

PREVENTING BREACHES OF IHL THROUGH DISSEMINATION: THE ROLE OF NATIONAL SOCIETIES

ANNABEL McCONNACHIE¹

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I. INTRODUCTION

In 1952 when Jean Pictet wrote his Commentary to the Geneva Conventions, he stated that ‘knowledge is an essential condition for its effective application’ and thus ‘one of the worst enemies of the Geneva Conventions is ignorance.’² The drafters of the Geneva Conventions concurred with this view and sought to ensure a State’s populous was informed of the contents of these treaties by specifically obliging States to engage in dissemination activities. Experts taking part in the preparatory discussions of the Diplomatic Conference prior to the drafting of the 1977 Additional Protocols were unanimous in their belief ‘that the dissemination of the treaty rules was of primary importance, and that education was a better guarantee of respect for these rules than any sanction could ever be’.³

¹ Annabel McConnachie MIR (Macq), BA (Hons) (Keele, UK) is a volunteer with Australian Red Cross’ IHL program and Sessional Lecturer, Department of Modern History, Politics and International Relations, Macquarie University. I would like to thank Renata Sivacolundhu, WA IHL Officer, for her guidance in producing this article and to the anonymous reviewer for ensuring that I kept the paper clear. Any mistakes within the text are, of course, my own.

² Jean S Pictet, *Commentary: I Geneva Convention for the Amelioration of the Condition of the Wounded and Sick in Armed Forces in the Field* (ICRC, 1952) 348.

³ The text of all four Geneva Conventions of 1949, the two Additional Protocols of 1977 and Additional Protocol III of 2005 are available, with their commentaries at <https://www.icrc.org/applic/ihl/ihl.nsf/vwTreaties1949.xsp>.

Securing compliance with any law is achieved by using many different means. Firstly, through building the norms required for acceptance of the laws that are being introduced for example through education to engender understanding of the law. Secondly, by changing behaviours amongst those carrying out the particular activity being regulated to encourage the normalisation of practices that respect the law. Finally, through monitoring those behaviours and introducing punishments when the law is broken, in an effort to deter future breaches. Together these activities are intended to build a virtuous circle of prevention, monitoring, prosecution and enforcement. International humanitarian law (IHL) is no different in this respect: although a failure to achieve compliance in this area of law will have deadly and far reaching consequences.

IHL is the body of rules which, during times of an armed conflict, operates to protect people who are not taking part in the fighting (such as civilians) or those who are no longer taking part in the fighting (like wounded soldiers or prisoners of war). In addition it provides limits to the methods of warfare that can be used and the means for fighting which are allowed. For millennia warring factions have introduced ad hoc rules applicable for one particular conflict against one specific enemy. Following the Battle of Solferino in 1859, Henry Dunant began a process which culminated in the drafting and adoption of the Convention for the Amelioration of the Condition of the Wounded in Armies in the Field of 1864⁴. This was the first multilateral treaty designed to introduce protections for impartial relief to wounded soldiers, neutrality to the medical personnel providing care to those soldiers and provision for an emblem to distinguish the neutral services which would be recognised by all parties to the conflict. Since then, this body of international law has developed to provide a sophisticated set of principles all designed to limit the effects of an armed conflict⁵.

In terms of securing compliance with the law and creating the virtuous circle mentioned above, this paper will focus on the first part – building an understanding and acceptance of the law. It seems to be self-evident that if people do not know what the rules of IHL are, then it is unlikely that they will be able to fully comply with those rules. This paper will discuss dissemination: spreading the word about the rules of IHL, making sure that people are simply

⁴ Convention for the Amelioration of the Condition of the Wounded in Armies in the Field of 1864, full text available at: <https://www.icrc.org/ihl/INTRO/120?OpenDocument>.

⁵ A full guide international humanitarian law treaties and customary law can be found on the International Committee of the Red Cross website: <https://www.icrc.org/en/war-and-law/treaties-customary-law>.

– in the first instance – aware of these rules. It will explore where the legal obligation to disseminate IHL comes from and how National Societies of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement (the Movement) have been tasked by States to assist in that dissemination duty. The author will also illustrate, using examples of activities undertaken by her colleagues, how Australian Red Cross⁶ seeks to assist in fulfilling this obligation; and finally an introduction to a collaborative dissemination project, in which the author is involved, currently being undertaken by National Societies in the Pacific region.

II. THE LEGAL OBLIGATION TO DISSEMINATE IHL

From its inception the purpose of the rules articulated within the Geneva Conventions and their Protocols were designed quite simply to ensure that people who find themselves in a vulnerable situation because of or during a conflict – whether as an injured or sick soldier, a prisoner of war or a civilian within a conflict zone – are afforded certain protections.

Part of that process of protection involves ensuring that people are made aware of these rules through dissemination. Dissemination comes from the Latin word which means ‘to scatter seeds’ and is variously defined as ‘spreading something, particularly information, as widely as possible’. Within the context of the Geneva Conventions, it would appear logical there must be a requirement that an attempt be made to contribute to the understanding of the information that is being circulated; and to make the information accessible to the various audiences being addressed. Dissemination should involve a more methodical sowing of seeds, not just scattering them. To sow effectively, the ground must be prepared for the seeds, the soil fed, fertilizer added and the seeds watered and cared for as they grow. Dissemination cannot involve simply scattering the information, walking away and hoping for the best. Examining the Australian Red Cross IHL program will illustrate the techniques used to sow the seeds of interest in this body of law.

Nevertheless, spreading the word about IHL is, first and foremost, an obligation of the States that have signed the Geneva Conventions. The first iteration of the Geneva Convention in 1864 did not specify that dissemination was a requirement, but by the time the four Geneva

⁶ Australian Red Cross IHL program: <http://www.redcross.org.au/ihl.aspx>.

Conventions of 1949 consolidated and extended the previous treaties to protect wounded and sick soldiers, sailors, prisoners of war and civilians there was a consistent requirement that States must ensure that the contents of the treaties are widely disseminated.

In addition to those articles referring to dissemination, there is also the general requirement that the States ‘undertake to respect and ensure respect for the present Convention in all circumstances’ (Geneva Conventions, common Article 1). Although the extent of this undertaking is contested, there is no dispute that this, in part, means that States must make sure that all their citizens know about the contents of the four Geneva Conventions.⁷

Much more specifically, the requirement to disseminate was introduced. As stated, in 1864 the first Geneva Convention did not mention dissemination⁸, but when the treaty was revised first in 1906 and then again in 1929, the requirement that everyone should be made aware of the rules was explicitly spelt out. States are now required to disseminate the text of each specific Convention ‘as widely as possible’ during ‘time of peace as in time of war’ to the entire population, but with the armed forces, medical personnel and chaplains being expressly mentioned in relevant Conventions (medical personnel in Conventions I and II for instance, which is designed to provide aid to wounded and sick armies in the field and shipwrecked forces at sea⁹).

The wording of earlier versions of the Geneva Conventions has developed considerably. Initially, in 1906, governments were simply tasked with having to ‘take the necessary steps to acquaint their troops’¹⁰ with the law. By 1949 the obligation had become an inclusion of the ‘study’ of the contents of the Geneva Conventions in ‘their programmes of military and ... civil instruction’.¹¹ Clearly it is necessary to reach different audiences with different

⁷ Carlo Focarelli, ‘Common Article 1 of the 1949 Geneva Conventions: a soap bubble?’ (2010) *Vol 21 No 1 The European Journal of International Law* 125-171.

⁸ Article 5 asks that generals make the general population aware that should they provide aid to the wounded, they would be treated respectfully (thus free from the imposition of war contributions, for instance). The full text of the 1864 Geneva Convention: <https://www.icrc.org/applic/ihl/ihl.nsf/vwTreatiesHistoricalByDate.xsp>.

⁹ Geneva Convention I/II/III/IV, Articles 47/48/127/144 respectively.

¹⁰ Article 26 of Convention for the Amelioration of the Condition of the Wounded and Sick in Armies in the Field. Geneva, 6 July 1906 Art. 26.

“The signatory governments shall take the necessary steps to acquaint their troops, and particularly the protected personnel, with the provisions of this convention and to make them known to the people at large.”

¹¹ Article 47 of Convention (I) for the Amelioration of the Condition of the Wounded and Sick in Armies in the Field. Geneva, 12 August 1949.

expressions of the same principles and rules, so that each is given the best chance of remembering that information, understanding that information and when necessary using and respecting that information.

Similar provisions appear in each Additional Protocol. For instance, Article 83 of Additional Protocol I of 1977 reinforces the requirement to disseminate the contents of all four of the Conventions and Additional Protocol I.¹² The 1987 Commentaries to the Additional Protocols state that the experts taking part in the preparatory discussions of the Diplomatic Conference were unanimous in their belief ‘that the dissemination of the treaty rules was of primary importance, and that education was a better guarantee of respect for these rules than any sanction could ever be’.¹³

Additional Protocol II contains a truncated version of the requirement to disseminate in Article 19, simply requiring that ‘this Protocol shall be disseminated as widely as possible.’ However, the explanatory commentary attached to this article suggests that a more fulsome article was unnecessary. Article 1 of the Additional Protocol states that it ‘develops and supplements Article 3 common to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949 without modifying its existing conditions of application’. The Geneva Conventions already contain both Article 1 and the four variously numbered dissemination Articles (47, 48, 127 and 144) which together call for the High Contracting Parties to respect, ensure respect and disseminate the contents of the Geneva Conventions. It was therefore considered that, by

“The High Contracting Parties undertake, in time of peace as in time of war, to disseminate the text of the present Convention as widely as possible in their respective countries, and, in particular, to include the study thereof in their programmes of military and, if possible, civil instruction, so that the principles thereof may become known to the entire population, in particular to the armed fighting forces, the medical personnel and the chaplains.”

¹² Article 83 of Protocol Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949, and relating to the Protection of Victims of International Armed Conflicts (Protocol I), 8 June 1977

“The High Contracting Parties undertake, in time of peace as in time of armed conflict, to disseminate the Conventions and this Protocol as widely as possible in their respective countries and, in particular, to include the study thereof in their programmes of military instruction and to encourage the study thereof by the civilian population, so that those instruments may become known to the armed forces and to the civilian population.”

¹³ The text of all four Geneva Conventions of 1949, the two Additional Protocols of 1977 and Additional Protocol III of 2005 are available, with their commentaries at <https://www.icrc.org/applic/ihl/ihl.nsf/vwTreaties1949.xsp>.

extension, these requirements would include respect for and dissemination of Additional Protocol II as a development of common Article 3.¹⁴

It should be noted that when discussing IHL the threshold of armed conflict is very important. This is a body of law which only applies when there is an armed conflict ongoing. However the obligation to disseminate exists at all times – ‘in time of peace as in time of war’.¹⁵ Dissemination is part of the prevention process: knowledge of the law cannot be left until war has broken out; and to encourage compliance people need to know what the rules are before they enter into a conflict.

This obligation to disseminate contained within the Geneva Conventions and Additional Protocols refer to the ‘High Contracting Parties’: the States which have signed the treaties. So why is it that National Societies, such as Australian Red Cross, operate dissemination programs?

III. THE MANDATE OF THE MOVEMENT TO DISSEMINATE IHL

National Societies of the Movement – including Australian Red Cross – have been given a mandate, an authority, to assist their governments to disseminate IHL.

By briefly understanding the structure of the Movement, it is possible to see that the mandate for National Societies to disseminate has strong persuasive authority. The Movement is made up of three components. Firstly, the International Committee of the Red Cross¹⁶ (ICRC, which is a private Swiss organisation with approximately 11,000 staff working in around 80 states of the world¹⁷) originally established just over 150 years ago. Secondly, the 189 National Societies which have been established since 1864 all around the world – Australian Red Cross was established 100 years ago¹⁸ at the outbreak of World War I, for instance.

¹⁴ Additional Protocol III of 8 December 2005 contains Article 7 which has identical wording to that of the first paragraph of Article 83 in Additional Protocol I, above at note 9.

¹⁵ Article 47 of Convention (I) for the Amelioration of the Condition of the Wounded and Sick in Armed Forces in the Field. Geneva, 12 August 1949.

¹⁶ The Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement: <https://www.icrc.org/en/who-we-are/movement>.

¹⁷ The ICRC Worldwide, <https://www.icrc.org/en/where-we-work>.

¹⁸ History of Australian Red Cross, timelines: <http://www.redcross.org.au/history.aspx>; <http://centenary.redcross.org.au/timeline>.

Thirdly, the International Federation of the Red Cross (IFRC), which is essentially the umbrella organisation for the National Societies and came into existence after the end of World War I¹⁹. The National Societies work with each other, as well as with both the ICRC and IFRC, all variously coordinating activities within and beyond their national borders working to prevent, prepare for and respond to humanitarian crises. All components are guided by the seven Fundamental Principles of the Movement²⁰ and use the protective emblems of the red cross, red crescent and red crystal²¹, thus adopting a common approach towards the universal goal of preventing and alleviating human suffering wherever it may be found.

This does not explain the connection between the Movement and the responsibility for disseminating IHL. The coordination of Movement strategy occurs through regular meetings between the ICRC, IFRC and the National Societies but once every four years the components of the Movement are joined by all the State Parties to the Geneva Conventions at the International Conference of the Movement²². At these Conferences (which have been held since 1867) Resolutions are adopted which guide the way in which the Movement is to work. For example, one such Resolution adopted the Statutes to the Movement at the International Conference in 1986²³. These Statutes are essentially the Movement's regulations: guiding the conduct of the Movement. What is significant is that these Resolutions have been endorsed by all the States Parties to the Geneva Conventions and although they cannot bind the participants they provide a powerfully persuasive guide to their actions.

Article 3 of the Statutes²⁴ formally authorises National Societies to disseminate and assist their governments in disseminating IHL and take initiatives in this respect. Not only are

¹⁹ History: <http://www.ifrc.org/en/who-we-are/history/>.

²⁰ The 7 Fundamental Principles of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement: Humanity, Impartiality, Neutrality, Independence, Voluntary Service, Unity and Universality: <http://www.redcross.org.au/principles.aspx>.

²¹ The Emblems: <http://www.redcross.org.au/the-emblem.aspx>.

²² <https://www.icrc.org/en/document/international-conference-red-cross-and-red-crescent>.

²³ Statutes of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement: <http://www.ifrc.org/PageFiles/88219/statutes-en-a5.pdf>.

²⁴ Article 3(2) [National Societies] “disseminate and assist their governments in disseminating international humanitarian law; they take initiatives in this respect. They disseminate the principles and ideals of the Movement and assist those governments which also disseminate them. They also cooperate with their governments to ensure respect for international humanitarian law and to protect the distinctive emblems recognized by the Geneva Conventions and their Additional Protocols” at <http://www.ifrc.org/PageFiles/88219/statutes-en-a5.pdf>.

governments legally obligated to educate their populations about IHL, all National Societies have been authorised by those same States to assist them in this task. There have also been numerous resolutions and pledges at later International Conferences reaffirming this obligation.²⁵

Not only is this task of dissemination an international legal obligation but the information being disseminated consists of universally endorsed international laws. Although the humanitarian motivations underpinning the protections articulated by IHL treaties may appear around the world, within differing national, cultural or religious traditions, what must be emphasised is that these humanitarian activities are now protected by international law and apply to absolutely everyone. The rule that insists a prisoner of war is treated humanely is not just a matter of conscience or personal motivation – it is the law. The only way to ensure that everyone knows about these legal protections and respects them – not just instinctively or as a result of their own concerns for their fellow human beings – is through dissemination.

IV. NATIONAL SOCIETY DISSEMINATION: THE EXAMPLE OF AUSTRALIAN RED CROSS

Twenty five years after its inception, the Australian Red Cross IHL program has amassed a formidable reputation, being commended for the program's work, materials, approach and expertise. Personnel within the program have continued careers within the humanitarian sector and the Movement to the highest roles, including the current Director for International Law and Policy with the ICRC.²⁶

When the Australian Government incorporated Additional Protocol I into domestic law it was decided that in order to meet the requirement to disseminate (in Article 83), Australian Red Cross should be supported to establish an IHL Officer in each State and Territory²⁷. The

²⁵ For example: Resolution 4, 25th International Conference of the Red Cross, Geneva, 1986: <https://www.icrc.org/eng/who-we-are/movement/international-conference/overview-international-conference-of-the-red-cross-and-red-crescent.htm>; Resolution 3, article 27, 30th International Conference of the Red Cross, Geneva, 2007: <http://www.ifrc.org/Global/Governance/Meetings/International-Conference/2007/final-resolutions/ic-r3.pdf>.

²⁶ Dr Helen Durham, link to a recent interview with Dr Durham: <http://intercrossblog.icrc.org/blog/video-in-conversation-with-the-icrcs-director-for-international-law-policy#sthash.t6eFHpu1.dpbs>.

²⁷ Emily Camins 'Taking IHL off the bookshelf: dissemination in practice' (2014) Issue 1 *IHL Magazine* (Australian Red Cross) 28.

current program supports eight dedicated IHL experts in each of the States and Territories around Australia²⁸. The program that has been devised in an effort to meet the requirements of that legal obligation means that the target audience for the team is the entire population of Australia. Strategically work is divided into four broad interest groups. Firstly, those who will be most likely to use IHL directly in the field or in their work: the ADF, AFP, humanitarian and emergency response workers, medical personnel, journalists or lawyers. Secondly, those individuals who will have the capacity through their work to influence the domestic implementation of IHL: policy and decision-makers such as parliamentarians and public servants whose support and understanding of IHL is needed to ensure that new international law is negotiated, ratified and consequently introduced into Australian domestic law and then implemented into policy, monitored and supported. Thirdly, the broad group that encompasses ‘the civilian population’: this might include educating school or university students, health and legal professionals with an interest in international law or IHL specifically, but also raising awareness within the general public that ‘even wars have limits’ and promoting humanitarian values. Finally, but by no means least, there is an understanding that the dissemination of IHL is essential for the effectiveness of Australian Red Cross. Appreciating the principles contained within IHL and understanding that all humanitarian work is carried out within the framework of the Fundamental Principles of the Movement is crucial to all the activities of the Australian Red Cross.

To reach out to all of these identified groups at the appropriate level for their work or prior knowledge, the program with Australian Red Cross has to be extremely diverse and flexible. IHL officers who have come to work with Australian Red Cross have been drawn from all sectors of society to ensure that the necessary skills and knowledge to enable the program to reach out to each of those particular groups: a journalist, teacher, lawyers, ICRC delegates, an ADF reservist, a nurse, humanitarian advocates. The breadth and depth of the IHL staff is similarly reflected in the breadth and depth of the type of work that the program has produced to engage with different audiences, some examples of which are provided here.

The program runs two IHL courses a year for ADF personnel at different locations around Australia. These courses necessarily provide a very comprehensive and detailed examination of IHL and its application by the military. In addition, the IHL team have participated in

²⁸ Australian Red Cross IHL program: <http://www.redcross.org.au/ihl-courses.aspx>.

exercises with the ADF playing a fictional National Society responding to a dynamic scenario. In 2015, members of the IHL team will be involved in the planning process prior to drafting the exercise, to provide valuable insight into National Society behaviour.

It is not only professional armed forces who construct scenarios to explore the rules of IHL. A group of students from Charles Darwin University spent time in the outback planning the construction of an Internally Displaced Persons evacuation camp as part of their undergraduate degree. Their initial brief included instructions to prepare a contingency plan for emergencies. After a couple of days settling in the students were then ‘attacked’ by militia group, played by IHL staff and volunteers from the Northern Territory office, which then captured the unsuspecting student prisoners of war. Another IHL staff member role played an ICRC protection delegate carrying out detention visits followed by debriefs about the legal frameworks applicable to complex emergency situations²⁹.

In addition to taking a broad approach, introducing IHL in its entirety, the IHL team have also taken a more focused thematic approach on occasion: perhaps to examine a particular emerging or challenging issue. For example, since April 2010 when the ICRC appealed for a renewed effort to raise awareness of the humanitarian consequences of the use of nuclear weapons, Australian Red Cross has taken a leading role in concentrating on this issue. The IHL team have, amongst other dissemination activities, produced a magazine highlighting the issue in 2011³⁰ and organised a two day conference in 2012 drawing together international experts to examine the impact of the use of nuclear weapons. In order to engage with a different audience on this issue, Australian Red Cross turned to social media for a more creative response, taking the issue to the streets in eight cities around Australia using flash mobs to capture the attention of an audience who might otherwise not have been introduced to - or interested in - this issue³¹.

This use of a more theatrical, visual approach to deliver a message has also been used to engage with other groups within Australia. In 2013, prior to the Statutory Meetings of the

²⁹ Law Camp with a Difference (2014) Australian Red Cross, Northern Territory newsletter: <http://publications.redcross.org.au/northern-territory-2/>.

³⁰ IHL Magazine, Issue 2, 2011, Nuclear Weapons: a unique threat to humanity <http://www.redcross.org.au/files/IHLnuclear.pdf>.

³¹ Australian Red Cross, Young Humanitarians: <http://www.redcross.org.au/nuclear-weapons-flash-mobs.aspx>.

Movement which were to be held in Sydney in November that year, a member of the IHL team worked with a group of Red Cross volunteers from the Tiwi Islands in the Northern Territory to produce a visual depiction of the Fundamental Principles, together with a translation of the meanings into their local language. Dissemination at its best is about consultation, discussion and inclusion, having close conversations to build understanding. This particular work of dissemination resulted in seven vibrant photographs illustrating each of the seven Fundamental Principles and the generously granted permission to use each of these images to promote the principles through Australian Red Cross work.³²

From art competitions to writing competitions, to mooted competitions, the IHL team have organised, promoted, judged and provided opportunities to exhibit work to reach out to students from schools and universities around the country. For those students not wishing to compete, the IHL team have created role play board games which have been taken into the class room to enable students to discuss the challenges of providing protections during times of armed conflict.

For those who want a greater challenge, a debate was arranged for high school students in South Australia in the parliament building. Engaging with a group of parliamentarians, students were able to participate in a debate about whether 'Even Wars have Limits'. This proved to be a valuable dissemination event touching two important audiences at the same time: children, who will be the decision-makers of tomorrow, and parliamentarians, the decision-makers of today.

V. COLLABORATIVE DISSEMINATION IN THE PACIFIC: IHL HANDBOOKS FOR PARLIAMENTARIANS

Parliamentarians have always been a focus of dissemination, not just within Australia but further afield. Australian Red Cross participates in a collaborative project which began in 2008 assisting with the development and production of handbooks explaining IHL for parliamentarians around the Pacific region.

³² The 7 Fundamental Principles can be found on Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/AustralianRedCross/videos/10153857100637222/>.

Publication of an IHL handbook for parliamentarians stems from the obligation that the National Societies have to assist their governments to disseminate IHL. Without government members being aware of this obligation to disseminate and understanding the ongoing requirement for each State to ‘undertake to respect and ensure respect for the present Convention in all circumstances’ (Geneva Conventions, common Article 1), it is not possible for parliamentarians to adhere to this requirement. As mentioned, ignorance may be the greatest enemy of the Geneva Conventions.

In 1999 the ICRC and the Inter-Parliamentary Union published an information handbook about IHL entitled ‘Respect for International Humanitarian Law’³³. This handbook was designed both to inform members of parliaments around the world about IHL but also to mobilise them, as political leaders, to understand the importance of the law and demonstrate how they could respect and ensure respect for the law. Information aimed to build an understanding of the process of signing and ratifying international treaties relevant to IHL as well as the mechanisms to incorporate these into domestic legislation. The handbook was designed to be generic, for use globally by members of all parliaments. It was a detailed text containing quite technical legal information, including examples of model legislation.

The IHL team at Australian Red Cross, for purposes of their own engagement with parliamentarians, wanted to produce a less technical document promoting respect for IHL. It would be more introductory in nature but with sufficient substance to be of value to a parliamentarian and locally adapted to speak directly about the Australian context to Australian parliamentarians. To identify, for example, the international IHL treaties Australia had ratified and incorporated into domestic legislation. The value of providing local context cannot be understated. For a National Society to be able to engage in meaningful dialogue with their parliamentarians, locally relevant material is essential.

Consequently in 2008 Australian Red Cross produced their own, country-specific version of the handbook, designed to identify with Australian members of parliament and public servants.³⁴ Promotional material to advertise the proposed development of the handbook was

³³ Respect for International Humanitarian Law (International Committee of the Red Cross, 1999) <https://www.icrc.org/eng/resources/documents/publication/p1090.htm>.

³⁴ Promoting Respect for International Humanitarian Law: a handbook for parliamentarians (Australian Red Cross, 2008): http://www.redcross.org.au/files/IHL_Parliamentarians_Handbook.pdf.

created and distributed at the International Conference of the Movement in November 2007. Consequently a number of National Societies expressed an interest in developing their own drafts to engage with their own parliamentarians and government officials. Support was sought from the Australian Government to assist with the funding of such a project. Securing the technical legal support from the ICRC delegation in Australia and the Pacific, the IHL team have coordinated with dissemination officers around the region to work through the contents of each handbook to ensure that the adaptation is truly locally relevant and appropriate.

A similar format and style as the ICRC/IPU publication has been adopted, keeping the clear question and answer approach to provide information. Working through questions such as ‘What is IHL?’; ‘What about IHL and ‘terrorism’?’ and ‘What happens when IHL is violated?’ the handbook guides the reader, who does not need to have an extensive legal background to be able to understand the information, through this complex body of law. The focus within the handbook is on the provision of local information such as ‘What is the relevance of IHL to the Federated States of Micronesia?’ and ‘What treaties has the Federated States of Micronesia ratified and what legislation is in place?’³⁵ Each handbook makes both historical and contemporary references to relevant situations, for example referencing ‘the tensions’ in the Solomon Islands or the sending of security forces to join the Regional Assistance Mission in the Solomon Islands.³⁶ Making reference to citizens of the Federated States of Micronesia joining the USA armed forces or, in the case of Samoa, where there are no armed forces, referring to connections with IHL through Judge Slade, a prominent Samoan national and one of the first judges to be elected to the International Criminal Court in 2003.³⁷ As with the ICRC/IPU publication a section indicates what steps parliamentarians can take to respect IHL, amongst which is the requirement that a State is responsible for ensuring that its military forces are trained in IHL and parliamentarians can monitor whether this is undertaken effectively. The use of locally sourced images to illustrate the handbook

³⁵ Promoting respect for international humanitarian law: a handbook for legislators in the Federated States of Micronesia (2013):

http://www.redcross.org.au/common/images/ecards/thumbnails/FSM_IHL_HBook_Web.pdf.

³⁶ Promoting respect for international humanitarian law: a handbook for parliamentarians in the Solomon Islands (2011): http://www.redcross.org.au/files/20110328Solomon_Islands_IHL_HBook.pdf.

³⁷ Promoting respect for international humanitarian law: a handbook for parliamentarians in Samoa (2012): http://www.redcross.org.au/files/20120628_Samoa_IHL_HBook.pdf.

and use of the indicative emblem of the local National Society ensures that it truly belongs to the country in question.³⁸

By the end of 2014 IHL handbooks for parliamentarians have been printed and launched to parliament members in the Solomon Islands, Samoa, Cook Islands³⁹ and the Federated States of Micronesia. A handbook has also been printed for Papua New Guinea⁴⁰ and will be launched in 2015, whilst handbooks for Tonga, Vanuatu and Timor-Leste are currently in the process of adaptation. The project, of course, has much wider appeal and value to all National Societies. Evidence of this can be seen in the production of a locally adapted IHL handbook for both the Gambia Red Cross Society and Swiss Red Cross⁴¹ both of which relied very heavily on the style and content used for the Pacific IHL handbooks. The Namibia Red Cross Society are also undertaking their own adaptation of the material.

The message regarding the protection of people during armed conflict is universal: 196 States have signed the Geneva Conventions. With very little adaptation it is a simple task to produce a handbook for all parliamentarians promoting respect for international humanitarian law.

VI. CONCLUSION

The universal nature of IHL is always the focus of the dissemination work and is ably illustrated by a comment from an IHL officer recently working in the field. Sending a note about the work being undertaken, and commenting that she had seen and done some incredible things but ‘most importantly seen IHL in action’. After noting the difficulties of keeping consistently provisioned with food and medical supplies, she went on to say that ‘the emblem is very much respected. Our [local] colleagues are doing an amazing job supporting the [Movement] and promoting the ICRC as a neutral intermediary. They are for the most part volunteers. The work is tough.... It is good for me to be reminded of the power of the

³⁸ Pacific National Society IHL Handbooks, including Samoa, Solomon Islands, Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia and Papua New Guinea: <http://www.redcross.org.au/pacific-ihl-handbooks.aspx>.

³⁹ Promoting respect for international humanitarian law: a handbook for members of parliament in the Cook Islands (2013):

http://www.redcross.org.au/common/images/ecards/thumbnails/Cook_Islands_IHL_Hbook_Web.pdf.

⁴⁰ Promoting respect for international humanitarian law: a handbook for parliamentarians in Papua New Guinea (2013): http://www.redcross.org.au/common/images/ecards/thumbnails/PNG_IHL_Handbook_Web.pdf.

⁴¹ Respect for international humanitarian law: a handbook for parliamentarians (2014):

<https://www.redcross.ch/de/gesetze-und-recht/humanitaeres-voelkerrecht/das-humanitaere-voelkerrecht-hvr>.

Movement and how it functions in conflict. I am incredibly proud to be part of this Movement ... we are all obviously united by a shared hope and commitment to the good old Fundamental Principles and in particular, humanity.⁴²

It is hoped that the dissemination work carried out by the IHL team in Australia and with colleagues around the Pacific will continue to contribute to the respect and understanding felt half way around the world, making all efforts worthwhile.

⁴² Personal correspondence received from Jess Hazelwood, VIC IHL Officer, Australian Red Cross (2014).