

Journal of Conventional Weapons Destruction

Volume 4
Issue 3 *The Journal of Mine Action*

Article 29

October 2000

International Rescue Committee

CISR JMU
Center for International Stabilization and Recovery at JMU (CISR)

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Recommended Citation

JMU, CISR (2000) "International Rescue Committee," *Journal of Mine Action* : Vol. 4 : Iss. 3 , Article 29.
Available at: <https://commons.lib.jmu.edu/cisr-journal/vol4/iss3/29>

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International Rescue Committee

The International Rescue Committee (IRC), founded at the request of Albert Einstein to assist opponents of Adolf Hitler, helps people fleeing racial, religious and ethnic persecution as well as those uprooted by war and violence. The IRC, with a staff from 40 countries, is a global organization. International institutions, governments and individual donors support the organization. Recently, the European Commission and individual European nations contributed substantial funding to assist IRC humanitarian aid projects.

Advocacy

Since 1933, the IRC has appealed to the world's conscience by focusing attention on refugee issues. It emphasizes educating public policy makers in the U.S. Congress, the United Nations and capitals around the world. IRC's current advocacy priorities focus on increasing refugee admissions to the earlier level of more than 10,000 refugees annually.

Emergency

Responding to refugee emergencies is an essential function of IRC. At the outbreak of an emergency, IRC rapidly delivers critical medical and public health services, shelter and food. In an emergency deployment responding to refugee flight, IRC emphasizes public health interventions that mitigate or interrupt the preventable fraction of disease processes that lead to mortality and morbidity in newly displaced populations.

IRC maintains an Emergency Response Program (ERP) in order to strengthen its capacity to mount an effective and rapid response to the increasingly frequent and massive events that afflict people worldwide. Its program provides rapid assessments, planning and response. ERP also facilitates a pro-active approach to emergencies by reinforcing its systems of readiness in Program Administration, Financial Administration, Personnel Administration, Material Support and UN/IO/GO/NGO Coordination. Since its inception in October 1995, ERP has initiated emergency operations in Burundi, Liberia, the Congo, Chechnya, Panama, DR Congo, Sierra Leone, Congo-Brazzaville, Uganda, Guinea, Albania, Macedonia, Indonesia and Guinea-Bissau.

Resettlement

Under a cooperative agreement with the U.S. Department of State, IRC resettles many refugees

who qualify for entry into the United States and cannot safely return to their countries. IRC provides direct financial assistance to cover the initial cost of housing, food, clothing and transportation to those refugees resettling in another country. IRC staff members and volunteers also offer counseling, job placement, translation, community orientation, school referral and other direct services. While the U.S. Department of State and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services pay for some initial support, other assistance depends upon IRC donors and volunteers. Through training, education and income-generating programs, IRC helps refugees acquire new self-sufficient skills. In 1998, IRC resettled 9,519 refugees.

Health

The IRC believes that health is not merely the absence of disease or infirmity but also a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being. By providing quality comprehensive health services, IRC is committed to promoting and improving the health of refugees and displaced populations throughout all phases of the disaster cycle. The IRC has a well-established history of providing health services to refugees and displaced persons. IRC has initiated programs that include preventive and curative services, health promotion and rehabilitation.

Protection

Protection comprises both the physical safety and well-being of refugees and the guarantee of their legal and human rights. Traditionally, UNHCR and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) have been responsible for protection issues; however, in an effort to provide more effective and consistent cooperation on these issues among all the agencies that serve refugees and to integrate protection issues fully into its own programs, the IRC established a protection team based in New York.

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Mercy Corps International

Mercy Corps International, a non-profit voluntary agency, is one of the United States most resourceful international charities, contributing close to 94 percent of its resources to the most vulnerable areas in the world. Since 1979, when Mercy Corps was founded as Save the Refugees Fund, it has dispersed over \$500 million in assistance to people in more than 72 countries. With the support of several prominent Americans, Save the Refugees Fund was able to expand its efforts to assist not only the Cambodian refugees who attempted to flee by boat but also vulnerable people in other nations. In 1981, the Fund was re-named Mercy Corps International to reflect its broadened humanitarian role. With the intention of alleviating suffering, poverty and oppression, Mercy Corps' programs focus on providing support to victims of natural disaster or conflict by helping them build secure, productive and lawful communities. In recent years, Mercy Corps has become a leader in integrating civil society initiatives and human rights advocacy into humanitarian assistance. In 1999, it provided food, shelter, health care and economic opportunity to more than three million people in 24 developing and emerging countries, sent emergency goods and material aid to eight additional countries and delivered \$93 million in humanitarian aid.

Mercy Corps is a world leader in emergency aid. It builds stronger societies and finds long-term solutions to poverty. Rather than providing a one-time consumption of resources, it offers humanitarian aid that helps lay the foundation for building stronger societies and empowers the people in countries plagued by civil, religious and ethnic conflict. With the understanding that no single agency can meet the challenges of poverty and oppression alone, Mercy Corps forges partnerships with other international and local organizations. Mercy Corps promotes a broad coalition for humanitarian action with Mercy Corps Scotland, Pax World Service, Proyecto Aldea Global and MercePhil Development Foundation. This global movement of organizations is committed to alleviating poverty and finding peaceful solutions to social problems by providing quick-response, high-impact relief and development around the globe.

Mercy Corps has several approaches to help communities find lasting solutions in overcoming poverty and oppression.

- *Responding to human crises:* Emergency relief services assist people afflicted by conflict or disaster.
- *Investing in long-term solutions:* Sustainable community development focuses on the needs of children and their caregivers. It helps people grow more food, protect their environments, improve health care, build housing and infrastructure, earn more money by starting small businesses and educate their children.
- *Restoring torn social fabrics:* Civil society initiatives promote citizen participation, accountability, nonviolent conflict resolution and the rule of law.

Mercy Corps has a global network of donors, including individuals, corporations, foundations, churches, governments and international organizations, such as the United Nations and the European Union. In Kosovo, Central Asia, Mongolia, the Caucasus and elsewhere, major donors have entrusted them with multimillion-dollar grants to provide humanitarian aid.

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