

Communication

Objekttyp: **Group**

Zeitschrift: **Annual report / International Committee of the Red Cross**

Band (Jahr): - **(2001)**

PDF erstellt am: **18.04.2024**

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COMMUNICATION

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Appropriate communication, both internally and to the outside world, is crucial for the ICRC in its efforts to influence the attitudes and behaviour of those who determine the fate of conflict victims and who can either obstruct or facilitate humanitarian action. The Communication Division and the Press Service work to ensure that the ICRC maintains a credible and consistent image in support of these efforts. In the field, the key communication objectives are pursued by over 50 national and expatriate staff in charge of communication activities. Field communication staff continued to receive information, advice and professional resources from headquarters in 2001. In addition, 22 new field communication officers attended a training course on ICRC communication policy, programmes and management techniques in October.

A new integrated approach to production, marketing and distribution was introduced early in the year with a number of innovations: a new logo for communication products was approved by the Directorate; corporate design guidelines were developed; and a more dynamic approach to ICRC products was adopted, notably with regard to the "Panorama" posters and video and the range of products linked to the "Women and War" project. To improve communication products, new strategies were developed and implemented and a systematic evaluation process was introduced.

Research on strategies for exerting influence in the future

In a bid to gain a better understanding of how the ICRC's communication and diplomatic activities can exert more influence on those who most need to respect humanitarian law, the Communication Division launched a research project in mid-2001 in close cooperation with psycho-social specialists and ICRC delegations. Two exploratory missions were conducted in the Republic of the Congo and in Colombia to assess the feasibility of carrying out in-depth field research and to test data-collection tools. The results were expected to be available by mid-2003.

The ICRC's main target audiences are the armed and security forces, mine-affected communities, decision-makers and opinion-formers in government, and tomorrow's decision-makers – students and other young people.

Armed forces, police forces and other bearers of weapons

The ICRC's objective is to ensure that all levels of armed, police and security forces know and apply international humanitarian law (IHL) and the relevant provisions of human rights law, and that other armed groups either support, or at least do not oppose, humanitarian action.

In 2001 the ICRC developed its approach and its training tools for police forces on the basis of an evaluation of its experiences in 2000. The approach to police training was redefined by focusing on contexts where a clear link could be established with ICRC protection activities, such as Eritrea, and on countries facing political violence, such as those in Central and South America. The ICRC strengthened its network of contacts with other organizations running programmes for police forces (OSCE,¹ UNHCR, Council of Europe), to avoid duplication of activity. Training resources were developed, including a booklet for wide distribution to police and prison officials which summarized the main tenets of human rights law that apply to police work.

The ICRC reinforced its relations with strategic military academies, regional alliances and defence institutes, such as the NATO² Defence College, the *Ecole Militaire de Saint-Cyr*, the Royal Military Academy at Sandhurst, the *Collège Interarmées de Défense* in Paris, and the Swedish Defence College.

Furthermore, the ICRC was represented at a number of conferences, including meetings at the NATO School in Oberammergau and the Western Hemisphere Institute for Security and Cooperation (WHINSEC), and the NATO Commanders' Conference at the Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe (SHAPE). It expanded its network of military experts established to help raise awareness and promote application of the law of armed conflict and other humanitarian principles.

The ICRC organized three international conferences for heads of training of armed forces, in Moscow for the Russian Federation, in Bangkok for the Association of South-East Asian Nations, and in Otavalo, Ecuador, for Latin America and the Caribbean countries. The aim of these conferences was to exchange field experiences on integrating IHL into military training.

The ICRC also took part in several international military exercises in Europe and around the world. For example, in the framework of the Partnership for Peace and on the basis of the Memorandum of Understanding with SHAPE, it took part in "Allied Effort", "Cooperative Partner" and "Peace Shield". Through this participation, the ICRC aimed to include IHL-related events in the military scenario at the planning phase, to increase knowledge of its mandate and activities and, finally, to be involved in role-playing during the actual exercise.

A structured approach to other bearers of weapons, including private security companies, was developed, in terms of both message and methodology. It is worth noting that this approach was launched in Asia, namely at train-the-trainers courses for the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam in Sri Lanka and for the Karen in northern Thailand. A study on non-State actors was carried out in order to formulate a series of basic key messages for these arms-bearers. In 2001 informal contacts were made with private security companies to assess the feasibility of including IHL in their training programmes.

The ICRC continued to provide assistance and expertise for the running and development of training programmes in IHL and human rights for armed, police and security forces. The ongoing activities of the 21 specialized delegates involved in these programmes, supported by a multinational network of officer-instructors, raised training standards in over 100 countries.

Mine-affected communities

The aim of the ICRC's mine/unexploded ordnance-awareness programmes is to reduce the number of casualties by changing patterns of behaviour and proposing alternative solutions geared to each affected community. A special effort was made to include mine-awareness and mine-clearance/markings as an integral part of other assistance activities.

In 2001, the ICRC's Mines Awareness Unit helped 14 delegations and the National Societies of the countries concerned to run effective mine-awareness programmes by providing guidelines, monitoring and evaluation tools, training modules and the services of an expert help desk, and by carrying out assessment and evaluation missions. These included an evaluation of the impact of the programme initiated in the Balkans and an assessment mission conducted in southern Iraq to determine an appropriate strategy. The ICRC also gave support for the resumption of mine-clearance activities in Afghanistan after the bombing campaign.

The Communication Division continued compiling a standard database on mine/unexploded ordnance casualties, due to be online in 2002. The ICRC's mine-awareness concept was promoted among organizations involved in mine action such as UN agencies, UNICEF in particular, and among donors and ICRC staff. Better understanding of the concept on the part of field staff led to an increase in the number of programmes implemented at field level. A joint project was initiated with a clearance agency linking mine awareness to clearance activities.

¹ Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe

² North Atlantic Treaty Organization

Decision-makers and opinion-formers

The objective pursued in this area is to ensure that key leaders and opinion-formers facilitate the action of the ICRC because they see it as a credible, legitimate and efficient humanitarian organization, working close to the victims of armed conflict around the world and knowledgeable about IHL and humanitarian issues. Communication activities are also aimed at making them aware of the significance of IHL and encouraging them to actively support its implementation.

In 2001 the ICRC increased its knowledge and understanding of key opinion-formers and developed communication strategies and tools to ensure their understanding and support of both the ICRC and IHL. This was achieved in part through their involvement in ICRC projects such as "Women and War" and the publication *FORUM: War and Accountability*.

The ICRC contributed to the debate on humanitarian issues by making the results of the "People on War" survey available to researchers. A programme was set up to develop and share statistical data based on the "People on War" survey. A research project has been conducted with the Harvard School of Public Health and preliminary results are expected in July 2002. Support was given to delegations in exploiting the results of the "People on War" survey and various methodologies were developed to improve ICRC communication with influential players in conflict zones.

During the year the ICRC adopted a new policy for the development of its Website (www.icrc.org), created in 1995, including a new design and promotional activities targeting decision-makers and opinion-formers. Work on this project started in mid-2001 and resulted in an appreciable increase in page hits. Following the events of 11 September, the number of hits rose sharply and for the first time the number of pages read passed the 1.5 million mark per month, with the average visit duration increasing to around 10 minutes. Overall, English remained the main language of reference, chosen by just over 50% of Internet users, followed by French and Spanish which shared equal importance. In November, the first pages in Arabic were introduced; these will be further developed in 2002 and Russian will be added later in the year. Other developments during 2001 were the introduction of audiovisual reporting online from Afghanistan, the live Web launch of the *2000 Annual Report* from Nairobi and a "Women and War" event on the Web.

Students and tomorrow's decision-makers

The ICRC endeavours to ensure that, through their studies, future decision-makers and opinion-leaders understand the practical relevance of IHL and have a thorough knowledge of its basic principles. This will enable them to work to implement IHL, to influence the humanitarian debate and the development of existing law, and to support the ICRC's action.

In 2001, the ICRC developed training in IHL for university students and professors by organizing, financing or moderating national and regional courses and seminars. Such events were held in some 20 countries in Africa, Asia, Europe, and North America. It also continued to distribute its casebook on IHL to professors around the world. Following a needs assessment, the ICRC began to adapt and translate the casebook for publication in French.

Youth

The ICRC feels it is essential to ensure that young people understand the need to respect human life and dignity in times of violence and armed conflict and to provide them with the basic knowledge of IHL necessary to apprehend current events from a humanitarian point of view.

In 2001 technical and financial support was given to over 55 National Societies and Ministries of Education around the world to start implementing "Exploring Humanitarian Law" (EHL), an educational programme for young people. Over 50 government officials and teaching staff from 29 countries took part in three international train-the-trainer workshops held in Geneva in July and December. Some 2,000 EHL kits, in English and French, were supplied to partners in the programme, including Ministries of Education and National Societies, free of charge, and to ICRC field delegations.

Assistance and expertise were made available to ICRC delegations which had developed initiatives aimed at young people at risk of becoming involved in armed violence; support was given for youth summer camps in territories administered by the Palestinian Authority. In the Russian Federation, the ICRC and the Ministry of Education devised an IHL test that was included in the yearly nationwide competition for pre-military training classes in secondary schools.