



NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS

The Red Cross

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Introduction

Welcome to the International Committee of the Red Cross. Known worldwide as simply the Red Cross, this non-governmental organization (NGO) is dedicated to ensuring respect for human beings and preventing human suffering without discrimination due to nationality, race, religious belief, socioeconomic class, or political affiliation. While the Red Cross is an NGO, it works very closely and in association with federal governments worldwide. Specifically, the Red Cross utilizes its credibility and clout to draw attention to disasters that require the attention of national governments.

The Red Cross is headquartered in Geneva, Switzerland and has external offices in about 80 countries. It has approximately 12,000 staff members worldwide. About 800 employees work in the Geneva headquarters, 1,200 **expatriates**, of which half serve as delegates managing international missions and half work as doctors, agronomists, engineers, and interpreters, , with about half of them serving as delegates managing its international missions and the other half being specialists like doctors, **agronomists**, engineers or interpreters, and about 10,000 members of individual national societies working on site in the local mission.

The Red Cross has four main goals on its global agenda. These are the initiatives that you must lobby for while representing the Red Cross at HMCE 2009:

- Reduce the number of deaths, injuries and impact from disasters.
- Reduce the number of deaths, illnesses and impact from diseases and public health emergencies.
- Increase local community, civil society and Red Cross capacity to address the most urgent situations of vulnerability.
- Promote respect for diversity and human dignity, and reduce intolerance, discrimination and social exclusion.

While these may seem like rather lofty goals, the Red Cross has historically had more than considerable success in not only providing aid and relief in times of disaster, but also in drawing attention to problems that were previously not well known.

Expatriate—one who has taken up residence in a foreign country.

Agronomists—the scientists who specialize in agronomy, which is the science of utilizing plants for food, fuel, feed, and fiber.

History

The idea for the Red Cross was born in 1859, when Henry Dunant, a young Swiss man, came upon the scene of a bloody battle in Solferino, Italy, between the armies of imperial Austria and the **Franco-Sardinian Alliance**. Some 40,000 men lay dead or dying on the battlefield, and the wounded were severely lacking medical attention. Dunant organized local people to bind the soldiers' wounds and to feed and comfort them. On his return, he called for the creation of national relief societies to assist those wounded in war, and pointed the way to the future **Geneva Conventions**.

The Red Cross was officially established in 1863 when five Geneva men, including Dunant, set up the International Committee for Relief to the Wounded. This organization eventually became the International Committee of the Red Cross. Its emblem was a red cross on a white background: the inverse of the Swiss flag. In the year following the Red Cross's inception, 12 governments adopted the first Geneva Convention; this was a huge milestone in the history of human rights as it served as one of the first internationally recognized laws dealing with the proper treatment of casualties during war time. Specifically, it established a universal standard for offering care for the wounded and defining medical services as "neutral" on the battlefield.

Since its founding, the Red Cross has led unprecedented and unparalleled relief efforts during the World Wars, the Holocaust, and almost every armed conflict since then. The Red Cross has even been awarded the Nobel Peace Prize three times in 1917, 1944, and 1963. Today, it is the oldest and most honored humanitarian aid, program and it is one of the most widely recognized organizations in the world.

Means of Action

Consultation

The Red Cross is slightly different from other NGO's because, it does have a very close relationship to various government bodies. The main reason for this is that governments rely on the vast experience that the Red Cross has in dealing with relief efforts. As a member of the Red Cross, you will work to consult governments on how to best deal with their numerous crises. In real teams this means that relations between the Red Cross and governmental bodies will include giving testimony before committees, providing reports, and coordinating requests made by the various committees at HMCE.

While you will be working closely with and helping these governmental bodies, keep in mind that the Red Cross does advocate a strong sense of autonomy. The organization is completely independent and autonomous so that it can, at all times, take action in accordance

Franco-Sardinian alliance—group of troops from France and Sardinia that fought against Austria in 1859.

Geneva Conventions—the Geneva Conventions consist of four treaties formulated in Geneva, Switzerland, that set the standards for international law for humanitarian concerns.

with its goals and principles, and not necessarily conform to the will of any particular government. As such, if a committee makes request outside the scope of your original initiatives, you are not obligated to follow the request. You can even go so far to protest the actions of a committee if they **contravene** the major ideologies of your organization. The Red Cross has very well established goals; be sure to uphold them and make every effort to advance these goals at the conference.

Contravene—*to be in conflict with; to violate; to transgress.*

Lobbying

As an NGO, one of the primary tools that you can utilize in working towards your goals is information. The information that you present, or choose not to present, can be very useful in terms of advancing your initiatives. Given the experience that the Red Cross has in dealing with crises, the information you have is very valuable to governments that are not sure of how to deal with their current disasters. As such, they will be actively seeking out your organization for help.

In preparing to be a member of the Red Cross, you should research the issues that the Red Cross is or would be involved in. In order to engender support for your initiatives on the part of governments, you must provide sound, quality information on the specifics of the disaster. While you can spin the information in such a way to garner more support, the research itself must be unbiased. The Red Cross has a strict policy of providing analysis and assessments **impartially**.

Impartially—*not biased; fair.*

Campaigns

The Red Cross has offered aid and relief in more than 70,000 natural and man-made disasters. These disasters have included everything from hurricanes, earthquakes, floods, and tornadoes to large automobile accidents, train wrecks, and toxic spills. Below is a short list of the countless areas to which the Red Cross offers aid.

Armed Conflicts

Since its founding, the Red Cross has been notorious for providing aid to the victims of armed conflict. Whether in Iraq helping thousands cope with being displaced from their homes due to battle or in the Congo leading humanitarian efforts in the midst of civil war, the Red Cross tirelessly dedicates itself to helping innocent bystanders who are unfortunately affected by war and armed conflict.

Several of the issues at HMCE 2009 either deal directly or indirectly with armed conflicts throughout the world. It is your job, as a member of the Red Cross, to provide as much information as possible regarding the innocent victims of war, so that these problems can be properly addressed and resolved. Besides lobbying against conflicts that

may lead to further suffering, the Red Cross can work with many government bodies to come up with adequate aid efforts to assist the victims of ongoing conflicts.

Food & Drink

While providing sustenance for those affected by war, the Red Cross also leads aid efforts in areas that are directly affected by famine and droughts. Millions of people worldwide are affected by these natural phenomena each year, and the most common effect is shortages of food and water. As a result, millions endure malnutrition and other health complications due to this lack of adequate resources.

Furthermore, there is a substantial lack of **potable** water in underdeveloped countries. One reason for this problem is the demographic shift from rural to urban areas in countries with low average rainfall and limited infrastructure that is unprepared to deal with the mass migration. Currently, approximately 27% percent of the populations of lesser developed countries do not have access to safe drinking water.

Potable—*fit or suitable for drinking.*

The Red Cross has been instrumental in leading efforts to curb the effects of famines and droughts. By raising donations directly, the Red Cross has been able to fund its own projects that enable it to make mass distribution of food and water to affected areas. In addition, the Red Cross can sway governments to devise their own relief efforts, as well as offer expert consultation on the best way to execute these programs.

Disease

Health initiatives in the Red Cross are diverse and include long-standing initiatives such as first aid and emergency response, as well as epidemic control, programs in health promotion and prevention, addressing stigma, providing **psychosocial** care and enabling community empowerment.

The Red Cross' worldwide network and volunteer base, its public auxiliary role with national governments, and its ability to broker partnerships provide the basis for the Red Cross to have a major impact on improving the health and care of vulnerable people in all corners of the globe.

Psychosocial—*of or pertaining to the interaction between social and psychological factors.*

Disasters

Disaster response continues to represent the largest portion of the efforts by the Red Cross, with assistance to around 30 million people annually from refugees to victims of natural disasters. The sharp increase in the number of natural disasters worldwide in recent years has prompted the Red Cross to devote more attention to disaster preparedness activities. These aim to establish national chapters of the Red Cross in many countries, which will help coordinate international disas-

ter responses. Establishing new chapters also has an added benefit of making national governments more **cognizant** of the risks they face, how to reduce their vulnerability, and how to cope when disaster strikes.

Cognizant—to be aware.

Conclusion

As a member of Red Cross, realize that your main obstacle will usually not come in the form of outright disagreement. Instead, your objective is to ensure that the primary initiatives of the Red Cross rank as one of the highest priorities on others' agendas. You can accomplish this goal with clear, insightful arguments, supported by solid facts and statistics, and convincing presentation

There is an abundance of information that you can use to open people's eyes to the atrocities taking place all over the world. Come prepared with sound data and clearly articulated arguments, and you will help further the cause of providing humanitarian aid where it is needed.

Guide to Further Research

As members of the Red Cross you should be able to provide detailed information on a wide variety of current and past Red Cross projects. This information will be valuable to policymakers who are looking for solutions to current disasters in their respective countries. Below is a list of websites where you can learn more about the Red Cross, its past and current projects, as well as its initiatives and goals:

- <http://www.ifrc.org/index.asp>
The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies is one of the umbrella organization under which the Red Cross operates. Here you will find more information about the history of the Red Cross and its main objectives. Additionally, you can find a list of its current initiatives at this website: http://www.ifrc.org/what/index.asp?navid=04_01.
- <http://www.icrc.org/web/eng/siteeng0.nsf/iwpList2/Home?OpenDocument>
This is the main website of the Red Cross. This will be the most valuable resource in terms of further research. You can find a detailed list of current Red Cross campaigns at this website: <http://www.icrc.org/web/eng/siteeng0.nsf/htmlall/activities?OpenDocument> .
- http://www.icrc.org/web/eng/siteeng0.nsf/htmlall/section_annual_report_2007
The 2007 Annual Report of the International Committee of the

Red Cross describes the field activities out of 80 delegations worldwide; its mandate to protect the lives and dignity of victims of war and its work to promote respect for international humanitarian law.

- <http://www.redcross.int/en/>
The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement is the other umbrella organization of the Red Cross. You will find further details on the current initiatives and objectives here.

While these websites outline the initiatives by the Red Cross, it would also be beneficial to see the Guides for Further Research in other HMCE briefings, particularly the ones that concern issues that the Red Cross has an interest in, such as foreign aid, genocide in Darfur, and neglected diseases. Good luck!

Bibliography

The American Red Cross <http://american.redcross.org/site/PageServer?pagename=COGP_CA_LosAngeles_main>

The International Committee of the Red Cross <<http://www.icrc.org/web/eng/siteeng0.nsf/iwpList2/Home?OpenDocument>>

International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies <<http://www.ifrc.org/index.asp>>

International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement <<http://www.redcross.int/en/>>