



ICRC

Geneva, 23 September 2026

ODG 26/80 PKR/dbar

Management Response – MOPAN Institutional Assessment of the International Committee of the Red Cross, 2025–2026

Dear Ms Steensen,

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) entered into this institutional assessment conducted by the Multilateral Performance Network (MOPAN) in a sincere spirit of openness and interest. The process presented an opportunity for learning and strengthening the organisation. I wish to thank the MOPAN members, the Secretariat and the Institutional Leads from Belgium and the Netherlands for the care taken to engage with the specificities of the ICRC's mandate and operating model throughout.

I welcome MOPAN's recognition of the ICRC's comparative advantage which derives from the combination of its legal mandate, normative authority, and principled operating model; as well as its contribution as a component within the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement. This affirms the value of the ICRC within the wider humanitarian system, and the organisation will continue to invest in preserving and communicating this distinct identity while adapting to a rapidly changing operating and funding environment.

The report offers a substantial and considered review of the organisation, including an acknowledgement of several distinctive strengths. The assessment's recognition of the ICRC's role as guardian of IHL, reinvigorated through the Global Initiative on IHL, and of the organisation's active adaptation of its normative work to the evolving character of warfare, speaks to that which the ICRC considers foundational to its mandate. The report identifies the ICRC's engagement with armed non-state actors as one of its most distinctive features.

The ICRC also welcomes the assessment's engagement with its institutional and financial architecture. The report's acknowledgement of the genuine strengthening in governance that followed the ICRC's response to its 2023 financial crisis reflects a period of significant institutional learning. Its identification of the 'plan-implement-fund' budgeting model as an example of principled financial architecture from which other humanitarian organisations could learn is a notable endorsement.

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The assessment highlights good practices such as: the ICRC's combined policy for preventing and responding to sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment for communities and staff; and its approach to managing the tension between humanitarian principles and operational realities – including its graduated approach to confidentiality versus public denunciation. It notes the need for a dedicated whistleblower policy – this was indeed already part of the ethics, risk and compliance roadmap and expected within this current strategy implementation cycle.

On accountability and evidence, the assessment recognises the ICRC's establishment of a centralised Analysis and Evidence function as an institutional innovation addressing a persistent challenge across large humanitarian organisations: systematising the connections between data generation and programming decision-making. The creation of an independent Evaluation Office is similarly recognised as a meaningful investment in accountability and learning, positively viewed by stakeholders.

Finally, and importantly, the assessment's finding that the ICRC's humanitarian responses are relevant to the needs and priorities of affected people is particularly significant to the organisation: relevance to those the ICRC exists to serve is the measure against which it ultimately holds itself accountable, more than any other. The report's recognition of the ICRC's direct implementation model and deep field presence – with 89% of staff based in delegations and missions – as enabling real humanitarian impact reflects that same principle of relevance in practice.

Throughout, the MOPAN assessment engaged meaningfully with the 2024-2027 Institutional Strategy; and its recognition of the Strategy as a credible and substantive framework for modernising the organisation, as well as strengthening its focus, is appreciated. It is extremely relevant, therefore, that the considerations set out in the report support the existing direction of the Institutional Strategy and its orientations.

I have carefully considered the areas highlighted by the MOPAN report to both identify where there are ongoing workstreams and initiatives that respond to the recommendations, and that provide the opportunity to incorporate learning from the assessment. Each area of consideration is addressed in turn below.

Going forward, the MOPAN assessment, as an in-depth and wide-ranging external review, will contribute to the organisation's own reflections on its performance. The areas for consideration raised in the report will inform our thinking as we regularly review our implementation of the Institutional Strategy and reflect on our strategic and operational priorities.

I extend my appreciation to MOPAN, its membership, and all the stakeholders who contributed evidence and perspectives to this assessment. Whatever the pressures on the wider humanitarian sector, the ICRC's purpose remains focussed: to protect and assist the victims of armed conflict, guided by its mandate and by the principles on which it was founded. It is in that spirit that the ICRC remains committed to working with its donors and partners to strengthen its performance.

Yours sincerely,



Pierre Krähenbühl
Director-General

Consideration 1 – *Urgently diversify donors.*

The ICRC's capacity to deliver an effective, principled humanitarian response is greatly strengthened by a predictable and flexible financial base. The ICRC's funding is concentrated on public sources and recognised by the leadership as a significant vulnerability that exposes the organisation to volatility in any shifts among a modest number of highly valued bilateral relationships. While the share of funding from the organisation's top five donors reduced from 58% to 51%, income from the members of the Donor Support Group still accounted for 84% of funding in 2025.

Diversifying funding sources from a wider number of donors remains a priority with clear targets that the ICRC regularly reviews. Progress has been slower than envisaged, with diversification efforts curtailed due to the challenging funding environment creating substantial budget and staff contraction for the ICRC as a whole and with related consequences on the Resource Mobilisation Division. However, the ICRC fully recognises that while the targets are ambitious, they remain necessary, and the organisation will continue to pursue these in 2027, therefore not requiring a revision at this time. Private sector funding received by the ICRC in 2025 exceeded targets although remains modest. An external evaluation of the resource mobilisation strategy, alongside the budget reductions, precipitated a realignment of the division's structure to deliver on the refreshed Resource Mobilisation Strategy (2025-2027) in which two of the four strategic orientations specifically focus on the concentration of funding and the donor base.

Alongside the diversification of income, including from emerging public donors, the ICRC remains fully committed to advocating for flexibility of funding. This effort sits within the ICRC's wider commitment to financial stability and sound governance – strengthening financial management, broadening partnerships across public, multilateral and private actors, and ensuring the organisation can sustain predictable delivery and respond decisively when crises demand it.

Consideration 2 – *Invest in capturing and communicating the value of protection and prevention outcomes.*

Protection and prevention sit at the centre of the ICRC's mandate and its comparative advantage as a neutral intermediary. We appreciate the report's recognition of the challenges in capturing and communicating the value of the ICRC's most distinctive contributions – preventing violations of IHL through confidential dialogue, visiting detainees across the world and working to improve conditions of detention, and accessing hard-to-reach populations. This work often depends on being responsive to unpredictable dynamics rather than organising around fixed targets within conventional results frameworks. We nonetheless recognise the need to demonstrate our value to donors and to contribute to sector-wide debates on humanitarian performance.

To address this, the ICRC is strengthening how it documents, monitors and communicates protection outcomes without compromising confidentiality. Following an internal conference in 2024 on this area of work, the ICRC has embedded management ownership and accountability for protection dialogue as institutional priorities, supported by the protection case management tool and a dedicated evaluation now underway to define and baseline protection dialogue. A new collaboration framework between the Protection Division and the Analysis and Evidence function is aligning how evidence from this work is generated and used, alongside continued IHL training with armed forces and non-state armed groups.

A topic relevant not only to Protection but across the organisation is the ICRC's articulation of 'value for money' – a theme raised both in dialogue with individual donors and explicitly in the MOPAN assessment. The ICRC's deep investment over years, sometimes decades, in developing approaches appropriate to diverse contexts, and the elements of its work that resist straightforward costing, are not always easily captured in conventional value-for-money terms. The ICRC has planned a review of its approaches in 2027, building on the ICRC Institutional Strategy 2024–27, which already embodies value-for-money principles across its strategic orientations, operational approaches and enabling systems.

Across all of this, the ICRC aims to make the outcomes of its protection and prevention work more visible without compromising on the critical operational modalities of confidentiality and access.

Consideration 3 – Develop and resource a human capital strategy that can balance the dual pressures of further budget cuts and strategic talent demands.

The ICRC notes the assessment's observations regarding the cumulative effect of workforce reductions since 2023 on institutional memory, staff wellbeing and operational capacity. These are considerations the organisation weighs actively in its workforce planning. A Staffing Model validated by the Directorate in 2025 is reshaping the organisation's HR foundations around mobility, talent management, career development and simplification of processes. Recruitment and career pathways are being redesigned so that staff readiness for fieldwork, and the competencies the ICRC needs across its areas of expertise, are assessed and developed consistently from the point of entry through to internal mobility. This work continues into 2026 and beyond, including a common competency framework now in use across recruitment and career development.

Internal capabilities are being addressed through the dedicated programmes on staff integration and leadership training, alongside embedding People Management Standards across the organisation. Succession strategies are explicitly being incorporated into workforce planning. Staff wellbeing in hardship postings remains a priority, with the recently validated duty of care policy being implemented to ensure staff are prepared and supported throughout their assignments. The institution is developing the expertise and skills needed for its digital transformation agenda through a multi-year learning roadmap running until 2027, with digital literacy now embedded as a core competency into recruitment and career progression.

This work sits within the ICRC's broader institutional strategy which places investment in people, cohesion and leadership responsibility at the centre of organisational resilience. The Directorate regards a workforce that is skilled, trusted and equipped to operate under sustained pressure as foundational to the ICRC's ability to deliver on its mandate in the years ahead.

Consideration 4 – Accelerate digital transformation with explicit attention to its implications for data protection in conflict settings.

The ICRC's digital transformation is driven by the goal of enhancing the organisation's reach and accountability to conflict-affected people while preserving the trust it has earned over years. The pace of this transformation reflects a considered assessment of risk: balancing the speed of adoption of new technologies with the organisation's ability to implement them securely and sustainably, while ensuring that it keeps pace with the evolving environments in which it operates.

The ICRC's approach to data protection reflects a broader commitment to make principled and deliberate technological choices that foster long-term institutional resilience, mitigate digital risks to affected populations, and uphold the organisation's independence and neutrality – an approach set out in the ICRC's technology strategy and data protection frameworks. This is operationalised through an independent Data Protection Office, mandatory organisation-wide training on data management and protection, and an upcoming internal communication and digital literacy campaign on new technologies.

Sustaining this pace of transformation requires significant investment in technology, infrastructure and staff capacity, and to which the ICRC remains committed while navigating financial constraints. This work is guided by the ICRC's commitment to lead by example in its use of digital technology – ensuring that every choice of technology, infrastructure or partner remains consistent with its Fundamental Principles.

Consideration 5 – Strengthen the Movement partnership model as a force multiplier for capacity and reach in an era of constrained resources.

The ICRC's identity is inseparable from its place within the Movement, and its partnerships with National Societies and the IFRC – grounded in mutual recognition of each component's mandate, role and responsibility – are central to how the organisation understands its own effectiveness. The ICRC has for many years contributed to a Movement that is a significant force multiplier for humanitarian action. Yet, there is recognition that it can be further leveraged to enhance capacity and reach.

Resource limitations underscore the further importance of optimising interoperability and leveraging shared assets, while such constraints and other factors have impacted the Movement's ability to fully implement frameworks like the Seville Agreement 2.0. There are important areas to strengthen including the process for agreeing Movement priorities at the onset of a crisis; investing in the capacity of host National Societies in their role as co-convenor; and ensuring shared interpretation and ownership of the Seville Agreement 2.0 roles and responsibilities. And yet I remain confident that the implementation of the Seville Agreement 2.0 is on a positive trajectory – and recently even accelerating when reflecting on the past years – towards becoming standard practice together within the Movement.

For the ICRC, the Agreement represents a commitment with the wider Movement to invest in collective preparedness for armed conflict and internal strife; implementation has not been perfect, but the organisation's commitment to enabling the Movement's full potential remains steadfast. That commitment was tested directly during the financial contractions of 2023 and 2025. The ICRC made concerted efforts to preserve funding to National Societies as far as possible, even as broader budget reductions required difficult decisions.

The ICRC is committed to strengthening equitable partnerships, particularly in operational contexts most affected by the budget reductions over the last few years. Consultations with National Societies and the IFRC at the highest leadership levels have been ongoing, already preceding the MOPAN assessment, with the aim to adapt collaboratively to a rapidly changing world and address emerging challenges through a renewed humanitarian lens, grounded in the Fundamental Principles of the Movement and collective impact.

Consideration 6 – Engage substantively in the Humanitarian Reset and system-wide reform agenda from a position of principle and influence.

The ICRC's ongoing engagement with the Humanitarian Reset and the broader system-wide reform agenda reflects its commitment to help shape the future of humanitarian action amid a changing world. Principled, independent humanitarian action must remain central to the sector.

The ICRC notes the recognition of its specific contribution to the evolution of the humanitarian space, at a moment when unprecedented reductions in humanitarian budgets are visibly reducing support to people in countries with the most severe needs. Within this environment, the ICRC works in partnership with National Societies and the IFRC across the Movement to articulate policy positions essential to principled and effective humanitarian responses, and continues its engagement with international actors and UN agencies – in recognition of the collective effort, comparative strengths and funding interdependencies that now define the humanitarian ecosystem at national, regional and global levels.

Our approaches sit within the ICRC's broader commitment to take a leading role in shaping the future of humanitarian action – engaging in policy debates on new paradigms for aid delivery, deepening local partnerships, and ensuring that the perspective of a principled and independent actor remains part of how the system is reformed.

Consideration 7 – Use the 2026 mid-strategy review to integrate MOPAN assessment findings into institutional adaptation.

The ICRC is in full support of bringing learning from the MOPAN assessment to the implementation of the Institutional Strategy, and into existing workstreams, reviews and planning processes. Progress on delivering the institutional strategy is reflected on quarterly, and reported to the Assembly and major donors. These moments create opportunities to reflect on alignment between strategic direction and the changing external environment.

The integration of the Institutional Strategy's strategic orientations into the ICRC's overall organisational Planning for Results process represents a streamlining of planning and reporting, which is appropriate for coherence and efficiency gains. For the same reason, any actions or adjustments to our approaches stemming from the assessment will be similarly incorporated into the existing planning and monitoring architecture without the need for additional tracking. We also recognise the importance of the findings of the MOPAN report in informing bilateral dialogue with donor organisations on areas of shared priorities, and welcome opportunities to engage on topics of mutual interest.