The International Committee of the Red Cross
Outline of Presentation

- The ICRC
- ICRC Communication
- Public Communication
- Media Relations
- Neutrality
- Confidentiality
- Transparency
- Advocacy
- Questions - Discussion
International Committee of the Red Cross

Battle of Solferino, 1859

- 1859
  - one battle: Solferino
  - one man: Henry Dunant

- 1863
  - “Committee for relief to the wounded”
  - 1864: Geneva Convention
  - first relief societies
  - protective emblem

40'000 wounded and dead
The International Red Cross & Red Crescent Movement
The ICRC: Mission

The ICRC’s mission is to protect and assist the civilian and military victims of armed conflicts and internal disturbances on a strictly neutral and impartial basis and to promote compliance with international humanitarian law.

*Discover the ICRC, summary of the mission statement*
The ICRC around the world

- Delegations / Missions in more than 80 countries
- Over 12,000 employees
Major operations 2009

- Sudan
- Iraq
- Afghanistan
- IL /OT
- DRC
- Somalia
- Colombia
- Chad
- Sri Lanka
- Pakistan
ICRC is …

- NOT an NGO
- NOT an international organization
- Is a Swiss based private organization with international standing
- No public fund-raising
- NOT a human rights organization
- protects and assists victims of conflict (civilians, wounded, detained)
NIHA

- Neutral
- Independent
- Humanitarian
- Action
- Impartial
"The normally secretive ICRC"
- Communication based on operational need
- Priority to access
- Access to those needing assistance
- Access to those with influence
- Persuasion rather than denunciation
- Privilege confidential bilateral discussion
- Multilateral influence
Operational Communications

- Improve access to victims
- Increase acceptance and security for ICRC
- Foster knowledge and acceptance of IHL
- Prevention (mine awareness)
Operational Communications

- Targets local populations, beneficiaries
- Leaders, youth, armed groups, military
- Presentations, seminars, townhall meetings
- Publications, pamphlets, local media
ICRC PUBLIC COMMUNICATION

- Institutional priorities / issues
- Highlighting humanitarian issues / contexts
- Thematic issues
- Expressions of concern
- Reminder of IHL
- Denunciation
Public Communication Tools

- ICRC website
- News releases
- News conferences
- Audio visual material
- Photographs
- TV / Radio / Print / interviews
- Background briefings
- Local / Regional / International networking
Media perception of ICRC

- Misunderstood by many
  - Confusion with National Societies
  - Seen as human rights or advocacy
  - Seen as primarily medical / assistance

- Well known to some
  - discreet, "secretive"
  - conservative, reliable
  - well informed, unique access
  - good source for "reality check"
Reactive media relations

- Initial phases of conflicts
  - Georgia / Ossetia

- Conflicts with limited media access
  - Gaza, Sri Lanka

- Prisoner exchanges
  - Israel / Hezbollah

- Hostage releases
  - Colombia, Afghanistan

- Detention issues
  - Bagram, Guantanamo
Reactive media relations: ICRC guidelines

- Neutrality
- Avoid political / military issues
- Stick to what we know first hand
- Focus on humanitarian situation
- Highlight ICRC activities
- Cautious of security issues
- Confidentiality - describe what we do
- Detention visits, numbers visited, RCMs
- Press lines, releases, web interviews
Proactive media relations

- Institutional issues / campaigns
  - visits, anniversary of Geneva Conventions
- Thematic issues
  - Medical mission, sexual violence, the missing
- Forgotten conflicts / ongoing concerns
  - DRC, Somalia, Colombia, Gaza reconstruction, Haiti
- Highlight ICRC operations
- Reminder of IHL in conflict
- Denunciation
- Release, web, news conference, A/V, interviews
Public Denunciation

- Last resort – preference to persuasion
- May have limited benefit over time
- Used rarely, greater impact
- Criteria:
  - Confidential approach not working
  - First hand information / very reliable source
  - Serious humanitarian concerns
  - More benefit than harm for beneficiaries
  - Short, medium and long term considerations
  - Decision at highest levels of institution
Confidentiality

- Essential for access
- Essential for persuasion / ongoing dialogue
- Detention, protection of civilians
- Breaches / leaks can have world wide impact
- Testimonial immunity
- Confidentiality does not mean complacency
Limits on confidentiality

- Misrepresentation of ICRC activities
- Partial misleading release of a report
- Confidential approach not working
- Ongoing abuse with no improvements
- Unable to work according to our SOPs
- May withdraw and explain why
- Never done lightly, senior level decision
Transparency

- Transparent about what we do
- Will describe operations, SOPs, budgets
- Important for confidence of belligerents
- Accountability to donors and beneficiaries
- Cooperation with other humanitarian actors
- Cooperation with governments / authorities
- Maintain independence
- Mindful of security concerns
Public advocacy

- Priority to neutrality / access
- Not the only humanitarian actor
- Advocacy for thematic / institutional issues
  - Knowledge / awareness of Geneva Conventions
  - Sexual violence, the missing
  - Child soldiers, women and conflict
  - Respect of medical mission
  - Cluster munitions, anti-personnel mines
- Avoid finger-pointing / blame
Conclusion: ICRC Public Communication

- Priority to access (victims & influential actors)
- Neutrality
- Confidentiality
- Independence
- Serves operational needs
- Part of larger communication efforts
- Focus on humanitarian concerns / needs
- Explain what we do
- Limited in terms of what we see