



TO: Participants completing surveys

Plain Language Statement (Surveys)

Date:

Full Project Title: International Humanitarian Law (IHL) Knowledge Research Project – ‘The value and impact of IHL knowledge and training in the Australian humanitarian sector’

Reference Number: 2024-180

Principal Investigator: Dr Phoebe Downing

Co-Investigators: Dr Josh Hallwright and Ms Claire Cayzer

Research Assistant: Adriana Stibral

My name is Claire Cayzer, and I work as an International Humanitarian Law (IHL) Legal Advisor for the Australian Red Cross. I work together with Dr Phoebe Downing (Deakin University) and Dr Josh Hallwright (Deakin University/Centre for Humanitarian Leadership (CHL)) on this research project.

The Australian Red Cross together with Deakin University/the CHL are conducting a longitudinal study (2024-2027) on the value and impact of IHL training and knowledge in relation to enhanced humanitarian outcomes and reduced individual, operational, and organisational risks. This study has received Deakin University ethics approval (reference number: 2024-180).

The purpose of this research project

The main aims of the research project are to clarify the value and impact of IHL knowledge and training for the Australian humanitarian sector. It further aims to produce evidence that IHL knowledge and training can lead to enhanced humanitarian outcomes and reduce individual, operational, and operational risks.

This research project seeks to map the knowledge and use of IHL by Australian humanitarians over the next three years. At the start of the research project and every six months over the life of the project, study participants will respond to surveys relating to their current knowledge and use of IHL in their professional roles and in their professional environments (domestically and abroad). Periodically over the course of the research project, study participants will be offered various learning and training opportunities and will be asked to complete a short follow up survey immediately after the training has been completed. Participating in follow-up surveys aims at providing evidence whether IHL training and knowledge can lead to improved humanitarian outcome and reduce individual and organisational risk due to enhanced knowledge of IHL.

Study participants who are deployed overseas into a humanitarian, conflict-related environment where IHL applies, will also be interviewed before and after their deployment. Surveys and interviews will provide insights into whether IHL training and knowledge has impacted on improved humanitarian outcomes and reduced individual, operational, and organisational risk in the field.

Intended outcomes from this research project

As a result of this research, an IHL Toolkit will be developed that Australian humanitarians and Australian humanitarian organisations can use. The toolkit will include a range of tools and resources, including an updated [IHL Handbook for Humanitarians and Health Professionals](#), an updated [IHL Knowledge Framework](#), access to a range of training and capacity building opportunities, and a mechanism to continually monitor and evaluate the impact of IHL training. It will also include a set of IHL Best Practice Principles for the Australian humanitarian sector and a range of related resources to enable organisations to easily adopt and adhere to these principles.

Research questions

The main questions of this research project are:

- What is the value of IHL knowledge and training in relation to enhanced humanitarian outcomes and reduced individual, operational, and organisational risks?
- How does IHL knowledge and training lead to enhanced humanitarian outcomes?
- How does IHL knowledge and training lead to reduced individual, operational and organisational risks?

The sub-questions of this research project are:

- What types of training methodologies/pedagogies are most effective for the transmission of IHL knowledge?
- What is the best way to learn and teach about IHL for humanitarians?
- How can humanitarians convert that knowledge into action/practice?
- What are the indicators of successful application of IHL knowledge?
- How can the impact of IHL knowledge and training be measured?

Invitation to participate: surveys

Please note, participation in this research study is entirely voluntary. We are seeking to conduct surveys with around 67 study participants from the following groups:

- Australian humanitarians employed domestically in various roles (e.g. finance, human resources, training, administration, management, security, evaluation & monitoring, etc.) (at least 40 study participants)
- Australian humanitarians who will be deployed overseas into a humanitarian context where IHL applies (at least 10 study participants)

We are also seeking to conduct surveys with approximately 17 control participants from the following group:

- Australian humanitarians employed domestically in various roles (e.g. finance, human resources, training, administration, management, security, evaluation & monitoring, etc.) (around 10 to 14 control participants)
- Australian humanitarians who are likely to be deployed into a humanitarian overseas (where IHL applies) (around 3-7 field control participants)

What would be involved: surveys

Your participation will involve the completion of an online survey (45-60 minutes, once every six months over the lifespan of the project (three years)) and an online survey (10-15 minutes, after the completion of Australian Red Cross IHL training, which will be tailored for humanitarians and offered to all study participants periodically over the lifespan of the project).

If you are likely to be deployed overseas into a humanitarian context where IHL applies, your participation may also involve a 45-60 minute interview before and after your deployment (please see the Plain Language Statement and Consent Form (interviews) for more information about these interviews).

Anticipated harm or benefits

It is not expected that there will be any harm or stress caused to participants in this study. The questions asked or topics raised in the surveys should not be outside of the range of everyday life experiences. However, should you experience any discomfort or distress, please contact any of the researchers immediately as well as your organisation's Employee Assistance Program or a community mental health support provider, such as Beyond Blue (www.beyondblue.org.au or 1300 224 636) or Lifeline Australia (www.lifeline.org.au or 13 11 14).

Participation in this study is entirely voluntary and you are under no obligation to consent. You can decline to answer particular questions, decline to submit a survey, or withdraw from the study completely at any point, without adverse consequences.

Survey participants and interviewees will not be reimbursed in any way for their participation. Research findings may be published in academic and industry publications, and media articles. If you do consent to participate now, you may withdraw your consent at any time prior to the final write-up of the research findings.

Expected benefits to wider community include:

- Contribution to knowledge about the value and impact of IHL training in regard to enhanced humanitarian outcomes and reduced individual, operational, and organisational risks;
- Contribution to knowledge on how IHL knowledge and training can be transmitted in the best way possible;
- Contribution to knowledge on how IHL knowledge can be best applied to practice;
- Development of mechanisms to measure the impact of IHL training in the Australian humanitarian sector;
- Creation of a set of guiding principles of IHL Best Practice for Humanitarian Organisations in Australia that humanitarian organisations in Australia (including those delivering IHL training) can apply;
- Design of an IHL Toolkit which entails an updated IHL Handbook for Humanitarians and Health Professionals, and information on the best ways to teach and learn about IHL.

Published results

The published results will neither identify participants' names, nor provide any information that could lead to participants being identified – unless the participant provides consent that their identity and the organisations they are affiliated with can be published. The anonymity of participants will be protected by the use of pseudonyms, and all identifying features will be either omitted or changed as appropriate. All aspects of the study, including results, will be strictly confidential and only accessible to the researchers.

If you would like to be informed of the final research findings, please contact the co-investigator, Claire Cayzer, via email: ccayzer@redcross.org.au. You may also contact co-investigator Dr Josh Hallwright via email: j.hallwright@deakin.edu.au or the principal investigator, Dr Phoebe Downing via email: p.downing@deakin.edu.au.

Complaints

If you have any complaints about any aspect of the project, the way it is being conducted or any questions about your rights as a research participant, then you may contact: The Manager, Human Research Ethics Office, Deakin University, 221 Burwood Highway, Burwood Victoria 3125, Telephone: +61 (03) 9251 7123, research-ethics@deakin.edu.au. Please quote project number [2024-180].