Handicap International

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portantly, MSF gives stricken populations the foundations for long-term recovery, stabilizing the situation and in many cases providing training and support for local medical personnel to carry on relief activities independently once the most acute need has passed.

And MSF does not forget. With the publication of reports such as Living in a Minefield, and Populations in Danger, MSF provides the most vital, life saving care any medical personnel can offer—prevention. Here’s to hoping that raised awareness will prevent some of the world’s atrocities from ever happening again.

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International Committee of the Red Cross

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) is an impartial, neutral and independent organization whose exclusively humanitarian mission is to protect the lives and dignity of victims of war and in internal violence and to provide them with assistance. It directs and coordinates the international relief activities in situations of conflict. It also endeavors to prevent suffering by promoting and strengthening humanitarian law and universal humanitarian principles.

Established in 1863 on the principles of Henry Dunant and the meeting of the Geneva Conventions, the ICRC has also originated the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, and plays a significant role in providing aid to landmine victims.

ICRC Work with Landmine Victims

The systematic use of violence to resolve human conflicts is as old as humanity and shows no sign of going out of fashion. The consequences of laying anti-personnel mines in present day war, however, are far more disproportionate than the casualties. Anti-personnel mines result in the daily cries of pain, and the visible, and the actual, mutilation. Caring for the victims of anti-personnel mines challenges every part of a public health care system at every stage of its development, and the problem is most acute in countries least able to bear the burden. Landmines render whole regions useless for human habitation and activity, they displace populations and create demographic pressures which destabilize neighboring regions. The surgical activities of the ICRC stem from the institution's general mandate to protect and assist the victims of armed conflict. The war wounded are only one category of the victims included in the ICRC's terms of reference.

The ICRC's main role in relation to the war wounded is not to treat them, for this responsibility is given to the governments involved in the conflict and hence their army medical services. The task of the ICRC is first and foremost to ensure that all involved are familiar with the provisions of the Geneva Conventions and apply them, meaning they must secure the rights and care for the war wounded. When supplying hospitals with medical equipment and medicines is not enough, the ICRC must set up its own surgical facilities to offer the wounded the care that the authorities cannot provide.

Some countries are only able to provide medical assistance to the wounded at the point of injury, and are not able to care for them properly once they arrive at the hospital. The ICRC therefore has to be very careful in selecting the countries and the categories of victims to take on for medical care. The ICRC provides medical care to war wounded, in places inaccessible to other humanitarian agencies. The ICRC also provides medical care to civilians in places where civilian facilities do not exist.

In June 1999 the ICRC launched an appeal for 105 million Swiss francs (U.S. $90 million) to fund its activities for mine victims over the next five years. The financial appeal covers all the ICRC's activities relating to mine victims.

Goals:

- Reduce the risk of mine-related incidents through mine awareness programs currently being conducted by the ICRC in six countries.
- Provide mine victims with treatment and physical rehabilitation in 23 high-risk centers that the ICRC is running in 11 countries, and to continue its support for similar centers run by ministries of health.