



S. Badier/ICRC

ENERGY SUPPLY AND THE ENVIRONMENT

During emergencies, our engineers always try to strike the right balance between the immediate needs of victims and the medium- and long-term consequences of their actions.

Providing power for essential services is a key part of our emergency response and plays a crucial role in ultimately getting these services fully restored. We strive to design and carry out our activities in a way that minimizes the use of natural resources and maximizes the sustainability of our projects.

Since it was set up in 1983, our Water and Habitat Unit has sought to promote respect for the environment and to employ eco-friendly technologies and approaches. Our engineers are encouraged to include environmental considerations in their projects as long as it does not compromise assistance to victims.

We:

- provide power to restore essential services
- use energy-saving and eco-friendly solutions in both urban and rural environments
- employ fuel-saving technologies in places of detention
- draw on solar, wind and hybrid solutions to generate power



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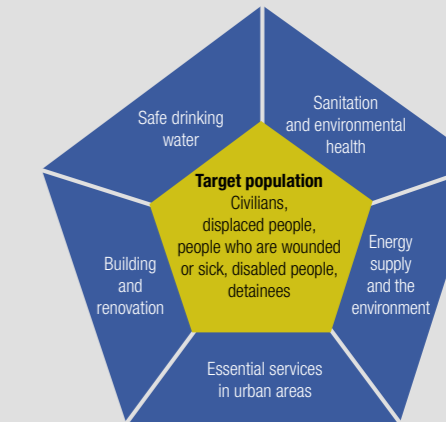


WATER AND HABITAT

ENSURING DECENT LIVING CONDITIONS FOR CONFLICT-AFFECTED COMMUNITIES



ICRC



WATER AND HABITAT PROJECTS

Each year, millions of people's lives are shattered by armed conflict. But we at the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) are doing our utmost to relieve their suffering and preserve their dignity, in keeping with our principles of impartiality, neutrality and independence.

One way we relieve suffering in conflict zones is by restoring essential services such as water, sanitation and power, and by renovating public infrastructure. These systems can be damaged or disrupted as a direct, indirect or cumulative result of conflict.

The staff of our Water and Habitat Unit assess what the most vulnerable people need in order to have decent living conditions. Then they design, plan and oversee projects to meet those needs. This includes negotiating and working with local authorities and civil society bodies to get essential services restored. Our teams adopt sustainable strategies, even when responding in emergencies.

Because water is essential to life, it is granted special protection under international humanitarian law.

See the Protocol Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949, and relating to the Protection of Victims of International Armed Conflicts (Protocol I), 8 June 1977.



SAFE DRINKING WATER

The world's population, estimated today at 7.4 billion, is expected to grow 30% by 2050. In addition to the associated depletion of the world's natural resources, issues such as urbanization, migration, land management, global economic crises and climate change will have far-reaching effects on access to clean water. Measures need to be taken to ensure that there is global water security, i.e. that people have sustainable access to adequate quantities of clean water for their well-being and socio-economic development.

The need to negotiate water use can give rise to cooperation between countries sharing cross-border resources. However, the strain on obsolete infrastructure that is no longer able to meet demands for water, sanitation and electricity has already led to increased tensions within communities and, in some cases, to armed violence.

During conflict, access to clean water can be restricted because water-supply or wastewater systems have been destroyed, because water sources are located in dangerous areas, or because large numbers of people have been displaced and resort to water sources that pose a major health risk.

In such circumstances, our water-supply projects help to save lives and to ease tensions between communities.

We:

- provide emergency water supplies for temporary settlements
- install and repair water-supply systems in both urban and rural areas
- ensure that health facilities and places of detention have safe water supplies

SANITATION AND ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH

Our environmental-health projects include installing emergency waste-disposal and sanitation systems in temporary settlements and repairing and upgrading sewage and wastewater networks in towns and villages affected by armed conflict. We also improve sanitation systems in health-care facilities and places of detention. To complement our infrastructure work, we hold awareness campaigns that promote good hygiene.

Cultural practices play a major role in the success of water and sanitation projects. That is why we get communities involved. We want them to contribute to the projects and feel invested in them so that the projects are successful and sustainable in the long term.

In places of detention, many of the diseases among inmates are either waterborne or due to poor hygiene. To remedy this we focus our activities on human-waste disposal systems, vector-control measures and preventive action to ensure that waste and wastewater are removed and properly treated.

We:

- set up emergency sanitation systems and shelters in temporary settlements
- install and repair wastewater systems in both rural and urban areas
- carry out engineering projects to improve conditions in places of detention and health-care facilities

ESSENTIAL SERVICES IN URBAN AREAS

The catastrophic effects of armed conflict in urban areas are becoming ever more apparent, especially to the estimated 50 million people bearing the brunt of the consequences. The effects are particularly devastating in these areas because of urban dwellers' dependence on increasingly complex essential services.

In many conflicts, water-supply systems fail, the power is cut off and municipalities are no longer able to treat wastewater or collect solid waste. Collapsing infrastructure means that hospitals and other health-care providers can no longer care for the wounded or treat chronic diseases.

Meanwhile, people start losing their jobs and children stop being able to go to school. Large numbers of people leave for other cities or seek refuge in neighbouring countries, overburdening the infrastructure there.

Our Water and Habitat teams repair and upgrade essential infrastructure to make it more resilient and sustainable. We also help urban authorities develop strategies and contingency plans for keeping their water-supply services operational.

We:

- repair and upgrade water-supply and wastewater systems
- repair and upgrade power-supply systems
- help providers of essential services to develop and implement contingency plans

BUILDING AND RENOVATION

In areas of growing and unplanned urbanization, public services are often inadequate, if they exist at all. Shortages of funds and qualified workers are the primary reasons why essential public infrastructure is not properly maintained. And yet, adequate buildings are essential for key services such as health care to be provided properly. That is why the situation can be even worse in times of conflict.

A large part of the work of our Water and Habitat teams is constructing or renovating key buildings such as hospitals and physical rehabilitation centres. Our goal is to improve these public facilities so that they can operate effectively.

We also work in places of detention. Armed conflict can trigger a rapid rise in the number of detainees, leading to overcrowding and overstretched services. We work in partnership with detaining authorities to refurbish and upgrade detention centres in line with the latest design recommendations.

We:

- build and renovate hospitals and physical rehabilitation centres
- refurbish and upgrade health-care and prison facilities
- repair roads, dams and water-catchment and irrigation systems