

ACCOUNTABILITY TO AFFECTED PEOPLE INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK



The AAP Institutional Framework is based on the July 2017 draft of the framework and accounts for findings and recommendations from the external evaluation on diversity, inclusion and accountability to affected people in ICRC operations.

The framework will be complemented with:

- examples and case studies illustrating the guiding principles
- a list of resources for each one of the guiding principles
- a more detailed policy on diversity and inclusion.

These documents, hosted on the [AAP team intranet page](#), will remain separate so they can be updated on a regular basis.

A. Introduction

This framework draws together ideas arising from internal discussions, key features of existing ICRC policy and practice, and recognized humanitarian standards. These include the [Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement](#), [Impact Measurement and Accountability in Emergencies](#), [The Good Enough Guide](#), and the [Core Humanitarian Standard on Quality and Accountability](#). The framework was drafted in 2017 and finalized following an external evaluation of diversity, inclusion and accountability to affected people in ICRC operations.¹

While this framework does not replace policies and approaches specific to individual programmes, it provides us with a common understanding of what accountability to affected people means and why it matters. By providing a common language and reminding staff of what we are trying to achieve through our programmes, this framework consolidates our multidisciplinary response to humanitarian problems and underpins how we should work with others to maximize our impact.

As the needs of populations affected grow in magnitude, complexity and interconnectedness, we should expect the ICRC to change its response and the way it works with others.

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The **Accountability to Affected People (AAP) Framework** articulates how to use power responsibly by taking account of, and being held accountable to, those who are affected by the use of such power. We recognize the importance of obtaining affected people’s views on their own needs to find and design their own solutions, while acknowledging the diversity of the people who form a community and the range of their needs and abilities. In doing so, we seek to ensure that affected people have the power to co-design humanitarian activities, in particular by making sure we:

- inform affected people
- understand the range of their vulnerabilities and abilities
- enable the participation of different groups of people
- adapt our activities to people’s priorities, vulnerabilities and abilities.

This framework provides field staff in particular with a coherent, integrated approach to delivering high-

quality programmes while remaining accountable to affected people. The framework does not, therefore, only cover ideas surrounding social inclusion, communication, participation and feedback but also addresses needs assessments, coordination, learning and partnerships.

Since the organization’s foundation, the ICRC has adopted people-centric approaches to humanitarian work, underpinned by the “do no harm” principle and the Fundamental Principles of humanity and impartiality. Our ongoing efforts to stay close to people affected by armed conflict and other violence are essential to understanding their needs, priorities, vulnerabilities, abilities and coping mechanisms, as they see them. We view AAP as both an ethical approach to bearing our responsibilities and an effective way to building trust and acceptance between people. Ultimately, it is a way of improving the impact of our work.

Changing humanitarian landscape

Consolidating the ICRC’s approach to AAP is also necessary if we are to adapt to the changing humanitarian landscape. The prevalence of new technologies means people can react more easily to crises, explain their needs more clearly, and expect their concerns to be more readily heard and taken into account. Social media and improved connectivity in particular have accelerated feedback loops and enabled people to demand greater interaction, transparency, responsiveness and accountability from others, including from the ICRC.² This is acknowledged by the humanitarian sector in the Grand Bargain and its commitment to a “participation revolution”.

The Institutional Strategy 2019–2022 also has a focus on including people in decisions that affect their lives. To ensure the relevance and sustainability of our humanitarian action, the strategy states that our working procedures should:

- maintain and increase our physical proximity to and digital engagement with populations affected by armed conflict and other violence
- systematically engage affected people on the relevance, design, implementation and review of our activities
- improve the timeliness, reliability and scope of needs assessments and feedback mechanisms.

¹ This [external evaluation](#) was completed in September 2018 by the Global Public Policy Institute.

² The ICRC is working with the IFRC and National Societies to develop a joint approach on Community Engagement and Accountability that builds on and complements this framework.

B. The ICRC’s approach to AAP

Our work is built on solid ethical foundations and best practice with the aim of ensuring the quality and accountability of our programmes. We create an enabling environment for staff to put these principles and practices into action (see figure 1).

Principled humanitarian response

The Fundamental Principles of the Movement, especially humanity and impartiality, form the ICRC’s ethical framework, putting *people* affected by armed conflict and other violence at the centre of our mandate. The principle of humanity, together with our commitment to upholding people’s dignity, guides our decision-making when we are faced with tough choices. Impartiality, and insisting on a needs-based approach to programme planning, pushes us to respond to people’s needs, rather than focus only on what we as an organization can deliver. Inclusive programme planning is essential to maintaining impartiality: in many instances, not making the effort to understand people’s specific needs, taking into account factors such as gender, age or disability, could end up excluding people who need our help.

Programme results

The ICRC aims to deliver programmes that are in line with the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development’s criteria for development assistance, which are often used to assess the impact of humanitarian operations. This means programmes that are timely, effective, accessible, inclusive, appropriate to the context, relevant to people’s needs,

free of negative consequences, and supportive of local capacities. Those best placed to judge whether these criteria have been met are the affected people themselves.

Guiding principles

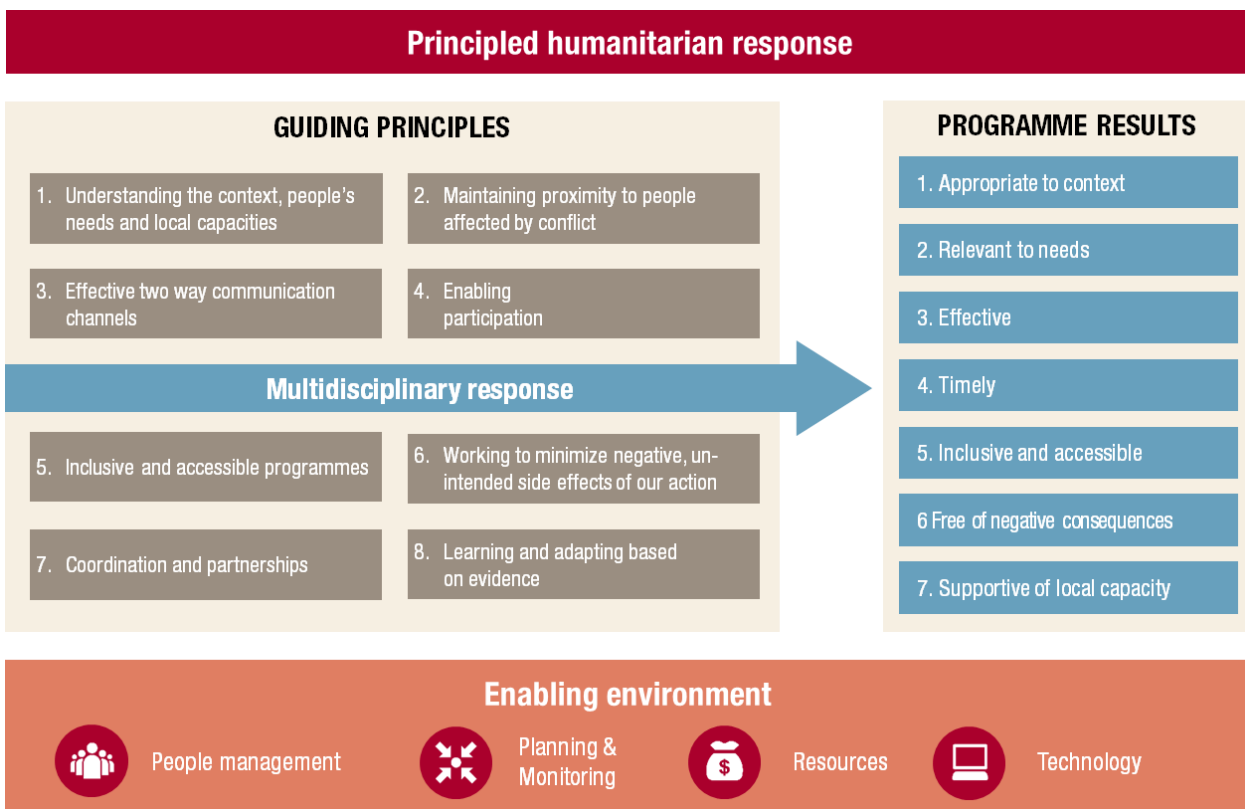
In order to consciously place people at the centre of our humanitarian work and to increase the likelihood of a programme’s success, we systematically account for a set of key actions when we assess situations, and then design, implement and monitor our programmes. To be effective, humanitarian responses to armed conflict and other violence need to be based on an understanding of all the problems faced by affected people, which is why our response combines programmes, advocacy, information and prevention activities.

Enabling environment

Systems and processes can help or hinder in achieving results. When systems, planning tools and resource allocation enable staff to take action that supports inclusive, timely and appropriate activities, we can do our best work and improve a programme’s results. This requires recruiting and training the right people, enabling and encouraging the right actions to take place through planning and reporting tools, allocating resources where needed, and making responsible use of technology where appropriate.

Section C describes the guiding principles that form the core of the AAP Framework.

Figure 1: ICRC’s approach on Accountability to Affected People



Dilemmas and constraints

While the ICRC consistently aims to provide humanitarian activities in line with our own high expectations, we cannot ignore the constraints we face. We are often confronted with logistical and security constraints that limit our choices. As a result, staff regularly need to address a range of dilemmas and trade-offs. The external evaluation of diversity, inclusion and accountability highlighted some of them.

Operational dilemmas

- Reaching more people with less targeted assistance vs reaching fewer people with more targeted assistance
- Quick, standard assistance vs longer, more participatory and adapted assistance
- Ensuring disabled people's access (to information, for example) vs investing in expanding the reach of (less targeted) communication

“Do no harm” issues

- Risk of singling out already marginalized people by consulting them separately
- Transparency vs creating unrealistic expectations by providing information on all ICRC services or by consulting people in an open-ended way
- Exposing affected people to a psychological burden by carrying out detailed assessments
- Creating risks (e.g. of looting or of triggering displacement) through transparent communication on distributions

Investment trade-offs

- Investment in formal feedback and complaints systems vs investment in direct contact or more programmes
- Time spent by staff on consultation vs time spent on implementation
- Time spent by staff documenting feedback for accountability vs time spent on other activities

Problems of representation

- Relying on community leaders to relay information and accepting potential bias vs investing the time needed to inform everyone individually
- Adapting to the priorities of the majority vs ensuring the most vulnerable are heard
- Antagonizing people in power by consulting marginalized groups directly

Professional judgement dilemmas

- People's priorities vs our concern for and expertise in security issues
- People's dietary preferences vs our nutritional expertise
- People's preferences for jobs they know vs our preference for diverse microeconomic projects

Humanitarian principles and international humanitarian law

- People's priorities may replicate harmful dynamics or violate the principle of neutrality
- Affected people's norms may conflict with international humanitarian law

Strategic trade-offs

- Focusing on issues where we can offer specialist help vs sticking to community priorities
- Focusing on conflict-related vulnerabilities vs an “all-victim” approach or a creative interpretation of our mandate
- Enabling services to continue vs the risk of taking over government's responsibilities

While there is rarely a right answer in such situations, two principles can guide decision-making. The first is ensuring that the views of people affected by armed conflict and other violence are taken into account. The second is ensuring that we are transparent about why we made certain choices.

C. AAP guiding principles

The AAP guiding principles describe the steps that people affected by armed conflict and other violence can expect the ICRC to take to ensure that humanitarian activities are appropriate, timely and effective. These principles are interconnected and work best when used together. Most of the principles have more than one aspect and are linked to specific indicators. Operational Delegations can assess their situation and its evolution over time by conducting a self-assessment on AAP.

1. Understanding the context, people's needs and local capacities

1.1 Systematic, objective and ongoing analysis of the situation and people involved

In order to be as objective as possible, teams should base their analysis on comparisons between different sources such as secondary data (e.g. external reports and official statistics; see also section 5.3), observation (e.g. detention visits and field trips) and direct

discussions with people caught up in the crisis. Understanding power dynamics, social factors, culture and the different elements that shape identities (including for example age, disability, gender, sexual orientation and other diversity factors) is important because it affects the dynamics of inclusion and exclusion, and in turn the relevance of the problem and situation analyses.

An enhanced vulnerability-based methodology, one that makes use of needs and impact assessments that are more participative and multifaceted, would help us to develop broader and more inclusive means of addressing the various threats to the safety and dignity of people affected.

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I. Brenda/ICRC

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Maintaining and increasing the ICRC’s physical proximity to people affected, in order to build relationships of trust that enable the organization to respond to an evolving palette of needs, will be crucial.

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1.2 Involving the people affected by the armed conflict to understand the problems they face

The needs of affected communities should not be assumed but identified through discussions that engage people to find appropriate responses. Field officers and delegates can achieve this by working with formal leaders and community committees, women's committees, disability organizations or if they exist, organizations led by people with diverse sexuality or gender identities. The National Society branches or volunteers are another key informant group in many contexts. The ICRC does involve communities more broadly precisely because community leaders or the loudest and most visible persons may not represent all members of the community fairly.

1.3 Understanding context-specific vulnerabilities, coping strategies and local capacities

Vulnerability is the result of a combination of specific factors (e.g. socioeconomic status, education, location or culture), individual traits of identity (e.g. age, gender, disability, sexual orientation or gender identity³) and the related power dynamics. Understanding context-specific vulnerabilities helps delegations identify factors that should be monitored when collecting and reviewing data (see section 5.3).

Individuals and communities can act to manage change in the face of shocks or stress, meaning they are resilient and can be agents of their own protection. While coping mechanisms may increase resilience, they may also be harmful. Therefore, understanding how civil society, existing institutions and other mechanisms support resilience enables programme staff to identify what positive mechanisms they can support and build upon.

1.4 Understanding which communication and feedback channels people use and trust

Mapping the media landscape can show what the preferred and most trusted channels of communication are, which helps in knowing how best to communicate with people in a given situation. Different groups (e.g. mothers with young children, older men or disabled people) will have different communication and information needs. They will likely trust different types of media and may not be able to access the same sources of information and communication. This also applies to their ability to provide feedback or make complaints. That is why staff should ensure that we not only know which communication channels exist but also which ones people trust and can use.

³ Neither of these traits should be construed as a vulnerability in and of itself.

⁴ Jérémie Labbé, "How do humanitarian principles support humanitarian effectiveness?" in *The Humanitarian Accountability Report*, CHS Alliance, 2015.

2. Maintaining proximity to people affected by conflict

Proximity is essential to understanding the situation and assessing people's material and protection needs based on their specific vulnerabilities (age, gender, disability, etc.). Staff members' physical presence enables them to develop a dialogue with communities, listen carefully to people's fears and aspirations, give them a voice and establish the human relationships necessary to "ensure respect for the human being", which is a crucial aspect of the Fundamental Principle of humanity. Proximity also enables teams to be aware of the local situation, including local initiatives that address the needs of the people. That means programmes can be developed that complement or support local communities, instead of duplicating or undermining their work. Striving to respond to communities' actual needs, in line with the Fundamental Principle of impartiality contributes to maintaining acceptance and access. In this sense, proximity is a driver of accountability and a prerequisite of effectiveness and relevance.⁴

However, proximity is not just about the ICRC gaining access to people. It is also about us being accessible to people. Staff should develop and maintain proximity in line with local preferences and constraints, by taking into account the state of the roads, the distances from duty stations and people's ability to travel. In situations where the ICRC works through National Red Cross or Red Crescent Societies and cannot maintain a physical presence, we must ensure that we can be a reliable and principled intermediary through the National Society and other means. Digital channels, i.e. radio, mobile phones, TV, newspapers, the internet or social media, can be critical for maintaining and developing proximity.

3. Effective two-way communication channels

The 2018 external evaluation showed that staff routinely explain the ICRC's mandate and approach to key contacts and people targeted by our programmes, being careful to manage people's expectations. The assessment highlighted three elements that are key to effective two-way communication.

3.1 Communicating in languages, formats and media that are easily understood, accessible and culturally appropriate

Different groups (e.g. mothers with young children, older men or disabled women) have different communication and information needs and may trust different sources of communication. Likewise,

familiarity with, or access to, new communication technology is uneven within any population. The most marginalized groups often have the least access to mainstream media, making them more vulnerable to rumours and misinformation.⁵

The ICRC does not rely solely on the most popular channel of communication but rather selects the appropriate combination of channels based on the people and groups we want to interact with, adapting media, formats and languages as needed – for example to make our communications suitable for people with vision or hearing impairments, or learning disabilities. Appropriate channels can be selected by referring to the mapping process carried out at the context-analysis stage (see section 1.4).

Information-as-aid

When armed conflicts break out or natural disasters strike, staff members' priority should be to use locally available channels to provide timely, accurate information to those affected. The right information at the right time and in the right format can save lives, prevent further crises and protect homes and livelihoods. Examples of providing information-as-aid include:

- information people need to protect themselves from a threat such as aerial bombing, mines, storms or epidemics
- information on how to mitigate the after-effects of a crisis, e.g. advising people not to drink flood water
- information on how to access help and services, such as the Restoring Family Links network, which hospitals are open, and when and where aid distributions are taking place
- information on their rights and who to contact for shelter, protection or health care.

3.2 Informing people about the ICRC, our programmes, how they can expect us to behave and how to contact us

People may be vulnerable to exploitation and abuse if they do not know what they are entitled to, how they can expect aid workers to behave, how to contact the ICRC or how to complain if they are not satisfied with the services provided. Sharing clear, accurate, timely and accessible information strengthens trust, understanding and participation, and allows people to make informed decisions. For example, being transparent about a programme's eligibility criteria can reduce the number of formal complaints received.

⁵ Rumours and misinformation can indicate real fears that people are not able to articulate. We should not simply discard rumours but analyse why they are happening and whether we should do something about it.

The ICRC and its partners often do not have the capacity or expertise to respond to all needs and requests. In such cases, it is useful to explain to people beforehand what constraints we are working under. However, do not assume that everyone understands the information you provide. Use discussions, perception surveys and other tools to find out how people perceive the ICRC and understand what we are doing. Make sure you are able to identify differences arising from diversity factors (e.g. gender or age) so you can adapt what you are doing.

3.3 Seeking feedback from affected people

A people-centred approach is at the heart of the ICRC's Institutional Strategy and is one of the six key competencies in our performance appraisal system. Receiving feedback contributes to developing a better understanding of what does or does not work, improves our understanding of the problems people are facing and contributes to our learning. People's feedback often includes concrete suggestions on how things can be improved. In addition, complaints can alert the ICRC to serious misconduct or failures, meaning we can address grievances and prevent bigger problems from arising in the first place.⁶

Enabling feedback means providing formal and informal channels people can use to contact the ICRC, while simultaneously seeking feedback in a proactive way to confirm the relevance and effectiveness of our action. For this to work, affected people need to know how to give feedback and what that entails. In addition, people also need to know when the ICRC (or National Society) cannot respond to feedback and why. Staff should therefore be equipped with the soft skills required to gain and maintain people's trust and welcome people's suggestions and comments. They should know how to respond to both positive and negative feedback and understand how aspects of people's identities can influence how they see our work. See guiding principles 8.2 and 8.3 for analysing and responding to feedback.

Specific approaches will be needed to prevent or minimize the adverse effects of unequal power relations between international actors and vulnerable communities, and between the different social, age or gender groups within these communities.

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⁶ Always manage complaints in a timely, fair and appropriate manner that prioritizes the safety of the complainant and those affected at all stages.

4. Enabling participation

The 2018 evaluation of diversity, inclusion and AAP in ICRC operations argued that “the ICRC consults local leaders more systematically than communities when it establishes operational priorities”, warning that the ICRC’s reliance on leaders to identify contacts means there is a risk of replicating patterns of exclusion.

The ICRC’s Institutional Strategy (2019–2022) offers important advice for ensuring people affected by armed conflict and other violence view us as open, accessible and interested in their views. The following questions highlight in particular the critical link between participation, inclusion and accessibility (see also guiding principle 5):

- Who should be consulted?
- Who represents a legitimate expression of needs?
- How should the ICRC engage with those who are most vulnerable and manage local intermediaries?
- How should the ICRC respond when assessing needs is difficult and when it does not yet have responses for emerging needs?
- How does the ICRC build trust and a broad consensus in highly volatile situations?
- How does it structure operational decision-making processes?
- How can the ICRC use new technologies to facilitate engagement with people affected, and make sure their views and voices are heard and become more responsive to them?
- How can we address security challenges, as well as political, social and bureaucratic obstacles at the local level?
- And how can we ensure that the humanitarian response reaches the right people?

These are real and important challenges.

4.1 Engage with affected people on the relevance, design, implementation and review of humanitarian activities

Local populations are usually the first to react to crises and are best placed to understand their own problems and needs. In the early stages, enabling participation and feedback may be challenging. With time, however, there will always be opportunities for individuals and groups to be involved in decision-making. Time invested early on in discussing problems, options and constraints with those affected can prevent poor decisions from being taken and reduce the time needed later to address problems that could have been avoided. Discussing indicators of success also ensures everyone understands what success should look like.

Depending on the situation or differences in power relations (e.g. because of gender, race, class, caste or disability), participation may not be spontaneous. Teams should pay particular attention to groups or individuals traditionally excluded from power and from decision-making processes. This entails identifying subgroups within communities and holding separate discussions with them to analyse the specific risks they face, their capacities, needs, interests and priorities. These subgroups may include groups for women, the elderly, disabled people, people with diverse sexuality or gender identities, or cultural associations for minority groups. Their participation will ensure that these groups support activities and their specific needs and capacities are taken into account.

Figure 2: A typology of participation⁷

Type of participation	Description
Passive participation	The affected population is informed of what is going to happen or what has occurred. While this is a fundamental right of the people concerned, it is not one that is always respected.
Participation through the supply of information	The affected population provides information in response to questions, but it has no influence over the process, since survey results are not shared and their accuracy is not verified.
Participation by consultation	The affected population is asked for its perspective on a given subject, but it has no decision-making powers, and no guarantee that its views will be taken into consideration.
Participation through material incentives	The affected population supplies some of the materials and/or labour needed to conduct an operation, in exchange for payment in cash or in kind from the aid organization.
Participation through the supply of materials, cash or labour	The affected population supplies some of the materials, cash and/or labour needed for an intervention. This includes cost-recovery mechanisms.
Interactive participation	The affected population participates in the analysis of needs in programme conception, and has decision-making power.
Local initiatives	The affected population takes the initiative, acting independently of external organizations or institutions. Although it may call on external bodies to support its initiatives, the project is conceived and run by the community; it is the aid organization that participates in the people’s projects.

⁷ In “Participation Handbook for humanitarian field workers”, Groupe URD, p. 40, 2009



A. Hussein/ICRC

By recognizing and respecting the fact that communities affected are experts on their own situation, first responders and agents of change, the ICRC aims to go beyond its traditional needs analysis and subsequent provision of assistance – goods, cash and services – to build a response that takes into account evolving priorities, irrespective of whether people’s needs lie within its existing portfolio of operational responses.

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The level of participation should be adapted to the level of trust and to existing relationships, working towards levels of participation that mean humanitarian responses can be co-designed. The appropriate level of participation can also be informed by and adapted to the context, time constraints, partners and type of programme under consideration. Note that including children in a meaningful way requires dedicated time, safeguarding measures, and special skills and techniques.

5. Inclusive and accessible programmes

In order to be impartial, the ICRC provides aid purely on the basis of need, rather than by simply considering what it could deliver as a humanitarian organization. This can be a challenge. Being inclusive when planning programmes is essential for maintaining impartiality: in many instances, not making the effort to understand people's specific needs based on aspects of their identities could lead to exclusion.

5.1 Assessing the role that culture, gender, age, disability or sexual orientation play in community structure and power dynamics

Understanding the roles, activities, and behaviours commonly associated with gender, age or disability, together with an analysis of power dynamics in society and at the household level can usefully inform humanitarian work. Gender roles and power dynamics may shift in times of armed conflict and other violence, creating specific additional risks for both men and women. However, gender is just one feature of a person's identity and position in society. Others include age, disability, ethnicity, religion, nationality, migrant status, class, health, caste or sexual orientation.

Different groups may have specific needs in terms of assistance and protection work. Taking diversity into account when planning programmes enables us to understand how those groups cope with threats and problems related to their specific vulnerabilities. Diversity analysis can be an opportunity for delegations to strengthen humanitarian activities by building on and reinforcing resilience, and existing coping mechanisms. An understanding of diversity can also reduce people's exposure to risks.

5.2 Assessing who is not getting help and why

Understanding community structure, roles and power dynamics can help teams understand possible barriers to accessing humanitarian aid. One such barrier may be discrimination faced by certain groups in society. In order to understand these barriers, staff will often need to make special efforts to assess the needs of

hard-to-reach people, such as those who are not in camps, who speak different languages, have a low level of literacy, are in less accessible geographical areas or are staying with host families. The same applies to people identified as being at-risk – such as disabled people, the individuals with diverse sexuality or gender identity, the elderly, the housebound and children. To be inclusive, therefore, means the ICRC has to reverse the burden of proof. That means demonstrating how each project reaches the most vulnerable, rather than assuming services are accessible to all.

It is also important to consider the composition of teams. For example, older people may not be comfortable sharing their concerns with a young humanitarian worker, and women may be reluctant to talk to teams of only men. It might not always be possible to strike the right balance of diversity in teams but it is important to be aware of it so as to take steps to overcome these issues when possible.

5.3 Data disaggregation

Disaggregating data at a minimum by sex, age and disability means both collecting data in a way that enables disaggregation, and then analysing data with these categories in mind at the assessment, implementation and monitoring stages. Doing so can provide evidence-based insights into how a situation is affecting people based on particular factors. It also helps staff to understand the extent to which different populations are satisfied with the relevance or effectiveness of our programmes, which in turn provides more specific indications of what teams need to adapt or improve.

6. Working to minimize the negative, unintended side effects of our actions

6.1 Assessing and mitigating potential harm

The value of aid and the privileged position of aid workers creates a power dynamic that can enable abuse, competition, conflict, misuse or misappropriation.⁸ While the ICRC's operations generate positive impact for those directly receiving our services, they may lead to negative economic, social or environmental consequences for others. For example, large-scale distributions of food can destabilize markets, and drilling boreholes to meet the needs of internally displaced people can compromise local water sources. Likewise, a programme targeting specific groups can create tensions if not appropriately discussed and explained. By carefully considering how programmes may affect not just the people directly affected but also the broader community, the

⁸ See the work of the ICRC's [Global Compliance Office](#) in relation to integrity.

environment or the local economy, we acknowledge our responsibility (or that of the National Society working on the ICRC's behalf) to avoid negative consequences. Affected people are well placed to warn programme staff about such risks.

6.2 Data protection

There will always be risks associated with collecting personal data. Safeguarding people's data and being accountable for how it is handled is important for establishing trust and avoiding harm, particularly during armed conflicts. This requires thoroughness in analysing and avoiding risks, taking ownership and being accountable regarding risks taken, all this while respecting the key principles of data protection, such as fairness, transparency, proportionality and security (which may include confidentiality). It also requires people to be aware of how their data are and will be handled, and their rights regarding their data. This is particularly relevant in today's connected world, where there is huge potential for data not only to be used to provide more effective and efficient services, but also for digital surveillance, harmful data exploitation and data breaches. For these reasons, staff must follow the *ICRC Rules on Personal Data Protection*, which are in line with other modern data protection regulatory frameworks. Anybody who is concerned that the ICRC may have violated the Rules on Personal Data Protection in processing their data can complain to the [ICRC Data Protection Independent Control Commission](#), an independent body with decision-making powers.

The ICRC is a trusted manager of personal information on individuals in insecure environments and therefore applies data-protection, and digital, cyber, and information security, standards that preserve the integrity, confidentiality and availability of information systems and data.

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7. Coordination and partnerships

7.1 Ensuring complementarity

No single humanitarian agency has both the resources and the expertise to respond to all humanitarian needs. That is why coordination is so important for establishing a clear division of labour and identifying gaps in coverage and quality. This coordination is also important in avoiding meeting needs that can and should be met by local authorities, and in preventing duplication of efforts, and hence wasting resources. Even though the ICRC may guard its independence by not formally joining coordination bodies, we still have a responsibility to be aware of the roles, responsibilities, capacities and interests of different parties in order to understand where we can provide value in the most effective and sustainable way.

7.2 Referring needs that the ICRC cannot meet to partners

Some needs cannot be met without government intervention (e.g. access to land or land ownership rights) while other needs may fall outside the ICRC's area of expertise, mandate or priorities. In such cases, we should refer these needs to those best placed to respond, including Movement partners. The ICRC may also directly advocate for these needs to be met.

The gaps between needs and response, and the complexities of the challenges that arise, cannot be addressed by a single approach or by one organization. Cooperation, complementarity and work between different stakeholders and actors have therefore become more essential than ever.

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7.3 Strengthening local capacity and resilience

As National Society staff and volunteers are members of the local communities, sometimes affected by the crisis themselves, they are well placed to help us understand local needs and priorities. Partnering with National Societies can be an opportunity to strengthen their ability to deliver more accountable programmes, which can in turn increase the resilience of the National Society and the community. Supporting a National Society, whether in terms of technical expertise or governance, will also lead to greater acceptance of both the National Society and the ICRC. Involving them in training, coaching and programme cycle management is important. However, although National Societies are often privileged partners, principled partnerships with others, such as local authorities and civil society, can also be a way to improve resilience and support local capacity.

Programme planning can improve resilience and support local capacity – helping to restore services, access to education, markets and employment can promote recovery. Likewise, providing cash-based assistance when conditions allow, or buying goods and services locally can support the local economy.

8. Learning and adapting based on evidence

The ICRC faces significant trade-offs and dilemmas in adapting the organization's strategy to people's vulnerabilities, capacities and priorities. For example, the priorities voiced by people receiving our assistance often clash with our desire to avoid taking on government responsibilities or our decision to prioritize issues in which we are specialists. When adapting to diverse needs, we have to balance our response to the most urgent needs – many of which are structural – and a mandate-driven approach focusing on conflict-related vulnerabilities.

8.1 Learning from past experience

Learning from past experience can usually only take place if experiences have been documented and are easily accessible to staff. Collecting information and making assessments, reports on lessons learned or other relevant documents easily available on the intranet or team space in the appropriate language is one way of ensuring online accessibility. This is complemented by resident staff who often have an institutional memory of past programmes that can feed into new programmes. That is also true of people and communities affected by armed conflict and other violence whose experience of past successes and failures is key to avoiding new or recurring mistakes. Finally, ensuring appropriate handovers between staff and providing new staff with training and suitable briefing packs can go a long way towards achieving this objective.

8.2 Monitoring programmes

Monitoring is a way to ensure that projects and programmes respect their budget and deadlines. It is also a way to control the quality of what we do, to check whether an activity has produced what was expected or to verify that programmes are reaching the people targeted. Monitoring is also an important way for managers to identify emerging problems (e.g. monitoring of epidemiological data) or trends and respond to feedback.

Effective monitoring relies on a combination of data. At project level, **quantitative** data allows us to measure outputs or outcomes (e.g. the number of wells constructed, tonnes of food distributed, household economic situation or nutrition levels) while **qualitative** data provides insights for understanding problems, changing needs, and satisfaction with a service or the ICRC in general.⁹ Qualitative monitoring can take the form of structured/semi-structured discussions or surveys and should always involve affected people and key groups, being careful to record any difference in feedback or satisfaction based on factors such as age, gender or disability.

Those best placed to assess the relevance and effectiveness of ICRC programmes are the affected people themselves. It is therefore essential that staff gather data on perception in addition to monitoring programme outcomes.

Perception data can be collected by:

- incorporating indicators from the AAP self-assessment into post-distribution monitoring work,

formal and informal feedback mechanisms, or as questions surveyed by community contact centres

- organizing focus group discussions with a representative sample of community members where the ICRC is present or has implemented programmes
- commissioning a third party to conduct perception surveys for the ICRC.¹⁰

Whatever the type of indicator, data should be collected on a regular basis so that the impact of changes made in response to feedback can be assessed. Data collection should also allow, when feasible, disaggregation of data by relevant categories so as to identify any differences in satisfaction and give more precise information on how to improve programmes.

8.3 Adapting programmes

The ICRC should remain flexible enough to redesign any intervention in response to changing needs, feedback or changes in epidemiological and monitoring data. Throughout the operation, staff should continuously consult with communities to find out how far they are meeting their needs, and whether additional or different activities are required.

Responding to and following up on feedback, including by adapting programmes when needed, is crucial if feedback mechanisms are to be trusted. This does not necessarily imply an obligation to inform people individually about actions taken¹¹ but rather implies that programme staff should inform communities about changes made or not in response to feedback.

This will include a shift away from a culture of top-down operational control to one of genuine engagement with populations and communities affected and the local actors and influencers within their environment.

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9. Multidisciplinary response

9.1 Understanding problems, not just needs

The ICRC aims to ensure respect for the lives, dignity, and the physical and mental well-being of people affected by conflict and other violence. We do this by carrying out assistance, protection, prevention and cooperation activities on the basis of a solid, multidimensional understanding of the context and people's different needs and capacities. Staff can

⁹ Consult the ICRC's Results-Based Management Planning and Monitoring Guide, together with programme-specific guidelines for more details on using baselines, control groups and the different types of monitoring.

¹⁰ The ICRC has worked for example with Ground Truth in the Philippines and Afghanistan and ORB International in Syria.

¹¹ Except in the case of formal complaints or for individual case management where individual follow-up is essential.



achieve this in initial discussions with affected people by focusing on the problems they are facing and how they deal with them, before carrying out more specific needs and feasibility assessments. Engaging with communities throughout the programme cycle contributes to a deeper understanding of the context, and the often complex web of factors that create and sustain humanitarian needs. Depending on the analysis of the situation and the challenges identified, the ICRC can decide, together with affected people, what the most appropriate response is – whether in the form of a single programme or a combination of activities.

9.2 Devising a multidisciplinary response

A multidisciplinary response makes interventions more effective and sustainable by addressing problems in three ways:

- addressing immediate needs
- reducing the impact of a risk
- preventing that risk from materializing.

To take the example of car accidents, caring for the injured driver addresses immediate needs, car safety (e.g. airbags and seatbelts) reduces the impact of accidents, and training drivers or building and maintaining safe roads decreases the risk of accidents happening in the first place.

For the ICRC, prevention is a longer term effort whereby behaviour is influenced through humanitarian diplomacy, advocacy or the training of armed forces. In health-care programmes, for example, changing behaviour can prevent health issues. Cash programmes often permit a multidisciplinary response because recipients can address different needs and issues through one programme. Communication and coordination between the ICRC's different business functions (*métiers*) is key to ensuring that ICRC projects are multidisciplinary.

The ICRC will also ensure that people-centred and influencing strategies bring together its humanitarian activities and institutional initiatives independent of their organizational labels or structures. By doing this we hope to ensure that our responses are perceived as more integrated and multidisciplinary by people affected, and to enable all ICRC staff, resident and mobile, to contribute to addressing people's need for protection and assistance effectively.

ICRC Strategy 2019–2022

D. Enabling environment

Upholding the Code of Conduct

People may be vulnerable to exploitation and abuse if they do not know what they are entitled to, what behaviour they should expect from aid workers and how to complain if they are not satisfied with the services provided or the way aid workers behave. Communicating about these topics is therefore important.

The same is true for ICRC staff. Ensuring our workforce is aware of how they should behave, how their colleagues should behave and how to complain in case of misconduct is just as important. Within the ICRC, the Global Compliance Office enables staff to report possible breaches of the Code of Conduct and related policies and procedures, thereby enabling prevention, detection and response.

1. People management: Creating an inclusive and diverse workforce

We not only want to help affected people. We also want each and every staff member to feel valued, respected and motivated to give their best. A more inclusive and diverse ICRC helps teams engage with different people and incorporate their feedback. Every staff member contributes to creating an inclusive and diverse workplace. Managers are key to tapping into the potential of all our staff, making sure that every team member feels fully included and that diversity makes us more approachable. A more inclusive and diverse ICRC enables us to respond to operational priorities through:

- understanding people's experiences and perspectives better
- partnering with a wider range of people
- ensuring an environment of dignity and respect, reducing bias and stereotypes about ourselves and people affected by armed conflict and other violence
- building a sustainable workforce and accessing a global talent pool
- increasing creativity and innovation in the development of solutions.

Valuing diversity enables us to improve our humanitarian work and perform at our best. It is critical that we consciously embrace inclusion as our way of working together. This means that we must ensure that staff feel well connected, respected and that they have opportunities for learning and development, regardless of their type of contract, cultural background, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation and physical abilities.

The greatest strengths and the most valuable assets of the ICRC and the Movement are their staff and volunteers. The ICRC's global workforce provides the organization not only with essential skills and knowledge, but also with an unwavering commitment to its humanitarian mission and action.

ICRC Strategy 2019–2022

2. Planning and monitoring tools

Even when everyone agrees that joint planning, inclusivity, responding to feedback and doing no harm are fundamental features of the ICRC's operating model, it is possible that procedures, processes and systems create obstacles to turning these objectives into everyday practice. Conflicting priorities, procedures that make it difficult to respond to changing needs, or barriers to effectively working across departmental boundaries are just some examples. Planning and monitoring systems in particular need to be aligned with institutional priorities in order to enable action while encouraging appropriate behaviours.

3. Resources

Our aim of putting people affected by armed conflict and other violence at the centre of our work needs to be matched by investment. By this we mean, for example, allocating sufficient resources so that staffing levels allow teams to spend an appropriate amount of time engaging with people and communities, making premises accessible for disabled people, or setting up community contact centres where people can share feedback and complaints.

4. Technology

Technology can support the ICRC's goal of being more accountable to affected people in several ways. Efficient and fit-for-purpose IT infrastructure, connectivity and software can reduce the time needed to complete administrative tasks and free up time for interacting with affected people. Modern software and databases also make it possible to collect, analyse and use data more quickly and effectively. Finally, in places where access to the ICRC is difficult, but there is a mobile phone network, social media makes it possible to communicate with people who cannot physically access us.

¹² AAP is closely interlinked with security. For example, access can be a constraint, while increased programme quality and accountability can improve the security of our staff and operations. To help staff manage risk in a more consistent

E. AAP throughout the programme cycle

The results-based management (RBM) approach is present throughout the planning-for-results process as a means of improving the effectiveness of operations. Through the four phases of the RBM cycle, it is possible to see whether programmes are on track to achieve their objectives or if adjustments need to be made. Ultimately, RBM is used by the ICRC to improve accountability to affected people and to ensure that projects are relevant and meaningful.

The ICRC often operates in one place for a long time, meaning work is not always subject to project-cycle logic. Likewise, many features of the AAP Framework are meant to be seen as part of the ongoing process rather than carried out only at a particular stage of the programme cycle. Nevertheless, identifying key AAP objectives at different stages during the programme cycle is useful, in particular when used alongside existing ICRC planning tools.

Phase	Key AAP objectives
Assess & analyse	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understand what problems people face that require protection and assistance work, how these issues relate to each other and what coping strategies people use to address them. Understand how gender, age, disability, culture, sexual orientation and other factors shape social dynamics and how they combine with socially determined factors to create vulnerabilities. Understand what information people need and what channels of communication different categories of people use and trust. Identify contextual constraints (security,¹² capacity, logistics, etc.) that should be taken into account.
Formulate & plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider and mitigate any negative side effects that our work could have on the environment, the economy, the local population or specific individuals, taking into account the experience and views of affected people themselves. Use appropriate channels and languages to inform people about the ICRC, our services, how they can expect us to behave, constraints we are operating under and other relevant information. Work with local authorities and affected people to plan projects. Aim for programmes to address immediate problems while also reducing risk and addressing root causes. Whenever possible, do

manner worldwide, the ICRC recently formalized a common methodology on [security and safety risk management](#). In addition, since 2018 each field duty station is expected to apply the ICRC's [minimum security requirements](#).

so based on existing capacity, working with others when appropriate, in line with humanitarian principles.

- Consider what barriers people may face in accessing programmes, services and feedback mechanisms, paying particular attention to vulnerable and marginalized groups.

Implement & monitor

- Verify that all targeted groups – with a focus on the most marginalized – are able to access programmes.
- Monitor the progress of programmes and people's satisfaction with results, disaggregating data by, for example, gender, age and disability.
- Ensure affected people are aware of the evolution of programmes, including scope and response, and understand available feedback and complaint mechanisms.
- Seek and review feedback, adapting programmes when needed.

Review, evaluate & learn

- Involve affected people in reviews and evaluations, informing them of findings and involving them in decisions that affect them.
- Assess and document what strategies and approaches have a positive (or negative) impact on operations as well as on affected people's satisfaction with the ICRC and our programmes.
- Share lessons learned internally and externally and act on them.

F. Measuring progress

By measuring progress we see where we need to improve. That is why the AAP Framework comes with a self-assessment,¹³ which enables delegations to develop a context-specific understanding of their strengths and weaknesses, prioritize areas to be strengthened and allocate resources accordingly.

Initially, self-assessments can be carried out as needed ahead of the annual planning cycle. With time, it should be increasingly linked to ongoing monitoring, reviews, reports and other sources of information within the delegation – not least the voices and perspectives of affected people. This approach enhances the accuracy of results and makes the self-assessment a solid foundation for action. Having a solid, annually updated self-assessment is a valuable management tool which also makes it easier to meet reporting expectations, such as those related to

internal audit, the compliance office or donors. When conducting a self-assessment, delegations will:

- increase staff awareness of what inclusive, people-centred programmes mean
- support the problem and situation analysis for the annual planning cycle
- be better able to work in a multidisciplinary way
- better understand current practice and be encouraged to learn from peers
- manage gaps and risks
- use objective evidence to identify resources needed for progression
- measure and demonstrate progress.

Lower self-assessment results do not necessarily signal the absence of commitment towards accountable, high-quality programmes at delegation level. Various factors and constraints can affect performance in operations, from access to affected people to logistical problems to staffing issues. Identifying gaps enables us as an organization to understand the challenges and shortfalls we face, adapt our approach to AAP and focus on areas that seem to reflect the clearest priorities at delegation level and globally.

The self-assessment tool is most useful for operational delegations. More details on this tool and the latest results can be found on the [AAP Intranet page](#).

G. Responsibilities

Everyone has a role to play in implementing the AAP Framework:

- the Directorate is responsible for ensuring the framework is endorsed, promoted and supported
- heads of regions at HQ are responsible for ensuring that the AAP Framework is included in regional strategies
- senior management of delegations, whose staff are closest to affected people, are responsible for assessing and improving practice, including the multidisciplinary nature of their work, using the AAP self-assessment and other tools
- heads of units are responsible for incorporating the relevant aspects of the AAP Framework into their technical standards, Programme Reference Frameworks and training modules, thereby ensuring recommended actions can be focused on specific programmes, which will in turn make it easier for staff to include these actions in their daily work

¹³ Following a pilot project with an initial version of the self-assessment tool in 2017, it was streamlined to make it easier to use while also providing more guidance for delegations.




- staff who draw up procedures and planning tools should use the AAP Framework to enable and incentivize the right behaviours within programmes and to ensure systems can collect and review disaggregated data
- Human Resources support staff should use the framework to hire the right people, and for empowering and training people, fostering inclusion and staff well-being and making better decisions through people analytics
- the AAP team and advisers naturally use the framework to work with and support delegations and programme staff in testing, refining and improving tools, as well as sharing best practice.

With nearly half of the ICRC's programmes run by National Societies working in their own countries (and in some cases internationally), the ICRC can only be accountable and inclusive if our partners are. This part of the "accountability chain" must be given sufficient priority by the ICRC at all levels, from delegations to the Directorate. Such accountability is guided and facilitated by the field cooperation teams, and by the Division for Cooperation and Coordination within the Movement. Partnerships with National Societies should also be seen as an opportunity to increase their capacity to deliver more accountable programming. In some cases, the ICRC can take a similar approach with international organizations and local or international NGOs.

Finally, including the building blocks of AAP within policies – in particular in relation to inclusion – helps staff to think and look at issues in a more inclusive and accountable way.

The ICRC helps people around the world affected by armed conflict and other violence, doing everything it can to protect their lives and dignity and to relieve their suffering, often with its Red Cross and Red Crescent partners. The organization also seeks to prevent hardship by promoting and strengthening humanitarian law and championing universal humanitarian principles. As the reference on international humanitarian law, it helps develop this body of law and works for its implementation.

People know they can rely on the ICRC to carry out a range of life-saving activities in conflict zones, including: supplying food, safe drinking water, sanitation and shelter; providing health care; and helping to reduce the danger of landmines and unexploded ordnance. It also reunites family members separated by conflict, and visits people who are detained to ensure they are treated properly. The organization works closely with communities to understand and meet their needs, using its experience and expertise to respond quickly and effectively, without taking sides.

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