



MID-TERM EVALUATION: CONTRIBUTION TO IMPACT AND EFFECTIVENESS EVALUATION OF THE CRB-CF AND RKV ADVOCACY PLAN 2017-2021

1. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

As auxiliary to the public authorities in the humanitarian field, Belgian Red Cross (BRC) develops activities for the dissemination of IHL towards different target groups in Belgium as well as supports the implementation of IHL by the public authorities.

In the framework of the current Action Plan 2017-2021, the two communities of Belgian Red Cross, Croix-Rouge de Belgique – Communauté francophone (CRB-Cf) and Rode Kruis Vlaanderen (RKV), undertook jointly the following actions towards Belgian policy makers:

- Approaches to Belgian political decision-makers (parliamentarians, federal parliamentary assistants, cabinets and civil servants of the administrations) within the framework of an advocacy work in favor of a better respect of IHL: training, information sessions, bilateral and confidential dialogue, participation in the Belgian National IHL Committee (Interministerial Commission for Humanitarian Law), international conferences of the Red Cross and Red Crescent (RCRC international conferences);
- An active and joint contribution to the networks and platforms created within the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement (RCRC Movement) with different aims: to bring together experts to carry out reflection processes on the current challenges of IHL, make recommendations and propose plans of action in this direction, identify commitments to be made for the States and the components of the RCRC Movement.

The mid-term evaluation of the Action Plan 2017-2021, funded by DGD, is focused on these IHL advocacy activities towards Belgian policymakers, developed from January 2017 to July 2019. The evaluation, conducted by Organisation Development Support (ODS) between September 2019 and March 2020, focused on the criteria of impact (contribution to) and effectiveness.

2. SUMMARY OF MANAGEMENT RESPONSE

The conclusions of the report by ODS show a good level of progress of the activities; it is highly likely that the targets will be achieved by the end of the implementation period. The frequency of engagement and the tools used enable the teams engaged with a broad range of priorities and several stakeholders. The analysis of the impact criteria shows that, through its activities, the BRC is keeping IHL present in the agenda of Belgian policymakers according to its auxiliary role which consists in assisting them in IHL dissemination and cooperating with them to ensure respect for IHL. This ongoing work is made particularly through supporting the processes related to follow-up the pledges made by Belgian federal government at International Conferences of the Red Cross and Red Crescent and through several other advocacy activities reflecting BRC priorities that are also corresponding to the ones identified by the International Red Cross Red Crescent Movement at the international level. The key role of BRC in enabling, supporting and organizing the work of the National IHL Committee (CIDH/ICHR) that unites representatives from ministerial departments who are entry points for potential contacts in the cabinets, is also outlined.

The evaluators conclude that there is a considerable potential for IHL work and stress that the areas of contribution could be further strengthened by revisiting the way in which the strategic planning of advocacy is conducted.

The evaluators identified some lessons learned and made a set of recommendations to BRC teams, including with a view to strengthen the planning, tracking and capturing of the results of its efforts. Details of these recommendations and of our position on these can be found below. Out of the 21 recommendations formulated by ODS, we fully accept 12 recommendations, partially accept 8 recommendations and reject 1 recommendation. The accepted and partially accepted recommendations will be implemented as part of the current action plan and/or in the future five-year programmes. As an answer to these recommendations, we have listed a series of action points. Some of them are referred several times as some recommendations seem to be redundant or to overlap each other.

3. MANAGEMENT RESPONSE TABLE

Recommendation	Responsible	Involved	Key action(s)	Timing
1. CONTRIBUTION TO IMPACT				
1.1. In formulating advocacy positions, build on the experience with pledges and other specific messaging. This would allow BRC to map out where the BRC position is aligned with the Belgian government's position, whether there are any key allies and how much can be achieved in a certain direction.	IHL legal adviser (CRB-Cf) Head of IHL (RKV)	IHL teams	Importance : 6 and feasibility : 8 Management response : partially accepted This recommendation is partially accepted as BRC already formulates advocacy positions on the basis of previous experience. However, BRC plans to do so in a more structured way : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In a document per priority topic, analysis of eventual gaps between BRC position and government's one; • Explore broader range of key allies (stakeholder mapping); • Map possible intermediate steps with timeline towards specific goal. 	Future programme
1.2. Cover main expected results and a timeline for following up on the pledges.	IHL legal adviser (CRB-Cf) Head of IHL (RKV)	IHL teams	Importance : 8 and feasibility : 6 Management response : accepted This recommendation will contribute to measure the impact of BRC advocacy work and to reorient its actions if needed in due time. It will also help to rebalance the respective roles of BRC and the authorities within CIDH/ICHR. However, the realization and the coordinated follow-up of the pledges, although doable at BRC level, does not depend solely on BRC. BRC will : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to contribute to the establishment of follow-up tools for pledges including by identifying concrete means for verification (outputs); • Continue to contribute to the creation of a Four-Year Action Plan within CIDH/ICHR that will include the implementation of resolutions and pledges of the 33rd International Conference (2019); • Make its own assessment and timeline for specific actions in the framework of the pledges outside of the CIDH/ICHR. 	Current and future programme
1.3. Capture "impact stories" of BRC's advocacy work.	IHL legal adviser (CRB-Cf) Head of IHL (RKV) PMER	IHL teams	Importance : 8 and feasibility : 8 Management response : accepted BRC recognizes the importance to regularly identify in a more structured manner the positive outcomes of its advocacy work for future reflections and for a better external and internal visibility. BRC will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish a format for the twice-yearly reflection meetings so this can be tracked in the same way over the several years; • Create a shared tool for capturing these successes/decisions taken in relation to the priority topics; • See also action point in relation to recommendation 1.1 	Future programme

1.4. Exchange experiences with other National Societies	IHL legal adviser (CRB-Cf) Head of IHL (RKV)	IHL teams	Importance : 2 and feasibility : 10 Management response : partially accepted This recommendation is partially accepted as this approach is already implemented: BRC systematically shares its experience on the implementation of the joint EU pledges and IHL resolutions adopted at RCRC international conferences and on other issues of advocacy of common concern with other NS. BRC will continue to do so by participating in different Movement's fora as platforms for this exchange.	Current and future programme
1.5. Internal reflection on contribution to impact scheduled into standing meetings (beyond progress on indicators). These should draw on an agreed-upon definition to impact.	IHL legal adviser (CRB-Cf) Head of IHL (RKV) PMER	IHL teams	Importance : 7 and feasibility : 7 Management response : accepted See action points related to recommendation 1.1 and 1.3.	Future programme
1.6. CRB-Cf should consider making IHL advocacy a priority in its next multi annual strategy.	Head of International Department (CRB-Cf) IHL legal adviser (CRB-Cf)	CRB-Cf IHL team	Importance : 9 and feasibility : 7 Management response : accepted The implementation of this recommendation would help to increase the internal visibility of IHL advocacy activities and the support from leadership and colleagues from other departments of CRB-Cf. Reflection has started on how to include advocacy as a cross-cutting topic into the next strategy. CRB-Cf will : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to share internally its experience on IHL advocacy; • Act in favour of the incorporation of advocacy as well as IHL advocacy as a priority in its next multi annual strategy. 	Future CRB-Cf multi annual strategy
2. EFFECTIVENESS				
2.1 Developing an advocacy strategy that could be shared internally; including an advocacy calendar and stakeholder mapping/strategy.	IHL legal adviser (CRB-Cf) Head of IHL (RKV) Communication officer	IHL teams	Importance : 8 and feasibility : 6 Management response : partially accepted This recommendation is partially accepted as we already have an advocacy strategy as reflected in the ToC of the current programme. However, BRC will : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integrate a calendar and a stakeholder mapping in the document per priority topic (see action point related to recommendation 1.1.) • Create a readable document facilitating the communication of its IHL advocacy strategy to an internal audience 	Future programme
2.2. Create space for reflection on BRC practice, successes/challenges and decision making based on insights on outcomes.	IHL legal adviser (CRB-Cf) Head of IHL (RKV) PMER	IHL teams	Importance : 8 and feasibility : 8 Management response : accepted See action points related to recommendations 1.1, 1.3. and 1.5.	Future programme
2.3. Update meetings on individual dossiers.	IHL legal adviser (CRB-Cf) Head of IHL (RKV)	IHL teams	Importance : 5 and feasibility : 8 Management response : accepted This recommendation will have a limited impact on the relationship between IHL teams as there are already regular meetings on specific files and bi-annual general meetings. But BRC can always improve these updates through more structural meetings: see action points related to recommendations 1.1, 1.3. and 1.5.	Future programme

<p>2.4. Operationalize the gender strategy for the specific advocacy goals and types of intervention led by BRC. A good starting point for this process would be the development of short gender-related advocacy points for each of the 5 priorities.</p>	<p>Gender focal point IHL legal adviser (CRB-Cf) Head of IHL (RKV)</p>	<p>IHL teams</p>	<p>Importance : 6 and feasibility : 6 Management response : partially accepted This recommendation will aim to consider more gender as a cross-cutting issue. The development of a short gender-related advocacy document for all of the five advocacy priorities is not feasible but BRC will continue to :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reflect on key messages around the implementation of IHL under gender perspective; • Follow the work of the RCRC Movement on the theme of Protection, Gender and Inclusion. 	<p>Current and future programme</p>
<p>2.5. Update the terms of collaboration in a way that one of the two branches can be delegated to represent the joint advocacy work of the two towards policymakers.</p>	<p>IHL legal adviser (CRB-Cf) Head of IHL (RKV)</p>	<p>IHL teams</p>	<p>Importance : 6 and feasibility : 6 Management response : partially accepted The two branches already coordinate very intensely and BRC doesn't agree that it is necessary to update the terms of collaboration As the contact with federal authorities remains within the competence of the whole National Society, the representation at national level should be ensured by both communities in principle, especially if BRC leadership may be more involved (Statutes of the BRC, art.34). When not possible, a community could exceptionally represent the whole National Society with explicit consent from the other.</p>	<p>Current programme</p>
<p>2.6. At the level of each branch, strengthening internal knowledge and capacity around IHL and advocacy could offer additional resources and support for the work.</p>	<p>IHL legal adviser (CRB-Cf) Head of IHL (RKV) Head of IHL (CRB-Cf)</p>	<p>IHL teams</p>	<p>Importance : 6 and feasibility : 4 Management response : partially accepted This recommendation is only partially accepted because while BRC believes it could be beneficial to strengthen the internal knowledge and capacity around IHL in general for support of our activities, this will not have a direct impact on the advocacy efforts as the files require a technical and continuous follow-up. BRC will strive to continue in its efforts towards strengthening internal capacity :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to ensure optimal use of human resources in the future; • Reflect on the possibilities of a greater engagement of leadership (e.g. CEOs, members of the boards) on IHL advocacy files. 	<p>Future programme</p>
<p>2.7. Covering federal and regional parliaments as well as identifying and building a network of champions in the ministries and key other services.</p>	<p>IHL legal adviser (CRB-Cf) Head of IHL (RKV) PMER</p>	<p>IHL teams</p>	<p>Importance : 7 and feasibility : 6 Management response : accepted BRC has already approached parliamentarians but without reaching the expected outcomes. Contacting parliamentarians is challenging and time-consuming (problem of agenda and of keeping level of interest and turnover after elections) and human resources of IHL teams are limited. But broadening the range of policy makers beyond CIDH/ICHR would contribute to increase the BRC influence on Belgian policies. BRC will :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analyze, case by case, the added value of working with parliamentarians and explore the best way to contact them and involve them in specific initiatives; • See action points related to recommendation 1.1 (stakeholder mapping). • BRC will also continue to explore potential key persons who may be considered as champions in the ministries and key other services. 	<p>Current and future programme</p>

3. MONITORING AND EVALUATION				
<p>3.1. An update to the impact measurement system would ideally include some of the following elements :</p> <p>a. A reflection on intermediate outcomes that can lead to policy impact</p> <p>b. Analysis of the content of the items that are captured</p> <p>c. BRC's teams should capture their understanding of the BRC contribution close to the time of the outcome</p> <p>d. Finally, attention to actual policy change and change in the way current rules are implemented.</p>	<p>IHL legal adviser (CRB-Cf) Head of IHL (RKV) PMER</p>	<p>IHL teams</p>	<p>Importance : 7 and feasibility : 6</p> <p>Management response : partially accepted</p> <p>An update to the impact measurement system would help have a better identification of BRC potential influence on the adoption of policies and decisions. Points b and d are already implemented, although not in a structural format :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See action points related to recommendations 1.1., 1.3 and 1.5. 	<p>Future programme</p>
<p>3.2. Review the current impact tracking process. Consider including tipping point, intermediary and framing type activities and workflows into the practice. The collection of data should be accompanied by opportunities for reflecting on the insights that the data offer, in a structured debrief around key outcomes.</p>	<p>IHL legal adviser (CRB-Cf) Head of IHL (RKV) PMER</p>	<p>IHL teams</p>	<p>Importance : 7 and feasibility : 6</p> <p>Management response : partially accepted</p> <p>Recommendation is too vague as it is phrased, but, considering its available human resources and time, BRC will undertake the following actions to the extent possible:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore the existing and relevant tools for measuring advocacy impact; • Exchange with other organisations working on advocacy; • See also action points related to recommendations 1.3 and 1.5. 	<p>Future programme</p>
<p>3.3. In future programming, we strongly encourage CRB-Cf and RKV to align the structure of outcomes, theories of change and indicators.</p>	<p>IHL legal adviser (CRB-Cf) Head of IHL (RKV) Head of IHL (CRB-Cf) PMER</p>	<p>IHL teams</p>	<p>Importance : 8 and feasibility : 8</p> <p>Management response : accepted</p> <p>As regards advocacy, the programme frameworks are already quite similar. But BRC IHL teams can always improve the alignment of their outcomes, ToC and indicators for this part of the Action Plan.</p>	<p>Future programme</p>
<p>3.4. The BRC should develop a theory of change for its work with the CIDH/ICHR.</p>	<p>/</p>	<p>/</p>	<p>Importance : 5 and feasibility : 4</p> <p>Management response : rejected</p> <p>The participation of BRC in the work of the CIDH/ICHR cannot be questioned according to the BRC statutory mandate and auxiliary role in IHL, its role as it is provided in the 2000 Royal Decree related to the organization of the committee and resolutions of the International Conference of the RC/RC. The involvement of BRC in the committee is one of the main advocacy approaches where the NS can effectively influence the policy makers. It is an integral part of our general theory of change. Moreover, a four-year action plan of CIDH/ICHR is being developed and will contribute to rebalance the respective roles of the National Society and the departments which are represented.</p>	<p>/</p>

<p>3.5. Indicators should be useful, used and relevant to the decisions taken by the teams. We suggest that for each indicator, the BRC lays out where these indicators would be used for steering the advocacy project.</p>	<p>IHL legal adviser (CRB-Cf) Head of IHL (RKV) PMER</p>	<p>IHL teams</p>	<p>Importance : 8 and feasibility : 5 Management response : partially accepted Recommendation as it is phrased here is too vague but there will be another reflection on the indicators as part of the formulation of the future programme. See also action points related to recommendations 1.3 and 1.5 and 3.2.</p>	<p>Future programme</p>
<p>3.6. We suggest that the BRC teams reflect on the reality of their work, priorities, successes and engagement. Insights from the reflection should inform the definition of impact and overarching objectives which are aligned with this reality.</p>	<p>IHL legal adviser (CRB-Cf) Head of IHL (RKV) PMER</p>	<p>IHL teams</p>	<p>Importance : 8 and feasibility : 7 Management response : partially accepted Recommendation is very vague but meet some of the above-mentioned recommendations. See action points in relation with recommendations 1.1, 1.2., 1.3, 1.5, 2.2, 2.3, 3.1., 3.2.</p>	<p>Future programme</p>
<p>4. SUSTAINABILITY</p>				
<p>4.1. The teams would benefit from a structured approach to the longer-term view of the advocacy programme, as it is likely to remain an important component of the BRC's work.</p>	<p>IHL legal adviser (CRB-Cf) Head of IHL (RKV)</p>	<p>IHL teams</p>	<p>Importance : 6 and feasibility : 8 Management response : accepted BRC will : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Try, for each priority topics, to identify multi annual goals and goals per year; • See also action points in relation with recommendations 1.1 and 3.1. </p>	<p>Current and future programme</p>
<p>4.2. Sustainability planning would take place at all levels of the program:</p> <p>a. Planning: Define a structure for a yearly evaluation meeting where insights from the year are captured, data interpreted and actions taken for the coming year. This should be aligned with the strategies of the partners and the ICRC and weighed against changes in context and resources.</p> <p>b. In the case of important political changes, scenario-based forward planning could be useful in framing advocacy priorities, even as insecurity persists, e.g. around elections.</p> <p>c. We recommend BRC to develop an exit plan for advocacy with the main actors, including possibilities for rebalancing the roles occupied by the BRC's with the CIDH/ICHR. Exit planning would also enable the sustainability of BRC's work in areas which become special focus for the period of time between two Red Cross conferences. Planning for the after-life of pledges would help balance resources and priorities.</p> <p>d. Organisational: widen the circle of colleagues</p>	<p>IHL legal adviser (CRB-Cf) Head of IHL (RKV) Head of IHL (CRB-Cf) PMER</p>	<p>IHL teams</p>	<p>Importance : 7 and feasibility : 6 Management response : partially accepted Points e, f and g reflect existing practices. No exit strategy is foreseen (c) : it is important to keep an ongoing support of the BRC to the authorities and of a constant dialogue with them according to its statutory mandate and auxiliary role in IHL. Pledges are important humanitarian advocacy tools and not an end in itself. That is why additional pledges will continue to be considered for other Belgium's commitments for the next RCRC international conferences and considering new IHL challenges in contemporary armed conflicts. See also general comments in relation with recommendation 3.4. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. This point meets some of the above-mentioned recommendations: see action points in relation with recommendations 1.1, 1.2., 1.3, 1.5, 2.2, 2.3, 3.1., 3.2. b. BRC's key messages and approaches are already adapted in case of important political changes but BRC will consider alternative ways for each priority topic. d. See action points in relation with recommendation 2.6. </p>	<p>Current and future programme</p>

<p>who are part of the advocacy work around IHL and the strategic relevance of the work for the whole organisation. Main outcomes and decisions from the strategic review meeting should be shared with the CEO-level leadership in the partner organisations.</p> <p>e. Organizational: currently, much of the work is owned by the senior leads in the two partner communities. Gradually on-boarding at least one or two additional team members by including them in meetings, phone calls and delivery of advocacy work would not only help with the considerable workload, but also increase the BRC's resilience to turnover or absence.</p> <p>f. The collaboration between the two communities is a key aspect of the advocacy programme which should be safeguarded through formal and informal approaches. e.g. through high-level meetings, or a common advocacy advisory Board/shared figurehead.</p> <p>g. Funding: We recommend that the teams put in place a fundraising plan to secure alternative/additional funding streams for advocacy.</p>				
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