



# ECONOMIC SECURITY



ICRC

IN BRIEF



Ben Houcjik / Netherlands Red Cross

## ECONOMIC SECURITY

The ICRC defines economic security as the condition of individuals, households or communities able to cover their essential needs and unavoidable expenditures in a sustainable manner, given physiological requirements, the environment, and prevailing cultural standards.

Food, basic shelter, clothing and hygiene qualify as essential needs; the related expenditures are regarded as unavoidable, as are the costs – including taxes – associated with minimum livelihood-supporting assets and activities, health care, and education.

The mission of the ICRC's Economic Security team is to assist victims of armed conflict and violence in a timely and flexible manner,

in order to meet their essential needs and unavoidable expenditures in ways that are both sustainable and respectful of their dignity.

The ICRC's mandate covers not only civilians but also persons deprived of their liberty. Hence, the food and economic security needs of detainees are also assessed and dealt with when necessary.

The Economic Security team bases its assistance on a multidisciplinary analysis of needs, vulnerabilities and capacities. It uses various modes of action adapted to the context, the time-scale and the specific attributes and circumstances of the people affected.



Olga Miltcheva/ICRC



Boris Heger/ICRC

## TYPES OF PROGRAMME

The ICRC is implementing a number of different economic security programmes in accordance with identified needs and capacities, analyses of response options, and the stage of the crisis (pre-crisis, acute crisis, chronic crisis or post-crisis).

**Relief activities** are undertaken when needs are urgent – for example, to ensure that basic conditions exist and that dietary needs are met (whether sufficient food is available, in terms of quantity and variety, whether people are able to prepare and consume it so that it preserves its nutritious value, and so on). Relief activities are also carried out to enable the implementation of critical livelihood activities.

**Livelihood support activities** aim to restore or enhance livelihoods.

**Structural support activities** restore or build the capacities of service providers.

These three forms of activity can be implemented sequentially or in combination.

### Programmes to meet food needs

- Relief activities: food distributions, food vouchers, combined food-and-cash aid, cash grants, food-for-work or cash-for-work, supplementary feeding, therapeutic feeding
- Livelihood support activities: vegetable seed distribution, technical advice for food preservation

### Programmes to meet food production needs

- Relief activities: food, cash or vouchers until the next harvest or to acquire agricultural equipment and/or supplies; agricultural, livestock and fishing equipment and/or supplies (seed, tools, fertilizer, pesticide, vaccines, drugs, feed) or vouchers for them; destocking
- Livelihood support activities: food-for-work or cash-for-work in connection with rebuilding, improving or maintaining agricultural infrastructure or for agricultural services (e.g. irrigation, anti-erosion measures, nurseries, seed multiplication); provision of agricultural machinery or mechanization services or of vouchers for them; restocking; training for farmers



### Programmes to meet income-support needs

- Relief activities: cash grants, cash vouchers, cash-for-work
- Livelihood support activities: provision of supplies and equipment for producing goods and services, or vouchers or cash for them; micro-economic initiatives; vocational training; support for access to micro-finance

### Programmes to meet basic living needs

- Relief activities: essential household items or vouchers for them, cash

### Programmes to strengthen capacities of service providers

- Structural support activities: workshop training, coaching/on-the-job learning, strengthening/development of training programmes; provision of materials/equipment.

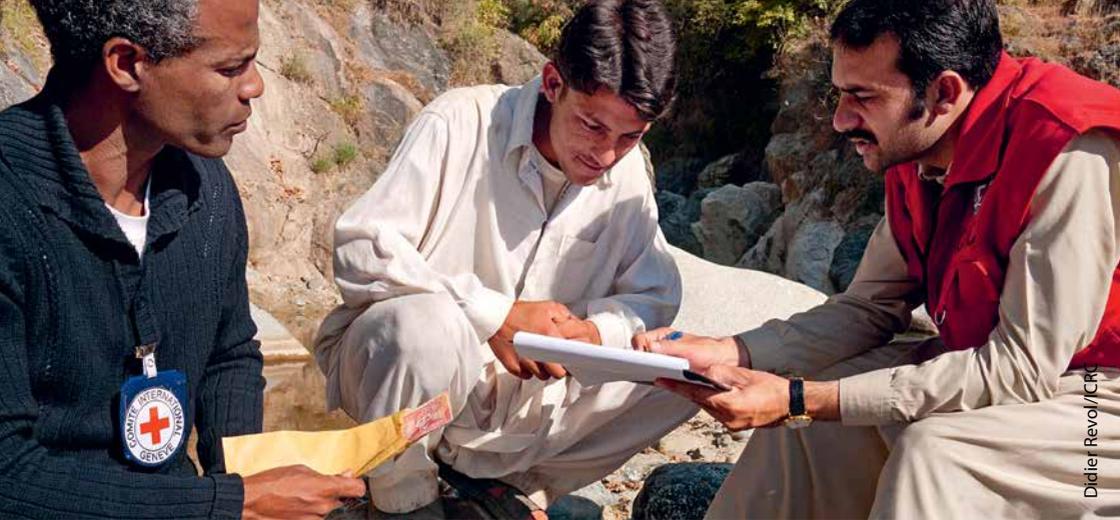
## MODES OF ACTION

The ICRC uses four modes of action, all of which are applicable to the issue of economic security:

- *Substitution*: direct provision of assistance in lieu of service providers unable or unwilling to do so
- *Support* to local service providers so that they can respond to needs
- *Persuasion*: convincing pertinent authorities to respond to needs
- *Mobilization* of third parties to respond to needs or to persuade relevant authorities to do so.

In rare cases, when all other modes of action have failed, the ICRC resorts to denunciation, to inform the public of the failure of a response or the absence of one.

The choice and combination of modes of action depend on the severity of the situation, the urgency of the needs and the capacities of service providers and authorities.



## ASSESSMENT, MONITORING AND EVALUATION

Assessments, monitoring and evaluation look at the core components of economic security at population level:

- *Food consumption:* What are people eating? Does their diet cover their nutritional requirements?
- *Food production:* Can people carry on their agricultural livelihood activities?
- *Income:* Can people earn or obtain cash to cover their basic expenditures?
- *Living conditions:* Are people protected against climatic threats? Are they able to cook? Can they maintain basic standards of hygiene?

To determine a suitable response, *capacities* to respond to people's economic security needs – amongst authorities and service providers, including the government, civil society, and the National Red Cross or Red Crescent Society – are also evaluated.

Economic security assessments are conducted within the broader scope of the ICRC's mandate

to assist victims of armed conflict and other situations of violence and protect their lives and dignity. They also take into account other factors directly affecting people's ability to achieve economic security: the public health situation and access to health care; the sanitation and water-and-habitat situation; and protection-related issues.

Assessments are undertaken at all stages of a crisis. In pre-crisis and acute crisis situations, they provide information for saving lives and for meeting livelihood-protection needs. In chronic crisis and post-crisis situations, they provide information on needs associated with the restoration and strengthening of livelihoods.

After a response has been launched, *monitoring and evaluation* are regularly conducted to ascertain the extent to which needs have been met and the adjustments that might be required, as well as the lessons to be learnt for future operations.



## CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES

Vulnerability, resilience and risk management, and nutrition are matters that span the activities of the ICRC's Economic Security team. They are taken into account while making assessments and determining the most effective responses for those in greatest need and for achieving both short- and long-term results:

- **Vulnerability:** For both assessments and programmes, differences of vulnerability are taken into account – for both individuals and groups – based on gender, age, health, physical capacity, displacement status, and socio-economic status.
- **Resilience and risk management:** While responding to emergency needs, economic security programmes also strive to strengthen capacities to respond to various risks. Whenever possible, activities aim to build on sustainable coping strategies and to strengthen livelihood assets and strategies in the medium and the long term.

- **Nutrition:** Therapeutic and supplementary feeding programmes are implemented where rates of acute malnutrition are high and where no one else is providing the necessary assistance (as in some places of detention). In contexts with persistently high rates of acute or chronic malnutrition, economic security programmes can be adjusted to reduce these malnutrition rates or at least to ensure that they do not increase. Such activities benefit from integration with health, sanitation and water-and-habitat programmes.



Diana Mrzlikova/ICRC



Jacques Gay-Crosta/ICRC

## MULTIDISCIPLINARY APPROACH / PARTNERSHIPS

Economic security activities require a variety of skills in the following areas: household economy analysis, agronomy, veterinary science, microeconomic and market analysis, human nutrition, and adult training.

The ICRC supplements its expertise by forming partnerships with the National Societies of the host country and of other countries. Especially in contexts where even the National Society has only limited direct access to the field, these partnerships also include local non-governmental organizations and members of civil society (organizations, groups or individuals).

## ECONOMIC SECURITY STAFF AND BUDGET

The size of the staff and the budget vary from one year to another; typically, the staff numbers roughly 900 (of whom about 100 are expatriates) and the budget about one-third of the ICRC's field budget.



ICRC

International Committee of the Red Cross  
19, avenue de la Paix  
1202 Geneva, Switzerland  
T +41 22 734 60 01 F +41 22 733 20 57  
E-mail: [shop@icrc.org](mailto:shop@icrc.org) [www.icrc.org](http://www.icrc.org)  
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