

2018 HCID Annual Meeting: Joining forces on the agenda

Working together to protect health care from violence was a central topic at the fourth annual meeting of the HCID initiative in May 2018. The event, held in Geneva, brought together representatives from the HCID Movement Reference Group (composed of 25 National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, and ICRC field and headquarters staff) and 19 organizations from the wider HCID Community of Concern.



A replica of a bomb-damaged ambulance on display in front of ICRC headquarters to raise awareness of the HCID initiative.

What was discussed?

During the two-day event discussing safer access to, and delivery of, health care during armed conflict and other emergencies, participants looked at how best to combine their experience and influence at national and international levels.

“We have set ourselves a formidable task – making violence against health care a taboo. To achieve this, now is the time for us to project our leadership in the field through our delegations, structures and members.” Yves Daccord, ICRC director-general

The sessions were organized in accordance with the new HCID Theory of Change, which sets out a more pragmatic approach to the implementation of measures at regional level. Numerous recommendations and action points proposed by participants on a wide range of topics and practices have already been put in place since the meeting.

Best practice and key recommendations

For instance, the adaptation of the Safer Access Framework for health-care services in Rio de Janeiro has significantly improved access to these services for vulnerable people who need them the most. This adaptation could be replicated in other contexts.

Methodologies and tools for de-escalating violence between individuals in health-care settings have been developed by the ICRC delegation in Pakistan and by the Norwegian Red Cross. Participants at the annual meeting showed great interest in implementing such tools in a wide range of contexts.

Other points raised at the meeting included engaging with non-State armed groups and directing diplomacy towards promoting specific practical solutions and peer-to-peer exchange of best practice rather than international accountability. Maintaining dialogue with national armed forces, promoting the protection of health care through domestic legislation and addressing the psychological needs of health-care personnel operating in insecure settings were also discussed.

The importance of data and research in mitigating violence against health care was another recurring theme.

“Data and research are an incredibly important part of the work to mitigate violence against health care. But it is important to move beyond counting the incidents and move towards solution-oriented investigation and analysis.” Maciej Polkowski, head of the Health Care in Danger initiative

What’s next?

The main focus of the upcoming HCID communication campaigns will be behaviours within communities, with the aim of *preventing* violence against health care, rather than just raising awareness of it.

The main priority for the coming year is to gradually shift our focus from international humanitarian diplomacy to implementing practical measures at regional and national levels.

“For the first time, we have openly admitted that Security Council Resolution 2286 might not actually be such a great success in terms of concrete impact on the ground, and we should take advantage of the enthusiasm demonstrated by States to continue to promote concrete efforts regionally, related to the resolution, while finding ways to reinvent it and refresh it.” Mary Werntz, ICRC deputy director of Operations

At the 2018 HCID annual meeting, the participants concluded that meeting annually in their own regions to share similar or comparable problems with aid providers from neighbouring countries was more relevant when it came to promoting practical measures. Starting next year, therefore, two regional meetings will be organized every year, beginning with the Middle East and Asia–Pacific regions in 2019.