

Would you like to learn more about International Humanitarian Law and how it might be relevant to you as an Australian humanitarian?

International humanitarian law (IHL) is a set of universally accepted rules that seek to limit, for humanitarian reasons, the effects of war. The purpose of IHL is to maintain some humanity in armed conflicts – saving lives, reducing suffering, and respecting basic human dignity. To do this, IHL protects people who are not or are no longer participating in hostilities, including wounded and sick soldiers, prisoners of war, medical personnel and humanitarians, and all civilians. It also restricts the means and methods of warfare by placing limits on the types of weapons and military tactics used in armed conflict in order to limit unnecessary suffering.

IHL is particularly relevant to humanitarians working in conflict settings as well as Australian based humanitarians helping to respond to the needs of people impacted by conflicts globally.

Since 2019, the Australian Red Cross International Humanitarian Law (IHL) Program has been progressing research to learn more about the value and impact of IHL knowledge and training within the Australian humanitarian sector. In the first phase of the research project, the report '[Gaining Traction: Measuring the Impact of IHL Training](#)' was published. The key findings of this report were, among other things, that IHL training can be linked to improved humanitarian outcomes and that awareness of IHL and the humanitarian principles mitigates risks in the field. In 2022, an [IHL Knowledge Framework](#) tool was published which recommends an IHL knowledge level for key roles in the humanitarian sector, and in 2023, a [baseline survey of the humanitarian sector](#) was conducted to better understand what is known about IHL and how it is used by Australian humanitarians.

Longitudinal study relating to the value and impact of IHL knowledge and training

To progress this research further, Australian Red Cross is now collaborating with Deakin University's [Centre for Humanitarian Leadership](#) to launch an academic study to determine how IHL knowledge can be better leveraged by Australian humanitarians and humanitarian organisations. This study has received Deakin University ethics approval (reference number: 2024-180).

In 2024, we will commence a three-year study which will explore the value of IHL training for people in different roles in the humanitarian sector. This includes people in leadership, governance, strategy, policy, human resources, people and culture, communications, fundraising, advocacy, government relations, Australian and international programs, finance, legal, partnerships, learning and development, and monitoring and evaluation roles.

The study will seek to map the knowledge and use of IHL by humanitarians over three years. Every six months, study participants will respond to surveys relating to their current IHL knowledge levels and use of IHL. In exchange, study participants will be given access to a range of IHL training opportunities that will be tailored for Australian humanitarians to ensure they meet the minimum recommended IHL knowledge level for their job profile.

If you work in the Australian Humanitarian sector (in any role) and want to learn more about IHL and how it is relevant to you, we want to hear from you.

To get involved in this research as a study participant or if you would simply like to know about the project, please scan this QR code and [complete the form](#), or email Claire Cayzer, IHL Legal Adviser, at ccayzer@redcross.org.au.

