

# The Power of Humanity

the origins and activities of the Swiss Red Cross

## Swiss Red Cross

### Who we are The Headquarters and the cantonal associations

The Swiss Red Cross (SRC) is the National Red Cross Society and a member of the worldwide Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement. The basic principle of this movement is to help people in need.

The SRC comprises the SRC Headquarters and 24 cantonal associations. The latter are supported by 13,000 volunteer workers. Although their help is unremunerated it is nevertheless invaluable. The SRC Headquarters and the Secretariat of the cantonal associations are based in Bern.

The SRC and its staff, members and volunteer workers are committed to helping people in Switzerland in four key sectors: health care; the social and social-medicine area; immigration and integration; and in first aid and rescue operations.

The SRC's activities in other countries are concentrated above all in regions that have been devastated by war and natural disasters and where health care is far from adequate to meet the needs.

### Did you know that every year...

- ... 9,600,000 kilometres are driven by the volunteer driving service?
- ... 1,100,000 hours of work are provided by volunteers?
- ... 420,000 blood donations are processed?
- ... 117,000 people take part in Red Cross courses?
- ... 100,000 hours of occupational therapy are given?
- ... 47,000 patients are cared for?
- ... 20,000 border health examinations are carried out?
- ... 14,000 air-rescue missions are flown by REGA?

### The Swiss Red Cross relies on:

- 500,000 members
- 55,000 volunteers
- 300,000 blood donors

### What we do Services provided by the SRC

#### In Switzerland

- Conflict training for teenagers, children and adults
- Vocational training (regulating about 20 health-care professions)
- Assistance for the elderly and the handicapped (driving service, alarm service)
- Minder service for sick children and children whose parents are ill

- Youth work (e.g. summer camps, solidarity promotion)
- Second-hand clothes shops and clothes collection
- Care and accommodation for asylum-seekers
- Returnee assistance
- Outpatient care for the victims of war and torture
- Health promotion for immigrants

#### Abroad

- Emergency and disaster relief
- Development cooperation and promotion of health care
- Reconstruction after war and natural disasters
- Support for National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

### The SRC group

12 other organizations and institutions belong to the SRC group.



Please affix stamp

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Communication Service  
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### The origins and development of the Red Cross

#### Battle of Solferino

In the mid-19th century various States were vying for supremacy in Europe. The battle of Solferino in northern Italy on 24 June 1859 was one of the bloodiest battles that had even taken place at that time. More than 40,000 soldiers and officers were killed or wounded.

#### Henry Dunant

The businessman Henry Dunant arrived on the battlefield shortly after the battle. When he realized that thousands of injured soldiers were left lying where they fell without any assistance, he organized relief help for all the wounded, regardless of their nationality and origin. Henry Dunant's spontaneous, human reaction when faced with the misery of the battlefield at Solferino was the foundation for the largest and best-known relief organization in the world: the Red Cross.

#### "Memory of Solferino"

Three years after the battle Henry Dunant wrote a book about his experiences. The book caused a stir throughout Europe. It demanded an international convention to protect war victims. Dunant also called for the creation of associations of volunteers in all countries that would be trained during peacetime to provide support for the sanitary services of the armed forces during wartime. Dunant travelled all over Europe drumming up support for his idea.

#### Protective red cross emblem

In 1863 five people, including Henry Dunant, met in Geneva to set up a committee – later to become known as the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). Shortly afterwards a conference was convened, attended by delegates from 16 countries. The congress decided that a neutral relief committee should be set up in every country. It was decided that a red cross on a white background would be used as the emblem. Later a red crescent was also used (in certain countries in Africa and Asia).

#### Founding of the Swiss Red Cross

The Red Cross spread around the world. On 17 July 1866 General Guillaume-Henri Dufour and Minister of State Jakob Dubs set up the Swiss Red Cross (SRC) in Bern. By the end of the 19th century regional Red Cross associations had been set up in many cantons. In 1898 the Central Secretariat was founded in Bern. The activities of the SRC were extended from sanitary assistance to the promotion of health in the Swiss population. Over time the SRC's commitment gradually spread to include disaster relief and emergency assistance, refugee assistance and work in the social services.

### International network

The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement currently comprises the ICRC (\*1863), the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (\*1919) and the National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies. [www.redcross.int](http://www.redcross.int)

The National Societies must be recognized by the ICRC and must fulfil a series of conditions. There can only be one Red Cross or Red Crescent Society in any one country. There are currently a total of 181 National Societies.

The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies is the worldwide association of National Societies. Its work focuses on coordinating international aid. The president of the SRC is ex officio the vice-president of the Federation. [www.ifrc.org](http://www.ifrc.org)

The International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent meets as a rule every four years to update the guidelines of the Movement.

The ICRC is operational throughout the world. Its work includes caring for the wounded, visiting prisoners of war, or supplying foodstuffs for the victims of conflicts. [www.icrc.org](http://www.icrc.org)

#### The Geneva Conventions

The Geneva Conventions placed wounded soldiers and sailors, prisoners of war, and civilians under the protection of international humanitarian law. As the advocate of the Geneva Conventions, the ICRC reminds all States of their duty to respect and apply humanitarian law. To date a total of 191 States have ratified the conventions. [www.icrc.org](http://www.icrc.org)

### The seven Fundamental Principles of the Red Cross

Back in 1965 the Red Cross drafted the humanitarian principles for help in conflict and relief situations. These Fundamental Principles are valid for the whole Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement.

#### Humanity

Everyone everywhere is a fellow human being.

#### Impartiality

Help in need knows no distinctions.

#### Neutrality

Humanitarian relief needs everyone's trust.

#### Independence

Autonomy protects our Fundamental Principles.

#### Voluntary Service

Relief is provided without any desire for gain.

#### Unity

Just one per country and open to all.

#### Universality

Humanitarian duty is a worldwide task.



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- I am interested in the SRC. Please send me further information.
- I am interested in becoming a volunteer, please contact me.
- I would like to help, please send me documentation.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Postcode / Town: \_\_\_\_\_

e-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Further information can be obtained from:

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