to send you the questions in advance, and take the time to prepare your replies if possible.
- Be aware that one or two simple anecdotes say much more than long explanations.
- Make sure that what you say isn't being recorded or filmed without your knowledge. Depending on the circumstances, you may be able to specify in advance whether certain information can be published or not. However, you should always assume that the journalist will treat anything you say as part of the interview, and will therefore publish all your comments.
- Don't let yourself be intimidated. Explain in simple terms what you're doing, and describe the needs that people have. Try to relay their voices rather than presenting your own.
- Avoid talking about the political situation or the conflict, and don't answer any question you don't want to.
- Make sure you put ethical considerations and confidentiality before the exchange of information, and that the interview will not harm the people to whom the interview relates. If relevant, try to get their consent, or that of their representatives.
- Avoid saying anything that could perpetuate stereotypes.
- Ask to take a break if necessary.
- Find out when the article or interview will be published. Give the journalist the contact details of your communication coordinator in case they have any further questions.

Only give an interview if you feel comfortable doing so.

⁴³ Most interviews are relatively short, especially if they're for radio or TV. Interviews for print media may be more in-depth.

9.13 ACCESS TO PEOPLE IN NEED: TEN QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF

1. What can I do to reduce risk during my field trips?
2. Do I know what areas and routes to avoid?
3. Have I obtained all the authorizations I need?
4. Am I using my field trips to find out about the security situation?
5. Am I making sufficient use of my eyes and ears?
6. Do I listen to my instincts when they tell me not to continue my journey?
7. Do I know exactly how to behave at a checkpoint?
8. What should I do if someone confiscates my working documents?
9. How could transporting people from outside the ICRC be problematic?
10. How could staying overnight with certain entities or individuals harm the image of the ICRC?

Further reading

Centre of Competence on Humanitarian Negotiation, *Field Manual on Front-Line Humanitarian Negotiation*, V 2.0, 2019: <https://frontline-negotiations.org/home/resources/field-manual>.

10. STAYING SAFE WHILE DOING YOUR JOB

You became a humanitarian because you wanted to help people. Unfortunately, you'll sometimes find that your work creates tensions with the very people you're trying to help. The simple fact that you're operating in one area and not in another can cause controversy, even if you're being totally impartial and applying completely objective criteria such as the degree of vulnerability of people affected by the violence. If you can't enter an area – be it for logistical, security or political reasons – things will inevitably become more complicated, because some communities won't be able to benefit from your programmes. Poorly-designed programmes or a lack of transparency, relevance or results can all create tension and cause you problems.

In this chapter, you'll learn how to ensure that your activities don't become sources of risk. It will set out the precautions to take when running economic security programmes, working in a health facility or visiting prisons. Most of these precautions are also applicable to other fields of activity. This chapter also covers the basics of handling dead bodies and gives a few tips on dealing with aggressive individuals.

The security of beneficiaries will only be touched on briefly.

10.1 GENERAL APPROACH

10.1.1 INCORPORATING THE RISK ASSESSMENT INTO YOUR WORK

To plan your activities, carry them out and evaluate their relevance, you must understand your operational context – and especially the threats it presents.

Humanitarian activities and risk assessments are inextricably linked.

You therefore need to take account of your office's **risk assessment** during all those phases. The risks to which you're exposed and the measures you take to mitigate them will vary according to the area where you're working and the kind of work you're doing.



10.1.2 A SENSITIVE APPROACH TO THE CONFLICT

It is in the nature of your work that you'll never please everybody. People will inevitably think you're supporting one side and ignoring the other – or even doing them harm. This is especially true in a conflict, where helping a particular group can easily be seen by their adversaries as giving direct support to the enemy. However, you must make sure your operations don't exacerbate the problem and aggravate underlying tensions between communities.

- Take account of the stakeholder and context analyses. Whenever you obtain new information, add it to them.
- Discuss your intended activities with your colleagues, including those working in other fields.
- Stay up to date on current and future activities and projects in your region, including those of other humanitarian organizations.
- Take account of the interaction – positive and negative – between your planned activity and your operational context. Modify your activities accordingly if necessary.
- Where possible, involve the authorities and the community in your activities. Mobilize individuals and entities of influence in your region (see below).

If there's any danger of your activity aggravating existing tensions or posing a security risk to you or the population, consider other options.

Do no harm

The basic principle of any operational approach is “do no harm”.⁴⁴ This is a professional and moral obligation for every humanitarian. It means that your actions mustn’t have negative effects on the individuals and communities you’re trying to help, nor on the rest of the population – including their natural environment. So the rule is to anticipate and avoid any action that could have negative effects on the situation and exacerbate the conflict or violence, and to support whatever could potentially have a positive effect.

10.1.3 A MULTIDISCIPLINARY APPROACH

One common mistake is to see one’s own work in isolation, as something independent of what others are doing. For instance, a nurse is worried that combatants might attack their health centre, but doesn’t think to speak to their colleague whose main job is to remind those combatants that they mustn’t attack health facilities.⁴⁵ In other words, what your colleagues are doing in their respective fields can have an effect on yours. Their activities can also affect your security and that of the people you’re there to help.

Expand your horizons beyond your own activities and your own organization.

You’ll also need to take account of complementarity between your activities and those of other humanitarian agencies, such as government agencies, other components of the Movement, UN agencies and NGOs. If you don’t coordinate with them, and ignore the work they’re doing, then you risk depriving yourself of access to their knowledge. Furthermore, you may remain unaware that some communities are being well supported while others are getting no help at all, a situation that could put you in danger.

⁴⁴ M.B. Anderson, *Do No Harm: How Aid Can Support Peace – Or War*, Lynne Rienner Publishers, Boulder, 1999.

⁴⁵ See, in particular, Article 3 common to the four Geneva Conventions; GC I, Art. 12; Additional Protocol I, Art. 10; Additional Protocol II, Art. 7; J.-M. Henckaerts and L. Doswald-Beck, *Customary International Humanitarian Law, Volume I: Rules*, ICRC, Geneva: <https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/customary-ihl/eng/docs/home>, Rule 110.

What do we mean by an “integrated” approach?

The ICRC’s approach is described as being “multidisciplinary and integrated”. This means that your activities and those of your colleagues in other fields are interdependent and complementary. Your activities and theirs form a cohesive whole and reinforce each other, maximizing the benefit to people in need. Whether it’s restoring family links, visiting prisoners, promoting compliance with IHL, health care, water and sanitation or economic security projects aimed at increasing people’s resilience, each activity is closely linked with the others and contributes to achievement of the overall aim, which is to protect the lives, health and dignity of people affected by conflict and violence.

10.1.4 THE VALUE OF THE COMMUNITY

You’ll be working in unstable environments, which means you’ll constantly be thinking about security. But it’s easy to forget that your environment isn’t just a source of risk – it can also protect you. So don’t see the community as a threat. Not everyone will support you. Some people may even try to harm you. But in most cases, their interests and yours will overlap. They can influence your work, and are prepared to help.

The people affected by a situation are the “subject-matter experts” on it. Who knows better than them what they’re going through, what their priorities, needs and preferences are? Who’s better qualified to seek solutions to their problems? They’ll also know things about the context that an outsider would miss – especially the sources of tensions within or between communities. They are also best placed to help you identify risks of aid being diverted away from those who are supposed to receive it. Indeed, experience has shown that **corruption** decreases as the involvement of communities in their programmes aimed.

Your environment is more a source of protection than of danger. Wherever possible, involve communities in planning, implementing and evaluating the activities that are intended to benefit them.

Involving the community – and assigning specific responsibilities to the community where possible – will therefore enhance the quality of your work and reduce the risks you might face.



10.1.5 GET THE KEY INDIVIDUALS AND ENTITIES INVOLVED

Before starting any activity, you must create a favourable framework for it. This includes analysing, preparing and raising the awareness of **individuals and entities who exert influence** in the area where you intend to operate. Building a favourable environment is a collective activity, requiring the participation of other departments. The first thing is to fully inform these individuals and entities of influence as to what you intend to do, and listen to any comments and expectations they may have. This will ensure that even if they aren't going to support you, they'll at least tolerate your activities, and won't do anything to harm you or the people you're supposed to be helping. You may also need to ask certain entities – especially military authorities, the police or the commanders of an armed group – to ensure that those under their responsibility won't try and interfere with your operations.

Before launching an activity, create a favourable framework for it.

10.1.6 THE DANGERS OF THE GREY ECONOMY

Certain individuals and groups make a lot of money out of illicit activities. These include the extraction and sale of natural resources (oil, gas, minerals, etc.), trafficking and smuggling (drugs, timber, ivory, etc.), extortion and illegal taxes (on items including agricultural produce and water), transporting migrants, kidnapping and misappropriation of humanitarian aid. There is nothing that somebody, somewhere, hasn't found a way of selling or taxing. The profits can be huge, especially in the case of transnational organized crime. This illegal market is often in the hands of powerful criminal gangs, who may have close links with the political elite.

Anticipate situations in which your activities could be contrary to the interests of people or entities of influence, and modify them accordingly.

If any of your activities get in the way of this grey economy without your realizing it, you could be in serious danger. The reaction of these people if their interests are threatened is likely to be merciless, and the fact that you're a humanitarian will make no difference whatsoever. The same applies if a powerful local businessman or someone involved in the black market sees your activities as a threat to their income.⁴⁶ For all these reasons, you must carefully avoid getting involved in the local grey economy and take all possible precautions to ensure that your activities don't harm the interests of influential individuals or entities. And don't enquire about where any armed groups get their money – that could also be extremely dangerous.

10.1.7 DOING YOUR JOB: SIX ERRORS TO AVOID

1. Believing that because you're a humanitarian, you're somehow outside the situation.
2. Thinking that your work is respectable, and hence respected by all.
3. Assuming that the more you help the population, the safer you are.
4. Failing to analyse the environment and to take account of the risk assessment for the area.
5. Not including the population and the authorities in the planning of your activities, even though you could have.
6. Making promises you won't be able to keep.

⁴⁶ In many cases, the effects of an activity on the local economy will only become apparent at a late stage, when you're finalizing the implementation details.

Further reading

ICRC, *Enhancing Protection for Civilians in Armed Conflict and Other Situations of Violence*, ICRC, Geneva, 2017: <https://shop.icrc.org/enhancing-protection-for-civilians-in-armed-conflict-and-other-situations-of-violence-pdf-en>.

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ICRC, *ICRC Rules on Personal Data Protection*, ICRC, Geneva, 2017: <https://shop.icrc.org/icrc-rules-on-personal-data-protection-pdf-en>.

C. Kuner and M. Marelli, (eds), *Handbook on Data Protection in Humanitarian Action*, ICRC, Geneva, 2017: <https://www.icrc.org/en/data-protection-humanitarian-action-handbook>.

10.2 CARRYING OUT ASSISTANCE ACTIVITIES

Whether you're conducting community-level activities such as supporting a health centre or repairing water pipes, or running an assistance project for a specific population, such as agriculture support or livestock vaccination, some groups or individuals will feel neglected, excluded or aggrieved. And they may be bitterly disappointed that their situation hasn't improved, despite all the humanitarians in their region. There's also a risk that combatants will benefit directly from your assistance, despite your best efforts to make sure that aid goes only to civilians. That will create perception problems.

So what can you do to limit the risks inherent in assistance activities? The following pages will underline the importance of the process, starting with the selection of beneficiaries and the verification of beneficiary lists, and will outline the basic precautions to take when distributing relief supplies. We will then look at the various cash-transfer systems available, and how to reduce the risks associated with them.



10.2.1 SELECTING BENEFICIARIES AND VERIFYING BENEFICIARY LISTS

The following recommendations regarding the beneficiary-selection process were drawn up primarily with economic security activities in mind, but they are applicable to other assistance programmes.

Who is in need?

Any assistance programme involves answering the question “Who is affected by this conflict (or violence)?”. Unfortunately, there are no clear criteria for distinguishing between those who are affected and those who are not. Putting people in one or other of these categories will always be somewhat artificial and hence will always be a challenge. There will always be people who just don’t understand why you haven’t done anything for them – or at least, not enough. “These refugees are getting drinking water and free health care. We’ve been living here for decades. What about us?” “How come our neighbours are getting help with their farm, when our soil is the least fertile?” “Why do all these humanitarians drive through our village without even stopping and asking about our problems?”

Put yourself in the place of each group, and take the time to listen to their demands.

Such questions are totally reasonable. And they deserve simple, clear answers. If you decide to ignore them, your security could be affected. Some of the serious security incidents that ICRC personnel have experienced could perhaps have been avoided if a community's incomprehension or demands had been listened to properly and taken into account.

Selecting beneficiaries

You can't base your selection criteria exclusively on people's needs. The criteria must reflect the bigger picture and must take into account an analysis of your environment, including the activities of other ICRC departments and other humanitarian agencies. Distributing aid to some people and not to others could cause problems between communities. The effect will be even worse if other humanitarian organizations apply criteria similar to yours, deepening the resentment of the population that's not receiving support.

A transparent selection process that involves the beneficiaries as much as possible will allow you to manage the community's expectations and avoid many misunderstandings.

- Plan your activity in such a way that it will be complementary to those of your colleagues.
- Draw on the know-how of more experienced colleagues.
- Ask for support from your colleagues, particularly those specialized in protection, logistics and communication.
- Avoid imposing your own selection criteria, because the local population may not share your view as to who's vulnerable and who isn't. Align your criteria with those of the population, involving them in the process as much as possible and making sure you include women. If you're in "remote management" mode and it's temporarily impossible to access the population, you could conduct this dialogue through intermediaries such as partners, key informants or local organizations.
- Choose your registration criteria such that it's easy to see whether someone meets them or not. That will make registration quicker and easier – which will reduce your exposure to certain risks – and will make it easier to deal with any complaints.
- Once your criteria have been defined, do all you can to explain them to community representatives, especially the representatives of communities who won't be benefiting from your assistance.

People excluded by your selection criteria may not be aware that the ICRC is possibly providing their community with other basic services, such as water or health care. Bringing such services to people's attention can often calm things down. If, despite your best efforts, you realize that your selection criteria are provoking serious resentment in some quarters, talk to your management about modifying the criteria or finding other ways of helping communities who are being left out.

Beneficiary registration

The registration phase separates the beneficiaries from the non-beneficiaries. This is going to be a delicate operation, which must be executed with care. If it's possible to access the population easily, and you have sufficient resources, the best options are to register people directly or have a partner do so. If

Rather than selecting beneficiaries purely on the basis of technical criteria, get the population involved in defining selection criteria as much as you can.

that's not possible – perhaps because of security problems – a third party could carry out the task, such as a local committee consisting of tribal leaders, religious officials, representatives of minorities, etc.

A poorly-drafted list – such as one that includes lots of people who shouldn't be on it – can cause major problems later and lead to dissatisfaction, objections and complaints. So the list needs to be as accurate as possible. It may be tempting to take certain measures in the interests of security or to save time – like outsourcing the registration process to a local partner without setting up an effective verification mechanism. But that kind of shortcut may well prove counter-productive. If there are too many mistakes in the list, the community may be less inclined to accept the registration process. Having said which, there's a limit to what you can do. No list will ever be perfect, especially if it's been compiled by a third party. This means you should expect problems on account of deficiencies in the list and plan your activities accordingly.

- Make sure that important stakeholders such as local officials and weapon bearers have been informed of the process and have given their consent.
- Communicate your registration criteria clearly to the authorities and to the communities concerned, including those who may feel left out.

Aim for a rapid, careful and efficient process, and set up a system for handling objections and complaints.

- Try to ensure that your registration process is quick and efficient. Put 30 people on the job for one day, rather than taking 10 days because you've only allocated three people. This will reduce the number of trips you have to make (trips that could rub salt into the wounds of communities already angry at being left out) and will give people less time to try and influence the process in their favour.
- Set up a system for handling objections and complaints, involving the authorities, so that people can express any grievances. This will enable you to resolve any misunderstandings regarding the eligibility criteria.
- Avoid long delays between registration and distribution.

List verification

Have you forgotten anyone in need? Is anyone on the list despite not meeting the criteria? The verification process not only enables you to spot mistakes and identify any problems that need resolving to prevent misunderstandings, but is also a chance to share with the community the weighty responsibility of deciding who will receive aid and who will not.

If the list was drawn up by you or one of your partners: Make sure you submit it for verification and approval by community representatives (such as a local committee). They'll be more familiar than anyone else with both the members of the community and any inter-community issues, which may be difficult for an outsider to pick up on. If there are complaints, they'll be best placed to help you resolve them, and they'll share the responsibility for any problems. It may also be necessary to re-examine your lists at a later stage, especially if you're planning multiple rounds of assistance.

Think about the groups that your criteria exclude. Explain and re-explain the rationale behind your criteria as often as you have to. If need be, think about how you can defuse any tension caused.

If the list has been compiled by a third party: Compare it with information from other sources – internal and external – and with your own observations. If possible, visit a random sample of beneficiaries, to check that there aren't too many mistakes. If there are, it may be better to reject the list than to simply go ahead and risk provoking the anger of a section of the community.

10.2.2 CARRYING OUT ASSISTANCE ACTIVITIES: SIX QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF

1. Am I fully informed regarding the activities of my colleagues and of other humanitarian organizations in the area where I'm intending to operate?
2. Are my beneficiary-selection criteria likely to provoke tension?
3. Does my analysis take account of demands from people who may be excluded from my activities? Is there a need to do something else for them?
4. Is there any risk that my activity will be contrary to the interests of influential individuals or entities in the region?
5. Have communities, authorities and influential weapon bearers been adequately informed regarding my activities?
6. Do I need to get any of them more involved?

10.3 DISTRIBUTING AID



A large-scale aid distribution in a dangerous context is a major undertaking. Quite apart from the logistical and time constraints, this type of operation generally involves bringing together a large number of people in what may be a difficult security context. Crowd violence, attacks on the people who've come to collect aid, drunks and other undesirables causing trouble, looting ... plenty of things can go wrong and the situation can rapidly degenerate, putting people in danger. People may also suffer violence or robbery on their way to or from the distribution session.

Before deciding to distribute supplies⁴⁷ (food, essential items, tools, etc.), you should always consider other options. For instance, providing cash may reduce or eliminate the need for large gatherings, depending on the cash-transfer system chosen. People can go and collect cash when it suits them, or receive money via their mobile phones.

10.3.1 PREPARE THOROUGHLY

An orderly, disciplined distribution requires a well-chosen site, thorough planning, community participation, smooth and open sharing of information with all concerned and systems for crowd management and dealing with complaints. You'll also need to inform the parties to the conflict and raise their awareness of what you're doing, to ensure that they respect your activities – or at least don't interfere with them.

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Choose a suitable site: Don't leave this until the last moment. Security has to be the main criterion. The site needs to be large enough to accommodate vehicles, goods and beneficiaries. It must also offer:

- the possibility of routing and managing crowds
- emergency evacuation routes
- good communications coverage
- minimum exposure to attack (e.g. don't plan a distribution near an army camp)
- easy access for beneficiaries.

Minimize crowding: Do everything you can to minimize the number of people who will be on site at any given time, especially if there's a high risk of armed clashes or suicide attacks.

- Avoid bringing together groups that are at odds with each other (on account of tribal or political tensions, for instance).
- Use a community collection system if possible, with beneficiaries organizing themselves into groups and nominating a representative to collect the goods for the whole group.
- Set up multiple distribution points and arrange for different sections of the population to come and collect their goods at different times.

⁴⁷ For more details on distributing goods to individuals, see ICRC, *EcoSec Response* Geneva, 2020, p. 59: <https://shop.icrc.org/ecosec-response-en-pdf>.

Manage the flow of goods and people To distribute everything smoothly in the time available, the flow of goods and people must be carefully controlled, and people mustn't be getting in each others' way. Between arriving on the distribution site and being carried home by beneficiaries, the goods have to be offloaded, moved, piled, counted, unpacked and distributed. You'll need to organize the people so as to eliminate queueing (or at least, keep queues short) and prevent any uncontrolled crowd movements. And there has to be a system that enables people to leave the site easily.

- Reduce waiting times, by creating efficient routes for people and goods.
- Anticipate anything that could obstruct the flow of either.

Prepare a detailed distribution plan Unclear distribution sequences, long queues, no shade or rest area for vulnerable people ... anything not properly planned for can create problems. The crowd can rapidly become resentful and angry. It's essential that you plan your distribution carefully, even if it involves populations you've never met and is going to take place at a location that was inaccessible until now. The local Red Cross or Red Crescent will doubtless be able to help, as will other partners and community representatives.

The arrival of the goods, their departure from the site, movement in and around the site and everything else must be clearly regulated in advance, under a distribution plan drawn up in consultation with representatives of the beneficiaries. For instance, you may feel it would be logical to distribute goods to pregnant women and handicapped people first. But the community might see things quite differently, and you may encounter resistance if your process is contrary to local practice.

- Decide in advance how you're going to arrange goods into piles.
- Make sure everyone knows their role and responsibilities.
- Decide what compensation you're going to give to people who help with the distribution and explain to them what they'll receive (cash, goods or maybe nothing at all).
- Make the wait as pleasant as possible (provide water and shade, for instance).
- Decide as early as possible what you're going to do with left-over packaging (plastic, cardboard boxes, etc.). Such items are extremely useful to anyone living under precarious conditions, and people may even fight over them.

Brief influential weapon bearers: It's perfectly natural for a combatant to want to get his hands on the goods you're distributing. A tarpaulin will keep the rain off at night. He's armed, so why shouldn't he help himself? So while it may not always be possible, you should try to ensure that no members of the armed forces or armed groups are on your distribution site or nearby. There's a risk that they'll try to seize goods that are not intended for them, take goods off people after they've collected them, intimidate or rob beneficiaries on their way home or attack the most vulnerable.

However, it would be unrealistic to hope that weapon bearers won't demand any payment from the local population, in cash or kind. That's not an ideal situation, but it may mean that they won't steal, confiscate or loot the community's assets. In any case, you must never interfere with any agreements set up between weapon bearers and the community. There's also a risk that in case of tension or crowd violence they'll over-react and make the situation worse; they may use force and endanger the people present. Weapon bearers need to have been made aware of these issues beforehand, to prevent this kind of situation arising. Make sure they know what's going on, won't interfere with the distribution and won't harm the beneficiaries, either at the site or after they've returned home.

Being prepared for potential problems will enable you to control them if they occur.

Share information and prepare your team: Hold a briefing session, to communicate your distribution plan to all involved (colleagues, volunteers, community representatives, etc.), to modify it if necessary, to reiterate everyone's roles and responsibilities and to eliminate any remaining misunderstandings. If you need to communicate the distribution plan externally, make sure you use a modified version that doesn't breach any data protection rules.

Making the community responsible for security: Primary responsibility for security during the distribution should be assumed by recognized community leaders. It's important to communicate your expectations on this point well ahead of time. In the case of a large-scale distribution, you should set up measures for directing the flow of people and maintaining control. If community leaders can't commit to providing security, you may need to reconsider the distribution.

Create a complaints system: Set up a help desk where people can ask questions or make complaints. If you don't, people with questions or complaints may slow down or interfere with the distribution process. The help desk must be separate from the distribution process. Ideally, it should be run in conjunction with community representatives.

10.3.2 BEFORE STARTING

- Make sure that the way the goods are packaged won't slow down the distribution process. Do any re-packaging back at the warehouse rather than on site, where the risk is higher.
- Make sure you've received the approval of all parties, and that security conditions are such that the distribution can take place.
- Mark the site with the ICRC logo and with that of your partner if you're working with one (unless there are good reasons not to, of course).
- Make sure that everyone involved in the distribution is clearly identified by means of a tabard, jacket, cap or similar.
- Limit the number of people inside the distribution area. Restrict access to the beneficiaries, ICRC staff, partner staff and community members with a job to do.
- Inform everybody clearly regarding the distribution process and the complaints system.
- Make sure that people move away from the site promptly once they've collected their goods, so they don't block the exit.

Community leaders are your most important allies in preventing and resolving disputes. Involve them as closely as possible.

Distributions: main risks and mitigation measures	
Risk	Recommendations
Disorganized distribution team	Make sure the team leader briefs everyone before they arrive at the distribution site. Brief everyone involved in the distribution (including offloaders and security) to ensure that they know how the distribution will be organized.
Claims for compensation from community helpers	Agree beforehand with members of the community involved in the distribution what compensation they will receive. Are they providing their services for free, or are they to receive compensation in cash or kind, and if so, how much? Communicate related decisions clearly.
Crowd-related problems (violence, rioting, attacks on beneficiaries)	Do everything you can to minimize the number of people who will be on site at any given time (community collection system, multiple distribution points, different collection times for different groups, etc.). Plan for crowd-control measures.
Presence of people under the influence of alcohol or drugs	Avoid times when people are likely to consume alcohol, qat or other drugs.
People excluded from the distribution entering the site	Make sure that only beneficiaries have access to the site. Make sure that people excluded from the distribution can access the help desk. This means that it must be separate from the distribution site.
Combatants entering the distribution site	Inform armed groups operating in the region of your distribution, so they can take the necessary measures.
Looting	If you identify a significant risk of looting, consider distributing from trucks. The risk of looting is highest at the end of a distribution, after most beneficiaries have received their share.
Beneficiaries dissatisfied with the goods received	Tell them about the complaints procedure. If possible, this should be managed by representatives of the community concerned.

Further reading

ICRC, *EcoSec Handbook – Assessing Economic Security*, Geneva, 2017: <https://shop.icrc.org/ecosec-handbook-assessing-economic-security-pdf-en>.

ICRC, *EcoSec Handbook, EcoSec Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation*, Geneva, 2019: <https://shop.icrc.org/ecosec-handbook-ecosec-planning-monitoring-and-evaluation-pdf-en>.

ICRC, *EcoSec Response*, Geneva, 2020: <https://shop.icrc.org/ecosec-response-en-pdf>.

10.4 CASH TRANSFERS AND TRANSPORTING CASH

You may need to carry cash in the field, either to cover your costs (food, accommodation, etc.) or to carry out your operations (pay volunteers and suppliers, distribute cash to beneficiaries, etc.). That money will be highly attractive to people living in poverty, under volatile conditions. So it may well attract criminals. In some countries, the physical volume of banknotes will be a problem – a small amount of foreign currency becomes a huge wad of notes in local currency. While some things can only be paid for in cash, today’s cash-transfer technologies offer a range of alternatives to physically delivering money to a beneficiary or supplier. For instance, cash can be credited to a mobile phone or a card, and the beneficiary can encash it later.

What cash-transfer systems are used for humanitarian purposes? What are the inherent risks, and how can you mitigate them?

10.4.1 CASH-TRANSFER SYSTEMS

Distributing cash or vouchers – as opposed to goods – is becoming increasingly common ICRC practice. Cash and vouchers enable people to buy the goods or services they feel they need. The precise cash-transfer system used will depend on practical constraints and security considerations. Most systems make it possible to avoid transporting large amounts of cash and assembling large numbers of people at a distribution point. However, they do require some technical means of making the transaction (mobile phone, card, document proving entitlement) and a financial service provider, such as a bank, mobile phone provider or cash office. If these transfer systems are not appropriate to the people concerned – or if they’re unavailable or not working, which may be the case in a conflict zone – you’ll have to either distribute cash or vouchers directly, or else distribute goods, if that’s more appropriate.

You should only take a large amount of money with you into the field as a last resort, having examined all the alternatives.

Typical cash or voucher distribution mechanisms⁴⁸	
Mechanism	Description
Direct cash	Cash is handed over directly to beneficiaries, either on ICRC premises or in the field.
Over-the-counter cash	Cash is personally given to beneficiaries by a financial institution such as a bank, a post office or a remittance company. This method is generally considered in places where electronic transfer mechanisms are unavailable or inappropriate.
Bank accounts	Cash is transferred directly to the beneficiaries' bank accounts using existing accounts or accounts opened for the project. Cash transfers through bank accounts can be appropriate when there's a small number of beneficiaries and they have access to bank accounts.
Cash cards	Cash cards are loaded with funds that beneficiaries can use to get cash at a cash machine or to make purchases at point-of-sale terminals. The cards may or may not be linked to beneficiary bank accounts.
Mobile money	Cash is transferred to beneficiaries' mobile wallets. The credited amount can then be turned into cash at a financial institution or used to pay for goods and services directly.
Paper vouchers/tokens	A paper voucher (or token) can be exchanged for a set quantity or value of goods at preselected vendors or at fairs run by the ICRC. They can be either value- or commodity-based. Vouchers will indicate the types of goods or services for which the person can exchange them.
Electronic vouchers (E-vouchers)	E-vouchers are a form of e-transfer where a card or code is electronically redeemed at a participating distribution point. The supplier is reimbursed automatically. E-vouchers can hold a cash or commodity value and can be redeemed using a variety of electronic devices.

10.4.2 RISKS RELATED TO CASH TRANSFER

The risks inherent in making cash transfers as a form of assistance are in many ways similar to those involved in the distribution of goods. As with any kind of assistance, you can reduce those risks by thoroughly analysing the context, carefully planning your programmes, involving the communities concerned, selecting the beneficiaries in a transparent manner, setting up a suitable complaints mechanism and supervising programmes closely. This type of

⁴⁸ Source: ICRC, *EcoSec Response*, Geneva, 2020, p. 114: <https://shop.icrc.org/ecosec-response-en-pdf>.

assistance requires the consent of the authorities, the main parties to the conflict and of course the beneficiaries. The distribution mechanism must be in accordance with the laws and regulations of the country.

If you have to transfer large sums of money, use electronic transfer, bank transfer or vouchers whenever possible.

But even if all these conditions are satisfied, cash transfers carry a number of risks, which can endanger you and the beneficiaries.

Destabilization of markets: One essential precondition for setting up a cash-transfer programme is that the market be capable of absorbing the increased demand that will result from a direct injection of cash, and can do so without price increases. A sudden, excessive cash inflow can cause inflation. It can also lead to a significant difference in purchasing power between beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries. This in turn can lead to tensions. You can limit these problems by conducting a market analysis, carefully monitoring prices and making regular adjustments to the amounts transferred as the situation develops. You can also combine cash assistance with assistance in kind, to avoid excessive increases in the money supply.

Corruption and fraudulent misuse of data: Providing assistance in a non-physical form can reduce certain physical risks, especially those related to logistics. However, electronic cash transfer via a mobile money operator may transpose the risks into the digital realm. Hacking, fraudulent misuse of personal data and theft are all possible. You can limit the risks by selecting a reputable financial service provider that offers secure financial transactions.

Data protection: Using a financial service provider creates certain risks for beneficiaries: the authorities may use their personal data to harm the people concerned or businesses may use them for commercial purposes. Negotiating suitable agreements with financial service providers can reduce these risks, but beneficiaries must be informed of them and must accept them.

If you intend to carry out cash transfers:

- Find out about the procedures for storing and transporting cash, and comply with the relevant rules.
- Before selecting a transfer mechanism, examine the advantages and disadvantages of the options available, including those related to security.

- Find out about any security problems that other organizations have encountered in connection with cash transfers.
- Check that the beneficiaries are happy to receive cash and that the intended transfer mechanism suits them.
- Make sure as few people as possible know the details of your cash transfers (dates, amounts, etc.).
- Supervise the whole process closely, to ensure that the money reaches its intended recipients without being syphoned off along the way.

10.4.3 TRANSPORTING CASH AND MAKING DIRECT PAYMENTS

Distributing cash directly has a number of advantages over distributing goods, one of which is that everyone gets the specific assistance they need. However, storing, transporting and handling cash does involve risks including theft, corruption and loss. So only make direct cash payments in the field – to beneficiaries, suppliers or partners – as a measure of last resort, if other cash-transfer mechanisms are unavailable or unsuitable. If you do have to make direct cash payments, take the following precautions:

- **Be discreet:** The fewer people who know that you're going to be handing out cash, the lower the risk.
- **Spread the risk:** Theft, burglary and hold-ups can happen anywhere. Two of the most basic precautions are a) never keep all your cash together and b) always have a small amount of cash accessible (on your person, in your vehicle and in your accommodation) that you can use to satisfy a robber. Keep the rest out of sight, dividing it up among your colleagues or hiding it in several places such as a wallet, a money belt, your shoes, etc.
- **Don't be predictable:** You're more likely to be attacked if your routes and your schedule are predictable. Try to avoid getting into a routine, don't travel alone, use at least two vehicles and vary the number of passengers.
- **Think carefully about your distribution options:** Work with the community to choose the safest location for the distribution, and the safest time, bearing in mind that the beneficiaries must be able to get home before nightfall.

If you absolutely have to make direct cash payments, look at whether regular payments of small amounts would be safer than a single large payment.

Further reading

ICRC, *Cash Transfer Programming, Standard Operating Procedures*, ICRC, Geneva, 2018: <https://cash-hub.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2020/08/ICRC-CTP-SOPs.pdf>.

10.5 WORKING IN A HEALTH FACILITY

Health services are most needed when fighting breaks out. Paradoxically, that's when people are most likely to attack them. Violence hits hospitals, health centres, medical personnel, ambulance crews, Red Cross/Red Crescent personnel and volunteers, the sick and the injured. Despite IHL clearly stating that they must be respected and protected.⁴⁹ If you work in a health facility, you're particularly exposed to violence, whether you're a nurse, doctor, surgeon, prosthetist-orthotist or member of the support staff. One of the issues is that treating an enemy fighter enables him to fight again, and that can make people unwilling to accept the very nature of your work.

The following pages address the global imperative to provide essential care to the sick and wounded, but they focus mainly on your security rather than that of your patients.

- What are the main factors that could interfere with your work?
- What can you personally do to enhance security in your workplace?

This section looks at security in hospitals, dispensaries and health centres.

10.5.1 UNDERSTANDING THE THREAT

The threats that a health facility faces depend on several factors, including:

- its type, size and location
- what security precautions have been taken
- the population to which care is provided
- the composition of the personnel and patients (ethnic, cultural and religious diversity, whether the patients include ex-combatants, etc.)
- the extent to which the facility can provide quality health care.

A risk assessment will enable you to select the measures needed to protect health services as a whole. To get a complete picture, you must take into account not only threats emanating from weaknesses in the facility and its

⁴⁹ See ICRC, *Health Care in Danger*: <https://healthcareindanger.org>.

location, but also those related to the way it's run and the way parties to the conflict perceive it.⁵⁰ It's generally the job of the facility management, your management or the ICRC's site security specialists to carry out such a risk assessment, but you'll be called upon to contribute to it.

In areas prone to conflict or violence, medical facilities face the following threats:

- The direct or indirect effects of weapons (shooting, bombing, bombardment, etc.)
- Fire – accidental or deliberate
- Robbery and looting
- Forced entry by weapon bearers who employ violence and (for instance) force patients to leave the facility
- Insults, threats and physical attacks aimed at you, your patients or those accompanying them
- Medical personnel being forced to provide treatment free of charge, or to act contrary to medical ethics
- The risk of being infected by a serious, highly contagious disease such as viral haemorrhagic fever, or contaminated by CBRN agents
- Belligerents occupying the facility and using it for military purposes

You need to know about the security problems that medical facilities in the region have faced in the past.

10.5.2 GENERAL SECURITY PRECAUTIONS

The basic **security precautions to take at any ICRC site** are also applicable to medical facilities. A “no weapons” policy, effective access management and the creation of secured areas will greatly enhance the security of a medical facility, just as they do at other locations. However, security measures mustn't interfere with the provision of health care.

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The prohibition of weapons

Most medical facilities prohibit the carrying of weapons on their premises, to avoid tensions or conflicts that could endanger personnel, patients and those accompanying them. However, it's not always possible to enforce this policy. If someone with a gun threatens the guards, they'll have no choice but to

⁵⁰ If you need to assess the security of a medical facility, see ICRC, *Security Survey for Health Facilities*, ICRC, Geneva, 2017: <https://shop.icrc.org/security-survey-for-health-facilities-pdf-en>.

let them in. Combatants might also enter the premises as part of a military operation, e.g. to carry out a search or make arrests.

- Make sure there are signs indicating clearly that weapons are prohibited at the health facility.
- Take the time to explain this policy to staff, patients and their relatives, all parties to the conflict and community leaders.
- Do everything you can to dissuade anyone who shows signs of intending to enter the facility armed.

Military operations in medical facilities

IHL does not explicitly prohibit armed personnel from entering medical facilities during a conflict, as long as they don't prevent or delay treatment. It may be legal for the armed forces to carry out searches or make arrests within a medical facility. Ideally, the armed forces should coordinate their operations with the health-care providers, to limit the effects on patients and staff.

Access control

The location and design of the main entrance are extremely important, both for security and for the flow of patients. Security precautions should reflect the threats identified, and should not interfere with medical triage. Triage must take place upstream of the security system, be separate from it and be so designed that the facility can cope with the mass arrival of casualties in an emergency.

Efficient access control enhances security.

Ideally, access to the premises should be restricted to staff, patients and their families, plus vehicles transporting the sick or injured. During a mass arrival of casualties, it's best to restrict or prohibit access for family members, to speed up the admission of patients and avoid disturbances inside the facility. Visitor and staff parking should be located outside the facility, before security control. Security checks must be performed by trained personnel, and there must be a system for warning you of any danger. The guards' main job is to control access and report any unusual occurrence, not to perform triage or carry out any other tasks normally carried out by medical personnel.

If you feel that the access system poses a security problem for the staff or patients, talk to your management so it can be improved if necessary.

- If you have the impression that a guard isn't doing his job, or isn't where he should be, inform the person responsible.
- When you receive a new patient, clarify the question of payment with them or their family (if payment is required) to avoid problems later.
- Find out about the system for warning of danger.

Areas to be secured

Certain areas will need to be protected against the entry of unauthorized persons or those carrying weapons. Which areas require such protection will depend on the type of care the facility provides, and the context. In the case of a hospital for instance, these areas could include the operating theatres, the intensive care unit, the pharmacy and the electricity and water-supply systems.

Make sure you know where the secure areas are located. If there aren't any, talk to your management about whether there should be.

There should be a room where you can take refuge in an emergency. This should ideally be located somewhere central, or at some other location that's quickly and easily accessible. This room should be designed by a specialist and should reflect local threats. It will never be possible to create a safe room capable of accommodating all your patients. This means that if there's a direct threat, you'll need to take other measures, such as temporarily evacuating the building.

10.5.3 YOUR ROLE IN SECURING YOUR PLACE OF WORK

Identify weaknesses in the security system

If you're going to treat your patients in a safe environment, you'll need to do more than just fulfil your medical role. The demands of your actual job won't generally leave you much time to think about the security of your working

Any security problem you fail to report may come back to bite you or a colleague.

environment. But it's precisely when things deteriorate suddenly and the needs are greatest that security will have to be stepped up. As a health professional, you're probably best placed to identify any weaknesses in the security precautions, along with those things that could interfere with the provision of care. For instance, you're

very aware that lighting is essential to the functioning and security of a health facility. So it's essential to report any faults involving the lighting and to make sure you have backup lighting in case the electricity fails – and that you know

how to use it. Just checking regularly that it's possible to lock the doors may one day save lives, as may inspecting your place of work to see if you can spot any security loopholes.

- Examine your working environment with a critical eye. If you believe that a security measure is missing, inappropriate or superfluous, or that there's a need for additional measures, speak to your management.
- Imagine a dangerous situation, such as an intruder in the building, and think about what you personally can do to prevent it occurring.
- If your job involves caring for people with serious, highly infectious diseases (haemorrhagic fever, for instance), or if you think contamination with a **CBRN** agent may have occurred, find out about the ICRC safety procedures in those areas. Make sure you follow them, and don't hesitate to suggest improvements.

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Promoting respect for health care

It will only be possible to achieve a satisfactory level of protection if the parties to the conflict, the authorities and the public respect your work, the sick and the wounded. Public perception of the facility where you work therefore deserves your fullest attention. Listen carefully to comments made

Take the initiative: raise awareness among the public and belligerents, to ensure that your work and the impartiality of health care are recognized and respected.

by colleagues, patients and their families, and to any tensions or arguments between them. These are all valuable sources of information on the topic. It's also a good idea to raise awareness among the public and belligerents, to ensure that your work and the impartiality of health care are recognized and respected.⁵¹

Involve Red Cross/Red Crescent volunteers, local community leaders, traditional and religious leaders, etc. You should also speak to your colleagues who work with weapon bearers; make sure they remind them that medical facilities are not military objectives and must be respected, as must the sick and injured.

51 See ICRC, World Medical Association, International Committee of Military Medicine, International Council of Nurses and International Pharmaceutical Federation, *Ethical Principles of Health Care in Times of Armed Conflict and Other Emergencies*, 2015: <https://www.wma.net/policies-post/ethical-principles-of-health-care-in-times-of-armed-conflict-and-other-emergencies/>.

If the media inform the public correctly about your medical work, this can enhance understanding of the impartial nature of health care and help clear up any misunderstandings. However, you must put ethical considerations and confidentiality before the exchange of information in your dealings with **journalists**, and you must ensure that such contacts don't present a risk to the facility, the staff or the patients.

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- Listen out for any verbal threats from patients or their families and report them to your management, even if you aren't the direct target.
- Take advantage of every opportunity to talk about the impartiality of health care and the need to protect it. Talk to combatants you meet outside, communities with which you're in contact, your family, etc.
- Carry out regular awareness-raising campaigns to inform the public and key individuals and entities about the types of service you provide, the role of medical personnel and the impartial nature of your work.

Respect medical secrecy

Respecting medical secrecy is an essential part of protecting your patients' security and – indirectly – your own. However, domestic law sometimes takes precedence. In some countries, health personnel are required to report certain things to the authorities, such as gunshot wounds or some infectious diseases. You may also be confronted by an army officer wanting to know how one of his men is getting on. Before giving out any kind of information concerning a patient, you should obtain their oral consent. If this is not possible, you should obtain the oral consent of their family. If the patient or the family refuse to give their consent, but you have to provide the information anyway, you must explain to them why you've done so and the possible consequences.⁵² If you've any doubts about whether you can provide a third party with information about a patient, consult your management.

Report any unusual occurrences

The ICRC needs to know about any new types of injury or illness, and anything else that could possibly be a source of information regarding the security situation in the region. For instance, knowing that someone has been killed or injured by a mine could reveal the existence of previously unsuspected mined areas and prevent more people

Certain information to which only you have access may save lives if you take the trouble to pass it on to your management.

⁵² See ICRC, *Domestic Normative Frameworks for the Protection of Health Care*, ICRC, Geneva, 2015: <https://shop.icrc.org/domestic-normative-frameworks-for-the-protection-of-health-care-pdf-en>.

being harmed. The same applies if you observe large numbers of patients with a highly infectious disease (measles, haemorrhagic fever, etc.) or showing signs of **CBRN** contamination, or if the mortality rate is higher than usual. Make sure you report any incidents that could interfere with the provision of health care, such as threats or insults – even if they appear minor.

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10.5.4 FORCED ENTRY



You must be prepared to deal with situations in which persons carrying weapons force their way into the facility, despite all measures taken to keep them out. What to do depends on the circumstances and the likely aims of the intruders.

You have a choice between:

- running away
- taking refuge in a secure area
- hiding
- trying to negotiate.

While it's good if you know the difference between legal and illegal entry on the part of persons with weapons, you're unlikely to get very far by quoting IHL at them. In fact, you'll probably make them rather angry. Unless your life is in immediate danger, the best approach is to deploy all your calmness, diplomacy and communication skills in an effort to defuse the situation.

Your best chance of preventing the situation from deteriorating is to listen attentively to their demands without contradicting them or interrupting them, and to let them express their emotions.

- Find out about the system for warning of an intrusion.
- Make sure you have two different means of communication, in working order, that don't depend on the same technology.
- Familiarize yourself with the evacuation routes, secure areas and means of calling for help (panic buttons, etc.), and make sure that alarm systems are working properly.
- Find out about **non-violent communication techniques**, and apply them if circumstances allow.

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10.5.5 ARTILLERY FIRE AND AIR STRIKES

No precautions can fully protect a medical facility against heavy artillery fire or an air strike. However, certain measures can reduce the consequences of nearby artillery fire or air strikes, or prevent them occurring. All health facilities should be clearly indicated and recognizable from a reasonable distance (including from the air), unless this would compromise the security of the facility. The **GPS** coordinates of the facility should be communicated to all parties to the conflict so they can take the necessary precautions, unless this would put you in additional danger.

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- Identify emergency exits and places where you could take refuge in case of attacks in the area.
- Make sure you have two different means of communication, in working order, that don't depend on the same technology.
- Make sure that adhesive plastic film is applied to the inside of the windows, to reduce glass splinters in the event of an explosion. Consider building blast walls, perhaps out of sandbags.

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10.5.6 WORKING IN A HEALTH FACILITY: FIVE QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF

1. Have any incidents interfered with the provision of health care in the area? If so, what kinds of incident?
2. What image does my health facility project?
3. Have I noticed any security breaches? If so, have I reported them to my management?
4. Do I know the evacuation routes and the places where I could seek shelter in an emergency? Do I know how to use the emergency equipment, such as fire extinguishers or generators?
5. Do I feel capable of handling people who are aggressive?

Further reading

ICRC, *Protecting Health Care: Key Recommendations*, ICRC, Geneva, 2016: <https://shop.icrc.org/protecting-health-care-key-recommendations-pdf-en>.

ICRC, *Ensuring the Preparedness and Security of Health-Care Facilities in Armed Conflict and Other Emergencies*, ICRC, Geneva, 2015: <https://shop.icrc.org/ensuring-the-preparedness-and-security-of-health-care-facilities-in-armed-conflict-and-other-emergencies-pdf-en>.

ICRC, *Security Survey for Health Facilities*, ICRC, Geneva, 2017: <https://shop.icrc.org/security-survey-for-health-facilities-pdf-en>.

10.6 PRISON VISITS



The simple fact that they're enclosed and secured means that prisons are not like other places. Visiting prisoners – and conducting activities for them – requires you to take account of the prison environment and the characteristics of its population. Most people are unfamiliar with the inside of a prison and many believe – wrongly – that prisons are particularly dangerous places for visitors.

Admittedly, no two prisons are identical, and the attitude to adopt depends very much on the context. However, all prisons do have certain points in common. Following a brief description of the prison environment and the dangers to which you could be exposed, this section will underline the importance of preparing your visit carefully, and the need to gain the confidence of both the authorities and the prisoners. It also contains a few tips on security, which you would do well to read and understand before your visit.

This section covers all places of detention that house a significant number of people, making no distinction between types of detaining authority or

categories of detainee – prisoners on remand, those who have been sentenced, penal law detainees, security detainees or people arrested in relation with an armed conflict or violence.

The aims of visiting detainees

When the ICRC visits detainees, the aim is to make sure they are living under decent conditions of detention and are being treated humanely. To do so, we need direct access to them – in their places of detention – and a constructive dialogue with the detaining authority. We care about all detainees, but we focus our efforts on those detained in connection with armed conflict or violence, because they're often at greater risk of ill-treatment or disappearance than other detainees.

10.6.1 IT'S COMPLICATED

In many of the places where the ICRC works – especially where the situation is unstable – the judicial and prison systems are unable to meet the needs of prisoners. And in many cases, the detainee population is very large. Prisons are often underfunded, the buildings dilapidated and poorly maintained and the personnel underqualified and unrespected. On top of all that, prisons are sometimes massively overcrowded, to the point that certain tasks – such as the internal security of parts of the facility – are shared with certain prisoners or simply delegated to them. Those prisoners often have as much power as the personnel, if not more. In certain “self-managed” prisons, the detainees are even armed.

But whether it holds hundreds or thousands of prisoners, a prison is a social entity with all the structures of a micro-society, including the power relationships. Some detainees form bonds of solidarity, while others are enemies. Each community will generally have one or more representatives to defend its interests.

A prison is a secure place of detention with complex power dynamics and issues, all based on multiple balancing factors. Drugs, corruption, smuggling, violence between individuals or groups, gang warfare imported from outside ... it's difficult for an outsider to imagine the daily life of a prisoner. Prisoners and staff find different ways of coping.

You'll meet highly cultivated people and some who are less so. They all have a right to empathy and respect. At the same time, you do need to be aware that the prison population has a number of specific characteristics:

- Some prisoners have a history of violence.
- Some prisoners have psychiatric problems or very little self-control.
- There's little or no contact with the opposite sex.
- Life is difficult on account of the closed environment: constant surveillance, absence of freedom, lack of access to the open air, etc.
- There's a high level of resentment, stemming from feelings of deep injustice, the inability to provide for one's family, separation from the family, lack of prospects, etc.

A prison is a closed environment, but it's not hermetically sealed. Everything you say and do is likely to become known not only to the detainees and personnel, but also to the world outside.

10.6.2 RISKS ASSOCIATED WITH PRISON VISITS

The threats that you face in a prison depend on several factors, including:

- the type and size of prison
- the profile of the prison population
- internal security precautions and situation
- the capacity of the authorities (financial and human resources)
- etc.

The threats are also linked to the situation outside.

Because of their purpose and population, places of detention sometimes present risks. For instance, overcrowding exacerbated by poor sanitary conditions (lack of ventilation, inadequate sanitary facilities, poor health services, etc.) can favour the propagation of contagious diseases. A power cut, problems with the provision of food or water, restrictions on visiting, a violent reaction to a strike, or anything else out of the ordinary can provoke expressions of dissatisfaction. You should also be aware that while they may not have sophisticated weapons, prisoners do have access to objects with which they can cause injury, such as sharpened pencils or hard pieces of wood or plastic.

For most detainees, a visit from a humanitarian organization is a window on the outside world, a source of humanity and recognition that they exist. A prisoner will often see the simple fact that someone from outside greets them respectfully as restoring a little of their dignity. As a result, your visits will often be appreciated. Apart from anything else, they're an opportunity for a group or individual conversation and may be followed by an improvement in the prisoners' treatment and living conditions. However, you must expect suspicion or even hostility from some prisoners, either because they have a negative perception of the ICRC, or because repeated visits haven't brought about the improvements they'd hoped for. Having said which, serious incidents involving humanitarian personnel are rare; rude gestures, insults or spitting are more common.

Main threats in places of detention (Non-exhaustive list, to be modified in the light of the context)		
Threats not specific to you	External	Disasters
		Armed attacks, including attacks with heavy weapons (against the authorities, against the detainees or with the aim of freeing certain detainees)
	Internal	Riots, violent disputes
		Fire
		Transmissible diseases, epidemics and pandemics (e.g. diarrhoea, tuberculosis, cholera or SARS)
Threats specific to you	Internal ⁵³	Insults, spitting, throwing urine or faeces
		Rude gestures (often sexual)
		Requests for favours
		Physical aggression
		Hostage-taking

As with any other activity, risk mitigation requires above all that you fully understand the context. Furthermore, you're also a potential source of risk: inappropriate behaviour, poorly-planned distribution of assistance or poor

⁵³ The families of detainees sometimes express their discontent towards the ICRC by holding sit-ins or other demonstrations at the entrance to a prison. This type of situation can turn nasty if not managed correctly.

management of the information in your possession – especially any failure to maintain confidentiality – can put you in serious danger.

Showing respect and empathy does not mean being naïve or ignoring the potential for violence in a place of detention.

10.6.3 BEFORE YOUR VISIT

Once inside the prison, you'll be in a secure environment, and you won't be able to move around freely.

It's therefore crucial that you prepare your visit beforehand.

Points to cover include:

- who will be team leader
- who will be on the team (members to be selected depending on what activities are planned, and the profiles of the personnel available)
- precise roles and responsibilities
- briefing and debriefing
- action to take in case of problems or incidents.

You must plan everything carefully in advance, especially if the ICRC is visiting the facility for the first time.

Team leader: Prison visits are normally carried out by multidisciplinary teams, especially when making an initial evaluation of conditions of detention – delegates, health professionals, water and sanitation engineers, nutritionists, interpreters, etc. It's therefore essential to decide who will be responsible for ensuring that the visit proceeds smoothly and for managing everything that involves cooperation, especially as regards security. Demand that the team leader brief the team on the aims of the visit and on security issues.

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Security guarantees: Your visit must be announced to the detaining authority in advance. In a conflict zone, as well as obtaining the usual security guarantees, you may need to obtain specific guarantees from the belligerents that they will not attack the prison while you're there. In any case, an attack on a prison would be a breach of IHL, because it's a civilian structure.

p. 117 Dress code: This is even more important when you're working in a prison. In addition to conforming to local culture, you must bear in mind the specific nature of a place of detention. Bear in mind that whatever the context, detainees have little or no contact with the opposite sex. The more neutral and "conservative" your clothing, the less risk there will be of inappropriate looks or gestures.

Personal profile: If you don't feel comfortable about taking part in a visit – because you're afraid of the detaining authority or of certain categories of detainee, or for any other reason – talk to your team leader. It's their job to choose their team in the light of everyone's constraints and characteristics, and of any threats identified.

Identification: In principle, you should wear the ICRC logo at all times, to identify yourself. However, the ICRC logo may be more of a risk than an advantage when dealing with certain detainees, and it may be wiser to take it off. This needs to be thought about in advance, and not wearing ICRC identification needs approval from your management.

Information: The reports of previous visits contain a wealth of vital information, such as the situations of the detainees, the surveillance systems in the prison, the security situation, relations between the detainees and relations between detainees and staff. Some of these reports will include an outline plan of the prison, which can be very useful in helping you get your bearings and for specifying both the assembly points for the team and places where you could take refuge in case of problems. But even if you have such a plan, you must still carry out an initial tour of the prison before meeting the detainees (see below). A plan of the prison – even a rough one – is a confidential document and must be treated as such.

Communications: Standard practice is not to take phones or radios into a prison, even if you're authorized to do so. These devices are a source of problems – risk of theft, accusations that you're recording conversations, etc. This means that you'll have to communicate face-to-face. It's the team leader's job to state clearly where and when this communication will be possible. They must also be able to locate the rest of the team at all times. This implies that all team members must inform the leader regarding their movements around the prison. The leader must also tell the drivers waiting outside what action to take if the team is inside for too long.

10.6.4 DURING THE VISIT

Imagine a casual acquaintance invites you to dinner. You're not going to just walk into their house uninvited. You'll give at least a bit of thought to what you wear, and you'll show a suitable degree of respect, so as not to offend your host. Well, visiting a prison is the same. It's in your interests to show respect and understanding to authorities, personnel and detainees, explain your activities to them if necessary and listen to their concerns. A prison is a workplace for staff and home for the prisoners, so it's important to fit in with custom and practice.

Relations with prison staff

Prison authorities and staff sometimes see humanitarians as “inspectors” interfering in their work. Put yourself in their place – it's perfectly natural that they're afraid of being judged by outsiders who haven't the faintest idea of how difficult their work is and the weight of responsibility they carry. So you need to show understanding and be willing to listen to them. While it's totally normal for you to comment on things that appear contrary to respect for human dignity, you must do so diplomatically, without going beyond your role and while respecting both established protocol and local culture. If you don't, you risk losing the confidence of the authorities and prison staff, possibly with the result that the ICRC will no longer have access to the prison. So it's best to present your activities as a way of helping the personnel to improve the situation in their facility rather than criticizing their work.

Remain tactful at all times, but also remain firm regarding the principles for which the ICRC stands.

Security checks

Don't think that working for the ICRC means you're exempt from security checks (searches, metal detectors, etc.) and don't ask for any such exemption. And even if the prison staff don't want to search you, make sure you only bring in non-prohibited, work-related items such as pens, paper, diaries, Red Cross messages, etc. Even then, you must remain alert: it could be highly dangerous for certain items to fall into the wrong hands. That's particularly true of phones, cameras and radios, which are generally prohibited in prisons unless you've obtained permission. If you need technical photos, ask the authorities to take them for you, with no detainees present, and to send them to you once they've approved them.

The rule is simple:

- *Get the approval of the authorities before taking anything into or out of a place of detention – including mail.*
- *Make sure that anything that goes into a prison comes out again.*

The authorities are not authorized to have access to your notes or working documents, and are not allowed to **confiscate** them under any pretext, even briefly. If this happens, you should interrupt your visit and immediately inform your management.

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Meeting with the detaining authority

Before going into the prison itself, you must meet the officials in charge. Introducing the team and explaining the aims of the visit and the schedule provides a means of launching a dialogue with them. As the discussion continues, you should come to understand any concerns they have regarding the carrying-out of their responsibilities, the extent to which they are willing and able to resolve problems and what support they might need. This meeting is also an opportunity to discuss the security situation in the prison so you can modify your visit accordingly if need be.

Depending on what information you already have, and how much the officials trust you (or how little), the following information could be useful:

- Any major changes since the previous ICRC visit
- Any recent incidents, and their consequences
- The extent to which personnel are able to maintain security and any other mechanisms in use, such as detainees performing surveillance functions
- Timings and constraints to follow
- The characteristics of the prison population (high-security detainees, detainees under disciplinary sanctions, detainees with psychiatric problems, etc.) and any particular precautions to take
- Power relationships and relations between communities
- Description of the prison and possible escape routes
- Contingency plans, specific security regulations, etc.

The prison management is responsible for security within the prison and hence for your security. You should take account of any security-related recommendations they may make, unless to do so would be contrary to the ICRC's principles and working modalities.

During this meeting, you should agree on how the visit will proceed:

- Ask the authorities to make available a well-ventilated, shady area where you can safely meet up with your colleagues to brief each other on progress, take breaks, etc.
- Find out where would be the safest places to hold individual interviews with the detainees – and the most pleasant locations from their point of view.
- If you're planning to distribute relief goods, discuss the details with the officials.

Working with an interpreter

The quality of your dialogue is inextricably linked to how well you work with your interpreter. You may be the one conducting the discussion, but they're the one on the front line. You must therefore protect them – especially if you have to say things that the other person doesn't want to hear – by clearly indicating that any decisions have been taken by you or by the ICRC. The interpreter must adapt what you say in accordance with local culture and customs, to prevent misunderstandings that could cause trouble.

- **Before the interview/meeting:** Agree with the interpreter on the topic, the aims and the type of interpreting to be used (simultaneous or consecutive).
- **During the interview/meeting:** Before starting the discussion, explain your role and that of the interpreter, emphasizing that the interpreter's responsibility is purely to relay what the participants say. Address the person you're communicating with, look at them and not the interpreter – even when the interpreter's speaking – and pay attention to their non-verbal communication/body language. Speak in short, simple sentences.
- **At the end of the interview/meeting:** Make sure you hold a short debriefing with the interpreter, especially if the discussion has been somewhat emotional. This will enable you to exchange impressions of the meeting or interview and give you an opportunity to pick up on nuances that may have escaped you. It's also an opportunity for your interpreter to decompress.

Tour of the prison

Making a tour of the prison before meeting the detainees or starting your activities will give you a better feel for your surroundings, enable you to detect any changes since your previous visit and help you get your bearings. It's also an opportunity to chat informally, answer questions from the personnel and clear up any misunderstandings.

Be attentive to any messages the personnel are trying to pass on to you and take the time needed to answer their questions.

Pay no more attention than necessary to the internal dynamics of the prison, and remain professional. Avoid getting involved in those dynamics, and especially anything related to smuggling or corruption. And avoid getting into discussions about politics or religion if at all possible. If you have any questions on these subjects, don't hesitate to ask your boss for advice.

10.6.5 INTERVIEWS WITH THE DETAINEES

Before beginning your confidential interviews with the detainees – whether individual or in groups – it may be wise to ask the staff for advice. It's usual practice to go and greet the leader(s) of the prisoners, or the person in charge of a cell, and to ask for their views – they know their fellow-prisoners best. It may be that you need to take additional precautions with regard to certain prisoners, such as those with severe psychiatric problems.

The personnel may try to dissuade you from meeting certain detainees on the grounds that they're too dangerous – or without giving you any explanation. They may be right – don't forget that they see the prisoners every day, and they know them a lot better than you do. How to react to such suggestions will largely depend on the level of trust you've been able to build up with the personnel and the detainees. You might simply need to remind them (diplomatically!) that access to all detainees forms an integral part of the ICRC's working methods.

In any event:

- If possible, conduct sensitive interviews with no third person present.
- Choose the safest option available, while not harming relations with the detainee.
- Place yourself close to the cell door.

- If possible, sit or stand with your back to a wall, so you can see all of the detainees.
- Stay alert to the behaviour of the detainees.
- Where possible, avoid locations that have poor ventilation or lack shade.
- The quality of your work will depend on the way you interact with the detainees: show empathy and be natural and honest.

Under exceptional circumstances, it may be necessary for prison personnel to remain nearby – far enough away not to hear your discussions, but close enough to intervene if there are any problems.

Direct relationships with the detainees are the core of your detention work, so it's important to gain their trust and above all to listen to them.

In case of danger

How to respond to imminent danger depends on the type of danger and your immediate surroundings.

- If a detainee's behaviour worries you and you begin to feel uneasy, try to work out why. Don't hesitate to break off the interview (politely), with a view to perhaps continuing it later, or during a subsequent visit.
- If you can feel that the level of tension in the prison is rising significantly, stop what you're doing and try to find your team leader.
- In case of riot, fire or attack, immediately interrupt your visit and look for a place of safety. Rather than trying to make your own way out, follow the instructions of the personnel or of anyone else who appears to have some control over the situation, unless you feel that this would expose you to additional risk.
- Report any unusual occurrences to your team leader, along with any incident – however minor – such as an inappropriate gesture or a fight between detainees in your presence. All too often, incidents in prisons are not properly reported, making it impossible to draw the appropriate conclusions.

10.6.6 BEFORE ENTERING A PRISON: FIVE QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF

1. Have I read the report of the previous visit and asked my colleagues to brief me on the security situation at this prison?
2. Who is my team leader, and how/when should I contact them?
3. Am I appropriately dressed?
4. Am I carrying anything that could compromise anyone's security?
5. Am I clearly identifiable as being from the ICRC?
Could that be a problem with certain detainees?

Further reading

ICRC, *Protecting People Deprived of their Liberty*, ICRC, Geneva, 2016: <https://shop.icrc.org/protecting-people-deprived-of-their-liberty-pdf-en>.

10.7 WORKING IN A CAMP



A camp for internally displaced persons (IDPs) or refugees is a society in miniature. Its residents organize themselves as they arrive. Gradually, the camp takes on the form of a large village of a few thousand people, or a town of several tens of thousands or, in the case of the largest camps, several hundred thousand. Just like a town or village, a camp will have entities responsible for administration or basic services – government and other authorities, international humanitarian agencies, NGOs, etc. Other entities will provide

security. Each community will have its leaders, and will generally occupy a specific part of the camp. A camp is not an island: people come and go, to visit the market, collect firewood, go to work or find out whether the situation has improved sufficiently for them to go home. Relations with the host community are often strained, especially if local people don't have access to the same level of services as those living in the camp.

Before starting any activities in a camp, you must assess the security situation. This will depend on factors including the local situation, the location of the camp, its size, how well organized it is, what basic services are available and the makeup of the population. Camps are sometimes infiltrated by weapon bearers and they may come under attack. Disputes, protests and civil disturbances are frequent.

The newer the camp, the less its residents will know about the ICRC and our services. This means it will always be worth taking the time to explain who you are and what you're doing with and for them. Establishing professional, respectful relations with camp leaders, the entities providing security and other humanitarian organizations will enhance your security. Basically, the same approach as you should be adopting everywhere.

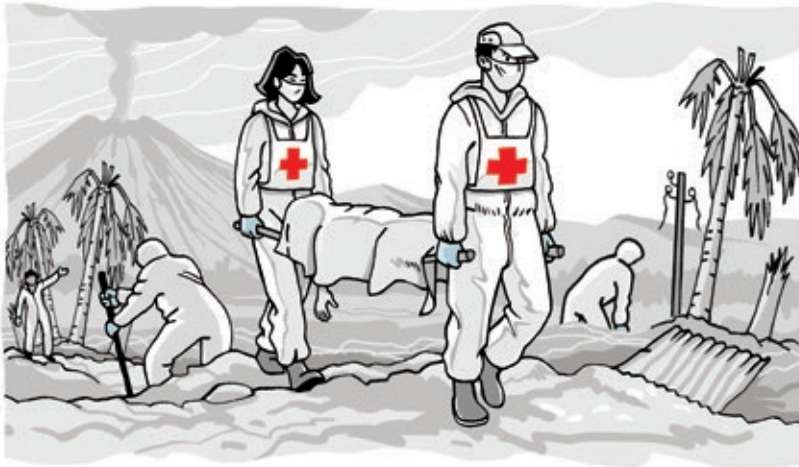
Action to take includes the following:

- Familiarize yourself with the layout of the camp and the way it operates, find out whether there's a security plan and any means of alerting you in case of problems, and locate the evacuation routes. Some camps have their own security regulations.
- At the start of every visit, introduce yourself to the person(s) responsible for running the camp and to the entity responsible for security, and enquire about any recent security problems. If there's any major cause for concern, check with your management before continuing your visit.
- Always park your vehicle in the location you consider safest, facing so you can get away fast if you need to.
- Make sure you always have a means of communicating with the other team members, but be discreet with your communications equipment.

What happens inside the camp affects what happens outside, and vice-versa. So it's important that you report anything that could have a bearing on the security of the camp, directly or indirectly.

- Avoid moving around the camp on your own. If necessary, get a respected member of the community to accompany you.
- Observe everything carefully, and seize every opportunity to enquire about what's happening in the camp.
- Avoid getting involved in disputes.
- If you sense that the situation is about to turn nasty, or you feel threatened... get out!
- Tell your management about any incidents and about any signs of aggression towards you or towards other humanitarian organizations, or between communities.

10.8 HANDLING DEAD BODIES



This section does not apply to regions where a highly infectious disease is endemic, nor to situations in which chemical or radiological agents have been used.

Following a natural disaster or violence, the media and some health professionals and humanitarian workers often propagate a fear that dead bodies can cause epidemics. They're wrong! But however wrong they may be, the myth continues. The resulting rumours put some people under pressure, prompting them to take unnecessary measures such as using disinfectant everywhere. This pressure also leads to hasty collective burials or cremations,

which make it difficult or impossible to identify bodies or their places of burial later. The mismanagement of dead bodies is undignified for the victims and prevents families and communities from grieving properly. It causes psychological suffering and creates major administrative and legal problems.

10.8.1 THE RISK OF DISEASE IS NEGLIGIBLE

For a member of the public, the risk of picking up an infectious disease from a dead body is very small.⁵⁴ The victims of natural disaster or violence usually die as a result of wounds, drowning or burns, and not from an infectious disease. It's unlikely that when they died they just happened to be carrying an infectious disease that could lead to an epidemic. However, they could have been carrying a chronic infection that can be transmitted via the blood (such as hepatitis or HIV), tuberculosis or a diarrhoea-related disease. This means that people who have to handle bodies should take a few basic hygiene precautions. A body will only present an epidemic risk in a region where such an infectious disease is endemic, or if the person died of such a **disease** (e.g. cholera, Ebola, other viral haemorrhagic fevers, SARS, etc.).

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10.8.2 PRECAUTIONS TO TAKE WHEN HANDLING BODIES

You should only deal with dead bodies if it's possible to adopt a **multidisciplinary approach** and you're trained to carry out this task. Not only do you need to know what health precautions to take, but you must also be familiar with local customs and traditions, and know how to ensure that it will be possible to identify the person if necessary. Dealing with dead bodies is also very difficult from a psychological point of view and may even be traumatic, given the way corpses may look and smell. Furthermore, grieving communities may show hostility towards people who handle bodies.

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If you absolutely have to handle dead bodies:

- get advice from an ICRC forensic specialist before doing anything
- make sure your working environment is secure
- wear basic personal protective equipment: at a minimum, this should consist of liquid-proof gloves, an apron and rubber boots (an antiseptic mask is not essential)
- treat bodies with care and respect

⁵⁴ It's not impossible that someone drinking water infected by faecal matter from a corpse could develop diarrhoea, although this has not actually been observed.

- avoid putting your hand on the person's face or mouth
- wash your hands with soap and water after handling a body and before eating
- wash all reusable clothing and equipment thoroughly
- thoroughly clean any vehicles used
- insist that your management conduct a debriefing following any operation that involves handling dead bodies, and don't hesitate to consult a forensic specialist.

In an area where a highly infectious disease is endemic, only qualified personnel with suitable equipment can handle dead bodies without putting themselves at risk. The same applies after a disaster involving a chemical or radiological threat.

If bodies are located in an enclosed, unventilated space, ventilation will be essential, because potentially dangerous toxic gases can build up as bodies decompose. Special masks may also be needed in some situations, such as where poisonous gases, smoke or particles are present.

Don't rush things – dead bodies present only a negligible health risk. Burying bodies hastily and in an uncoordinated manner may make it impossible to identify them later.

Further reading

ICRC, World Health Organization, Pan American Health Organization and International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, *Management of Dead Bodies after Disasters: A Field Manual for First Responders*, ICRC, Geneva, 2016: <https://shop.icrc.org/management-of-dead-bodies-after-disasters-a-field-manual-for-first-responders-pdf-en>.

10.9 HOW TO DEAL WITH ANGRY PEOPLE

There'll be no shortage of angry people in your life as a humanitarian. You'll run up against villagers angry because their community's not in your programme, prisoners' relatives angry because they reckon it's your fault they can't visit, officials angry because you didn't consult them on something and soldiers angry because you can't treat their sick comrade. As a humanitarian, you often have to turn down all sorts of requests, at the risk of making someone angry because they believe you've refused to give them something they're entitled to.

And often it will be something that they do genuinely need. If they're armed, drunk and/or on drugs, the situation will be more difficult to manage and more dangerous.



10.9.1 WE ALL GET ANGRY

Anger is one of the four emotions shared by all human beings, regardless of their culture, alongside fear, sadness and joy. People often feel angry if they get the impression that someone doesn't respect them, or they've been wronged. This results in a feeling of frustration, leading to anger and aggression. It could be that the person is angry with you, that they're trying to get something or that they want to harm you. However, you're probably not the only reason for their anger. It could be that they need to direct their anger at someone and you just happen to be there. Deprivation, violence and multiple catastrophes can leave a person feeling powerless, frustrated and in despair.

Put yourself in the other person's shoes. Ask yourself what they might be feeling and how they might see things.

The basic mechanisms: anger, fear, sadness and joy⁵⁵	
Anger	
Role	Expresses the feeling of having been wronged; that a person's values, that which belongs to them, their territory or their personal sphere are not being respected.
Time and place	Here and now, but may be related to the past in the case of a grieving process.
Function	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Useful if it serves as a means of being heard or indicating one's boundaries. Can also impel a person to act. • Dysfunctional if it applies to the past, because the person has no means of influencing the past. People who have been unable to obtain reparation for something that occurred in the past often remain prisoners of their own anger.
Needs	To be respected, set boundaries and be listened to actively.
Empathic response	Facilitate the expression of anger, take it seriously, understand, recognize one's mistakes and put them right if necessary.
Fear	
Role	Warns the individual of danger.
Time and place	Future – near or distant.
Function	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Useful if there is a threat; allows the person to confront or avoid it. • Dysfunctional if the threat is not real, if the person perceives a threat as more serious than it is or if they take no action. Under those circumstances, fear increases the person's level of stress and can cause them to lose control.
Needs	Security, protection, support.
Empathic response	Facilitate the expression of fear, inform, reassure.
Sadness	
Role	Experience feelings of loss, separation or abandonment.
Time and place	Past – including immediate past.
Function	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Useful if it forms part of a grieving process and is linked to a real loss. • Dysfunctional if it's linked to depression or to a grieving process that isn't evolving.
Needs	Cry, be listened to, be supported, belong.
Empathic response	Receive the person's sadness and their tears, show compassion, be present, connect with the person.

55 C. Progin, *Les Émotions*, Centre romand de soutien par les pairs, 2014.

Joy	
Role	Share, savour, appreciate and express feelings of well-being, satisfaction, pleasure or success.
Time and place	Past, present and future.
Function	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Useful if it takes the form of a moment of joy that's good to share, releases tension and excitement, allows a person to look back on something positive. • Dysfunctional if it doesn't respect others' needs or if it's a defensive reaction unconnected with the situation (cynicism or contempt).
Needs	Have one's joy recognized, accepted and shared.
Empathic response	Allow the person to express their joy, meet up to share and to enjoy the moment.

10.9.2 HOW TO SPOT THE SIGNS OF ANGER BEFORE IT'S TOO LATE

People show anger in different ways in different cultures. In many cultures, self-control and outward signs of politeness are very important, while expressions of irritation or anger are disapproved of. In such situations it can be difficult to detect signs of hostility towards you. But the fact that an official doesn't offer you a cup of tea could indicate that you're not welcome, as could the absence of a smile in a culture where smiling is part of being polite.

While you do need to be able to decode any signs of hostility towards you, you also need to make sure that your response doesn't make things worse. Non-verbal factors such as intonation and body language will often affect the way your message is received more than the words themselves. So if the other person is angry, you need to maintain control over your posture, your gestures and your facial expression, and you need to obey the unspoken rules of behaviour that apply. If you don't, you'll raise the level of tension and things may well get worse.

If you're not from the area, find out how people show hostility in the local culture. Also find out what postures and facial expressions are considered provocative or insulting.

10.9.3 CONTROL YOUR OWN EMOTIONS TO DEFUSE THOSE OF OTHERS

Your clear-headedness and your ability to control your emotions and behaviour will be of great value to you in situations that have the potential to turn nasty. Be aware that your most eloquent phrases will have no effect if the other person is emotionally unready to listen to them.

If the other person is drunk or on drugs

People under the influence of alcohol or drugs have a different perception of reality. They may become verbally or physically aggressive, or simply lose control. Rational discussion, decision making and negotiating will be beyond them. As a result, any attempt to reason with them will not only be useless but could make things worse. In areas where alcohol and drugs are a problem, it's best to schedule meetings in the morning, when there's a chance of talking to someone who's at least half-way sober.

If somebody who's visibly under the influence of drugs or alcohol acts aggressively towards you:

- stay calm, don't raise your voice and avoid provoking them
- avoid sudden movements and any movements that could be interpreted as threatening
- keep a safety distance between you if possible
- don't try and negotiate with them – just look for a way out of the situation
- offer them something to eat or drink if you think that might help
- try to get away or encourage them to leave
- if the person is extremely threatening – and especially if they're armed – do what they tell you, without resisting.

If you have to deal with someone who's angry

The recommendations below apply only if the person doesn't appear to have the intention of doing you serious harm. If they're armed and highly aggressive, do what they tell you, immediately and without resisting.

Focus on the aim, which is to prevent things from turning nasty.

- Listen, listen again and listen some more! Let the person express their emotions without interruption, contradiction, correction, challenge or reproach, otherwise you risk making them even angrier. Don't tell them to "calm down". Recognize their anger without judging, and tell

yourself that their aggression is aimed not at you but at the organization or the international community.

- Treat them respectfully and ask them to explain the situation, while remaining vigilant.
- Be careful about your tone of voice. Set an example by remaining calm. Don't try to out-shout them or let your ego get the better of you – you'll only make things worse.
- Control your facial expressions and body language. Stand or sit at an angle to them, rather than facing them head-on. Look at them, but don't stare, so they don't feel uncomfortable or threatened. Don't touch them, point your finger at them, frown or breathe heavily in exasperation.
- Don't show fear and don't let yourself look like a victim – either of these will make it easier for them to dominate you. Maintain a low profile, while appearing confident and determined. Don't appear arrogant, but avoid appearing hesitant or weak.
- If circumstances permit, try to eliminate any tension linked to your current location by inviting the other person to continue the discussion somewhere quieter.
- Consider the option of offering them something to eat or drink, to get things on a more human level and change the atmosphere a little.
- If they keep repeating the same thing, reformulate what they've said briefly, in your own words. This will show that you're listening, and that you've understood what they're saying.
- If they make direct accusations, never try to defend yourself – that could make things worse. If you or the organization have made a mistake, acknowledge the fact and repeat that as often as necessary. If not, try to understand why the person is angry by asking them to explain.
- Whatever you do, make sure you don't make any promises you won't be able to keep.
- Show that you want to find a solution, tell the person you'll investigate the things they're angry about or take them up with your management, or simply recognize that you've been unable to come to an agreement. Agreeing on a plan may reassure them, and enable both of you to move on.

Give the other person a chance to save face, without compromising your dignity or that of others present.

If you really can't get them to calm down, it will be up to you to decide whether it would be reasonable and useful to resort to threats, such as reporting the matter to their superiors or suspending one of your activities. But be aware that threats are a form of violence. They may work in certain situations, but they may also get you into trouble – the person may perceive a threat as a personal attack and become even more angry.

You must report any violent verbal dispute to your management, so that you can decide together what measures to take, if any.

11. SECURITY INCIDENTS

You may experience or witness a security incident, given the complexity and volatility of the places where the ICRC operates. There's also the risk of "ordinary" accidents and medical emergencies, of which the consequences could be more serious if you're in the middle of nowhere, a long way from the nearest decent hospital. Obviously, you must do what you can to prevent such situations, but you must also be prepared for them. Knowing what to do in an emergency may mitigate the consequences of an incident and save lives.

This chapter explains how you can prepare yourself to react effectively to an incident or a medical emergency.

Topics:

- immediate action
- first aid
- alerting the ICRC (as quickly as possible)
- how and why to provide basic psychological support.

This chapter doesn't necessarily distinguish between incidents that result from deliberate acts (security incidents) and those that don't (safety incidents).

11.1 WHAT IS A SECURITY INCIDENT?

Deliberate damage to your vehicle, being threatened with a weapon, physical violence, attacks, kidnapping, etc. ... there are several types of security incident, and not all are equally serious. So what do we mean by a "security incident"? A security incident is any event that may cause physical or psychological harm to you or another member of staff, cause material damage to the organization or impede the carrying-out of its operations. So even if it has no direct impact on your safety, action such as confiscating your working documents or vandalizing your vehicle may affect your access to the field and your ability to do your job. A puncture ceases to be a "problem to solve" and becomes a "security incident" if someone has deliberately damaged your tyre. It then becomes vital to know whether this was an act of random vandalism or a targeted attack on the ICRC.

Near-misses are also security incidents. Did you get the impression those shots were aimed at you? Even if you weren't hit, you could have been. Were you almost electrocuted in your bathroom? There's clearly a problem with the electrical system, and it needs to be fixed to stop the same thing happening again.

Not all occurrences are the result of intentional acts such as attacks, shooting, mine explosions or arrests. Some – such as natural disasters, fires, road accidents or electrocution – are accidental or coincidental. Humanitarians are inclined to be less vigilant regarding accidents, despite the fact that a large percentage of them experience accidents – and illnesses.

11.2 HOW TO PREPARE YOURSELF TO HANDLE AN INCIDENT

11.2.1 KNOW HOW TO GIVE FIRST AID

If one of your colleagues is injured, and no-one around has medical or paramedical training, it will probably be you who has to look after stabilizing and evacuating them until health professionals can take over. You must therefore have the basic first-aid skills needed to react quickly and appropriately. In turn, that means you must have taken a first-aid course – and regular refresher courses, because we forget these things very quickly!

Do to others as you would have them do to you: be prepared for dealing with medical emergencies and keep your first-aid knowledge up to date.

11.2.2 CARRY FIRST-AID SUPPLIES

Having a clean, complete first-aid kit available is essential: a simple antiseptic can prevent a minor wound from getting infected and a pair of scissors can save precious seconds if you have to cut away a patient's clothing to examine them or cut up a piece of cloth to make an improvised bandage. You don't generally need sophisticated medical supplies to carry out first aid. With a little creativity, you'll find most things you need, such as cloth or plastic. However, if the weapons threat is significant and there are no proper medical facilities, you may indeed require a more sophisticated first-aid kit.

- Find out where first-aid kits are kept in the buildings the ICRC uses and on ICRC vehicles, and make sure you know how to use them.
- Make sure you inform the person responsible if items have been used or are missing or dirty.
- Get yourself a personal first-aid kit.
- Before any longer stay in a remote area, check whether you need to take a post-rape kit, which includes post-exposure prophylaxis for use in case of contact with contaminated blood. You must take a post-rape kit with you if you expect to be more than 48 hours away from the nearest ICRC office, as the medicines in the kit have to be taken within 72 hours of a rape occurring.

11.2.3 BASIC PRECAUTIONS

While there are some problems you'll just have to resolve on the spot, knowing the procedure to follow if an incident occurs will save valuable time. Your most powerful weapon in the event of a medical emergency or injury is to take the right decisions quickly. The minutes and hours immediately following a serious incident are the time when efficiency, level-headedness and reacting correctly can limit the negative consequences.

In order not to lose valuable time in an emergency:

- familiarize yourself with the procedures to follow in case of an incident – they're only of any use if you can apply them, because you've prepared yourself to do so⁵⁶ make sure you know the locations of the nearest health facilities in the area where you're working
- make sure you know where to find first-aid kits in offices, residences and vehicles
- always carry a copy of your blood-group card and a list of any allergies
- know who to contact in an emergency, and carry a list of phone numbers
- always carry some means of communication with which to call for help, and make sure you know how to use it
- learn first aid.

*Always carry
a laminated card
with a list of emergency
contacts.*

⁵⁶ The security regulations for your office will describe in detail the procedure to follow in case of an incident, accident or medical emergency, including who to contact first (radio room, manager, health specialist, etc.).

11.3 REACTING TO AN INCIDENT

11.3.1 SECURITY INCIDENTS

Generally speaking, you can apply the same method to any security incident. Act in as considered, coordinated and efficient a manner as possible, and avoid putting yourself in danger. Focus on the essential:

1. Make sure that you and the team are safe.
2. Inform your base.
3. Take care of any casualties.

You must inform your base as soon as possible, so they can mobilize the resources needed to assist and advise you and take steps to prevent anyone else falling victim to the same hazard.

Who, how many, what, when, where, how

- How many people are affected? Who? How many people are on the scene? Who?
- Who needs medical attention? (give a brief description of their injuries)
- What happened? (briefly describe the type of incident)
- When did the incident occur?
- Where?
- What action have you taken and what are your future intentions?
- What immediate assistance do you need?
- What is the security situation at the scene?

What will your base do when they receive your report? The nature and scale of the response will depend on the seriousness of the incident and the circumstances.

In general, they will:

- advise you regarding immediate action (evacuation options, whether you need to report the incident to the nearest police post, etc.)
- mobilize the resources needed to help you
- organize medical evacuation if necessary, by surface or by air

- warn personnel who are working in the area or who might use the same route, so they can avoid running into similar problems
- inform all entities who need to be informed, such as the authorities, the police, the parties to the conflict, other humanitarian organizations, etc.
- if necessary, step up security measures in the area or suspend activities
- **inform the families** of those affected, in the case of a serious incident.

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11.3.2 ACCIDENT OR INCIDENT INVOLVING INJURIES

If circumstances permit, contact an ICRC health professional for guidance (any precautions to take, advice on first aid, evacuation options, etc.).

1. Make sure you and the team are safe

- Secure the area.
- Make sure the injured are safe, without putting yourself in danger.
- Make sure your hands are clean.
- Avoid direct contact with body fluids (blood, saliva, vomit).

2. Communicate

- Inform your management as soon as possible.
- Call for assistance by any available means (radio, phone, driver, messenger, etc.).
- Coordinate with your colleagues and divide the tasks among you as efficiently as possible.
- Explain briefly to those present what you're going to do, and why, and the limitations on what you can do.
- As far as possible, maintain contact with your base until management of the incident is over, so that you can keep them informed of the situation.

3. Treat the injured in order of priority (triage)

- Start by treating those who have breathing difficulties or are bleeding heavily.
- Reassure the casualty. Explain the situation and comfort them. Make sure they don't become cold. Keep them dry and in the shade.
- If they're conscious, tell them about each measure that will be taken to help them.
- Encourage the casualty to cooperate, and respect their dignity when examining them. Remove clothing to assess their injuries if necessary, but do so in such a way as to respect their modesty and local custom.

- Keep the casualty in your field of view. Make sure they're in a comfortable position.
- Carry out first aid.
- If the casualty needs further treatment, arrange for them to be taken to the most suitable medical facility. If they're to be evacuated, check security conditions along the route and **notify** any entities that should be informed.

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Keep the security aspect in mind. Think before you act and don't take risks. If possible, coordinate your actions with your base and with ICRC health personnel.

11.3.3 ROAD ACCIDENT INVOLVING THE PUBLIC

How to react depends very much on the context. In many contexts, immediate action in the event of a road accident is the same as for any other incident: secure the area, inform your base and treat any casualties. In others, even a minor road accident can provoke violent reactions if it involves a member of the community – or an animal belonging to a member of the community. An animal is often a very valuable asset or an important means of subsistence for a household. In some cases, leaving the scene immediately may be the only way to avoid being lynched. Once you're somewhere safe, then you can start thinking about how to help any casualties and do whatever may be necessary.

In other words, reacting inappropriately to a road accident could put you in serious danger. Ask your management about the best procedure to follow in the area where you're working.

In general:

- Don't leave the scene of the accident unless you're in danger. If you aren't, then secure the area, inform your base and treat any casualties.
- Ask your base whether you should report the accident to the police or other authority.
- If the police are present, cooperate with them.
- Try to obtain the names and contact details of anyone who has suffered injury or damage, and of any witnesses.
- Take photos of the scene of the accident, but only with the permission of all concerned, and only if this will not put you in danger.

- Don't reimburse anyone for damage while at the scene – don't even pay for the loss of an animal or minor damage to a vehicle.
- Don't accept responsibility for the accident. That's for the police, insurance company or courts to decide – or the ICRC.⁵⁷
- Don't sign anything without asking your management for advice.
- If you have to abandon your vehicle, try to take all ICRC identification with you (magnetic ICRC logos, flags, tabards, etc.).

*Never try to pay for any damage on the spot.
This will probably be disputed later and may create
a precedent for all humanitarian organizations in the area.*

11.4 FOLLOW-UP

The consequences of an incident aren't over when everyone gets back to the office. The first steps are to provide the necessary care and support to the victims and witnesses, and to minimize the risks for personnel and operations.

11.4.1 ALERT AND INFORM

Why is it necessary to report every security incident?

Many incidents never get reported. The reasons vary – failure to appreciate the need, feelings of guilt, a wish to avoid criticism or not wanting to write a report. Reporting an incident not only allows the organization to support you at the time but also ensures that your colleagues have access to vital information concerning security. The more information the ICRC has, the better placed it is to modify its risk analysis, security management and operations, so as to prevent similar incidents occurring again. For instance, if your office knows that humanitarian vehicles have been attacked in the area and is aware of the circumstances (location, time, methods, type of violence, consequences, etc.) it will be in a position to decide what precautions to take, such as avoiding certain routes. Warning and informing your office is therefore essential to your security.

Anything that falls into the category of “security incident” must be reported via a standardized incident report form. The first step will be to collect factual

⁵⁷ It's not unusual for the police at the scene to decide that you're responsible by default, as they consider that whoever's best able to bear the costs of the accident should do so.

information via an operational debriefing involving those who were present. The aim of that debriefing is to answer the following questions:

- What happened?
- What are the consequences for those present?
- Who are the (presumed) perpetrators?
- What are the possible causes of the incident?
- What do we believe to be the perpetrators' motives?
- Does the incident appear to have been premeditated or opportunist?
- Is it possible that the ICRC, your team or you personally were targeted?
- Were there any precursors?
- Were you sufficiently prepared to handle an incident like this?

Some of those questions will probably remain unanswered, depending on the nature of the incident. For instance, if your convoy came under fire, it may be difficult to identify those responsible and discern their motives.

Every incident must be reported as quickly as possible. Everybody's security depends on it.

It will be the task of the management team to carry out an overall analysis of the incident. However, it's essential that you contribute to that analysis, because keeping everybody safe requires everybody to play their part. Your perception of the incident and any mistakes you may have made is essential if

the information is to be of adequate quality and if there is to be as complete as possible an understanding of the circumstances surrounding the incident. This will provide the basis from which the ICRC can draw conclusions, e.g. regarding the way the incident was managed, with the aim of avoiding the same mistakes in future.

What do I need to report?

You can report an incident even if you yourself didn't suffer as a result of it. You should report any unusual occurrence that could affect your access in the field, your activities or the ICRC, whether it's the result of an intentional act or of an accident. So a threat aimed at the ICRC, an unusual administrative obstruction, the confiscation of a

list of beneficiaries, a minor incident involving the population, etc. should all be reported, even if they don't necessarily qualify as security incidents. They may yield valuable information regarding changes in the security situation. It's

It's better to report things, even if they turn out to be unimportant, rather than to risk losing valuable information on potential threats.

also important to report any serious incident involving another organization – especially a Movement component – and the theft or loss of any ICRC equipment.

Don't forget that security incidents are sometimes preceded by verbal warnings or threats, either direct or implied. This means that it's not only important to be listening out for any signals that people are sending you, however weak they may be, but also to report anything unusual to your management. Minor events that appear insignificant at first sight may be of considerable relevance to security management, and may hence be seen by the ICRC as security incidents.



11.4.2 HOW DOES THE ICRC REACT TO A SERIOUS INCIDENT?

In the case of a kidnapping, serious injury, death or other serious occurrence, the ICRC will activate a crisis-management mechanism, which will include:

1. a crisis-management team in the field, usually based at the delegation in the capital
2. a crisis-management team at HQ in Geneva
3. a directorate-level crisis committee at HQ in Geneva.

This three-level structure will coordinate all action taken in direct connection with the incident, for as long as the situation requires.

That action will include:

- ensuring medical and psychological care for the victims and witnesses, as appropriate to each person (whether or not to evacuate injured personnel to another country or repatriate them will depend on their state of health and the medical facilities available locally)
- the repatriation of any bodies
- contact with and support for the families
- communication and coordination with all involved (governments, police, weapon bearers, journalists, etc.)
- cooperation with other Movement components if necessary
- handling certain administrative matters, such as insurance
- support for security management in the area concerned and the making of any necessary changes to the ICRC's operations and activities
- in the case of **kidnapping**, all action necessary to secure the release of the personnel concerned.

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11.5 SUPPORTING COLLEAGUES FOLLOWING AN INCIDENT

How should I react if one of my colleagues has suffered or witnessed a security incident? This section explains the needs of someone who has experienced a security incident and how you can help them by providing basic psychological support.



11.5.1 BASIC PSYCHOLOGICAL SUPPORT

Basic psychological support consists mainly of supporting someone suffering emotional distress following a security incident or other potentially traumatic situation. That support must be both practical and appropriate to their needs. The most important things are to listen attentively, with empathy and compassion, and to let them express their suffering without judging them, so that they feel taken seriously and know that the violence they have suffered is recognized as such.

If properly given, basic psychological support will help achieve the following:

- **Restore a sense of security:** Attentive and compassionate listening, without judgement, in an environment away from violence, will be a source of comfort. This will enable the person to let go of some of the emotional shock resulting from the incident and will contribute to their stabilization process.
- **Bring the person back to the “here and now”:** This support helps the person re-establish some of that sense of normality that the incident has disturbed. It provides a notion of time and of the concrete, which may help them to reconnect with the present.
- **Identify the person’s immediate needs,** whether that means a need for information, to contact a member of their family, to change into clean clothes, to rest or anything else.
- **Put them in touch with resource persons** who can respond to their needs.

Basic psychological support is about helping a person who has experienced a security incident regain a feeling of calm and feel safe again, responding to their basic needs, providing them with information and helping them find professional support.

Important: Basic psychological support means getting alongside a person. It does not mean trying to investigate the facts of what happened. The aim is definitely **not** to get the person to recount what happened in detail. It’s therefore quite different from the **operational debriefing**, of which the aim is indeed to find out exactly what happened. A person will probably mention some of the details spontaneously. That’s fine, as long as the discussion does not take the form of an attempt to establish the facts.

11.5.2 SIX BASIC NEEDS

A security incident leaves a person in a state of shock, intense fear and confusion. It may cause them to lose their points of reference, and they may be experiencing the feeling of having narrowly escaped death. They may find it difficult to think coherently or to take even simple decisions. They may therefore need support, in order to re-establish their spatial and temporal points of reference. The aim is not to do everything for them, but to take a certain number of steps that could bring relief, while consulting them and respecting their wishes as far as possible.

The six basic needs of a person who has experienced a security incident are:

1. The need to be taken care of in a place that makes them feel safe

Receiving someone with compassion, in a friendly place where they are protected against further violence, will both reassure them and signal that the incident is over. This stage will facilitate their return to normality by making them feel protected and recognized. They will also benefit from experiencing order and organization after the chaos of the incident, which will have disrupted their notions of time and place.

2. Physical needs: medical care, food, drink

After having received any urgent medical treatment they may need, the person will need a period of calm, to catch their breath and perhaps have something to eat and drink. Like being welcomed into a place that provides a sense of security, this will help to reconnect them with the present, to signal the end of the experience and reduce their level of stress.

3. The need for information

The incident will have disrupted the person's life, and will have led them to wonder just how predictable their life really is. To start to feel safe again, and to feel that life is in fact predictable, the person will need clear, concise and consistent information on:

- The current situation, the people who were present when the incident occurred and their family: Where are they? How are they doing? When will I be able to speak to them and see them? What do we know about what happened?
- The future: What's going to happen to me in the coming hour, and in the next few hours and days?

4. The need to accept their emotions

Someone who has experienced a security incident will be feeling a combination of intense emotions, such as fear, panic, sadness, anger, shame, guilt, etc. It's important they know that these emotions exist and that if they want, they can express them to someone who will listen with compassion and without judging. For some people, putting emotions into words may be difficult. Or it may be contrary to their cultural norms. And some people simply don't want to express their emotions.

5. The need to share what they have experienced or to feel listened to

The incident will have shocked the person and will have invaded their emotions. Talking to colleagues the person trusts in a confidential framework will help them come to terms with this intrusion, will reassure them and constitutes a healthy approach to taking control of the event.

6. The need to find meaning, and answers to questions to which there may be no answer

A person who has experienced a violent incident will try to understand the sequence of events, but they will also tend to ask themselves questions to which there is often no answer. "Why me?", "What if I'd done this instead of that?" and similar questions are perfectly normal. Don't try to answer such questions or get into philosophical discussions. It's best to listen to them without judging, while indicating that their questions are indeed normal. A possible answer might be: "Yes, I can well imagine that you'd ask yourself that kind of question after what you've experienced."

11.5.3 PROVIDING BASIC PSYCHOLOGICAL SUPPORT

When? As soon as possible after the incident, after any urgent medical treatment has been provided and before the operational debriefing. You should take the initiative, rather than waiting for the people involved to do so. The operational debriefing should take place the day after the incident, not the same day. If any operational matters have to be resolved on the spot, it's best to do so as a separate activity at a different location.

By whom? Anyone, as long as they've undergone the corresponding training and obtain support from an ICRC mental health professional beforehand. Ask yourself whether you personally are the right person to be offering support, because there's no point starting if the people concerned don't trust you. The number of facilitators depends on the number of participants – the ratio should be one facilitator for every ten participants.

For whom? Everyone who experienced the security incident, whether as a victim or as a witness, must be offered basic psychological support.

Where? The location will depend on the type of incident and the circumstances. The session could take place outside (e.g. in the shade of a tree) or inside, depending on the facilities available. Find a place where the participants won't be visible and will feel free to express their emotions. Ask yourself "How can I create a reassuring atmosphere?" If the incident involved shelling or aerial bombardment, for instance, you should make sure there's no risk of sudden noises such as a slamming door, and reassure participants if they hear an aircraft.

Procedure⁵⁸

Do	Don't
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Be fully present and fully yourself. - Take account of the culture(s) and gender(s) of the participants. - Be compassionate and try to respond to the needs of the participants, in line with what they have experienced. - Remain calm, and speak in even and reassuring tones. - Use clear, concise sentences. - Explain that everything will remain confidential both during and after the session. - If you want to take notes, ask the participants for permission, and explain why you want to do so. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Be invasive or put people under pressure to speak. - Tell people to control their emotions. - Tell people what they should do. Instead, ask what they need in order to feel safe and at peace. - Take decisions for any of the participants unless it's absolutely necessary. - Make promises, unless you know that you'll be able to keep them.

⁵⁸ This outline of the procedure to follow is intended as an *aide mémoire* for those who have been trained in providing basic psychological support. It does not replace such training. For more detailed information on the subject, please consult an ICRC mental health specialist.

Step 1 – Welcome the participants

- Ask the participants to sit down, together. It's best not to split the group up unless someone would prefer individual support or there's no other option, e.g. if someone's in hospital.
- Offer something to eat and drink.
- Explain the purpose of the session.
- Remind everyone that the session is confidential, both for you and for the participants.
- Limit the discussion to a maximum of 45 or 90 minutes.

A few sentences you could use to launch the discussion

- "We're going to spend a few minutes together to relax a little and see what you need."
- "I was very sorry to hear about what happened. It must be very difficult for you."
- "I'm not here to judge, I'm here to listen."
- "What's said at this session will go no further."
- "What can I do for you?"
- "How are you feeling?"
- "What do you need right now?"

Step 2 – Listen

- Listen actively. Be tactful, empathic and compassionate. Don't be afraid of silence.
- Take part in the discussion as little as possible. Let people start to recover, and share their experiences freely. Accept that they may not want to talk.
- Look out for those who don't say anything. They too may have suffered severely.
- Support people in such a way that they can recover, re-establish contact with the "here and now" and with the others, and regain a sense of security and inner peace.

Calmness techniques: exercises for bringing people back to the “here and now”

- Breathe in slowly through your nose. Feel the air as it fills your lungs. Then breathe out slowly through your mouth. Count to four for each breath in and each breath out.
- Remember today’s date.
- Listen to the background noises.
- Observe all the objects around you that are white, green, etc.
- Pick up or touch nearby objects. Are they hard or soft, heavy or light, warm or cold? What texture do they have? What colour are they?
- Taste some food or a drink. What kind of taste does it have? How does it smell? What flavours remain on your tongue afterwards?
- Rub hand-cream into your hands.
- Concentrate on the sensations in each part of your body: the hairs on your forehead, the weight of your glasses on your nose or your shirt on your shoulders, feel your heart beating or the contact between your feet and the ground, etc.

Step 3 – Identify people’s concerns and immediate needs

- Assess whether anyone is still at risk, e.g. of reprisals.
- See whether anyone needs help taking decisions. If someone’s confused, take steps to relieve some of the pressure and help them work out what to do next.
- Identify their concerns and assess their practical needs, such as contacting a member of their family, clean clothes, money, information, rest, etc.

Questions you can ask to discover people's needs

- "What would do you the most good right now?"
- "What do you need?"
- "Do you feel in danger?"
- "Would you like to contact a member of your family or someone you trust?"
- "Do you have transport to get you home?"
- "Do you need someone to take you home?"
- "Is there someone who could stay with you for the next few hours?"

Step 4 – Help everyone to feel that their experience is valid

- Receive people's emotions with compassion but without letting them submerge you, e.g. by offering a tissue to someone who's crying.
- Provide the information the participants need in order to understand what's happening to them in physical terms.
- Explain the most common symptoms and reactions:
 - Physical: Perspiration, dizziness, palpitations, stomach upsets.
 - Behavioural: Isolation, sleep problems, silence.
 - Cognitive: Confusion, difficulty taking decisions.
 - Emotional: Fear, anxiety, anger, panic, helplessness, despair.
- Emphasize that all of these reactions are perfectly natural, that they will differ from one person to another and that they may only appear later.
- Show the participants that you understand them and believe them.
- Explicitly point out the abnormal, unacceptable and arbitrary nature of the violence they've experienced. Emphasize that it's legitimate and normal to have been afraid and to feel like you've been through something serious, even if you're an experienced humanitarian, a mature person or a man. [Or whatever... to be adapted to the context.]

Step 5 – Provide concrete support and refer participants to resource persons

- Answer practical questions as best you can. In case of doubt, refer the person to someone better able to answer the question.
- Make concrete proposals as to the resource person(s) best able to help each individual, depending on their needs and the intensity of their reactions.
- If necessary, and if they agree, refer them to appropriate ICRC specialists.

- Offer to accompany them during the subsequent stages (operational debriefing, medical care, etc.). You could say, for instance: “If you like, I could accompany you and help you with the various things that need to be done.” Be aware that even if a person appears to be OK, they may find things difficult and become anxious once they’re on their own.

Step 6 – Close the session

- Thank everyone for the time together.
- Tell them what the next steps will be.
- Explain the support you can provide and the degree to which you will/will not be involved, depending on what you’re willing and able to offer each person.

Make sure you consult the participants regularly to see what they need, as that can often change rapidly. Don’t forget to take care of yourself as well. Listening to what your colleagues have been through can be a source of **stress** for you too. Ask for support if you need it.

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11.6 IF YOU EXPERIENCE A VIOLENT INCIDENT

Even if you haven’t been physically injured, experiencing or witnessing a violent security incident is a psychologically stressful experience. Trying to push on as if nothing has happened, minimizing the shock and avoiding thinking about the emotions you experienced, could affect your stability medium-term even if there are no immediate effects. Later events could cause old traumas to resurface totally unexpectedly, leading to incomprehension, uneasiness and perhaps suffering.

- If you do have a painful experience, talk to a health professional or someone you trust.
- If you have intrusive memories in the weeks following an incident, or you experience symptoms such as flash-backs, nightmares, sleep problems, panic attacks, phobias or depression, consult a health professional immediately.
- If you have the impression that you can’t do your job properly at the moment and that you need some time off to recover, talk to your boss or your health adviser, to find a solution that meets everyone’s needs as well as possible.

Don’t minimize the emotional burden resulting from a security incident.

Don’t hesitate to ask for help, even months afterwards.

11.7 SECURITY INCIDENTS: SEVEN QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF

1. Am I sufficiently prepared to handle an incident, a medical emergency or an accident involving injuries?
2. Have I prepared my family for such a possibility?
3. Do I know how to give first aid?
4. Do I know what to do in an emergency?
5. Do I know the basic principles involved in supporting a colleague who has been involved in a security incident?
6. Do I know who to contact for help?
7. What occurrences should I report to my management, and why?

Further reading

ICRC, *First Aid in Armed Conflicts and Other Situations of Violence*, ICRC, Geneva, 2008: <https://shop.icrc.org/first-aid-in-armed-conflicts-and-other-situations-of-violence-pdf-en>.

12. ANNEXES

12.1 GLOSSARY

Movement

The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, which consists of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and the National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies.

notification

Process of informing entities that could have a significant effect on security – such as armed forces and armed groups – of the presence, movements and activities of the ICRC in a specific geographical area.

office

Any ICRC entity in the field, regardless of its size or position in the organigram. This may be the main office of the organization in a given context (delegation or regional delegation) or an entity responsible for a smaller geographical area (sub-delegation, office, etc.)

policy

The ICRC's reference texts, which lend its work lasting consistency and boost its predictability and credibility in carrying out its mandate. While the texts are meant to withstand the test of time, the ICRC does adapt them to changes within the organization itself and in the realities of humanitarian work. Some of the individual documents forming part of this policy are known as *doctrines*. Doctrines relevant to security matters include Doctrine 16 on safety in the field and Doctrine 58 regarding the ICRC's confidential approach.

risk

Any uncertain event liable to endanger the well-being, security or safety of an individual, or the ability of the organization to achieve its objectives.

This manual also uses the terms “danger” and “threat” to avoid repetition.

risk assessment

Overall process of risk identification, risk analysis and risk evaluation.⁵⁹

risk management

Coordinated activities that make it possible to take decisions regarding risk.

risk-reduction measures

Measures to reduce or mitigate a risk. Such measures may be preventive (e.g. a perimeter wall to prevent intrusion) or reactive (e.g. a medical evacuation).

In this manual, measures to reduce risk are sometimes referred to as security precautions.

risk source

Element which alone or in combination has the intrinsic potential to give rise to risk.

security incident

Any event that may cause physical or psychological harm to a member of staff, cause material damage to the organization or impede the carrying-out of its operations.

This manual does not necessarily distinguish between incidents that result from deliberate acts (*security incidents*) and those that don't (which might more accurately be dubbed *safety incidents* or *accidents*).

sexual orientation

Sexual orientation is understood to refer to each person's capacity for profound emotional, affectional and sexual attraction to, and intimate and sexual relations with, individuals of a different gender or the same gender or more than one gender.⁶⁰

⁵⁹ International Organization for Standardization, *ISO Guide 73:2009, Risk management – Vocabulary*, ISO, 2009: <https://www.iso.org/obp/ui/#iso:std:iso:guide:73:ed-1:v1:en>.

⁶⁰ Yogyakarta Principles (2006), Footnote 1, p. 6.

weapon

Any object designed or used to inflict wounds or to damage essential equipment or infrastructure. A weapon can be anything from a simple hand-held object like a knife or a stick, to a highly complex guided missile capable of hitting a target hundreds of kilometres away.

12.2 WEAPONS

12.2.1 WEAPON SYSTEMS

direct-fire weapons

Weapons designed for use where the firer (or the person guiding the weapon, if the two are not the same person) can see the target. These weapons generally (though not always) have a shorter range than indirect-fire weapons. They include small-calibre or “light” weapons (such as pistols, rifles and machine-guns), anti-tank weapons (rockets, shells, etc.) and munitions dropped from aircraft (missiles and guided bombs).

indirect-fire weapons

Weapons designed for use where the person operating the weapon cannot see the target, e.g. artillery or surface-to-surface missiles.

12.2.2 THE EFFECTS OF WEAPONS

Weapons generally use one of the following mechanisms to cause damage or injury:

kinetic energy

Projectiles mainly use kinetic energy to cause injury or damage. Systems using kinetic energy include small-arms ammunition and certain types of anti-armour projectile.

Generally speaking, projectiles that use kinetic energy don't explode; they penetrate their target using their speed and shape. When such a projectile hits a target, it causes damage or injury by transferring its energy to the target.

Some munitions that use kinetic energy may also produce other effects, increasing their capacity to cause injury or do damage. For instance, some medium-calibre munitions have elements that are designed to explode or burn after penetration.

blast

Weapons that use blast produce a shock wave when they explode. The injuries or damage caused depend not only on the force and direction of the shock wave but also on such factors as the size of the explosive charge, the topography of the area and (in the case of munitions dropped from the air and others that explode above the ground) the height of detonation.

Injury and damage are the result of the pressure that the shock wave exerts on the human body and on structures. Further injury or damage may occur as a result of secondary effects, such as flying debris and splinters of glass, or the collapse of structures.

fragmentation

Fragmentation weapons work by ejecting fragments, which may vary in size from microscopic to very large. Injuries and damage are caused by penetration of these fragments into the target.

Fragmentation may be primary or secondary. Primary fragmentation refers to the action of components of a weapon that are designed to cause damage or injury when projected by explosion. These components include the casing of the weapon (which may be specially designed to break up into fragments) and its contents, such as ball-bearings, nails, nuts and bolts in the case of an improvised explosive device. Secondary fragmentation involves objects that don't form part of the explosive device, such as fragments of wood, stone and glass, or parts of a vehicle.

Fragments move at very high speeds. If the explosion is sufficiently powerful, they may still be dangerous at distances of several hundred metres. Generally speaking, small fragments don't travel as far as larger ones. Fragments may cause penetrating wounds or blunt trauma, depending on their size and shape, and the amount of kinetic energy they're carrying at the moment of impact.

incendiary weapons

Incendiary weapons are designed to cause injury and damage by burning or starting fires. They include bombs dropped from aircraft, artillery shells and even some types of hand grenade. Incendiary munitions generally contain an inflammable component and a second component to ignite it. White phosphorous is a particularly dangerous type of inflammable component, as it burns spontaneously on contact with oxygen and requires no external source of ignition.

These weapons cause burn injuries and can also cause huge fires if used in large numbers. In confined spaces, their combustion consumes the available oxygen, causing death by suffocation.

12.3 INTERNAL SUPPORT MECHANISMS

At the ICRC, contact persons are always available to support you and to answer any security questions.

Source of support	Where to find it and what it does
Your boss	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The first person to ask about security, both operational and personal.
Colleagues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Exchange of experience and know-how. Advice on operations and security. - Help with professional and personal matters. - The roles of some colleagues are directly related to security management, e.g. they may be responsible for the security of the locations the organization uses.
Human resources	<p><i>Various locations</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Your point of contact for professional/personnel questions not linked to operations, such as your contract, salary, insurance, visas, administrative procedures, human resources regulations or training.
Risk-management advisers	<p><i>Various locations and positions</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Operational and technical support regarding security (including the provision of training).
Legal advisers	<p><i>Various locations</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Privileges and immunity of staff members.
Staff health advisers	<p><i>Delegations</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Point of reference for everything to do with physical and mental health (preventive measures, travel-related health, work-related illnesses or accidents, medical examinations, pregnancy, psychological support, etc.). - Medical care following an incident. - Basic psycho-social support, plus referral to internal or external psychologists or psychiatrists. - Support during crises.

Source of support	Where to find it and what it does
Staff mental health specialists	<p><i>Various locations</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Support for staff facing difficulties that affect their mental health or performance. - Support following incidents and during crises. - Specialized support for staff who have suffered sexual violence. - Individual, confidential psychological consultations (in person or remotely), or referral to internal or external psychologists or psychiatrists.
LGBT contact persons	<p><i>Various locations</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Confidential support for LGBT staff. - Referral to appropriate support services.
ICRC Ethics, Risk and Compliance Office	<p><i>At headquarters in Geneva, and in some delegations</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Prevention of wrongful behaviour by staff members. - Handling of alleged violations of the Code of Conduct and related policies and procedures. Supervises inquiries and carries out investigations.
Ombuds network	<p><i>At headquarters in Geneva, and in some delegations</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A neutral and independent partner, offering staff an opportunity to share their concerns in confidence in such areas as conflicts with colleagues, harassment, intimidation, threats, reprisals, fair treatment and ethical or legal issues.
Independent Board of Appeal	<p><i>At headquarters in Geneva</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Instance of final appeal against disciplinary measures. - Looks at whether the procedures have been followed and issues a legally-binding decision.

12.4 WHAT SHOULD I TAKE WITH ME?

12.4.1 BASIC DOCUMENTS AND OTHER ITEMS

Things to take ... and things to leave at home

You'll need to add and remove items depending on the circumstances.

Don't forget

- Valid ID documents, (**for one nationality only** if you have multiple nationalities)
- ID issued by the organization, including a Red Cross or Red Crescent volunteer ID
- ID badge issued by the organization
- Tickets (airline, etc.)
- Contact list for use in case of problems (including international dialling codes)
- Vaccination record book
- Blood-group card
- Allergies list
- Medical prescriptions
- Prescription details for any glasses or contact lenses you wear
- A small amount of cash (generally in dollars) and credit card (don't carry your PIN with it!)
- Copies of all important documents (carried separately)

Recommended

** = Check that this item is compatible with your means of transport and is permitted at your destination*

- Adaptor for electrical sockets
- Padlock (combination rather than key)
- Hidden pouch for cash and documents
- Torch (preferably wind-up type) or head lamp
- Cigarette lighter*
- Leatherman or similar tool*
- Strong adhesive tape
- String or cord
- Reusable water bottle (insulated if you're going somewhere cold)
- Comfortable, strong, waterproof shoes in which you can walk long distances
- Clothes that are discreet, durable and suitable for both the culture and the climate
- Clothes for more formal occasions
- Thermal blanket (if you're going somewhere cold)
- Comfort/leisure items (pillow, photos of family and friends, reading materials, music, games, etc.)

Things to take ... and things to leave at home

You'll need to add and remove items depending on the circumstances.

Articles NOT to take

- Any passport, ID card or other document indicating that you hold a second nationality
- Books banned in the country you're going to, or which deal with politically or religiously sensitive subjects
- Documents indicating that you previously carried out any activity that could be seen as problematic, e.g. press card, police warrant card, military ID card, ID card issued by another humanitarian organization, etc.
- Pornographic material, including material stored in electronic form
- Drugs, including cannabis
- Arms and ammunition, including handguns

Articles NOT to take

- Gas for camping stoves
- CS gas spray
- Binoculars
- Telescope
- Drone
- Military-themed clothing (including caps or hats) or clothing displaying sexist imagery
- Valuable objects (including imitations)
- USB key or other media containing material that could get you into trouble or confidential information
- Ivory
- Animals (unless you've obtained authorization) and vegetables/plants (on account of public health regulations)

12.4.2 MEDICAL AND PERSONAL HYGIENE

You'll need to modify the list below depending on what's available in-country and what you and your family require. Check that any medication or articles you bring are legal in your country of assignment and are acceptable to the airlines with which you'll be flying.

If you need specific medicines that will be difficult to obtain in-country:

- Bring enough for three to six months.
- Bring a list of your medicines (with dosages and frequencies), signed and stamped by your doctor. If anything happens to you, this list could be very useful to the medical personnel who'll be responsible for looking after your welfare.
- If you have any history of severe allergy (anaphylaxis), bring two epinephrine (adrenaline) self-injection kits, so as to ensure that one is always available.

- If you suffer from asthma attacks, bring two sets of inhalers, so as to ensure that one is always available.
- If you're going to a malaria region, also bring malaria-prevention tablets for your family.

Recommended medical and personal hygiene items	
Personal medication	Depending on your requirements (and those of family members) and availability in-country.
Malaria prevention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Malaria-prevention tablets (including a supply for your family) if you're going to a malaria zone - Insect repellent (20%–40% DEET or 20% Picaridin) - Permethrin (powder or spray) to kill harmful insects such as mosquitoes, mites, fleas, etc.). You'll use this to treat mosquito nets, bedding, etc.
Painkillers and medicines to combat fever	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Paracetamol 500 mg - Ibuprofen 400 mg
Treatment of diarrhoea and other digestive problems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Oral rehydration solution - Anti-diarrhoeal medicine (Loperamide 2 mg) - Antacid against indigestion (aluminium or magnesium hydroxide)
Nose and throat	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Nasal decongestant - Throat pastilles
Treatment for minor cuts, scratches and rashes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 1% hydrocortisone cream (in case of bites or sunburn) - Gel for treating burns - Iodine-based antiseptic - Plasters, preferably of the type you cut to size yourself - Elastic compression bandage - Scissors - Tweezers
For treating eye irritations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Eye drops (artificial tear)
As required	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Prescription glasses, plus a spare pair, or contact lenses (preferably disposable) - Hearing aid, with spare batteries
Miscellaneous	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Thermometer - Water-purification tablets (e.g. Aquatabs, Puritabs or Micropur Forte) - Hand-disinfecting gel - Any personal hygiene products not available in-country - Sunglasses - Sun cream - Condoms
Self-medication can have serious effects on your health. If you don't start to recover quickly, consult a doctor as soon as possible.	

12.5 PREPARING FOR A FIELD TRIP

You'll need to adapt this table depending on the situation, mode of transport and activities.

Main steps	Specific tasks
Define the aim	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Define the aim of your trip in precise terms.
Update the analysis of the situation and choose your security measures – and/or change your aim – as appropriate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Analyse the security situation in the light of recent events. - Decide whether threats along the planned route require you to take certain measures or change your plans. - Choose the most suitable means of transport (car, 4x4, motorbike, boat, etc.). - If you plan to spend one or more nights in the field, evaluate the available options. - Find out what medical facilities are available where you're going. - Ask yourself whether the expected benefit in humanitarian terms justifies making the trip, given the risks involved.
Estimate the time necessary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Draw up a realistic timetable on the basis of the distance you'll need to travel, the tasks you intend to carry out, road conditions, other conditions, weather, checkpoints, etc.
Coordination	<p>Internal:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Coordinate your aims with those of other departments and involve them if necessary. - See if you can carry out any tasks on their behalf. - Inform your management and all relevant departments, and get approval where needed. - Inform other ICRC entities if necessary (e.g. if you'll be working near the boundary of an area that falls under their responsibility).
	<p>External:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Identify entities that you need to inform of your operation (other Movement components, weapon bearers, government representatives, traditional authorities, etc.) and tell them what they need to know. - Make sure you've coordinated with other humanitarian organizations if necessary. - Take steps to obtain all necessary security guarantees.

Main steps	Specific tasks
Admin and logistics	<p>Personnel</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Decide who you need in your team to achieve your aim. - Check that the profiles of your team members won't cause any problems. This includes people from outside the ICRC, such as staff and volunteers of Red Cross or Red Crescent Societies, personnel from partner organizations and government agencies, visitors, etc.
	<p>Logistics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Decide which vehicles to use and who is to travel in each. - Check that all vehicles are carrying everything needed to deal with breakdowns (fuel, spare wheel, towing equipment, etc.) and medical problems (first-aid kit), and that team members know how to use them. - Make sure you have identification materials (ICRC flags, tabards, etc.). <p>Remember to involve logistics staff in this part of the planning – including the drivers.</p>
	<p>Admin</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Decide how much cash to take with you, bearing in mind the risks involved. - If you're going to be carrying large amounts of cash, decide how it's to be carried and who'll be responsible for it, and obtain authorization from the appropriate person(s). <p>The ICRC administration department must be involved in this, and you need their authorization if you wish to transport large sums of money.</p>
	<p>Other</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Fill in all the internal requests for authorization required, including the form for field trips, which includes the planned timings, list of team members, number of vehicles, intended route, etc. - Prepare the necessary equipment and obtain the necessary authorizations for your intended activities. - Collect ICRC information material appropriate for the people you expect to meet. - If you'll be spending a long time in remote areas, take a post-rape kit and, if appropriate, a rapid diagnostic test for malaria. - Assemble your personal kit, including documents (identity document, blood-group card), medicines and emergency anti-malaria treatment if necessary. - If necessary, take enough food and water.

Main steps	Specific tasks
Plan your communications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Decide what communications equipment you'll need. - Check that it works, and that everyone knows how to use it. - Specify a backup means of communication in case anything goes wrong. - Brief those responsible for monitoring your movements on the intended route, and agree communication procedures with them (e.g. how often you'll be checking in).

12.6 BASIC FIRST AID

In an emergency, knowing first aid and taking the right decisions – quickly – can save lives. These recommendations are reminders of what you should have learned during your first-aid training.

12.6.1 IF THE PERSON IS UNRESPONSIVE

Your first priority is to make sure oxygen is reaching the casualty's brain. The rule for this is ABC – Airway, Breathing & Circulation

- **Airway:** must be clear (mouth, nose and throat).
- **Breathing:** the casualty must breathe, either on their own or with the aid of artificial respiration.
- **Circulation:** the casualty's blood must circulate, which means their heart must be beating and you must stop any major bleeding.

Simple measures to keep the casualty alive until more advanced medical aid is available

- Check to see whether the casualty is breathing: tilt their head back slightly and check for breathing by looking and listening.



If the casualty is breathing

- Put them in a stable position (sometimes called the “recovery” position) on their side with their head tilted slightly backwards so that they can breathe easily and can’t choke on their own blood, saliva or vomit.
- Cover them with a blanket, clothing or whatever is available.



If the casualty is not breathing

- Lie the casualty on their back.
- Carry out regular chest compressions, pressing firmly on the lower part of their sternum (the bone in the middle of the chest to which the ribs are attached) and releasing. Perform at least 100 compressions per minute.
- Continue the chest compressions (taking turns if other people are available) until either a health professional has taken charge of the person, or there’s no hope of survival, or you’re told to stop.



12.6.2 IF THE CASUALTY IS BLEEDING

Studies of war injuries conclude that bleeding accounts for 50% of deaths and is the commonest cause of avoidable death. This is preventable if you follow the simple rules set out below.

Apply a compression bandage

- Ask the casualty to apply pressure to the wound, or apply pressure yourself using a clean cloth.
- Replace this manual pressure by a figure-of-eight pressure bandage made of a clean cloth or any other absorbent material.
- Make sure the bandage is not causing any pain. Check that no part of the affected limb is swollen or turning blue. If either of these things is happening, loosen the bandage.



Bleeding from the neck

- Apply a compression bandage, passing it under the opposite shoulder.



If blood is seeping through the compression bandage

- Add an additional bandage (or clean cloth) on top of the first bandage; don't remove the first bandage.

If there's a foreign body in the wound

Don't try to remove a foreign body, such as a bullet, knife, etc. The foreign body itself is not the problem; the problem is the risk of internal bleeding, tissue damage or infection, any of which can be fatal.

- Don't remove the object.
- Don't apply a tourniquet.
- Immobilize the object by surrounding it with compresses or clean cloth.
- Apply a compression bandage, without removing the object.



If a limb is severed or has been amputated

The essential thing is to stop the bleeding.

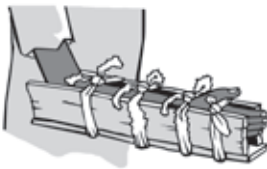
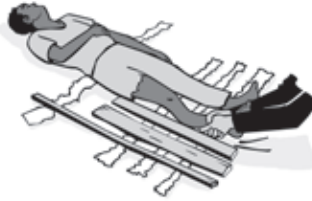
- Apply a compression bandage.
- Only apply a tourniquet if the limb has been amputated and the casualty is losing a lot of blood.
- If you don't have a purpose-made tourniquet, use whatever you have – it could save the casualty's life.



12.6.3 FRACTURES

Arms and legs

- Gently straighten the broken limb; this will make it easier to immobilize it effectively.
- Then immobilize the limb, to reduce pain and prevent further injury.
- If there's a visible wound, apply a bandage.



Broken neck

- With the casualty lying down, gently immobilize their head and straighten their body, to reduce pain and prevent further injury.



12.6.4 WOUNDS

General recommendations

- Remove any dirt and small foreign bodies, even from small wounds. Wash the wound with drinking water and then apply an iodine-based antiseptic.
- Cover the wound with a plaster or with a clean, damp cloth.
- Keep the wound under observation. If it becomes red and infection begins to spread, get medical advice.

Abdominal wounds

- Don't try to push the casualty's organs back into their body.
- Cover the wound with a clean, damp cloth.
- Help the casualty to lie down in a comfortable position, perhaps with their knees bent.
- Evacuate the casualty.



Chest wounds

- Cover the wound with a piece of plastic (or other similar material), **fixing it on three sides only** – it must **not** be completely airtight. If this is not possible, leave the wound uncovered.
- Help the casualty to lie down in a comfortable position, perhaps half-sitting.
- Evacuate the casualty.



12.6.5 BURNS

- Cool the affected area for as long as possible (under clean running water, for instance) until there's no further pain or the casualty is beginning to feel cold.
- Cover the burn with clean, flexible material, such as plastic film or a plastic bag.
- If the burn is larger than the palm of the victim's hand or affects such areas as the face, genitals or joints, you must consult a doctor. Always keep burns under observation. If pain persists, or the burn becomes infected, consult a doctor.



12.6.6 BITES

Mammal bites

These bites often become infected and in principle you should start a course of antibiotics even if no infection is obvious. There's also a risk of rabies if the bite occurs in a rabies zone.

If you're bitten by a mammal – including a bat – or suffer any graze or wound that punctures your skin or if an animal's saliva comes into contact with an existing skin wound or mucous membrane:

- Carefully wash the bite with soap and water.
- Apply an iodine-based antiseptic.
- If you're in a rabies area, get medical advice as quickly as possible, even if you're vaccinated against rabies. In such areas most mammals can pass on the illness, including bats.
- If the wound is small, it's generally best to let it heal naturally.

Snakes

Prevention

- Avoid walking through marshy areas and thick undergrowth.
- Wear boots that cover your calves if you have to walk through long grass or forests.
- Snakes cannot hear, but they do feel vibration. You can scare them off by hitting the ground or stones with a stick.
- Before putting on your shoes or putting your hand in a container, check it for snakes (and insects).

Snake bites

- If you can do so without taking unnecessary risks, take a photo of the snake (including its head) or memorize its appearance. Knowing the type of snake will help decide what treatment is needed.
- Place the person (or yourself, if you're the casualty) in a comfortable position, ensuring that the bite is lower than the heart. Reassure the casualty and calm them down if necessary.
- Clean and disinfect the area. Apply a compressive bandage. Immobilize the limb and make sure the casualty sits or lies still.
- Give the casualty water to drink, in small sips.
- Immediately inform the person responsible for medical emergencies, so they can tell you what to do next.



Note: Snake bites are almost never fatal, but they can be very painful. The venom generally takes several hours to have an effect. To slow the spread of the venom to other parts of the body:

- Do **not** apply ice.
- Do **not** cut the wound open.
- Do **not** try to suck the venom out of the wound.
- Do **not** apply a tourniquet.

Spider bites

Same procedure as for snake bites.

12.7 THE INTERNATIONAL PHONETIC ALPHABET

Use the international phonetic alphabet (sometimes referred to as the NATO alphabet) to spell out letters when conditions are difficult. It also comes in handy for spelling complicated or unfamiliar words, such as place names. The somewhat unusual spellings of Alfa and Juliett are in fact correct!

A: Alfa	J: Juliett	S: Sierra
B: Bravo	K: Kilo	T: Tango
C: Charlie	L: Lima	U: Uniform
D: Delta	M: Mike	V: Victor
E: Echo	N: November	W: Whiskey
F: Foxtrot	O: Oscar	X: X-ray
G: Golf	P: Papa	Y: Yankee
H: Hotel	Q: Quebec	Z: Zulu
I: India	R: Romeo	

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MISSION

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) is an impartial, neutral and independent organization whose exclusively humanitarian mission is to protect the lives and dignity of victims of 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.

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