

## **Dissemination: Moroccan Red Crescent launches pilot project**

### **Introduction:**

In 1987 the Moroccan Red Crescent (MRC) organized a series of seminars to spread knowledge of international humanitarian law and human rights among six different target groups concerned with these matters. This most interesting experiment enabled the Society to reach motivated people all over the country who had only a slight knowledge of international humanitarian law and were insufficiently acquainted with the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement. It was a pilot project and the first time that a National Society had, on its own initiative, organized a series of dissemination seminars for the target audiences defined by the Movement in all its programmes of action.

### **Contributory factors and infrastructure**

A number of factors combined to make possible this series of seminars. One factor was the perception of the leaders of the MRC, thoroughly versed in the principles of dissemination, who succeeded, under the enlightened guidance of their President, Her Royal Highness Lalla Malika, in drawing up the programme; two major material factors were the existence of a training centre at Medhia, not far from Rabat, fully equipped to receive about a hundred participants, and the financing of the project by an American foundation established for the training of senior staff and for education in the Middle East and North Africa.

### **Implementation**

The Moroccan Red Crescent, conscious of its responsibilities, wishing to apply Resolution IV of the Twenty-fifth International Conference of the Red Cross, within the framework of the Third Programme of Action of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement with respect to dissemination

of international humanitarian law and the principles and ideals of the Movement, (1986-1990), decided to implement a programme for dissemination at the national level.

The Moroccan Red Crescent organized an initial series of seminars, between August and December, to provide training for each of the following six groups: officials of the National Society at provincial and "prefectural" levels; officials of four ministries (Justice, Foreign Affairs, Interior, Information); Red Crescent Youth leaders; senior officers of the Royal Armed Forces, the Royal Police Force and the auxiliary forces; journalists from the country's major newspapers; and doctors (those of the MRC, of the armed forces and in private practice). Members of the academic world will be included in the second series of seminars.

The seminar programmes dealt with the various aspects—historic and legal—of international humanitarian law and human rights, also with the role and the work of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement. Each subject was introduced by a lecture which was followed by a discussion and, where suitable, by practical exercises.

Expert guidance on the subjects relating to human rights and Islam was provided brilliantly by Dr. Abdelkader El Kadiri, professor of international public law at the Law Faculty in Rabat. The head of public relations and dissemination at the MRC, Mr. B. Bensaoud, had invited the Co-operation-Dissemination Division of the ICRC to send lecturers on international humanitarian law and the principles and ideals of the Movement. Excellent collaboration between the organizers and the ICRC on the choice of subjects ensured that, from one seminar to the other, the subjects could be adapted as closely as possible to the audience. The wealth of subject matter in the lectures was stressed by all participants, whose high intellectual capacity enhanced the debates.

The Secretariat of the League of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies also took part in the seminars by sending experts and dissemination material.

Among those invited were eminent academics not associated with the Movement, including Professor Maurice Torelli, of the *Institut du Développement et de la Paix* (Development and Peace Institute) in Nice, Dr. Mohamed El Kouhenne, assistant at the Independent Commission on international humanitarian questions, Mrs. Khadija El Madmad, professor in the Casablanca Law Faculty, and Lieutenant-Colonel Mohamed Arassen of the Royal Moroccan Armed Forces. Leading officials and members of the MRC Central Committee followed the seminars closely. Among them were Mr. L. Derfoufi, General Secretary of the MRC. Mr. A. Belghiti, editor of the MRC journal, and the members of the Central Committee, Mr. Mehdi Bennouna, Treasurer of the League, Mrs. Fatima Hassar, Mr. Mohamed Maazouzi and Mr. Mohamed Nesh-Nash. All the seminars were given wide coverage by the Moroccan press.

## **Future plans**

Recently the MRC has received a large number of appeals from the provinces, from previous participants (MRC officials, officers in the armed forces, doctors), for further seminars to be organized for them to improve their knowledge of international humanitarian law and the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement. In view of the success of the first series of seminars, the MRC has decided to create a “dissemination cell” or commission, made up of the most highly motivated representatives of each group that has taken part in the seminars. With the support of members of the National Society, this cell or commission will then be able to carry on dissemination activities throughout the country itself, in what will constitute the second stage of the MRC dissemination programme.

## **Conclusion**

It is encouraging, in a world where failure to apply international humanitarian law is all too frequent to find a National Society that has not only recognized its responsibilities but has converted them into action, thus imitating Henry Dunant’s original gesture and fulfilling the primary concern of the Movement as a whole. It is to be hoped that the example of the Moroccan Red Crescent will spread far and wide among other National Societies and, in particular, will be followed by its own Government, which, under the Geneva Conventions, is primarily responsible for making known the provisions of international humanitarian law. This would demonstrate that the observance of international humanitarian law and the dissemination of its principles foster the spirit of peace and respect for human rights and help to combat all forms of discrimination.

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