The ICRC, established in 1863, works worldwide to provide humanitarian help for people affected by conflict and armed violence and to promote the laws that protect victims of war. An independent and neutral organization, its mandate stems essentially from the Geneva Conventions of 1949. Based in Geneva, Switzerland, it employs some 12,000 people in 80 countries; it is financed mainly by voluntary donations from governments and from national Red Cross and Red Crescent societies.

Since its creation, the ICRC's sole objective has been to ensure protection and assistance for victims of armed conflict and strife. It does so through its direct action around the world, as well as by encouraging the development of international humanitarian law (IHL) and promoting respect for it by governments and all weapon bearers. Its story is about the development of humanitarian action, the Geneva Conventions and the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement.

The ICRC's exclusively humanitarian mission is to protect the lives and dignity of victims of armed conflict and other situations of violence and to provide them with assistance; it directs and coordinates the international relief activities during armed conflicts.

Since 1945 the ICRC has continued to urge governments to strengthen international humanitarian law – and to respect it. It has sought to deal with the humanitarian consequences of the conflicts that have marked the second half of the 20th century – starting with Israel and Palestine in 1948.

In 1949, at the ICRC's initiative, states agreed on the revision of the existing three Geneva Conventions (covering wounded and sick on the battlefield, victims of war at sea, prisoners of war) and the addition of a fourth: to protect civilians living under enemy control. The Conventions provide the ICRC's main mandate in situations of armed conflict.

**ICRC IN PAKISTAN**

The ICRC, in conjunction with the Pakistan Red Crescent Society (PRCS), provides Pakistan with a multiplicity of services relating to IDP and refugee resettlement and humanitarian relief. Its relief activities during floods, fires, drought, earthquakes and other natural calamities have earned the Society great respect within the country and from the government. Similarly, it partners with leading national and international bodies like UNICEF to provide services such as polio eradication, HIV/AIDS education, and Hepatitis B vaccines. Today, with over 161 health facilities throughout the country, out of which 61 are specifically dedicated to maternal health care, ICRC/PRCS is providing valuable programs of population welfare and ensuring a considerable decrease in the otherwise abnormal maternal and child mortality rates in Pakistan. ICRC/PRCS maintains close links with various ministries, in particular the Ministries of Health, Education, Defense and with NGOs which share similar objectives and principles. In general, the Society receives strong support and cooperation from the government and collaborates with other organizations in the country such as United Nations Population Fund and the Family Planning Association of Pakistan.

The ICRC has access to some detainees in Sindh, Pakistan-administered Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan. It runs a program that helps families keep in contact with relatives held in jails in Pakistan and abroad.

In order to increase awareness of international humanitarian law (IHL) and its own mandate, the ICRC maintains contact with senior officers of the armed and security forces and the police and, to a lesser extent, with members of armed groups. In particular, it urges respect for civilians and Red Cross/Red Crescent workers. Other partners in the ICRC’s communication plan are the media, tribal and religious leaders and academics.

Armed violence that began in north-western Pakistan in mid-2008 has had a dramatic effect on the humanitarian situation, there and elsewhere in the country. Fighting between the Pakistan armed forces and armed opposition groups in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) since 2009 has caused successive rounds of displacement, leaving tens of thousands of residents without basic services. Fallout from the fighting in KP and the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) has worsened the violence affecting major cities such as Karachi and Lahore. Sectarian and ethno-political violence in these
major cities has further affected the living conditions of civilians. The armed conflict in Afghanistan continues to be felt in Pakistan’s south-western province of Balochistan, with scores of casualties crossing the border in search of medical care.

The ICRC helps ensure that displaced people or resident communities affected by the fighting and/or floods had access to adequate primary health care by supplying health centers and supporting National Society-run facilities, both fixed and mobile. Diarrhea treatment centers were established following the floods to treat people with water-borne diseases, and the ICRC’s hospital in Peshawar attended to bomb-blast victims and weapon-wounded people. Plans for a second ICRC hospital in Quetta were cancelled, but support was maintained to private medical facilities there. Local health workers were trained in first aid, and other hospitals received essential supplies. Disabled people were fitted with artificial limbs and mobility devices at ICRC-supported physical rehabilitation centers, and patients at the Muzaffarabad center received training and grants.
ICRC IN INDIA

In India, ICRC delegates visit people arrested in connection with the situation in Jammu and Kashmir, who are held both within the state and in other parts of India, to monitor their treatment and living conditions. According to need, the ICRC distributes basic assistance to detainees as well as to their close relatives. In India and Bhutan, the ICRC helps detainees to re-establish and maintain contact with their families.

The ICRC supports the humanitarian activities of the Indian Red Cross Society (IRCS), such as emergency response, first aid, livelihood support and community health programs. The ICRC strengthens the operational capacity of local IRCS.
branches in States affected by emergencies to help them provide the appropriate humanitarian response. It promotes Red Cross/Red Crescent principles and respect for the emblems and advocates in favor of neutral and independent humanitarian action. It also supports the Family News Service of the IRCS, which seeks to trace and reunite family members separated because of migration, displacement and disasters. The ICRC offers its support and expertise to India’s National Disaster Management Authority, concerning the management of dead bodies during natural and man-made disasters.

The ICRC assists in medical and health programs, as well as safe water and sanitation projects in Assam, Nagaland and Chhattisgarh. A team of ICRC doctors and nurses supports the Primary Health Centre of Kutru, in Bijapur district, Chhattisgarh. Community workers increase awareness of hygiene among local communities in Bijapur district. The ICRC also supports the IRCS and the Ministry of Health in physical rehabilitation activities run by a district rehabilitation centre in Dimapur, Nagaland. It also maintains one physical rehabilitation programme in Jammu and Kashmir, and supports one centre in the city of Raipur/Chhattisgarh.

In the Maldives, the ICRC visits detainees and provides support and expertise to the Maldivian detention authorities. Since 2004, the ICRC, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and the Maldivian Red Crescent have enjoyed constructive dialogue and cooperation, working together in the aftermath of the tsunami. Following the full recognition of the Maldivian Red Crescent during the 31st International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent in 2011, the ICRC continues to work closely with the Maldivian Red Crescent, mostly in the areas of disaster preparedness, first aid and support for health-care facilities.
ICRC IN CHINA

The ICRC in China works closely with the Red Cross Society of China (RCSC), the only national Red Cross society in the People’s Republic of China.

The ICRC/RCSC works to assist wounded soldiers, help refugees in times of conflict, and provides assistance to disaster victims. The RCSC also supports whenever possible relief activities in other countries and regions. The RCSC has been contributing a lot to assisting the Government in implementing the Geneva Conventions, supporting the state development and improving the people’s health. In 1993, the Standing Committee of National People’s Congress officially promulgated the Red Cross Law of the People’s Republic of China, which provides legal protection to the Chinese Red Cross and its work.

The RCSC has developed its activities in the humanitarian field with the support of the Government and the community. Its Disaster Preparedness / Disaster Relief network has been initially set up, and the establishment of a computer network has greatly improved its operational capacity and emergency responds and relief.

The ICRC/RCSC is working on disaster response and preparedness, first aid training, community service, and the dissemination of the International Humanitarian Law and RC Movement knowledge. In co-ordination with the social spiritual civilization building and social security system, the RCSC has developed disaster relief, health care and community service projects to build up a Red Cross course with Chinese characteristics. The Red Cross Society of China firmly abides by the seven fundamental principles of the movement: humanity, impartiality, neutrality, independence, voluntary service, unity and universality and continues to work hard to increase its contribution towards the well-being of the Chinese people and towards world peace and progress.
Regional instability stems from a decades-long dispute between Pakistan and India over Kashmir and from war in Afghanistan. In recent years, Pakistan has endured one crisis after another. Aside from the recent natural disasters, insecurity continues in some areas, including along the north-western border with Afghanistan, Balochistan, and in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) and the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA). The transition from military to democratic rule has been complicated, with reports of bureaucratic corruption and politicization slowing the state-building process.

In 2009, three million people were forced to flee their homes in north-west Pakistan due to security services operations by the Government against militants. Since July 2009, two thirds have returned home, but ongoing operations of security services continue to trigger new dislocations in parts of KP. The humanitarian response remains complex, with relief activities aimed at four target groups: returnees; stayees (those who have remained in insecure zones during operations); those dislocated to camps; and those living with host families. Approximately 80,000 families (600,000 people) need greater food security, shelter, health, education, and water and sanitation. There are also 1.9 million Afghan refugees assisted by UNHCR in the area.
Nahqi camp in Mohmand Agency in its early stages of development. © UNHCR