



Leadership and Management Effects on Humanitarian Impact Creation

Preparation for a Change Intervention – Case Study ICRC

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Keywords

Humanitarian Impact, Humanitarian Leadership Effectiveness, ICRC, Change Intervention

The humanitarian sector addressing humanitarian and social need situations is currently not covering all the need in the world, and leadership or lack of leadership has been claimed as a major contributor to ineffectiveness. As a result, both the professionalisation of the sector and more visibility for humanitarian impact creation have got a lot of momentum. I claim that within every organisation, the understanding of what defines successful value creation and the attributed leadership and management behaviour have a strong impact on the actual value creation. My research contributes in this area and aims at a better understanding and realisation of value creation, and will make focused recommendations for the learning and development offer at the ICRC (International Committee of Red Cross). The findings have been contrasted with research from social impact analysis, aid effectiveness and key findings in leadership and managerial behaviour effectiveness from the for-profit, non-profit and humanitarian sectors.

1. Introduction

1.1 General

There is a concern that in the context of increased needs of beneficiaries globally and gaps in fulfilling these needs; the current humanitarian system is not managing this efficiently enough (cf. Harvey et al. 2012; Buchanan-Smith and Scriven 2011; Featherstone 2010). Harvey et al. stated that the effectiveness of humanitarian action has gaps with dramatic consequences for the survival and livelihood of people (cf. Harvey et al. 2012). Questions have been raised about the role of leadership in this context (cf. Buchanan-Smith and Scriven 2011; cf. Featherstone 2010; cf. CERF). The question at the heart of the research reported here is how leadership behaviour is perceived to affect the humanitarian impact. Surprisingly, there has been limited research available on the topic of leadership effectiveness in the humanitarian sector – especially as the perceived leadership ineffectiveness has been dominating the humanitarian sector for years (cf. Buchanan-Smith and Scriven 2011). To elaborate on the humanitarian context, I will provide an overview of the humanitarian system and key changes in recent years.

The term humanitarian system is understood as a network of national and international organisations and authorities, including military and private companies that are functionally connected in the humanitarian action (cf. OCHA FTS). From 2009 to 2010, the humanitarian sector responded to more than 200 natural disasters and close to 50 complex emergencies and spends around \$20 billion annually (ibid.). The UN and The Red Cross Movement are the biggest individual humanitarian organisations, whereas most humanitarian staff is working for NGOs: NGOs: 140,000; UN: 85,000; Red Cross/Crescent Movement: 45,000 (cf. OCHA FTS; cf. Walker and Russ 2010). The past decade has seen rapid development and many changes in the humanitarian sector. As an example, it is - in contrast to the traditional way of working – no longer enough to provide the quick delivery of aid assistance. Humanitarian actors are more and more involved in long-term conflicts with more complexity and with increased exposure to physical risks for international staff and beneficiaries. Another big change has been that conflicts are no longer state A against B with clear uniformed parties; there are more and more within state conflicts, with new kind of weapons and with massive and fast scaling of conflicts and related humanitarian need. The perceived ineffectiveness of the humanitarian sector has been demanding from donors as well from beneficiaries more visibility for results in a comparable way to see the “bottom-line”

of humanitarian action more objectively (cf. Humanitarian Futures Program 2009; Jayawickrama 2011; Tuan 2008; Centre for Creative Leadership; Clark et al. 2003; Bolt 2007). As general accepted principles of reporting similar to those in the for-profit sector do not exist, the act of humanitarian impact reporting will remain difficult (cf. Hochschild 2010).

In this context, the ICRC introduced results-based management to be more transparent and has recently started the development of a learning and development program: the ICRC Humanitarian Leadership and Management School (HLMS). This move recognises that leadership and leadership development is crucial for the performance of the organisation. Maximising the humanitarian needs of beneficiaries in extreme and complex conflict situations assumes certain leadership and management behaviour will be successful. My research will make a contribution to inform the humanitarian leadership research by analysing these specifics in more detail.

1.2 Research Question – Description and Why It Is Important?

The central research question is: “How is leadership and management behaviour perceived to affect humanitarian impact creation?” According to Hamlin, there is no agreement about what constitutes effective leadership and management behaviour in general (cf. Hamlin 2006). The answer to this question could be used to guide the leadership and development program at the ICRC. I leverage, therefore, the diverse practical experiences of ICRC leaders with many years in the humanitarian field to recognise problems and challenges the managers are facing to reveal effective leadership and managerial behaviour. This has two advantages. It is firstly highly relevant to the practice of leaders and would secondly reveal leadership attributes specially needed in humanitarian action or under specific context conditions (cf. Jayawickrama 2011, Centre for Creative Leadership/People in Aid Review 2010). Some researchers listed specific behaviours that are mentioned as important in the humanitarian action, e.g. respecting beneficiaries, communicating, listening, negotiating, collaborating, envisioning, dealing with ambiguity and team building, but, to my knowledge, no consistent approach to humanitarian leadership effectiveness has been developed (cf. People in Aid 2007; Harvey et al. 2012; Buchanan-Smith 2011). Another important practical implication will be to go one step further than just documenting behaviour that will most likely not be applied. I will therefore introduce change perspectives to enable the actual deployment of findings and fostering of best practices. The next section will provide an overview of the structure and the scope of inquiry.

1.3 Organisation of the Inquiry

The inquiry structure unfolds in three blocks (cf. figure 1).

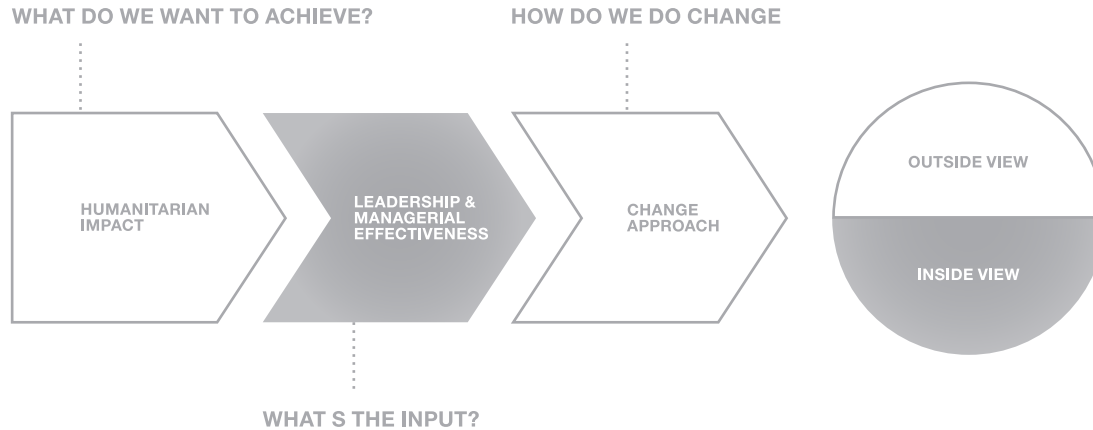


FIGURE 1: INQUIRY BLOCKS (SOURCE: OWN ILLUSTRATION)

I will first set up a framework to examine humanitarian impact (outside view) and apply to it the perspectives of ICRC leaders (inside view). Then I will summarise the main lessons from the generic leadership effectiveness literature in the for-profit, non-profit and humanitarian sectors (outside view) and contrast this with concrete examples from the ICRC (inside view). I will ask what humanitarian impact means to ICRC leaders and what perceived managerial and leadership behaviour is related to this, so I can explore the context of individual behaviour in more detail, e.g. the situation and intended results of actors. The last section will examine the change approach to address leadership challenges and improvement areas and will highlight change perspectives that would be useful to make successful changes in current practices at the ICRC.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Definition of Basic Terminology

In the following, I will elaborate the theoretical foundation of my research and will summarise the key concepts and theories used. Firstly, I will show the historical development in the area related to my research question, and secondly, I will develop my approach to leadership. Furthermore, perspectives and approaches from for-profit, non-profit and humanitarian sectors, which have been previously remained separate, are brought together. The next section will start by introducing basic terminology that will be used as common language for this research paper.

In leadership theory, we find paradigms differentiating leadership by trait (located in the person), situational (situation) or contingency theory (both situation and person) (cf. Grint 2010). I will use the contingency approach of leadership together with the behavioural paradigm, assuming that the actual behaviour can be observed and analysed from what leaders really do. But some limitations should be understood here, e.g. Yukl (2002) highlights in this context that there is a lack of agreement as to which behaviour might be relevant to measure effectiveness. Even if the behaviour can be measured by its frequency, duration, intensity and context, it remains a subjective measurement. I will use the leadership definition of Yukl:

“Leadership is the process of influencing others to understand and agree about what needs to be done and how to do it, and the process of facilitating individual and collective efforts to accomplish shared objectives.” (Yukl 2002)

Alvesson and Spicer criticise Yukl’s definition in that this might be correct, but due to its vagueness useless. I believe that the vagueness makes it at least a good starting point that can be made more concrete by using examples. Alvesson and Spicer argue that the leader’s role is grossly overstated (cf. Alvesson and Spicer 2011). I, personally, also see this heroic view of leaders with criticism as in my experience, leaders are very much bound to the context. Alvesson and Spicer developed an ambiguity-centred approach to leadership that informs my research, assuming that leadership can be used in different ways by different people, focusing on how leadership is actually done and interpreted, giving a greater sensitivity to the context and recognising different meanings attributed to leadership. Another discussion in the literature is how to separate leadership from management

(cf. Zaleznik 2004; Maccoby and Scudder 2010; Kotter 2013). The key message is basically that management deals with processes and leadership with relationships as a personal dimension of leadership. To allow the inclusion of management as well as leadership behaviour in my research, I will use, as proposed by Yukl (2010), the term ‘managerial leader’ to describe daily leadership in the field (cf. Hamlin et al. 2011). To be able to conclude if observed leadership behaviour is effective or not, we need to understand what humanitarian impact means.

2.2 Humanitarian Impact

Most of the terminology and research investigating humanitarian impact is adapted from the non-profit sector. The understanding of common terms like ‘social impact’ varies from funder to funder and organisation to organisation (cf. The Rockefeller Foundation 2003). That is the reason why I will first introduce some basic social science terms summarised by Clark et al. that provide a common vocabulary and lead to more conceptual consistency (see figure 2). Then I will outline why impact measurement is becoming more important and how it has been done in practice.

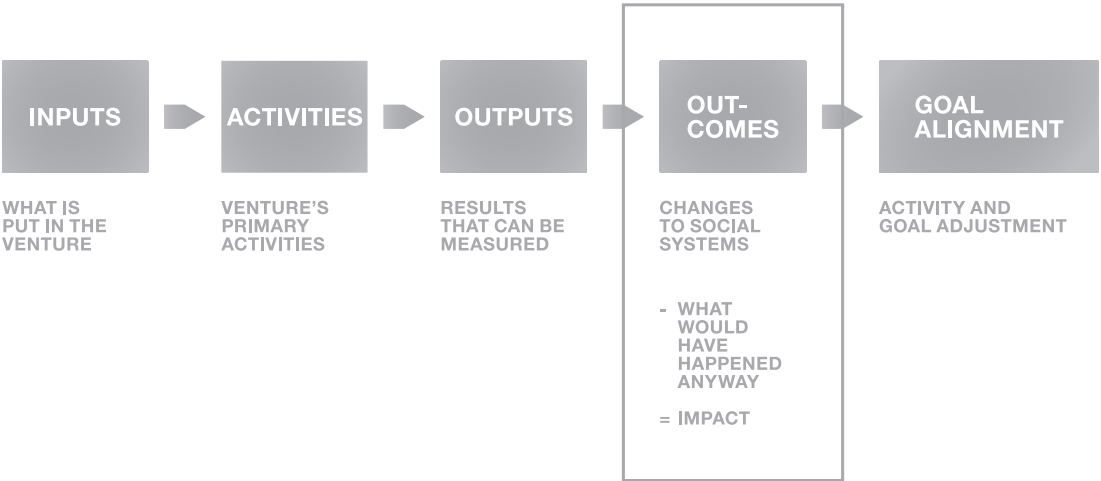


FIGURE 2: THE IMPACT VALUE CHAIN (CF. CLARK ET AL. 2003)

Clark et al. (2003) use the lens of social science and describe outcomes as changes to the social system minus what would have happened anyway resulting in impact. Outcomes are e.g. changes in attitudes, behaviours, knowledge, skills, status or more general changes that one is trying to make in the world (as an example: finding a job; avoiding getting sick). The key in the concept is to differentiate outputs from outcomes. Outputs are results that an actor can measure directly (e.g. number of children participating in after-school programs) (cf. Clark et al. 2003).

Impact analysis has become very important for non-profit organisations as donors want to understand whether the funding has been used efficiently and the desired outcome has been achieved (cf. Clark et al. 2003; Emerson 2000). There was an outcry when the American Red Cross failed to distribute the funds raised for victims and families of the September 11 terrorist attack (cf. Ciulla 1999). Now social service organisations are giving hard evidence to prove their worth and support to better people's lives (cf. Harvey et al. 2012). I would claim that a detailed understanding of the humanitarian impact chain is fundamental to decide in a more informed manner about programs and cross-program fund allocations as it allows for a dialogue within an organisation (cf. Tuan 2008). To evaluate impact and performance, I would like to mention the



FIGURE 3: KEY PRACTICES OF EFFECTIVE UN LEADERS
(SOURCE: OWN ILLUSTRATION ADAPTED FROM HOCHSCHILD 2010)

importance of evaluation research. Evaluation research is described as a systematic approach using social research methods for designing, collecting and sharing impact data which then can be used to judge a product, process or a program (cf. Stockmann 2004).¹ As better evaluations are claimed to have a positive effect on learning, accountability and performance in the humanitarian sector (cf. Beck 2006), I believe that standards have the potential to be established as harmonisation criteria. The OEC-DAC criteria for Humanitarian Aid Effectiveness, for example, are designed to understand the humanitarian action comprehensively (cf. Beck 2006; figure 3). The DAC evaluation criteria are the core of the evaluation of humanitarian action (cf. EHA), and have been clarified and specified in a more detailed way within the EHA frame with practical examples from the humanitarian sector (ibid.). The idea is that the criteria can be complementary or contradicting, and not all criteria need to be relevant in all cases.

Humanitarian Aid Effectiveness

Relevance/Appropriateness

- In line with local needs and priorities
- Tailoring of humanitarian activities to local needs

Connectedness

- Ensure that activities of short-term emergency are carried out in a context that take longer-term and interconnected problem into account

Coherence

- Ensure consistency of policies
- Particularly take into account humanitarian and human rights

Coverage

- The need to reach major population groups facing life-threatening suffering wherever they are

¹ Stockman summarised how objectives could be evaluated (cf. Stockman 2004): ex-ante – looking forward to determine indicator for favorable investment to the present; on-going – control and consulting function, early-warning and corrective action, testing assumptions and planning, ex-post – impact measurement and evaluation, root-cause analysis and efficiency, looking back at past investments in order to inform future decisions.

Efficiency

- Measures the outputs achieved as a result of inputs
- Generally requires comparing alternative approaches to output

Effectiveness

- Extent to which an activity achieves its purpose or goal on time

Impact

- Wider effect of the project – social economic, technical, environmental – intended or unintended

The criteria relevance and appropriateness evaluates whether the overall goal and outcome is in line and tailored to local needs and cultures. The concept of connectedness considers the long-term goals while carrying out short-term relief or recovery activities. The criteria coherence checks if all actors were acting in the same direction. Coverage describes the affected population in need, efficiency the input/output ratio, while effectiveness makes a comparison to the purpose or goal (ibid.). An additional overview of key impact measurement concepts currently used in the non-profit sector can be found in more details at Clark et al. (2003). Key impact measurement concepts:

Cost-effectiveness Analysis:

The cost-effectiveness analysis summarises the “bang for the buck” expressed in terms like e.g. cost per child cured by malaria or costs per child with school degree

Cost-Benefit Analysis:

The Cost-Benefit Analysis allows for the comparison of programs to alternatives with net present value and could support decision-making

Acumen Fund (BACO ratio):

The Acumen Fund BACO ratio compares an investment with the best available charitable option. The purpose is to assess the prospective merit of an individual investment opportunity versus making a charitable grant

Cost per impact:

The cost per impact method addresses the difficulty of measuring and maximising the impact of charitable gifts. The purpose is to answer the question: “how much does the change cost?” Cost per beneficiary multiplied with Success Rate = Costs per impact

Generally, I see two areas of concern with standardised measurement concepts. The first one is a more ethical discussion about what a life is worth; as the comparison of number of days of life saved without looking at the individuals and the context is problematic. The second concern is about the practicability of measurement. According to the Rockefeller Foundation, there is a constant struggle to balance being practical with being comprehensive and comparable (cf. The Rockefeller Foundation 2003).

As I have been discussing impact and some key methods to measure this, I will now describe the role of leadership in this context and how leadership behaviour supports and drives effectiveness. Leadership is claimed to make a difference not only in terms of the overall success – the bottom-line performance – but also on the well-being of its employees (cf. Centre of Creative Leadership /People in Aid Review 2010; Hochschild 2010).

2.3 Leadership Effectiveness

It has been widely argued that leadership is the basis for improving performance and outcomes, and most researchers evaluate effectiveness with the consequences of leadership influence (cf. Yukl 2010). This influence can be seen in higher follower satisfaction and more willingness to put in extra effort, so that the performance goes beyond expectations (cf. Bass and Bass 2008). There is evidence that behaviour like more drive, positive energy and clearer focus on goal attainment indicates an effect on employee commitment, motivation, task performance and organisational outcomes (cf. Lowe et al. 1996; Bartling et al. 1996). Bresnen (1995) questions many assumptions of mainstream perspectives of leadership because of attribution bias and leadership as a social construction. In the next paragraph, I will show the historical development in this area related to my research question and I will highlight key concepts in leadership effectiveness research.

Historical Development

There is a debate if leadership behaviour is universal or more context-driven, situation dependent or cultural- or sector-specific (cf. Fotler 1981; Arvonen and Ekvall 1999). According to Yukl, leadership behaviour might differ in important ways when used for different purposes. He proposed, therefore, relating leadership behaviour to criteria of leadership effectiveness – and including objective measures of unit performance to measure aspects of the situation (cf. Yukl 2002). To illustrate this, Kotter used the metaphor of a golf back, as each unique context would require a different choice (cf. Kotter 1999). Interesting to note here is that effective behaviour which is overused will become ineffective, which highlights the balancing act displayed by each leader adapting to the situation (cf. Eichinger et al. 2007).

For-Profit Leadership Effectiveness

The early research on leadership effectiveness started with the Ohio State and Michigan studies during the 1950s. They proposed a differentiation between considerations and the initiating structure of effective behaviour having impact on employee satisfaction and performance (cf. House and Aditja 1997). Initiating structure means in this context task-oriented behaviour and consideration more relationship-oriented behaviour (cf. Blake and Mouton 1982). Later, researchers focused more on change-oriented behaviour, researching how managers cope with change and innovation effectively (cf. Yukl 2002; Ekvall and Arvonen 1991). Change-oriented behaviour showed a strong correlation with the perceived competence of the manager by the follower and employee-centred behaviour correlated highest with subordinate satisfaction with the manager (cf. Yukl 2002). An important concept mentioned in the literature examining for-profit sector is Yukl et al., with their hierarchical taxonomy of leadership and three meta-categories tasks, relations and change behaviour as they provide a good summary from state-of-the art leadership efficiency research (cf. Yukl et al. 2010). Another popular concept in leadership effectiveness research is Bass and Avolio's multifactor leadership theory (MLT) with transactional and transformational leadership behaviours that are necessary for efficient leadership performance (charismatic-inspirational, intellectual stimulation, individualised consideration, contingent reward, management by exception and laissez-faire leadership (cf. Avolio and Bass 1999). The key characteristic of transformational leaders is that they inspire others with their vision, promote this vision over opposition, demonstrate confidence in themselves and their mission and inspire others to support them (cf. Bass and Avolio 1994).

Non-Profit Leadership

As the second reference for generating effective leadership behaviour, I investigated the non-profit sector. According to Hesselbein, people working in this sector are “hungry for meaning and significance” and in order to take the lead here, building partnerships and outside orientation are increasingly important (cf. Hesselbein 2004; Dobbs 2004; Riggio et al. 2004; Renz 2010). Hamlin’s generic framework of leadership effectiveness that has been confirmed in the non-profit sector collected concrete examples from a UK non-profit sector organisation of most effective and least effective leadership behaviour (cf. Hamlin 2011). I think that Hamlin’s approach is relevant for this research as it represents, in my point of view, the human resources management approach to effectiveness, so that empowerment, involvement and people development are important elements. Crutchfield and (2012) Grant analysed high-impact non-profit organisations and worked out common practices. The special focus has been on scaling the impact to have a magnifying impact on the world. What gets my attention here is that the framework helps to create a shift away from a more inside-oriented, organisational mind-set to a more outside-oriented, relational mind-set. All high-impact organisations focused on the outside world and influenced others to advocate for their cause and to achieve collective impact.

Humanitarian Leadership

I will use the insights generated by Hochschild on the topic of humanitarian action in the UN organisation and the study from Buchanan-Smith and Scriven (cf. Hochschild 2010; Buchanan-Smith and Scriven 2011).

We should keep in mind that success in humanitarian actions in most cases must be achieved while working in challenging, hostile and dangerous work environments and being exposed to risks like hostage-taking and criminality, so that leader and manager need to work with people in distress and take decisions that can affect lives and livelihoods. In emergency situations, this can be done under pressure without full information about the situation. The working conditions, with long working hours and limited resources, cause extraordinary challenges, on both personal and organisational levels.

“Salary is not the main recognition for performance in humanitarian action, it is more increased responsibility or more autonomy in decisions.” (interviewee)

Hochschild presented in his research the key practices of effective UN leaders that are mainly visionary and relationship-oriented (see figure 3). All UN leaders exhibit a wide range of leadership practices, starting with self-awareness, good context understanding and giving space to other leaders, to a more networking behaviour that ends with being in touch with the staff and achieving short and long term gains (cf. Hochschild 2010; Adair 2009). Buchanan-Smith and Scriven analysed personal leadership qualities, strategic leadership, decision-making and relational leadership behaviours that would be needed for effective humanitarian action.

Leadership in Humanitarian Action (adapted from Buchanan-Smith and Scriven 2011)

Strategic Leadership

- Understand the context
- Clear and strategic vision
- Focus on affected population

Personal Qualities

- Integrity
- Self-aware
- Humility
- Determination
- Energy and enthusiasm

Management Skills

- Organization
- Strong team
- Good manager and good leader

Rational

- Listening and learning from others
- Willingness to share
- Courageous conversations
- Relationshipbuilding

- Connecting with people

Decision-making

- Fast decisions when needed
- Decision in uncertainty
- Flexibility to change
- Accountability
- Risk-taking
- Innovation

As a key message for effective leadership in humanitarian action from the two studies, I would name the importance of values and vision, the analysis of the context, decision-making and strong relationship-oriented behaviours.

2.4 Conclusion of the Literature Review

For humanitarian impact analysis, there are methodologies like impact value chain, evaluation research approaches and standardisation like the OECD-DAC criteria that allows a baseline for transparency and visibility. What is still missing is a sector-wide general accounting principles that can be applied consistently. There is still a huge amount of subjectivity in the progress reporting of humanitarian action, and cost data are incorporated only in very limited ways. The leadership effectiveness review has indicated a belief in the literature that there are effects from leadership behaviour on follower motivation and performance. Visionary, relationship-oriented and outside-oriented behaviour has been mentioned as important for high impact and high performance. Studies focusing on ineffective behaviour have not been in the focus, but I believe that some ineffective behaviour can have highly negative consequences on employee motivation and can be used for learning and reflective practice.

3. Research Approach

This section describes and explains my epistemological stance and the research methodology used. I will describe how the research has been carried out and how I collected the research.

I will use a social constructivist ontology and interpretivist epistemology, as I believe that human behaviour cannot be understood without relation to meanings and purposes of human actors. My aim is to get qualitative, data-rich insights into human behaviour to uncover emic insider views of individuals (cf. Guba and Lincoln 1994; Glaser and Strauss 1967). I believe that findings are created through the interaction with the researcher which influence the way the research method is carried out (cf. Guba and Lincoln 1994). My long experience as a business controller for a multinational company from a for-profit company and my education as a systemic coach have had an impact on my interview style and possible bias in ignoring important aspects from the interviewees. My research is an exploratory case study as I am dealing with one organisation – the ICRC. According to Yin, a case study is an empirical inquiry that investigates a phenomenon within its real-life context and will have more variables of interests than data points (cf. Yin 2003). I will try to develop a “thick description” from the inside and leave the link to other social situations to the reader (cf. Geertz 1973).

Semi-structured Qualitative Interviews

A group of humanitarian leadership and management school participants took part in interviews to contribute to this research project. All interviews were done via telephone or video conferencing and in a semi-structured way. The questions that were used as a frame are listed in figure 4.

I prepared a transcript of each recorded interview. Based on these interviews, I did a content analysis (cf. Weber 1990) – to analyse the data systematically. I used thematic coding to cluster and categorise data according to humanitarian impact and leadership behaviour (cf. Strauss and Corbin 1990). Humanitarian impact data was referenced to impact value chain and OECD-DAC criteria of aid effectiveness, whereas the behaviour data was referenced to key leadership effectiveness studies. To assign the data to the reference coding, I used the methodology that Hamlin et al. described in their paper.²

2 They used the criteria “sameness”, “similarity” and congruence as semantic level of evidence (cf. Hamlin et al. 2011). Sameness is defined when sentences or phrases are identical or nearly identical, similarity when the meaning was the same and congruence when there was an element of sameness or similarity in the meaning of certain phrases and/or keywords (cf. Hamlin et al. 2011).

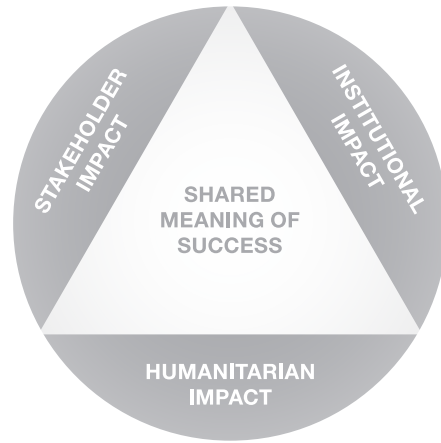


FIGURE 4: SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS
(SOURCE: OWN ILLUSTRATION)

4. Case Description – ICRC

In the following, I will describe the ICRC as my case object and will explore the specific context of ICRC to better understand and interpret the research data. I will first provide a brief overview about the ICRC organisation, its historical context, its mission and its specific areas of work. Then I will describe in more detail the humanitarian context in which the ICRC has been operating and I will highlight major changes in the context in the last 10 years.

The ICRC is an impartial, neutral and independent humanitarian organisation whose exclusive mission is to protect the lives and dignity of victims of armed violence and other forms of violence, provide them assistance and promote the humanitarian laws that protect victims of wars to prevent suffering (cf. ICRC 2013). Its mandate to help victims of armed conflicts is historically and legally given by states and stems essentially from the Geneva Convention of 1949. The ICRC is part of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and directs and coordinates the international activities conducted by the movement in armed conflicts and other situations of violence. Based in Geneva, Switzerland, it employs around 12,000 people in 80 countries and made a total expenditure of close to \$1 billion in 2010. A report on the economic and social value of Red Cross estimated the number of volunteers worldwide at 13 million (cf. ICRC 2011). The

ICRC is financed mainly by voluntary donations from governments and from National Red Cross and Red Crescent societies. One key characteristic of the ICRC is the dual nature of its work as it helps operations and develops and promotes international humanitarian law and humanitarian principles.³ Overall, the estimated need for humanitarian response has increased in recent years, mainly in the least developed countries so that we have seen an increase in the number of affected people. Another trend has been that there are a growing number of national actors managing responses in more independent way. In the last 20 years, the environment of the ICRC changed dramatically. According to the Humanitarian Futures Program, there have been commitments since the mid-1990s from key actors in the humanitarian system to improve the organisation's performance and to become more professional (cf. Humanitarian Futures Program 2009).

In figure 5, I summarised important items of change in the humanitarian sector with the old and the new reality. As already mentioned earlier, the key developments are in the change of the nature of conflicts, the duration of conflicts and the increased security risks. There are more and more interventions without end turning into chronic conflict in the context of rural societies and traditions. As an example, due to improvised explosive devices (IEDs) that accounted for the majority of security incidents, rural areas in some Middle East countries can't be accessed. Armed conflicts and armed violence usually indicates some kind of complexity, but in more and more conflicts, a direct intervention would no longer possible, so that strategies for trust-building and positioning, adaptation to local cultures and traditions and negotiating access are door-openers to be able to provide humanitarian assistance. The main humanitarian actors are responding to changed needs with diversification of humanitarian services and more partnering and collaboration with NGOs to reinforce the impact of the humanitarian action (cf. Kellenberger 2012). The speed and scale of events, and the massive humanitarian needs they produced, set major challenges for an effective timely response (ibid.). The ICRC included the results-based management concept in its management system and deployed social science terminology like output, outcome and impact in the institutional framework (cf. ICRC 2013). The ICRC Institutional Framework differentiates between internal and external success factors.⁴ In figure 6, I combined the description from the

3 As an example, in 2011, the ICRC distributed food to 5 million people, and essential household and hygiene items to 3 million people, while 4 million people benefited from sustainable food production programs or micro-economic initiatives. More than 20 million people benefitted from water, sanitation and construction activities (cf. ICRC Annual Report 2011).

4 Internal success factors are relevance of response (fulfilling the most pressing needs of people affected, evidence based and timely), professional, effective and efficient organization and processes, and Human Resources capacity and mobility. External success factors are access to victims, reputation, acceptance and positioning.



FIGURE 5: HUMANITARIAN SECTOR – OLD VERSUS NEW REALITY (SOURCE: OWN ILLUSTRATION)

ICRC annual report 2012 about terminology with the impact value map from Clark et al. (cf. ICRC 2013; Clark et al. 2003). The key differentiation here should be made between outputs, the products, goods and services that people receive as a result of ICRC activities and real outcomes – means changes to the field. The ICRC differentiated further between short-term outcomes (the likely or achieved short-term effect) and medium-term outcomes (likely or achieved mid-term effects in 1 to 5 years). The impact is seen here as long-term effects to which interventions contribute. The biggest difference to social science literature I see is that the ICRC is not looking at changes to the field and deducing the specific contribution that has been made by ICRC interventions. It estimates, based on outputs, the potential impact in short-term, medium-term and long-term timeframes. Furthermore, the measurement uses indicators that express real and verifiable changes and monitors the progress made towards the achievement of objectives (cf. ICRC 2013).

The ICRC programs are organised by 4 main pillars or domains for actions.

1. The protection area aims at preserving the lives, security, dignity and physical and mental well-being of people. As an example, ICRC activities are detainee visits or programs to restore family links after a war situation or internal displacements.

2. The assistance area is more the traditional domain of action to preserve lives and restore dignity of individuals and communities by e.g. providing access to basic survival means like access to water, food and non-food items, health or rehabilitation services.
3. The domain prevention covers people having a direct or indirect impact on the fate of people affected to prevent suffering.
4. The area cooperation with national societies has the main task to build local capacity for humanitarian responses.

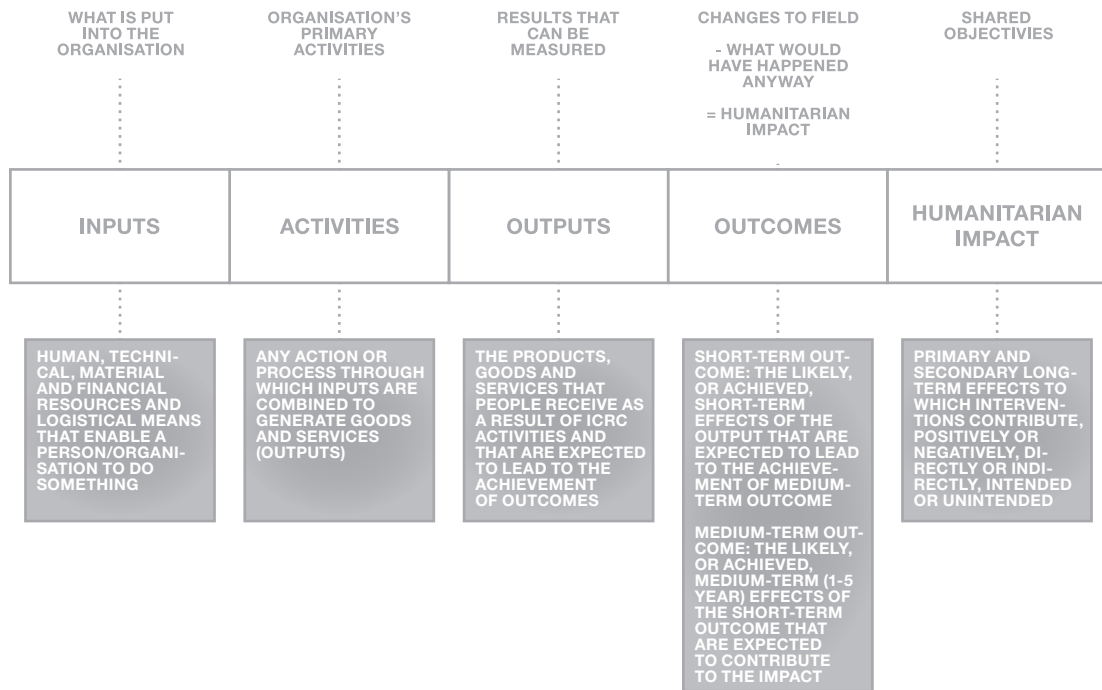


FIGURE 6: HUMANITARIAN VALUE CHAIN FOR ICRC
(SOURCE: OWN ILLUSTRATION ADAPTED FROM CLARK ET AL. 2003)

5 *Data Analysis*

The sample of humanitarian leaders consisted of 24 leaders with significant field experience of whom 20 participated in the interviews. The gender split between women/men was 35%/65%. The current location of participants was distributed quite diversely throughout the ICRC delegations. The participants have more than 300 years' of field experience in total, in average more than 15 years each in humanitarian action. The experience is, in most cases, truly mobile, meaning frequent change from one country and context to another. Leaders are currently working in different leadership positions ranging from head of administration, head of operations, head of functional expertise to head of delegation.

There is a broad range of examples for humanitarian impact. I grouped the answers according to the impact value chain I introduced previously and could see that around 50% of examples were related to activities and output and 50% to outcome or impact.

Activities

- Detention visits and socio-psychological care
- Promoting humanitarian law
- Influencing donors and lobbying and sensitising the government or the community

Outputs

- Direct assistance with food or non-food items (blankets, cooking material, shoes), handling out relief boxes and family support for victims
- Economic support programs like micro-economic programs, cash for work program, livestock vaccination programs
- Health services like emergency health care for wounded people, people treated with medicine or surgery, artificial limbs, vaccination program, dead body management, building of hospitals, orthopaedic centre or forensic clinic, first-aid training and seminar for doctors, technical and financial support
- Rehabilitation projects in the areas water and habitat, such as supply systems for water and sanitation, reconstructing of productive capital, transitional shelters

- In the area of weapon contamination, identification of dangerous areas, de-mining, and provision of alternative solutions for people (bringing water, firewood), releasing land for productive usage
- Messages for separated families, video calls for detainees, video calls in villages, collecting information about missing people and restoring family links e.g. with web-site
- Cooking and managing food distribution for prisoners' camp, delivering goods or providing protection for civilians

Humanitarian impact

- Preventing security incidents, getting access to beneficiaries, changing and improving people's lives, saving lives, knowledge, attitude and behaviour change, minimise the danger for the population
- Improving people's dignity and rights, human development, human welfare, no discrimination
- Helping people get in control about their lives, to manage their needs, their solutions, their ways to develop, and changing their confidence levels
- Preventing violence in treatment of prisoners, improved conditions and treatment, fate of loved ones is clarified, families are connected
- Prevent diseases from dirty water
- Re-integration into society for mine victims: walking and participating in life and preventing the need for medicine; providing job training
- Prevent incidents for population in motion; people rebuild themselves, people started to open their shops again; live in their own house and without begging or prostitution; alternative solutions provided instead of food; give employment or to make a productive project
- Victims of armed forces are protected; armed forces and authorities have a different attitude

My overall observation has been that there are very diverse views about what successful humanitarian impact means. For example, in comparison to assistance where impact can be measured quite tangibly, in all the other areas, it is very difficult to measure the impact, which could lead to frustration, as progress and success cannot be seen:

“[...] founded in assistance, health monitoring, baseline and then work out if you have an impact, in the other three pillars it hasn't been taking of at all”,

“Life-days saved per person”, “The first measurement is short-term, the long-term is never perceivable, it ends up in sum frustration as you don’t know how your actions are connected to the people on the ground”, “Very difficult to measure, there is no indicator for human dignity, we focus on individuals, you can’t really have statistics [...]”

Humanitarian leaders then use other channels of subjective measurement, individual feedback and behaviour of actors or see the value when they stop the humanitarian activity:

“It is more challenging if you don’t get any reward – unless you see the person in front of you and start a human relationship. You have humanitarian impact if you face one person directly, don’t lose that; it is why we are there [...]”

My interpretation of the split between activities/output and output/impact is that there is still a lot of focus on internal process for the people involved. This, to me, is a strong indicator that humanitarian services or products are initially internally created and then later rolled out. The standardisation of humanitarian service offerings allows for the fast delivery of basic services in emergency situations, but would have limitations in contexts that would need more adaptability in the approach.

Success from the ICRC management system’s point of view has been defined on a result-based management level. The concept mainly uses effectiveness as key criteria for success, answering the question of how well the ICRC is doing compared to the stated plan. In the plan, there are concrete objectives to target beneficiaries (coverage), timeline, budget and indicators to measure progress.

“[...] success is defined on whether or not we have achieved, what we set up to be achieved”, “how do we perform against indicators, baseline in the first place [...]”

The biggest gap might be in two areas. Firstly, there is not enough connection between short-term and long-term activities. As stated by interviewees:

“Something to be achieved after a year’s long-term impact is never perceivable, as we don’t know how our actions are connected to the ground”, “we don’t look at impact, and we look more at short-term results”

The need for more connectedness has been expressed due to the changed context and move from an emergency-oriented mode to a more developmental mode:

“We need more capacity building”, “hand-over to national organisations”, “not just providing food and health services, building the capacity within people”, “re-building themselves”

The second gap I see is related to relevance and appropriateness criteria.

E.g.: “local people need to connect, too”, “in country X there are more concerns for health services, poverty relief activities, serious diseases than IHL which leads to a relevance problem for ICRC”, “connected to the ground”, “integrate differences in global programs”, “beneficiaries were asking for alternative solutions than food, e.g. employment or productive programs”, “visible things that is fitting to the local culture and tradition”

My interpretation is that there is a conflict between global programs and local relevance. It is more relevant to pick the right humanitarian services out of the ICRC portfolio that will address the beneficiaries’ needs in the best way. In addition, some interviewees see that appropriateness is more important for successful humanitarian value creation:

“Hygiene program in [...] [a] country without linking to tangible solution will not work”, “I rather employ local people instead of using folk-lift machines”, “no ready-made recipes that we can unroll and that would apply to every context”. The criteria coherence has been mentioned only marginally “together with national societies”, “cooperation within movement”, “coordinating intervention here for a country beyond our area”, “alignment with donors”

The criteria coverage has been mentioned mainly in emergency situations and assistance with such examples as “number of people affected” and “affected population”. In contrast, development mode coverage has not been mentioned as a key example for success; it has more qualitative impact than just coverage.

Another perspective on the data is to analyse how beneficiary needs have been fulfilled. I used Maslow’s Pyramid of needs to understand what successful humanitarian impact is addressing (cf. Maslow 1954; figure 7).

Traditionally, preserving lives by addressing physiological needs and security needs has been the core of emergency interventions. Early recovery and development mode are requesting more and more needs higher in the hierarchy. I would claim that this model is very useful for the understanding and tailoring of activities to beneficiaries’ needs.

I combined three common concepts of successful humanitarian impact generated by the interview data. The first concept assessing beneficiaries’ needs by using Maslow’s pyramid has been already described above. The second concept describes three steps needed to generate long-term sustainable impact. The long-term impact is achieved e.g. when people’s lives and dignity

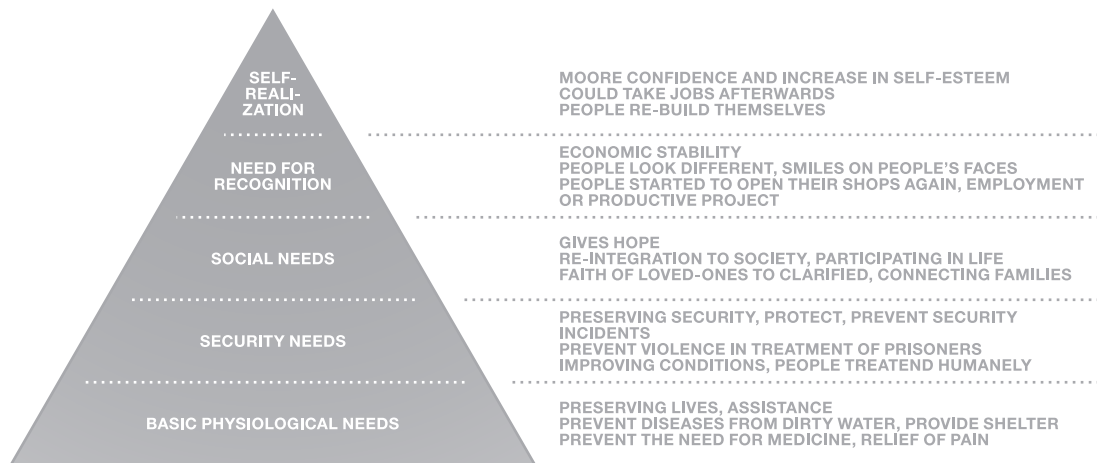


FIGURE 7: HUMANITARIAN IMPACT AND MASLOW'S HIERARCHY OF NEEDS
(SOURCE: OWN ILLUSTRATION ADAPTED FROM MASLOW 1954)

are respected and preserved, and ICRC intervention would no longer be needed. This would be expressed in terms like:

“Re-integration into society and participation in life”, “people have successfully re-built themselves”, “armed forces and authorities have a different attitude”, “and knowledge, attitudes and behaviour have been changed”

In order to achieve this long-term sustainable impact visibility, awareness and access need to be addressed first as this will become a bottleneck.

“The more you are visible the more you can do...if you don't get this – then you are blocked in the next steps, you can't do anything...in countries with no access, there is no possibility to provide assistance - even in natural disasters... humanitarian catastrophe...very inefficient way would be to use alternative channel (via national movements and landlords to hope that something is getting to the beneficiaries) to have humanitarian impact [...]”

The short-term impact is the core of the ICRC's successful humanitarian impact creation and should be relevant locally:

“Local people need to connect to the activities [...] preventing security events”, “providing emergency surgery”, “providing artificial limbs”, and “restoring family links”

The capacity building for sustainable impact should already be, in the best case, kept in mind right from the beginning:

“[...] local NGO or institution can provide the same services than ICRC”, “partner should be in financial stain to continue services”, “success can be seen as hand-over to local organisations”, “capacity building is the most important thing [...] I don't believe in short-term impact [...]”

The third concept explains successful humanitarian impact with the idea moving more people from a lack of control in their lives due to armed conflicts or other forms of violence to more control.

“People who get control about their lives; can manage their needs, their solutions, their way to develop [...]. [...] providing food is a small solution for a short time for a concrete need and definitely needed, but if we can move more communities of people to control their lives we get more impact, sometimes we do a lot but we don't change their lives.”

I claim that this model of humanitarian impact harnessed from the leaders in humanitarian action provides us with a more informed picture of humanitarian impact creation in the ICRC in different contexts.

The next section uses concrete examples of successful and less successful humanitarian impact. The logic is that for each example, I have assigned the intended humanitarian impact and what leadership and managerial behaviour was related to the outcome or would have increased the humanitarian impact.

Examples of Successful Humanitarian Impact

Related Management and Leadership Behaviour that helped to improve the outcome

Hygiene Program in a Middle East Country integrating with delivery of water pumps

- Preserve lives: First tangible result visible to beneficiaries then combined with prevention
- Understanding of local context and connecting with local communities

Ensure security in high conflict environment, get access, get door open

- Prevent suffering by influencing those who have a direct or indirect impact: Introducing what ICRC is about, awareness, visibility
- Networking/cooperation: weekly meetings with all international organisations, local community, authorities, getting an own view

Running a orthopaedic hospital in dangerous environment in spite of heavy fighting

- Preserve lives and/or restore the dignity: Dignity can't wait, humanitarian concern

- Strong believe in humanitarian impact, message to all parties: we are here to help – even if we are exposing ourselves to risks

Emergency programs: Rapid Response Team

- Preserve lives and/or restore the dignity: Providing fast assistance with food, non-food items, basic infrastructure and medical assistance
- Clear management, goals, roles & responsibilities, process and execution, strong trusting teams, fast decisions, flexible and adaptive

An interesting finding here is that for all successful examples, the most important relevant behaviour has been outside-oriented (understanding of external context, networking, understanding of beneficiaries need).

The less successful examples include understanding of beneficiaries' need not mentioned, as well as internal management problems like lack of planning and lack of clear roles and responsibilities.

Examples of Less Successful Humanitarian Impact

Related Management and Leadership Behaviour that could have helped to improve the outcome

Anti-Baby Pills program in a Middle East country

- Preserve the lives, security, dignity and physical and mental wellbeing: was seen suspiciously, do they want to reduce our population?
- Not just copying global initiatives, non-visible value needs to be carefully explained and take acceptance, time and trust first

Natural disaster in a Middle East country with no direct access to beneficiaries

- Preserve the lives, security, dignity and physical and mental wellbeing: no access to impacted areas
- Not targeting the right people and right beneficiaries, trusting local landlords, no visibility and no access

Eco-sec program in a Middle East country

- Preserve the lives, security, dignity and physical and mental wellbeing: global program has been rolled out to each country
- Cost efficiency questionable, high administrative costs, economically it would be better to use local NGOs specialised in this topic

Surprised by war and no assistance possible due to sea and air blockage

- Preserve the lives, security, dignity and physical and mental wellbeing: there was no scenario-planning and no in-country buffer stock for basic assistance capacity e.g. items for 2-3 weeks
- More pro-active and less reactive behaviour, more planning

My conclusion here is that success will be achieved mainly with a focus on beneficiaries' needs, outside orientation and with internal management capabilities.

In the following, I developed a model of perceived drivers for effectiveness in humanitarian action that is based on the most important behaviour mentioned by humanitarian leaders at the ICRC. I used here the data from the interview and analysed the transcripts to create high-order constructs that were aligned as much as possible with existing research in this area and are comprised of the top 10 most important behaviour constructs.

1. Role Model

Serves as role model, being trusted, inspirational, enthusiastic and optimistic:

- "Lead by example - you can't demand from others what you are not doing", "walk the talk", "live up what you preach"
- "Trusted", "reliable and predictable"
- "Inspire", "enthusiasm and optimism" "You have to earn trust and the credibility", "have a vision and the capacity to share this vision", pride, high drive, be convinced, believe in the outcome, confidence in thinking and acting
- "Commitment", "passion", "dedication", "persistence with the task, we don't give up easily", "determination" assertive, tenacious

2. External Relations

Networking, Cooperation, Communication and Negotiation:

- “Networking”, “create a platform you can work on“
- “Cooperation”
- “Communication”, “people need to know what ICRC is doing”, “explain the mandate, no weapons”, “accused because of the emblem”, “create awareness”, “dialogue”, “briefing”, “constant communication”, “chatting”, “explaining”, “not hiding”, “openly talking with people”, “showing what we are doing”, “build trust”, “share”
- “Negotiation”

3. Empowerment

Delegation and empowerment, autonomy and confidence in your staff:

- “Delegation and Empowerment”, “trusting people to solve problems”, “make decisions without prior approval”, “enable and empowers others to act on their own initiative“, “give space to work”, “make room for others to lead”
- “Give autonomy”, “support of local decision”, “give ownership, allow substantial responsibility while retaining accountability”
- “Confidence in the staff”, “team should work ideally along without supervision, not interfering”, “management by exception”, “recognize the value of team work”

4. Consulting

Consulting People, Involvement, Open to other views:

- “Checking with people before making decisions that affect them”, “communicates and consults well with staff and keeps them informed”
- “Encourage participation in decision-making”, “involve and include people in the planning, decision-making and problem-solving”, “engage with people”, “can’t enforce”
- “Listen to others’ ideas and open to others’ views”, “using the ideas and suggestions of others”, “remain in touch with staff”, “deal with diversity”

5. External Monitoring

Analysing the external environment, strategic, reflective:

- “Analysing information about events, trends, and changes in the external environment to identify threats and opportunities for the organisational unit”, “good understanding of what is going on”, “understanding the context”

- “Relate to a bigger picture”, “strategic analysis”, “clear and strategic vision”,
- “Reflection”

6. Fairness

Respectful, polite, fair, decisive in the rules, transparent:

- “Respectful”
- “Polite”, “manage difficult situation in calm”
- “Fair”, “honest style of communication”, “treat everyone equal”, “no discrimination”, “fairness”
- “Decisive management approach”, “direct”, “decisiveness in the rules”
- “Open”, “personal and trusting management approach”, “adopts an open and approachable leadership style”, “open”, “transparent”

7. Adaptability

Flexibility, Adaptability, Pragmatism:

- “Flexible adjusted to country needs and to changes”, “flexible for change”, “flexible to change course of actions”
- Adapt to local context, traditions, cultures”, “adapting to the situation”, “adapting to the reality”
- “Pragmatism”

8. Coherence

Responsibility, make tough decisions:

- “Clear decisions”, “stay the course”, “honest, no false hope”, “decide on tough call”
- “Coherence in what we do”
- “Take responsibility and sort out the staff escalation”

9. Envision Change

Taking risks, fast decisions, envision change, taking risks for change:

- “Courage for change”, “have the courage to fail”
- “Risk-taking”, “taking personal risks and making sacrifices to encourage and promote desirable change in the organisation”, “allow mistakes and don’t expect to be perfect”,
- “Take fast decisions”, “decisions in uncertainty when needed”

- “Presenting an appealing description of desirable outcomes that can be achieved by the unit”, “describing a proposed change with great enthusiasm and conviction”

10. Innovative

Open-minded, innovative, creative:

- “Seeks different views”, “suggests new ways”, “different angles”, “re-examine assumptions”, “looking at different angles”
- “Leader should be open, not jumping immediately to one side”, “integrate every idea to see new solutions”
- “To be innovative and creative”, “required ad hoc solution”

These findings will be contrasted with the previous research by Hochschild as well as Buchanan-Smith and Scriven. I will first start with the comparison to Hochschild who investigated the effective leadership practices of UN leaders. The elements of role model, external relations, external monitoring and envision change have been strongly confirmed, whereas empowerment, consulting and coherence were found, but not in the same intensity. Fairness, adaptability and innovative were not mentioned at all in Hochschild’s study. What was mentioned in Hochschild’s study and not by ICRC leaders is “look for short-term and long-term, build teams with diversity and self-aware and resilient”. In contrast to Buchanan-Smith and Scriven, we can find all mentioned categories, even adaptability and innovation, except fairness. On the other hand, the management skills and self-awareness categories mentioned by Buchanan-Smith and Scriven were not mentioned by leaders at the ICRC.

As a result of a short summary of this comparison, I would claim that the perceived ICRC leadership effectiveness constructs are generally confirmed with the previous research. I would conclude that fairness might be an ICRC-specific category that could be raised as an important topic because there might be currently concerns at the ICRC related to this behaviour, but this perception would need to be mirrored back to the organisation to clarify this further.

It has been confirmed that for all three humanitarian studies, relational, visionary and value-based leadership are key factors in the humanitarian sector. The focus on the outside world, adaptability to the context and concern for the beneficiary has been confirmed by two studies. My personal interpretation based on the interviews is that professionalisation in basic management skills is also very important, which Buchanan-Smith and Scriven would also confirm here.

The potential gaps in the top 10 behaviours, the strengths and history of ICRC practices, the improvement areas that constrain humanitarian impact generation and leadership challenges that create tension and conflicts will be used as mirror data for the proposed change intervention.

6. *Change Approach*

6.1 Change Perspectives

This section focuses on how to actually change and foster successful behaviour. I will offer different perspectives of change that might be helpful for change agents to address the historical situation and culture of the ICRC in the best way. Then I will make a recommendation for an activity theory-based intervention model – the change laboratory – to use the presented mirror data from the organisation and to collectively develop future leadership and management processes. I will start by introducing three change perspectives: Images of organisation (cf. Morgan 2006), problem view of leadership (cf. Grint 2010), and concept of colours (cf. Caluwé and Vermaak, 2003).

Morgan's idea is that thinking about organisation in metaphors would allow us to see, understand and manage organisations differently (cf. Morgan 2006). Clarke and Ramalingam (2008) claim that by rethinking what organisations are, we are opening our minds to new perspectives and we can become open to assimilating approaches to organisational change.

The ICRC could be understood with the metaphor of a machine, where the management is viewed as a process of planning, organisation, command, coordination and control in a hierarchical manner through precisely defined lines of command and communication. Another perspective could be to see the ICRC with the organismic metaphor. The organismic metaphor considers interactions between organisations and their environment in an open system and the ability of the organisations to adapt to the environment with flexible organisational approaches (cf. Morgan 1990). Another possibility to see the ICRC would be through the cultural perspective, focusing on values, behaviour and management style to understand the differences between 'what we say we do' and 'what we really do' (ibid.). All these perspectives would require different approaches to change when wanting to change practices sustainably. As an example a purely mechanistic approach to change might not be successful due to the rather complex humanitarian context.

The next concept claims that different problems demand different leadership behaviour. Grint differentiates between management and leadership by the context, and defined management as the equivalent of 'seen this before' and leadership as the equivalent of 'never seen before' (cf. Grint 2010). The concept is rooted in the distinction between certainty and uncertainty or tame and wicked problems developed by Rittel and Webber (1973). Tame problems are seen as puzzles for which there is always a solution (in the ICRC context, this is, for example, building a hospital, water pipeline, etc.) whereas wicked problems have high complexity and cannot be solved without affecting the context itself (in the ICRC context, examples would be delivering of assistance which will preserve lives but could reduce the self-responsibility of people taking care of themselves). The kinds of problems are subjective, with no stopping point and should be collectively addressed (cf. Grint 2012; Heifetz 1994). A critical problem is often associated with decisive action, and a commander is required to take action to provide the answer to the problem (cf. Grint 2012). In my point of view, the concept of commander could be seen as a different formal category whereas I think it only expresses a more decisive leadership and management behaviour. The key message in Grint's leadership construct is that we need clumsy solutions to be successful. This means that we need to consider how to adapt all three solutions to problems, so that the leader's role has to change from providing the answers to asking questions dependent on the context (ibid.). The concept would resonate very much with the current situation of the ICRC as the lines between interventions have been blurring among the categories of traditional humanitarian emergency, early recovery and developmental activity (cf. Kellenberger 2012).

In the traditional emergency situation, there is a need for more decisive leadership and management. Urgent humanitarian need requires fast execution of assistance and scaling of help to cover as many beneficiaries as possible. There is much consensus about the humanitarian situation and relief that would bring about an intervention. The more the ICRC is engaged in early recovery or development activity, the more complex the intervention will be, while would require a more consulting and adaptive mode that would focus on sustainability with more tailored impact.

Based on my initial observation to get change at the ICRC successfully implemented, Caluwés and Vermaack's (2003) concept of colours would help to develop the right change strategy, change communication and understanding of pitfalls. We see, on one hand, a more process-oriented and results-based management approach indicated by clear defined objective setting, monitoring the progress and strong rules. According to Caluwé and Vermaack, this represents blueprint thinking. On the other hand, we see a lot of people attracted to the humanitarian sector by the cause and

mission with a more humanitarian approach, which Caluwé and Vermaack would describe as red print thinking. The assumption here is that something changes when you make the approach attractive for people and exercise safeguard and fairness.

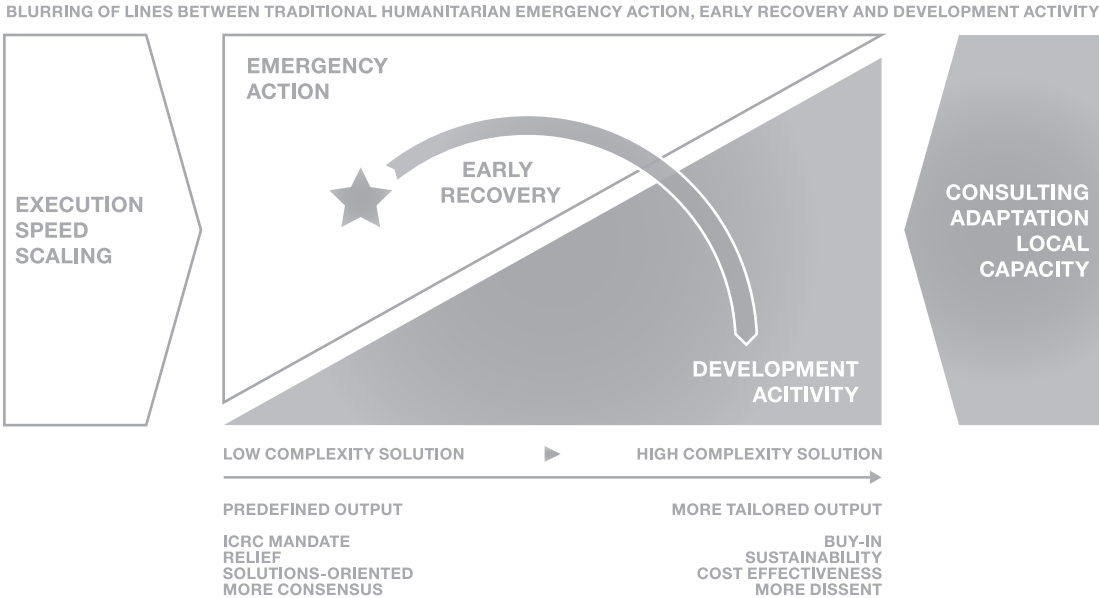


FIGURE 8: ICRC LEVELS OF INTERVENTIONS (SOURCE: OWN ILLUSTRATION)

6.2 Change Laboratory Model – Activity Theory Interventions

In this paragraph, the main focus is to describe and propose a change intervention that I would recommend using at the ICRC as part of the learning and development program in order to work with research data and to collectively create changes in the practices that would enable more humanitarian impact. I will recommend a detailed design for an activity-theory intervention approach tailored to ICRC. Activity theory is a concept that is based on Cultural Historical Activity Theory (CHAT) (cf. Vygotsky 1978; Engeström 2007). It takes into consideration the specific historical, local situation, practices, habits and ways of thinking and is claimed to be a very effective organi-

sational learning tool as it represents a minimal meaningful system for analysis and intervention that captures dynamic and multifaceted views (cf. Virkkunen and Kuutti 2000; Engeström 2007). The key characteristic of the concept is that it provides the language to describe components of an activity system in a dynamic way so that re-configuration and remediation during interventions could be visualised (cf. Virkkunen and Kuutti 2000). Remediation means that objects are seen in a new context and interpreted in a new way. Engeström (2007), one of the founders of the activity theory concept, explained organisational learning as follows:

“When the object of the activity is reinterpreted, and the actors’ interaction with the object is remediated to the effect that the object of the activity expands, we can speak of ‘expansive learning’. [...] it begins with the individual subjects questioning accepted practices, and it regularly expands into a collective movement or institution.” (Engeström 1987)

An example in my research is of the leader’s view on what should be improved in ICRC practices and what the leadership challenges or dilemmas are that hinder more humanitarian impact creation and as the result the way the themes are approached. Each individual has a slightly different view and interpretation of the object and purpose of the activity depending on the individual’s position in the division of labour, his or her history in the activity, training and experience (ibid.). The basic assumption here is that change and learning in the activity system occur when tensions, conflicts, dilemma and contradiction are visible within the system (ibid.). The fundamental change principle is that the work community engages itself in a process of analysing its activity and relates the abstract model to concrete facts about everyday practices, gives meaning to the elements and their relations to work situations, and provides solutions to everyday problems themselves (cf. Virkkunen and Kuutti 2000).

In figure 9, Virkkunen and Kuutti describe the phases of a change laboratory process (ibid.). The process starts by gathering first-hand data of the practices in use and charting the situation by mirroring improvement areas of the current practices and the historical development of the activity. Participants of the change laboratory would get the result of the research as input data and would be asked to summarise, based on the data and based on their own understanding, the current areas in need of improvement and the most important leadership challenges that should be addressed. The assumption is that faced with difference in views, participants began to question the current

way of practices and to think about the whole activity. The discussion expands the participant's view of the object (cf. Engeström 1987).

As an example about leadership behaviour as an important improvement area, people would recognise that there is tolerance for misbehaviour at the ICRC that has negative effects on employee satisfaction and staff turnover. By sharing the different views on this topic, the discussion would be turned to collective learning about what can be done about this and experimental thinking of participants would be enforced. Overall, this intervention model would use the participative approach to change work practices, and by deconstructing leadership in daily practices, it can drive change in leadership practices that can be fostered later on. According to Daniels and Edwards, researchers are active participants in the development of the system and will see ideas born from tensions or contradictions, stimulate frank dialogue about gaps and shortcomings in leadership and

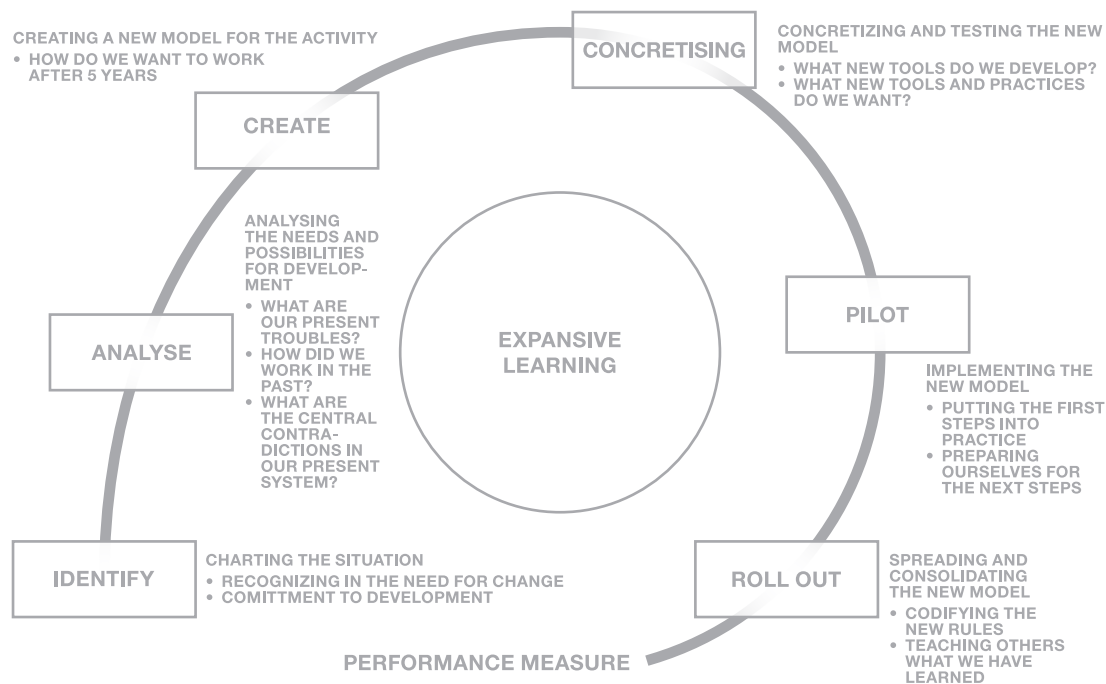


FIGURE 9: THE PHASES OF A CHANGE LABORATORY PROCESS
(SOURCE: OWN ILLUSTRATION ADAPTED FROM VIRKKUNEN/KUUTTI 2000)

focus on learning and accountability as a means to improve performance (cf. Daniels and Edwards 2010). The whole change laboratory cycle would then trigger the creation of a new activity system that will be first piloted and then spread out as new practices (cf. Virkkunen and Kuutti 2000).

In this section, I explored what could be done with the mirror data generated by the research to collectively use and design new practices that will bring more humanitarian impact to the beneficiaries of the ICRC. My recommendation would be to focus on a few critical shifts in behaviour and to also look for examples where people are already exhibiting the new desired practices as standard practice.

7. Results and Conclusions

This inquiry has investigated the nature of humanitarian impact and attributed leadership and managerial effectiveness and contributed to the understanding of humanitarian leadership effectiveness. The study set out to get a better understanding in terms of what is meant by successful humanitarian impact by ICRC leaders and compared it with standards from the humanitarian sector and social impact analysis research. Furthermore, the research harnessed perceived effective leadership and managerial behaviour and contrasted these findings with existing research. This research has shown that key elements from leadership effectiveness studies in the humanitarian sector have been confirmed, and thus relational and value-based leadership is important in the humanitarian sector. The research has clustered, explained and analysed the current view of the most important leadership and managerial behaviours that have been raised by humanitarian leaders of the ICRC. This project was undertaken to evaluate the findings and to come up with recommendations for the ICRC leadership and development. The research highlighted relevant practical leadership challenges managers are facing and revealed leadership attributes specially needed in humanitarian action or in specific contexts. The research had key practical implications as those gaps between desired behaviour and the current state give a clear prioritisation for leadership and development programs. In order to increase the success of change, the research offered perspectives on how to adapt changes to existing ICRC culture and context. I strongly recommended using a change laboratory intervention to work on leadership challenges and improvement areas on diverse views and tensions in the current systems to get a collective change and learning process started. The further deployment of the leadership and management school would provide an excellent base

for learning and change practices. This research could serve as a base for further studies in areas of research limitations or in areas in which interesting questions or dilemmas arose. The results of this study indicated the essence of the ICRC leadership portfolio. The findings suggest further that leadership is an art, as the type of leadership varies in different types of crisis and in different types of problems, and that being able to apply the whole portfolio of successful behaviour will ensure the needed adaptability and flexibility to cope with the fundamental changes in the humanitarian context. The study emphasised the importance of understanding the context in order to apply the appropriate leadership style.

This research provides preliminary support for a theory of humanitarian leadership and managerial effectiveness with the following key focus areas: Starting with the shared meaning of humanitarian impact, the approaches of leadership are at the core based on professional, relational and visionary behaviour with a short-term and long-term focus. The additional specific elements of successful humanitarian leadership are the concern for the beneficiaries, strong value orientation and the focus on the outside world and the adaptability to the context. The art of humanitarian leadership would be to develop clumsy solutions to specific contexts by applying the right portfolio of behaviours to maximise humanitarian impact while ensuring employee engagement.

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