



Interview with Mr Ma Qiang

Former Executive Vice-President
of the Shanghai branch of the
Chinese Red Cross*

In this issue, the Review wanted to give a voice to different perspectives on the principles guiding humanitarian action. The Chinese Red Cross is an interesting example of a member of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement operating according not only to the seven Fundamental Principles of the Movement, but also to three additional values (or “spirits”), namely humanity, fraternity and dedication. Whereas the Fundamental Principles serve as institutional rules and provide operational guidance, the three spirits serve as an ideology for members of the Chinese Red Cross. In addition, over the last few years, the Chinese Red Cross has become more and more involved in disaster response operations abroad (for instance, in the response to Typhoon Haiyan in the Philippines in 2013 and the earthquake in Nepal in 2015), as well as in China. It is expected that Chinese disaster response organizations will be increasingly involved in future international crises. The Review spoke to Mr Ma Qiang, former Executive Vice-President of the Shanghai branch of the Chinese Red Cross, the oldest Red Cross branch in China, to find out more about how he sees the evolution of the humanitarian sector and the challenges to principled humanitarian action in today’s world.

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He currently serves as a Permanent Member of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference Shanghai Committee and Chairman of the Medical Ethics branch of the Chinese Medical Association. He is also Vice-President of the Shanghai Medical Association, Deputy Director of the Shanghai Medical Technology Awards Committee, and a Distinguished Professor of Central South University and Suzhou University.

He was Chief Administrator of the Shanghai Municipal Health Department from 1997 to 2008 and Vice-President of Shanghai Second Medical University from 1994 to 1997.

Can you tell us a little bit about the history of the Shanghai branch of the Red Cross and give us an overview of the work it does?

Shanghai is one of the first ports in China that opened to the outside world. In the late nineteenth century and the early twentieth century, humanitarianism and the Red Cross were actively promoted by a number of Shanghai personalities such as Mr Sun Gan,² who used *Shen Bao* [the *Shanghai Times*] and a number of other newspapers and media as platforms and widely disseminated the concept. Dr Sun Yat-sen's³ translation of a Red Cross handbook of first aid and news of the Red Cross Movement from other countries often appeared in newspapers. As the main trading port in China, Shanghai, with its unique status, became an entry point for the Red Cross culture and practice, and the ideas spread from here to other parts of China. On 10 March 1904, Mr Shen Dunhe⁴ and a number of famous Shanghai merchants and gentlemen, taking advantage of Shanghai's advanced industries, commerce, charity, and open ports for international and domestic exchanges, established the National Red Cross Society in China – the Shanghai Wan Guo Red Cross Society. Since then, the Red Cross culture has been integrated with the traditional culture of our

- 1 Ma Qiang and Chi Zihua (eds), *Red Cross in Shanghai 1904–1949*, China Publishing Group, Shanghai, 2014.
- 2 Sun Gan (孙淦) was a Shanghai businessman and patriotic overseas Chinese citizen, doing business in Japan for a long time. He joined the Red Cross during his stay in Japan, and later came up with the idea of establishing a Red Cross National Society in China. In 1897, he submitted a letter to the Chinese ambassador to Japan calling for the establishment of a Red Cross National Society in China.
- 3 Sun Yat-sen (孙中山) (1866–1925) was the first president and founding father of the Republic of China. Sun played an instrumental role in the overthrow of the Qing dynasty, and co-founded the Kuomintang, serving as its first leader. He was also a medical practitioner, and he translated a Red Cross handbook of first aid into Chinese in 1897.
- 4 Shen Dunhe (沈敦和) (1866–1920) was a well-known Chinese social activist and philanthropist. In his early years, he studied at the University of Cambridge. In 1904, he established the Shanghai Wan Guo Red Cross Society with other merchants and gentlemen in Shanghai. From 1907, he served as vice-chairman of the Red Cross Society of China.

country and with the local context. The Chinese Red Cross opened its headquarters in Shanghai, and the chief executives carried out the work using Shanghai as a base. Shanghai became the centre for the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement in China.

The Shanghai branch of the Chinese Red Cross [SHRC] was established in 1911. There are currently four departments [Relief and Rescue Department, Youth Department, Voluntary Service Department, Communication and Information Department] and a general department [the General Office]. There are two independent affiliated institutions: the Disaster Preparedness and Response Centre and the Training and Exchange Centre. Nearly 100 full-time staff work at the SHRC at municipality level. The SHRC covers seventeen counties, more than 200 townships and several thousand villages. Some of the industrial and development zones, schools and medical institutions have also established Red Cross grass-roots units,⁵ forming a fairly comprehensive network.⁶

Shanghai is a very developed international city, and it is not prone to natural disasters. However, as residential structure fires occur every so often, we have set up a residential fire project for Shanghai and developed our own rescue principles, models and approaches. So, if a residential fire occurs anywhere within the city, local Red Cross grass-roots units will immediately move to provide assistance, and we will ensure that this assistance arrives at the scene.

Now, over ten different types of services that we provide directly through the Red Cross cover all of our counties, towns and villages, and schools.

Another area of expertise for the SHRC is restoring family links. After 1949, when the government of China withdrew from mainland Taiwan, many families were separated. So since the 1980s, we have helped more than 4,600 families to restore links with family members. The peak time was during the 1980s and 90s, but there are still some sporadic cases now, including many foreigners, especially Jews, who lived in Shanghai before 1949.

5 Article 40 of the Statutes of the Red Cross Society of China (revised in 2015) states:

The Red Cross organizations established in townships, streets (communities), corporations, enterprises, schools, medical institutions and other organizations are Grass-roots units.

The main responsibilities of the Red Cross Grass-roots units are: to disseminate knowledge about the Red Cross, carry out humanitarian relief activities, organize primary first-aid training, disseminate knowledge about public health, and other activities consistent with the goals of the Red Cross.

6 According to its statistics, as of the end of September 2014, the SHRC at all levels had 4,048 grass-roots organizations, 1,278 group members, 325 full-time staff and 3,186 part-time staff. Among them, three industries (steel, fire-fighting and railway) and thirteen economic development zones have established Red Cross units. Seventeen districts (or counties) and 209 street neighbourhoods (or townships) have established 4,727 Red Cross service stations in residential and public places. There are 1,390 Red Cross clubs in schools, and sixty-four Red Cross medical institutions. There are 1,115,200 Red Cross members, 1,278 group members and 244,100 volunteers. Volunteers, including first-aiders and disaster-monitor volunteers, cover virtually all neighbourhoods, townships and villages in Shanghai.



Disaster Preparedness and Relief Centre, SHRC. Source: SHRC.



Grass-roots Red Cross unit providing service to communities. Source: SHRC.

In your view, how do you see that the humanitarian work of the Movement and its Fundamental Principles relate to the Chinese tradition of philanthropy and relief in times of crisis?

China has a long tradition of famous philanthropists, such as Fan Zhongyan, Liu Zai, Li Wu, Bai Lunsheng and Xiong Xiling. Some of them even received commendations from emperors. So the concept of charity and benevolence is deeply embedded in the Chinese culture. For example, in 1874, *Shen Bao*, the most influential newspaper in China at the time, reported that there were many charity organizations in Shanghai alone. There were as many charity organizations as there are trees in a forest in a small place like Shanghai.

When the Chinese Red Cross was established in Shanghai in 1904 and the Red Cross concept of humanity was introduced to China, it was immediately accepted by many philanthropists. The Chinese Red Cross was sponsored by many powerful people such as the Empress Dowager Ci Xi, but ordinary people also donated money. It quickly spread, and more and more Red Cross branches were founded across China because the aim – to alleviate human suffering – is in line with Chinese culture and tradition.

In many ways, the work of the Chinese Red Cross is adapted to the Chinese context, but at the same time, it follows the seven Fundamental Principles of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement.

The Chinese Red Cross has adopted different principles guiding its work, namely humanity, fraternity and dedication, so it seems that there are some specificities and differences. Can you describe the Chinese principles? Why does the Chinese Red Cross put forward these three, which are partly different from the seven Fundamental Principles of the Movement?

Humanity, fraternity and dedication are the spirits advocated by the Chinese Red Cross. The first principle of the Chinese Red Cross is humanity, which is the same as the first Fundamental Principle and means that the Chinese Red Cross is protecting life and health and ensures respect for the human being. It promotes mutual understanding, friendship, cooperation and lasting peace amongst all people. It is the most fundamental approach when dealing with any human life.

Fraternity is described in China as a very far-reaching type of love which is able to extend beyond all types of discrimination and other borders. A doctor's heart, for example, should be a heart of universal love – love that is strong enough to break boundaries, even of classes, ethnic groups, religion, etc. This fraternity includes a concern with how one can provide fair and equitable treatment to all those individuals that need assistance. It is therefore in line with the Fundamental Principle of impartiality and means that when providing humanitarian assistance, you cannot discriminate.

And then there is the principle of dedication, comparable to the idea of voluntary service, which is also one of the seven Fundamental Principles. One must have the spirit of dedication if one is to become involved in voluntary service. If we do not have this spirit of dedication, then we will not be able to reach our goal of providing quality voluntary service. So, when approached from this angle, these three concepts of the Chinese Red Cross are actually consistent with the seven Fundamental Principles.

These three concepts express the “spirit” of our work. We did not feel that it was necessary to include organizational-related principles⁷ along with these three concepts.

The seven Fundamental Principles of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement were developed over the first hundred years after the Movement had taken up its work. China is a developing country, and we need to allow enough time for the country to fully embrace the work and presence of the Movement. I believe that these principles will be expressed more fully and in a way that is understood by the Chinese. We will also gain better understanding of these principles as they are being applied to the specific context in China.

Can you explain the use of the word “spirit” of the Chinese Red Cross, in comparison with the “Principles” of the Movement?

Whenever someone becomes involved in an activity, or begins striving to accomplish a certain goal, they will be doing so with a particular state of mind. With the proper state of mind, or spiritual awareness, this individual will be better equipped to be successful in the task they are hoping to accomplish. This is what we mean by spirit.

So spirit and principles are two different concepts. Principles serve as institutional rules and a measuring stick, whereas spirit is about one’s state of mind and is more ideological. Working for the Red Cross, I need to have the spirit of humanity, fraternity and dedication. But when I actually do specific work, I must adhere to the seven Fundamental Principles.

The work of the Chinese Red Cross is carried out based on the seven Fundamental Principles. However, when we are informing the general public about our work and are promoting our values, we tend to use the principles of humanity, fraternity and dedication. It makes it easier for us to mobilize the public to donate and/or take part in our humanitarian and charitable work, since these principles are in line with the Chinese cultural tradition and the Chinese language. The humanity, fraternity and dedication of Chinese Red Cross workers embody the Chinese humanitarian spirit, but we still adhere to the seven Fundamental Principles of the Movement.

⁷ According to Jean Pictet’s commentaries on the Fundamental Principles of the Movement, the principles of unity, universality and voluntary service are considered to be organizational principles. Jean Pictet, *The Fundamental Principles of the Red Cross: Commentary*, ICRC, Geneva, 1979, available at: www.icrc.org/eng/resources/documents/misc/fundamental-principles-commentary-010179.htm.



Henry Dunant statue in the city centre of Shanghai.
Source: SHRC.

Fraternity and dedication are powerful concepts that are very appealing to people. The concept of fraternity was proposed by Mr Sun Yat-sen, the founding father of the Republic of China. Mr Sun combined the Chinese concepts of charity and benevolence and Western concepts of humanitarian love and proposed what has become known in China as fraternity [博爱].

The principle of dedication [奉献] embodies the spirit and work of the Movement. For example, many colleagues of the International Committee of the Red Cross [ICRC] have lost their lives in armed conflicts throughout the world to fulfil humanitarian duties. This shows a spirit of dedication. It is not only something concerning people who work for the Movement, but it also calls for a similar devotion on the part of the whole society.

It is a way to mobilize resources from the general public. The principle of dedication represents the common spirit and ambition of an entire nation and the Movement. We, as part of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, need to dedicate ourselves as individuals, and also advocate for this dedication so that all members of society join us and dedicate themselves as well. The spirit of dedication is to a certain extent expressed by the principle of voluntary service, which is one of the seven Fundamental Principles. However, voluntarism represents more a form of service rather than a spirit or belief.

Red Cross and Red Crescent National Societies have an auxiliary status to the government, and at the same time operate under the principle of independence. Do you have practical examples from the Chinese Red Cross of how these two requirements can be combined?

In fact, the independence principle is a very important principle among the seven Fundamental Principles for a Red Cross and Red Crescent National Society.

The first example of the independence of the Chinese Red Cross I can give you is a historical one. At the end of the nineteenth century, the relationship between China and Japan was very difficult, and the First Sino-Japanese War started in 1894. Subsequently in 1904, the war between Japan and Russia was fought on Chinese territory. However, when the eastern Japanese earthquake took place in 1923, the Chinese Red Cross called for public donations and the Shanghai branch organized an emergency response team comprised of more than twenty people. The team was deployed to Japan, and helped with the relief work.

My second example is a more recent one. On 12 May 2008, the Sichuan earthquake hit China.⁸ During this major natural disaster, the Chinese Red Cross independently undertook fundraising efforts and shipped all relief materials to the disaster area for its relief projects. At that time, the Shanghai branch of the Chinese Red Cross alone raised 1.17 billion yuan that was sent to the disaster area. All these efforts were independent initiatives by the Red Cross in order to help the affected regions. After we had raised the money, we worked closely with the government in order to meet the most urgent needs of the victims during the earthquake.

In the post-disaster reconstruction, it was the SHRC that made the decisions on what projects should be pursued. The local government helped the local Red Cross branch to implement the reconstruction. The government organized the reconstruction team, and the Red Cross supervised to make sure that the team met its standards. In this way, the Red Cross was able to combine its independence with the leverage of government support. In order to rebuild the ruined area, the government made an overall plan, and the Red Cross participated in the planning in order to fit our project with the goals and the requirements of the government. But it was the Red Cross that made the decisions on the projects, raised the money, and also conducted the inspection and supervision. When the construction was finished, the SHRC then organized visits by our donators to the disaster area to monitor and evaluate the project.

Therefore, we can conclude that the principle of independence plays an important role in the core decision-making of the Red Cross. But we can also benefit from government support, which helps us to do things faster and better. On the one hand, we are the government's auxiliary, but on the other hand, we are independent. The relief effort for the Sichuan earthquake is a good example of this combination.

At the local level in Shanghai, we have our own humanitarian assistance projects for vulnerable people in the city. The SHRC fulfils its duty in accordance with the Law of the People's Republic of China on the Red Cross Society in that respect. We have an executive committee that makes independent decisions

8 The Sichuan earthquake, which measured 8.0 in magnitude and occurred on 12 May 2008 in the Sichuan province of China, left 69,197 dead and 374,176 injured, with 18,222 listed as missing. It was the deadliest earthquake to hit China since the 1976 Tangshan earthquake. The Red Cross Society of China raised donations of around 4.29 billion yuan (US\$680 million) in total.

regarding issues that concern our day-to-day internal work, our mode of operation, our fundraising methods, our humanitarian aid programmes and so on. We do not need to consult with any government departments when making these decisions, and no one can intervene in the decision-making process. The role of the government is to provide some positive support and to ensure non-intervention with the implementation of the projects.

On a personal level, ever since I took this position, I have been trying to transform myself from the mode of government administration into a qualified social activist, a humanitarian and a practitioner, a believer in the spirit of humanitarianism. So from this aspect, this is an elevated spirituality and a dedication to implementing humanitarianism. In the past seven years, I've been deeply moved and inspired by the Red Cross and its mission, and I am deeply in love with its cause. Joining the Red Cross has been a life-changing experience for me, and the Movement has become part of my life.

What are the primary challenges that the Chinese Red Cross, including the SHRC, is facing in the implementation of the seven Fundamental Principles?

The primary mandate of the Movement is to provide humanitarian assistance in situations of armed conflict and disasters. It is more difficult to disseminate the principles and spirit of the Red Cross in peaceful countries than in countries dealing with armed conflict or severe disasters. In the first half of the last century, China was in a state of war, so it was very easy for Chinese people to accept and understand the Red Cross at the time, and the public was willing to support and participate in our mission. But having been at peace for a long time, it has become difficult for young people to care about something that is so distant and alien to them.

The principle of neutrality can be found in traditional Chinese culture, and this has been demonstrated by the process of the development of the Red Cross. However, it is not very obvious and is difficult to define. Neutrality reflects more of a mode of action than a spirit. I believe that as China becomes more integrated with the rest of the world, this principle will find a richer definition in Chinese culture.

We need to develop an effective method to help young people understand our work. We need to take the Red Cross as well as a complete and accurate understanding of the seven Fundamental Principles and adapt this to the Chinese context. This is the way by which we will be successful in the objective of introducing the principles of humanity, fraternity and dedication.

Another challenge that we are facing relates to the stability of the Red Cross leadership as well as to the improvement of their understanding of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement. If we are able to successfully address these issues, the other tasks that we take on will not pose a significant challenge. The first task, therefore, is to spread the history of the Red Cross and the right messages about the seven Fundamental Principles among the leadership of National

Societies at all levels. If at any branch or headquarters the leadership does not understand the principles, the whole National Society will not be on the right track as a result.

Therefore, it is very important that people who start working for the Movement receive high-quality, comprehensive training during their first year on the job. I was trained years after I started this work, but the introductory courses I participated in were not very convincing due to curriculum settings. It took me over a year to really get the hang of things and move past the initial stage of confusion after I started to work for the Red Cross in 2008. So in the seven years that I have spent working at the SHRC, I am pleased that we now have a well-functioning team that is very professional. Without well-trained key staff or professional leadership, our aim cannot be achieved; this is very important in China.

I have also noticed, for example, that the ICRC and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies are interested in exploring how these principles can be spread to a group of key individuals throughout the world, in order to turn them into strong and long-term advocates for the principles.

The ICRC has had reasonably stable staff that have worked for the institution for five to ten years, or even longer. Having long-term staff will help advance the work of the Movement. We need to maintain the stability of staff who have the spirit of dedication and devotion and are able to spread the principles and become Red Cross activists.



Shanghai Debating Competition on Humanitarian Issues, final round, May 2015. Source: SHRC.

Voluntary service is one of the seven Fundamental Principles of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement. What suggestions would you like to give to the Movement to reconcile this with the growing demands to enhance the professionalization of humanitarian actors and organizational effectiveness of the sector?

This is an issue that I spent a great amount of energy working on after I joined the Red Cross, and I feel that working to successfully increase the professionalism of our organization is a task that needs to be approached from three different levels.

Firstly, the resources that are available to the Red Cross primarily derive from donations, and therefore it is not possible to employ a huge amount of people and our organization cannot afford to pay a large number of top management salaries. National Societies need to attract professionals who will work as Red Cross volunteers. So in order to accomplish its goals, the Red Cross needs to be skilled at building a team consisting of volunteers and employees.

Secondly, even when we have a large amount of volunteers joining our ranks, we still need highly skilled personnel. We need to identify volunteer leaders who can provide training for less skilled individuals and assist those individuals who are not yet familiar with the Red Cross's work. In this way, we will be able to produce a stronger team of what we call "student leadership", a volunteer cadre or volunteers in positions of leadership. They can serve as a sort of connection between employees and volunteers and will allow for in-depth relationships.

Thirdly, we need to be successful in training professional volunteers. The individuals that take part in our work need to be very professional. Just like I place a demand on myself to be a good disseminator and a professional manager of the Red Cross cause, I expect from our volunteers that they act in a very professional manner when they are working for us. In order to achieve this, the management of National Societies, and of local branches, is very important, and the organizers of voluntary services have to be very professional. Managers need to know how to lead a team in order to provide humanitarian services with a team of volunteers.

The Chinese Red Cross was established by businessmen and philanthropists in Shanghai in 1904. When you look at the situation today, do you feel that the private sector in China is willing to carry on this tradition of philanthropy? If so, how would it go about doing this?

Currently, the private sector occupies about two thirds of the economy and is in a very strong position, and undoubtedly, private businesses and individuals are accounting for a vast majority of charitable donations.

In the past, these private enterprises were run by individuals and operated on a limited scale. As these enterprises have grown bigger, more and more have adopted shareholder systems, and their boards of directors are making

decisions – also regarding charitable donations – that are now more standardized and transparent.

Both public and private enterprises have shown great enthusiasm for charity, and with improvements on the management of State-owned assets, joint-stock enterprises and the corporate governance structure, the collection and use of charitable donations will become more professionalized and regular.

The key point of the question is how we can mobilize the private sector to donate for the Red Cross cause. We need to inform the private sector about our work, because often there is limited knowledge about the Red Cross and its main activities. We need to help the private sector understand the importance of our humanitarian work and projects. How can we inspire that sector with the Red Cross spirit, how can we share the important achievements of the Movement and how can we increase trust in the Red Cross leadership?

Of course, this will take some time, and we need a large number of experienced Red Cross activists and leaders. I believe that the abilities, the calibre and the skills of the Red Cross executive teams will determine the level of commitment of the private sector. Of course, while we attract private-sector actors to get involved, we should strengthen the Red Cross value of “expecting no return” and reward them for being enterprises that care about corporate social responsibility. To achieve this goal, we need to improve the Red Cross’s organizational structure, team-building, capacity-building, programme development, information sharing, etc. We need to constantly improve the abilities and skills of Red Cross staff and volunteers with regard to spreading knowledge about the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement.

For example, during the Sichuan Lushan earthquake in 2013, an enterprise from Taiwan wanted to make a donation. However, the management were very hesitant since they did not really understand what the Red Cross was doing. We invited them over and explained to them what the Red Cross is all about and how we manage and make use of donations, and won their trust. On the spot, a representative made a donation of 1.5 million yuan, and later another of 800,000 yuan. We are also in contact with executives of a Korean enterprise. We asked one of the executives to take part in the volunteer service that we were providing for disabled patients in the Red Cross voluntary service base in hospitals. Every year, this executive donates over 1 million yuan for the humanitarian cause, as well as between 5,000 and 10,000 emergency life kits to our organization. He decided to make these donations after gaining an understanding of what our organization does.

Is there a Chinese model of humanitarian action, compared to the West? If so, in your view, what is the specificity of a more Chinese model of humanitarian action?

I do not agree with dividing humanitarian action into Western and non-Western and the creation of this dichotomy. They might have their own specific

characteristics, but they are not in conflict. One could say that everything is unique in its own way, that there are no two things in the world that are absolutely the same. Looking at the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, we see that every National Society adheres to the seven Fundamental Principles, regardless of whether it is based in the West or China.

However, China is a big country and it has reached different levels of development in different areas. Many underdeveloped regions still exist in China, on the one hand, and then on the other hand you have highly developed places such as Shanghai, which counts as one of the most developed cities in the world. So in countries as big as China, there may be different approaches adopted by different regions in accordance with the state of development. This allows everyone to move gradually onto the same path. So when we put it that way, it could be true that some countries feel that “China is a little different”. This is in fact not the case. When we are working to reach a common goal, some people run a little faster, and some people run a little slower. Some people run with very good posture, and others look as though they are dancing when they run. This does not influence the commonalities that we have.

In my opinion, the concept of having models and standardizations originates from the corporate world. A model ensures that everything that is produced is perfectly uniform. I don't feel that it is appropriate to use this concept when looking at the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement. For example, when we look at a cup, it may be the case that one cup is made from glass and another one is made from porcelain. But even though they are made from different materials, they are both able to contain water. The purpose of each one of these cups, as well as the benefit that they yield, is the same. So I feel that, as a nation develops, every National Society should take its own national conditions into consideration. However, at the same time, it should consider the seven Fundamental Principles in its work, as well as the overall aims and goals of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement. It means that the road and methods might be slightly different but the objective is the same.

Without doubt, the Chinese Red Cross has seen a rapid development these last few years, with the evolution of its own character and features. For example, we act on the basis of the Law of the People's Republic of China on the Red Cross Society; we have successfully utilized a combination of our networking with the government, the public and enterprises, and as a result, we have created great opportunities for development. The key for success for the development of the Chinese Red Cross is to make the best out of all resources that are available to it and to focus on a specific goal.

In addition, I feel that for anything in the world, it is diversity that will allow for its rapid development. So while China is in a state of development, it is important to consider China's national conditions and adopt methods that utilize its advantages as well as all its different resources when working toward the rapid development of the Red Cross. In fact, when we look back to 1863, when the ICRC was established, we can see that it also utilized the different



International Medical Emergency Relief Team of the Red Cross Society of China departing from Shanghai to perform international disaster relief operations. Source: SHRC.

characteristics of the different European countries. In doing so, it established the committee of five, later adopted the First Geneva Convention, and then attracted the participation of dozens of countries. It took advantage of these conditions at the time, and in this way was able to allow each of these individually unique countries to utilize its own individual resources in accomplishing the goal of training a group of motivated individuals that share our beliefs. The wonderful rewards of all of our hard work are further down the road.

In the past two decades, China has experienced rapid economic growth. During this process, China's international status has become more and more important. What impact will China's growing international status have on its future participation in international humanitarian work?

In fact, as China started out as an underdeveloped country and is now making strides toward development, I think we can share our experiences and our path of development with the rest of the world, while keeping in mind the differences of each country.

I believe that the contribution of the Chinese Red Cross on the international humanitarian stage will be multi-dimensional in the future. This includes deploying staff overseas, material and financial contributions and training of Red Cross personnel etc.



Dispatch of relief goods from the Disaster Preparedness and Relief Centre of the SHRC. Source: SHRC.

China's economic, social and cultural development will form the foundation for the country's participation in international humanitarian work. After experiencing a few decades of reforms and opening up to the international community, China is gradually integrating itself into the world in its politics, economics, education and humanitarian work.

As China's economic status and educational levels rise, China will become more and more involved in international humanitarian work. This is an inevitable result of these advances. One can see the enthusiasm for expanding cooperation abroad not only in Shanghai, but also in the various provinces throughout China.

China used to be very poor for decades, and the high-speed economic development of China started only in 1978.⁹ In this context, providing foreign aid has become more and more frequent in recent years. The Chinese Red Cross offered its emergency aid after the Indian Ocean Tsunami in 2004 and sent its first emergency response operations after Typhoon Haiyan in the Philippines in 2013, but the bilateral humanitarian aid between National Societies from China and other National Societies

9 From 18 to 22 December 1978, the 3rd Plenary Session of the 11th Central Committee of the Communist Party of China was held in Beijing. This conference marked the beginning of the "Reform and Opening Up" policy. It was a decisive turning point in post-1949 Chinese history, marking the beginning of the wholesale repudiation of Mao's Cultural Revolution policies, and set China on course for nationwide economic reforms.

dates back much longer. After the founding of the People's Republic of China, Shanghai became known as the gateway to China, and over the years, the SHRC has provided foreign aid to more than eighty National Societies, mainly in the form of emergency relief materials, but also human resources like medical teams.

When it comes to the contribution that China is capable of making toward the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, it should also be noted that China is home to 1.4 billion people, which is about one fifth of the world's population. It would be a great contribution to the world if the Chinese Red Cross is well developed to serve those 1.4 billion people.