

International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC)

Organisational Information

The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) is a member of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, one of the most well-known and widespread international humanitarian movements in the world. The movement consists of three united yet legally independent parts: the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), the IFRC, and the National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies. The IFRC coordinates the national societies' functions internationally, as well as leading and organizing relief assistance in response to large-scale emergencies. While the ICRC responds to conflict-related emergencies, the IFRC act in response to man-made or natural disasters.

The IFRC was formed in 1919 as the 'League of Red Cross Societies' to expand the Red Cross movement's international activities beyond conflict-related emergencies. The need for coordination of Red Cross work and societies was evident in the fact that within five years the League had issued 47 donation appeals for missions in 34 countries. In 1983, Red Crescent was added to the League's name and then in 1991 the name was changed to the current International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies.

The IFRC is based in Geneva, Switzerland and employs approximately 275 people at the secretariat with a further 5,500 locally hired staff at its 14 permanent regional offices. The Federation's budget mostly comes from national societies' contributions and investment revenues; however additional funding through appeals for relief assistance missions come from voluntary donations by various types of organisations. The IFRC's budget for 2005 was over US\$ 697 million¹.

The IFRC actively engaged in the data collection process for the 2006 Global Accountability Report. They completed a questionnaire, provided access to internal documentation and representatives of the organisation were interviewed as part of the research.

Transparency | Participation | Evaluation | Complaint and Response

Organisational Structure

The IFRC is a federation with 185 member National Societies. The General Assembly is the IFRC's governing body and it meets every two years with all National Societies participating equally. The IFRC's executive body, the Governing Board, meets twice a year and consists of the President, four Vice-Presidents, ex-officio Vice-President, twenty member Societies and the Chairman of the Finance Commission. The General Assembly elects the members of the Governing Board. The four Vice-Presidents are elected with one each from the four geographical regions. The Governing Assembly also elects the Finance Commission. The IFRC has four other commissions: Health and Community Services, Youth, Disaster Relief, and Development.

Transparency Dimension

The IFRC's transparency capabilities rank fourth out of the ten assessed INGOs alongside The Nature Conservancy and World Vision International with a score of 27 percent.

The IFRC does not have an organisation-wide information disclosure policy, but does make a public commitment to increase openness and accountability in the Framework for Action. The Framework does not fulfil any principles of good practice on transparency however; it makes no commitment to respond to information requests, nor does it identify narrowly-defined conditions for non-disclosure.

With the development of the Planning, Monitoring, Evaluation, and Reporting Department the IFRC has ensured that a senior executive—the head of the department—oversees transparency at an organisational level. However, the IFRC does not train staff on how to meet the organisation's

¹ IFRC Financial Statements for 2005 <http://www.ifrc.org/Docs/pubs/who/ar2005-pwc.pdf>

transparency commitments, and it does not make the Framework for Action accessible to external stakeholders by disseminating it through more than one medium or translating it.

Participation Dimension

The IFRC rank fifth among the assessed INGOs for their participation capabilities with a score of 62 percent.

External Stakeholder Engagement

The IFRC's lacks an overarching stakeholder engagement policy, but does have a document that guides their engagement with a specific stakeholder group, corporate partners, at the level of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement. The Policy for Corporate Sector Partnerships identifies the key principles that should inform the IFRC's engagement with the corporate sector but lacks most of the good practice principles identified in the 2006 Global Accountability Report.

The Communications and Resource Mobilization Department oversees corporate sector engagement within the Federation, while the head of the department oversees compliance with the Policy for Corporate Sector Partnerships. Training is provided to relevant staff on the policy and it is also widely disseminated to external stakeholder through multiple mediums and translated into five languages.

Member Control

The IFRC exhibits strong member control in the General Assembly and prevents a minority from dominating decision-making. In relation to the Governing Board, the Constitution does not state whether members can initiate a process of dismissal for individuals on the executive. However, the IFRC is currently undergoing Constitutional Review and the inclusion of such a provision is under discussion.

Evaluation Dimension

The IFRC's evaluation capabilities rank joint eighth among the ten assessed INGOs alongside three other organisations with a score of 51 percent.

The Operational Framework for Evaluation guides evaluation practice at the IFRC. This document meets a number of good practice principles including committing to engage external stakeholders in the evaluation process and using evaluation results to inform decision-making; it does not however make a commitment to being open about evaluation results or to evaluating internal administrative policies.

The new department of Planning, Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting oversees evaluation processes within the IFRC, but no training is provided to staff on how to comply with the organisation's evaluation commitments nor is the evaluation policy made available through more than one medium or translated. During the course of the research the IFRC noted however, that they are planning to develop staff training on evaluation and are in the process of translating the Operational Framework.

The IFRC does not currently have mechanisms in place for disseminating lesson learnt from evaluations throughout the organisation. While evaluation reports are posted on the intranet, the results are not analysed or disseminated systematically in ways that can be easily incorporated into planning and the ongoing work of the Federation. The Federation has identified this as a key priority for the new Evaluation Department to address.

Complaint and Response Dimension

The IFRC rank second out of the 10 assessed INGOs for their capabilities for handling and responding to complaints with a score of 47 percent.

While the IFRC makes no public commitment to handling and responding to complaints from external stakeholder, it does have policies on internal complaints. The two policies that guide the handling of complaints from internal stakeholders are the Code of Conduct for Secretariat Staff and the Standards of Investigations. Together these are of a high quality, meeting virtually all of the principles of good

practice for complaints handling; they only lack a commitment to requiring all negative consequences suffered by victims of proven whistleblower retaliation are reversed.

Two different senior executives oversee the policies. The Head of Human Resources oversees the Code of Conduct for International Secretariat staff, while the Head of Risk Management and Audit Department supervises the Standards for Investigations. To foster compliance with these policies, the Federation recently renewed its efforts to increase staff awareness and understanding of the Code of Conduct by intensifying training and management follow-up. The organisation has plans to incorporate this into human resource performance reviews. Alongside the training, the Federation also disseminates the policies through the intranet and integrates it into staff inductions.

Conclusion

The IFRC ranked highest for their participation capabilities, while their transparency capabilities scored the lowest.

Based on the results of the 2006 Global Accountability Report the IFRC should consider a number of reforms. They should formalise their approach to transparency by developing an information disclosure policy that clearly identifies what, when and how the organisation will make information publicly available and commits to key good practice principles on transparency.

The IFRC should develop a policy that guides engagement with external stakeholders other than corporate partners. Their presence in the field of humanitarian assistance suggests that they should develop a policy that identifies the key principles that guide their engagement with affected communities.

In addition, the lack of both policies and/or systems for handling and responding to external complaints highlights this as an area where the organisation needs to start developing its capabilities.

While there are numerous areas where the IFRC's capabilities require strengthening, the introduction in 2006 of the Planning, Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting Department, suggests the organisation is well placed to improve its accountability.

The 2006 Global Accountability Report assessed the accountability of 30 global organisations from the intergovernmental, non-governmental and corporate sectors according to four key dimensions of accountability – transparency, participation, evaluation, and complaint and response mechanisms. The study investigated the extent to which these organisations have in place the capabilities – policies and systems – at headquarters or the global office that foster accountability to communities they affect and to the wider public. At the global level, organisations need to have in place enforceable policies on key dimensions of accountability in order to promote consistency in approach both at different levels throughout the organisation and in relation to their diverse stakeholder groups. The presence of a policy at the global office indicates a public commitment to the dimensions of accountability and enables stakeholders to demand compliance with these policies; yet how these commitments translate into practice is equally important. The project team at the One World Trust is actively seeking innovative ways to assess accountability in practice both at the global office and field levels. Such assessments will help build a more comprehensive understanding of an organisation's accountability.

For a full list of indicators against which each of the 30 organisations were assessed click [here](#) or for further information on the 2006 Global Accountability click [here](#).