

CHANGING LIVES

Developing One Global Workforce of Humanitarian Leaders



ICRC

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

IN 2012, the International Committee of the Red Cross embarked on a remarkable Learning and Development initiative designed to build the next generation of leadership within the organisation in service of their unique humanitarian mission. Bringing together the best of existing leadership practices coupled with a comprehensive development journey derived from two doctoral theses, the development of the Humanitarian Leadership and Management School (HLMS) was designed to drive the biggest organisational transformation in its 150-year history – the vision of one global workforce with different competencies but equal values. The design of the program navigated each leader through three successive modules, starting with enhanced self-awareness and a focus on authenticity in leadership, then through a behavioural journey focused on leading high performing multidisciplinary teams and more strategic organisational transformation and complex operations.

The HLMS program brought together the best in L&D practice – a combination of distance learning, face-to-face interaction and work-based learning, the use of advanced psychometric tools, and the engagement of an expert pool of executive coaches to support participants as they navigated the HLMS journey. Many parties contributed to the success and growth of the program, but the main partnership was between the ICRC and Management Research Group (MRG), who provided the psychometric tools, the experienced group of multilingual coaches, substantial research capabilities, and many years of experience in supporting such initiatives. The HLMS has continued to evolve through constant process improvement, technology enablement and the feedback of over 1,000 participants to date, and has become a model of humanitarian leadership development to the extent that in 2017 ICRC signed an agreement with the University of Lucerne to establish the 3 modules of HLMS as 2 certificates of advanced studies (CAS). Together, the ICRC and the University of Lucerne are starting to build a Master's Programme in Humanitarian Leadership with the aim of further developing participants' leadership journeys, while generating much-needed research in the area of leadership in the humanitarian sector.

The real-world learning and positive organisational impact of the HLMS has exceeded organisational expectations and continues to evolve as a core success factor in the ICRC's enormous transformational journey – building the leaders and managers of tomorrow in alignment with changing organisational needs and expectations.