



ICRC

FINAL REPORT

Evaluation of the ICRC Learning Culture



Owl RE Evaluation Team

Cara Winters (Team Leader), Lois Austin, Claire Barthelemy, Obando Ekesa, Patricia Goldschmid, and Sarah Grosso.

April 2024



TABLE OF CONTENTS

Executive Summary	4
Acronyms and abbreviations	10
1. Introduction	11
2. Evaluation Purpose, Objectives, and Scope	12
2.1 Evaluation purpose and objectives	12
2.2 Evaluation scope	12
2.3 Evaluation questions	13
3. Evaluation methodology	14
3.1 Evaluation approach	14
3.2 Data collection and analysis	16
3.3 Risks and mitigations	17
3.4 Ethical considerations and safeguarding	18
4. Evaluation Findings	19
4.1 Current state	19
4.2 Future view	40
4.3 ICRC Learning Culture: Theory of Change Development	51
5. Conclusions	53
6. Recommendations	54

Annexes to the report (*Annexes attached as separate files*)

Annex I: Evaluation Matrix

Annex II: Data Collection Tools: Survey, Interviews, Focus Group Discussions

Annex III: List of Inception Briefings, Key Informant Interviews, and Workshop Participants

Annex IV: Staff Survey: Demographic Data

Annex VI: “Current State” and “Future View” Theories of Change

Annex VII: Evaluation Terms of Reference

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This document presents the findings and recommendations of the independent evaluation of the learning culture of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). It was conducted from June 2023 through April 2024 by Owl RE, research and consultancy. The evaluation was commissioned by the ICRC's Learning and Development Division (LnD) of the People and Culture Directorate (PAC) and the Evaluation Office.

Learning culture background. In 2019, the ICRC set a goal in its Institutional Strategy to foster the organisational learning culture as part of its strategic objective to create an inclusive and diverse working environment. Aligned with this, a Learning Council was established and the Learning and Development Division (LnD) released a five-year framework (2020–2025) for strengthening learning at the ICRC. This framework corresponded with the ICRC People Strategy 2020–2025, which guides all activities of the People and Culture Directorate (PAC) of which LnD is a part. LnD delivers core institutional learning programmes and contributes to the onboarding of new staff through a variety of trainings, amongst other activities. While PAC and LnD are uniquely positioned in the development of an organisational learning culture through their responsibilities, all structures of the ICRC contribute to fostering a learning culture either through explicit capacities (e.g., learning strategies and staff within the métiers) or implicitly (e.g., interest of individual staff to learn).

Evaluation purpose and scope. The evaluation supports the ICRC's progress on its strategic objective for strengthening a learning culture in the organisation. Evaluation findings will contribute to the Learning Council's aim of driving culture change, while gauging the learning experience of ICRC staff to improve learning practices and policies. The evaluation should benefit teams or units with their own learning strategies or those with continuous improvement in their missions.

The evaluation focused on learning intended for the professional development of ICRC staff, covering an organisation-wide geographic scope. Two periods are considered in the report: the "current state" and the "future view" of the learning culture at the ICRC. The current state reviewed by this evaluation covers the years 2020–2023. The future view considers 2025–2030. The period over 2024 is regarded as a transition year into preparing the revised PAC and LnD strategies. Reviewing specific institutional courses and external providers was outside the scope of the evaluation.

The evaluation responded to nine evaluation questions framed according to four components of an organisational learning culture:

- Purpose—organisational strategy or requirements that learning supports: "Why"
- Modalities—learning formats and mechanisms used by the organisation: "What"
- Environments—means through which people access learning and frequency: "When and Where"
- People—beliefs and attitudes of employees about learning within the organisation: "Who"

Evaluation methodology. The evaluation followed a theory-building approach that centres analysis around an iteratively developed Theory of Change (ToC) for the learning culture at the ICRC. Theory-building occurred at each phase of the evaluation process: inception, data collection, analysis, and reporting. Three ToCs were produced over the course of the evaluation, including an initial "current state" ToC at the inception phase, an adjusted "current state" ToC, and a proposed "future view" ToC.

The evaluation employed a mixed-methods and participatory approach to data collection and analysis. Specific data collection activities included: ToC workshop, key informant interviews, focus group discussions, staff survey, and document review.

EVALUATION FINDINGS

The evaluation identified 17 key findings on the “current state” and “future view” of the learning culture at the ICRC, organised by the nine evaluation questions and four learning culture components.

Current state

Evaluation Question 1: Purpose.

How does the ICRC currently understand its objectives for fostering a learning culture in the organisation? In what ways does the ICRC’s current vision of a learning culture contribute to the mission of the ICRC?

Finding 1: Multiple ICRC strategies outline objectives to foster a learning culture. There is not, however, a formal definition for learning culture active in the organisation and staff hold different understandings about its purpose and value at the institutional, departmental, and individual levels.

Finding 2: The ICRC has not consistently tied its current vision of a learning culture to the unique mandate of the organisation. Staff value the role of formal, social, and experiential learning in promoting core aspects of the ICRC’s humanitarian mission: (i) organisational identity and adherence to principles and (ii) organisational capacity to respond in complex environments.

Evaluation Question 2: Purpose, Modalities, Environment.

How has the organisation invested in cultivating a learning culture over the last three years (2020–2023), including policies, messaging, and support systems?

Finding 3: Over the 2020–2023 period, the ICRC progressively invested in fostering a learning culture through strategies and governance for learning, strengthening learning partnerships, and improving evaluation and measurement for learning. Financial resources dedicated to learning, however, largely decreased from 2019 through the end of 2023. Communications and messaging remained weak, despite efforts to cultivate “learning ambassadors.”

Evaluation Question 3: Modalities.

What are the formal, informal, and social learning modalities available in the organisation right now?

Finding 4: A significant portfolio of formal learning modalities exists at the ICRC, covering mandatory and voluntary offers at organisational and métier levels. Informal learning, including social and experiential modalities, is less available and not well institutionalised.

Finding 5: Quality assurance exists for LnD learning products, with additional coverage for ICRC digital learning modules. A framework for training quality was produced by LnD, but is yet to be adopted. The Learning Quality Group formed by LnD in 2022 was suspended in 2023 due to resource constraints. Staff recommend improving the contextualisation of training content and to professionalise its delivery.

Evaluation Question 4: Modalities, Environment.

To what extent are formal, informal, social, and external learning modalities utilised and actively contributing to learning in the organisation?

Finding 6: Formal learning at the ICRC has a wide reach, with significant levels of participation in mandatory modalities. There is no significant difference in relation to gender or region on the completion of mandatory training. Comparatively, the use of voluntary formal modalities is limited. Social or experiential learning modalities are valued, but reach is hampered by inadequate availability. Informal learning through self-directed pursuits or daily work is present, but not well quantified.

Finding 7: Staff are broadly able to apply their learning, while reporting challenges with organisational culture, management support, contextualization of learning material, and professional recognition and career growth. Learning modalities are not well linked to specific career transitions or directed according to learner needs.

Evaluation Question 5: People.

What are the beliefs, values, and perceptions of ICRC staff about learning opportunities in the organisation, the broader learning culture of the ICRC, and their own participation in learning?

Finding 8: On average, ICRC staff moderately believe the organisation provides an enabling environment for learning and moderately perceive the ICRC as a learning organisation. Evaluation data indicate that perceptions vary by gender, grade level, and managerial responsibilities.

Finding 9: Staff value the available suite of mandatory and voluntary formal learning opportunities. There is a preference for face-to-face interactions for learning modalities. When experienced, staff rate social and experiential learning as the most impactful to their work.

Finding 10: Staff report frustrations with the limited recognition of learning achievements and benefit to career progression.

Future view

Evaluation Question 6: Purpose.

How should the ICRC frame its learning culture to reach its strategic objectives? What should the ICRC expect to achieve through an enhanced learning culture?

Finding 11: The ICRC can orient its learning culture around the organisation's unique mandate, contributing to strategic objectives through formal, social, and experiential learning opportunities.

Finding 12: The ICRC can continue pursuing its current learning culture objectives, while expanding their scope for future relevance.

Evaluation Question 7: Modalities, Environment, People.

What are the gaps between the current and desired state, including (i) available learning modalities, (ii) the means through which employees access learning and how often, (iii) the ways ICRC constructs a meaningful learning culture and learning governance, and (iv) the beliefs and preferences of ICRC staff?

Finding 13: Gaps between the current state of the ICRC learning culture and the organisation's desired performance include opportunities for social and experiential learning, the practice of learning needs assessment and directed learning, available time and management support for learning, defining the intent and scope of learning culture at the ICRC, management accountability for learning, and recognition and reward for learning.

Evaluation Question 8: Modalities, Environment, People, Purpose.

What are the factors helping or hindering progress on learning in the organisation? Where are opportunities to strengthen or advance learning?

Finding 14: Factors helping learning in the organisation include the availability and flexibility of formal learning opportunities, relevance and applicability of learning content to one's current role in the organisation, individual motivation, and supportive management (when present). Staff experience may vary by gender.

Finding 15: Factors hindering learning in the organisation include insufficient availability of social and experiential learning modalities, limited recognition or career benefit from learning, inadequate or unavailable financial support, insufficient time, challenges with unsupportive managers, and organisational culture. Staff experience may vary by gender.

Finding 16: The ICRC can build on current enabling factors and promising practice that support learning to advance its relevance, impact, and uptake in the organisation. Following the examples from the field, L&D focal points within the delegations can champion learning for unconnected staff.

Evaluation Question 9: Modalities, Environment, Purpose.

How can the ICRC measure the advancement of a learning culture in the organisation?

Finding 17: The ICRC can build on existing measurement approaches to assess the strength and advancement of a learning culture more holistically.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the “current state” and “future view” findings of the learning culture at the ICRC, this evaluation supports a shift in priorities over the next strategic period. This requires addressing key gaps between existing and desired practice for the organisation’s learning purpose, modalities, environments, and people.

Learning purpose: Although ICRC strategies outline objectives to foster a learning culture, the meaning of the learning culture in the context of the organisation is not defined. This undermines the ICRC’s ability to coherently understand the value of learning and its criticality to the institutional mandate. As a result, individual staff, métiers, and the organisation may fail to provide the level of endorsement, support, and resourcing to learning that is required for the ICRC to meet its strategic objectives for a learning culture.

Learning modalities: Over 2020–2023, the ICRC invested in the availability and utilisation of mandatory and voluntary formal learning opportunities. However, there remains a significant gap in the availability of structured opportunities for social and experiential learning. The lack of organised social and experiential learning presents the largest risk to the ICRC’s ability to realise both its desired current state and future vision for learning. Staff greatly value these opportunities and rate them as the most impactful to their work, when experienced. Failure to advance these dimensions of learning compromise the highest goal of the “future view” of a learning culture at the ICRC: organisational performance and quality.

Learning environments: ICRC staff perceive the organisation as moderately providing an enabling learning environment. Multiple aspects of the learning environment act as barriers to learning participation, as well as limiting learning impact to individuals and the organisation. This includes weak communications and messaging on learning, challenges with organisational culture, inconsistent management support, and inadequate professional recognition and career growth. Addressing these areas is necessary to ensure staff access and enjoy the variety of learning opportunities developed by the organisation during the period under review. This is foundational work to cultivating a healthy and vibrant learning culture.

People: ICRC staff appreciate the learning opportunities afforded to them by the organisation. Staff frustrations with the limited recognition of learning achievements and benefit to career progression indicate that learning culture is not adequately linked to professional development. The variation of staff perceptions on learning by métier and gender should be explored through learning M&E to ensure an adequate understanding of the unique barriers and enabling factors experienced by different sub-groups of the organisation.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 1: Develop a holistic learning strategy with comprehensive communications plan.

Develop a new learning strategy for 2025–2030 that covers learning for the entire organisation. This can build on the progress made by the current LnD strategy, while expanding to promote a common vision of the purpose, value, and approach to learning inclusive of different levels of the ICRC (e.g. delegation, regional, global), types of positions (e.g. red line, blue line), and the métiers. The strategy is accompanied by a comprehensive communications plan that supports the visibility, uptake, and implementation of the strategy by raising awareness of available learning opportunities.

Recommendation 2: Develop and validate a comprehensive definition of learning culture.

Develop a comprehensive definition of learning culture that is validated by the ICRC Directorate. The definition states how the institution's learning and learning culture contribute to the specific and unique features of the ICRC's mandate, linking this to the role of the ICRC in terms of upholding humanitarian principles, promoting International Humanitarian Law (IHL), providing essential humanitarian services, and fostering Movement coordination and complementarity.

Aspects of learning culture that extend beyond individual staff development are featured in the definition, including reflection, cultivating trust and a safe environment for exchange in the organisation, and specifying links between individual and organisational learning. The definition balances the importance of staff motivation to learn with the responsibilities of the ICRC to direct learning. Once validated, the definition should be included (where appropriate) in all institutional and departmental learning-related strategies and policies.

Recommendation 3: Increase investment and focus on social and experiential learning modalities.

Bolster the social and experiential learning modalities identified as most impactful for ICRC staff. Building on the evaluation findings, conduct an organisational learning needs assessment to pinpoint priority areas that warrant further investment. Produce a concrete organisational roadmap for how social and experiential learning are made available in structured ways by the ICRC for staff development (e.g. producing clear formats for reflection or a defined system for the timing and application of opportunities). This includes addressing structures for supporting:

- In-person workshops and team reflection
- Exposure missions
- Mentorship or shadowing opportunities
- Coaching
- Communities of practice
- Knowledge transfer between incoming and outgoing positions / during handover

Staff preferences for face-to-face interactions influence how these opportunities are shaped. Strengthen LnD guidance for line managers on how these opportunities contribute to staff development, including ways line managers can recognise social and experiential learning through discussions with staff on how the learning applies to current and potentially future posts. Consider utilising iDevelop to fund a more diverse range of social and experiential learning modalities offered by external providers.

Recommendation 4: Increase direction on individual staff learning pathways.

HR and Talent Managers provide increased guidance and direction on individual staff learning pathways. This responsibility is included in HR and Talent Manager job descriptions, as well as in the job descriptions of all staff with line management responsibilities. At métier level, learning focal points within the métiers provide access to a list of pre-validated courses and other learning options (e.g. social and experiential modalities) that link to career progression (promotion and lateral moves), advancing visibility on the certification and skills required to progress within each métier. This is a long-term activity that may take several years to establish. HR and Talent Managers work collaboratively with the métier learning focal points to ensure consistent messaging, guidance and support is provided to staff on their learning pathways and career development opportunities.

Recommendation 5: Improve management accountability for and capacity to advance learning.

Provide guidance for line managers on their responsibilities to advance staff learning, including direction on the amount of time to allocate for learning in staff schedules and the use of the PMD in setting individual learning objectives.

Where necessary, train and qualify HR and Talent Managers to provide professional support to staff in relation to career progression. Line managers would benefit from the development of soft skills to improve their capacity to recognise learning needs of staff and encourage staff professional development, including communication and mentorship skills.

Recommendation 6: Expand learning M&E approaches to assess the advancement of a learning culture.

Adapt the system for learning M&E to holistically assess the advancement of a learning culture by tracking:

- *Activities*: Degree to which the ICRC offers the right mix of activities to nurture a learning culture.
- *Motivation*: Degree to which ICRC staff are motivated to engage in learning.
- *Management support*: Degree to which ICRC leadership and line management support learning.
- *Operational support*: Degree to which learning is resourced (funding, expertise, time).

The system engages with métiers for data collection, analysis, and reporting. Acknowledging the time and resource intensive nature of learning M&E, the ICRC identifies a range of basic indicators it can reasonably track (between 5 to 10) for gauging progress on a learning culture. The system builds on what currently exists, including methodology, data capture tools, dashboards, and indicators. Reporting on progress continues to occur in the ICRC Planning/Monitoring for Results system, promoting visibility at the ICRC Directorate level.

ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

EAG	Evaluation Advisory Group
EcoSec	Economic Security
EODG	Executive Office of the Director-General
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
HLMS	Humanitarian Leadership and Management School
HQ	Headquarters (ICRC)
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
IFRC	The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
IHL	International Humanitarian Law
KII	Key Informant Interviews
LnD	Learning and Development Division
M&E	Monitoring and evaluation
Movement	The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement
(Owl) RE	(Owl) Research and Evaluation
PAC	People and Culture Directorate
PMD	Performance Management and Development Plan
QA	Quality Assurance
SIP	Staff Integration Programme
ToC	Theory of Change
ToR	Terms of Reference
UNEG	United Nations Evaluation Group

1. INTRODUCTION

This document presents the findings and recommendations of the independent evaluation of the learning culture of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). It was conducted from June 2023 through April 2024 by Owl RE, research and consultancy. The team was comprised of the team leader, Cara Winters, the project manager and evaluator, Glenn O’Neil, and evaluators Lois Austin, Claire Barthelemy, Obando Ekesa, Patricia Goldschmid, and Sarah Grosso. The evaluation was commissioned by the ICRC’s Learning and Development Division (LnD) of the People and Culture Directorate (PAC) and the Evaluation Office.

Learning culture background. Learning culture is a transversal ICRC phenomenon that touches employees at all grade levels, contract types, and geographic locations. It represents part of the organisational culture that pertains to learning policies, infrastructure, practices, and values. In 2019, the ICRC set a goal in its Institutional Strategy to foster the organisational learning culture as part of its strategic objective to create an inclusive and diverse working environment (Strategic Objective 4, sub-objective: Learning Culture and the Spirit of Initiative and Innovation). Aligned with this, a Learning Council was established, with mandated leadership by the ICRC Directorate, to drive learning in the organisation and set learning priorities¹. Following the launch of the 2019–2024 Institutional Strategy, LnD released a five-year framework (2020–2025)² for strengthening learning at the ICRC. This included six strategic areas, the first of which is “building a learning culture and growth mindset.” This framework corresponded with the ICRC People Strategy 2020–2025, which guides all activities of PAC of which LnD is a part.

PAC’s stated role is to promote a safe work environment, learning and development opportunities, the fair and inclusive treatment of all staff members, open communication, and a culture of trust, integrity, and accountability³. Within this function, LnD delivers core institutional learning programmes and contributes to the onboarding of new staff through a variety of trainings, amongst other activities that promote and foster the learning strategy of the ICRC.

While PAC and LnD are uniquely positioned in the development of an organisational learning culture through their responsibilities, all structures of the ICRC contribute to fostering a learning culture either through explicit capacities (e.g., learning strategies and staff within the métiers) or implicitly (e.g., interest of individual staff to learn).

1 See the Revised Mandate of the Learning Council and Learning Council Workplans (2020–2021 & 2022–2023)

2 See the LnD Vision and Strategic Orientation (2020–2025)

3 See Evaluation Terms of Reference, section 1.1

2. EVALUATION PURPOSE, OBJECTIVES, AND SCOPE

2.1 EVALUATION PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES

The evaluation supports the ICRC's progress on its strategic objective for strengthening a learning culture in the organisation. Evaluation findings will contribute to the Learning Council's aim of driving culture change, while gauging the learning experience of ICRC staff to improve learning practices and policies. The evaluation should benefit teams or units with their own learning strategies or those with continuous improvement in their missions.

The evaluation addressed four specific objectives:

- Assess the current state of the learning culture at the ICRC.
- Articulate the learning culture at the ICRC to allow a baseline and to contextualise needs.
- Propose transversal measurements for learning culture at the ICRC that allow continued assessment.
- Recommend actions to contribute to the LnD 2025–2030 strategy and to enhance learning culture more broadly at the ICRC.

2.2 EVALUATION SCOPE

The evaluation focused on learning intended for the professional development of ICRC staff, including internal, external, formal, informal, mandatory, and voluntary modalities. It encompassed centralised learning activities, as well as decentralised opportunities provided within teams or through dedicated staff members. The assessment covered learning modalities, governance, and the orientation and framing of the learning culture. Connections between individual learning with organisational learning are identified where relevant.

The geographic scope of the evaluation was organisation-wide, including ICRC headquarters (HQ) and ICRC delegations (regional and country levels, operational and support). The current state reviewed by this evaluation covers the years 2020–2023. The future view considers 2025–2030. The period over 2024 is regarded as a transition year into preparing the revised PAC and LnD strategies. Reviewing specific institutional courses and external providers was outside the scope of the evaluation.⁴

Intended users. The primary users of the evaluation are the ICRC Learning Council, the LnD Division, the PAC Directorate, and the Executive Office of the Director-General (EODG)

Secondary users of the evaluation include: Talent Division, Working Group SO8, CONFOR, Learning Advisory Group (EAG), Learning Managers (all job families), Digital Learning Officers, Innovation Office, Employee Experience Division, ICT, People Analytics, Organisational Resilience, Diversity Equity and Inclusion, the work-force planning project, the Resident Talent Framework project, and external learning solutions providers.

⁴ The 2nd cycle of the iDevelop programme (2018–2021) was evaluated separately by Owl RE, concurrently to the start of this evaluation. The iDevelop evaluation feeds into the analysis and recommendations in this report.

2.3 EVALUATION QUESTIONS

The evaluation responded to nine evaluation questions grouped within the categories of “current state” and “future view” of learning culture at the ICRC. The questions were framed according to the Sponge learning culture framework⁵ and its components for assessing an organisational learning culture:

- Purpose—organisational strategy or requirements that learning supports: “Why”
- Modalities—learning formats and mechanisms used by the organisation: “What”
- Environments—means through which people access learning and frequency: “When and Where”
- People—beliefs and attitudes of employees about learning within the organisation: “Who”

Table I: Evaluation Questions

Current State	Future View
<p>EQ1: Purpose.</p> <p>How does the ICRC currently understand its objectives for fostering a learning culture in the organisation? In what ways does the ICRC’s current vision of a learning culture contribute to the mission of the ICRC?</p> <p>EQ2: Purpose, Modalities, Environment.</p> <p>How has the organisation invested in cultivating a learning culture over the last three years (2020–2023), including policies, messaging, and support systems?</p> <p>EQ3: Modalities.</p> <p>What are the formal, informal, and social learning modalities available in the organisation right now?</p> <p>EQ4: Modalities, Environment.</p> <p>To what extent are formal, informal, social, and external learning modalities utilised and actively contributing to learning in the organisation?</p> <p>EQ5: People.</p> <p>What are the beliefs, values, and perceptions of ICRC staff about learning opportunities in the organisation, the broader learning culture of the ICRC, and their own participation in learning?</p>	<p>EQ6: Purpose.</p> <p>How should the ICRC frame its learning culture to reach its strategic objectives? What should the ICRC expect to achieve through an enhanced learning culture?</p> <p>EQ7: Modalities, Environment, People.</p> <p>What are the gaps between the current and desired state, including (i) available learning modalities, (ii) the means through which employees access learning and how often, (iii) the ways the ICRC constructs a meaningful learning culture and learning governance, and (iv) the beliefs and preferences of ICRC staff?</p> <p>EQ8: Modalities, Environment, People, Purpose.</p> <p>What are the factors helping or hindering progress on learning in the organisation? Where are opportunities to strengthen or advance learning?</p> <p>EQ9: Modalities, Environment, Purpose.</p> <p>How can the ICRC measure the advancement of a learning culture in the organisation?</p>

5 <https://www.spongelearning.com>

3. EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

3.1 EVALUATION APPROACH

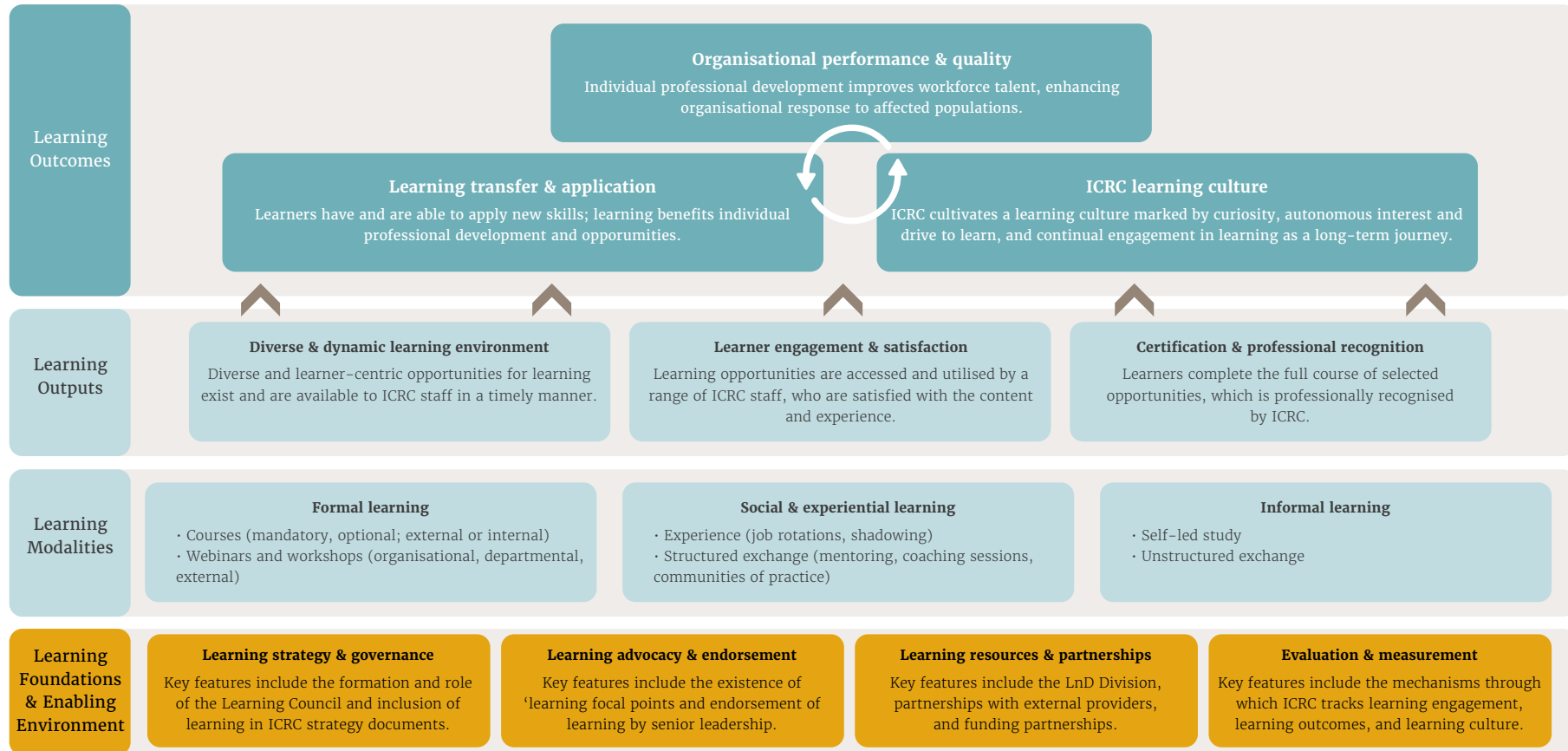
The evaluation followed a theory-building (vs. theory-validating) approach that centres analysis around an iteratively developed Theory of Change (ToC) for the learning culture at ICRC. Theory-building occurred at each phase of the evaluation process: inception, data collection, analysis, and reporting.

The initial “current state” ToC constructed for the inception phase and approved in the Inception Report is presented below in Diagram I. This acted as a starting point for the theory-building process that shaped the evaluation.

A presentation of the iterative formation of the ICRC’s learning culture ToC is provided in Section 4.3 of this report. It includes a proposed “future view” ToC for the ICRC’s learning culture. The proposed “future view” ToC is included in Annex VI as an evaluation deliverable, together with the detailed revisions to the “current state” ToC.



Diagram I: Inception Phase, ICRC Learning Culture “Current State” ToC



3.2 DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

The evaluation employed a mixed-methods and participatory approach to ensure a full range of available data to respond to the evaluation questions and inform a meaningful theory-building process. Evaluation activities segmented and sampled various audiences to ensure attention to female staff, resident staff, and unconnected staff⁶ as directed by the evaluation Terms of Reference (ToR). The evaluation was largely conducted remotely, with one face-to-face workshop and a series of in-person interviews held in Geneva. A quality assurance (QA) role was included within the team to complement the role of ICRC's own QA process.

The sampling strategy for data collection included both random and purposive approaches:

- *Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) (Purposive)*: Key informants were selected according to their level of engagement with ICRC learning pathways and learning culture. Selection criteria included diversity factors (position, grade level, geographic base, gender) to ensure a holistic representation of perspectives.
- *Métier Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) (Purposive)*: The set of métier FGDs were identified according to levels of engagement with ICRC learning pathways and the degree to which métier learning focal points are actively present in their structure. Selection criteria for field-based FGD participants included diversity factors (position, contract type, geographic base, gender) to ensure a holistic representation of perspectives.
- *Staff Survey (Mixed)*: The staff survey purposively targeted grade-levels B2 and B3 for which the organisation had limited data on learning and a specific interest in exploring career progression linked to staff development. Staff invited to participate in the survey were randomly selected from these two grade levels at a sufficient sample size to reach a representative response.

Evaluation data were collected through the following activities:

- **Theory of Change Workshop (September 2023)**: Discussion with the ICRC on the current practices and objectives for learning in the organisation, building a learning culture ToC and identifying areas for investigation during the evaluation. Participants included members of the Evaluation Advisory Group, the ICRC Evaluation Office, and stakeholders engaged in formulating learning strategies within their departments. A list of workshop participants is found in Annex III.
- **KIIs (September 2023 – January 2024)**: 46 interviews conducted with ICRC staff and a subset of external stakeholders directly engaged with ICRC learning pathways or the cultivation of learning culture in the organisation. Key informants represented a cross-section of organisational levels (e.g., global, regional, country delegation), roles (operational, support; “red line,” “blue line”⁷), position grades, length of time working with the ICRC, and geographic experience. Interviews were gender balanced, with a split of 52% female KIIs and 48% male. A list of key informants and the interview guide are found in Annexes II and III.
- **Métier Focus Group Discussions (October 2023)**: Ten remotely-facilitated FGDs with Human Resources, Information Management, Protection, and Economic Security (EcoSec) métiers and unconnected staff in Sudan, reaching a total of 38 field-based ICRC staff located in Africa, Asia, Europe, and the Middle East. Discussions were hosted in English and French, with Arabic translation as required for Sudan. Three additional individual interviews were held for invited participants based in Latin America who could not join the discussions. The discussion topic guide is found in Annex II. Participants are not listed in the evaluation Annexes to protect anonymity.

The métier FGDs replaced the delegation visits originally planned in the evaluation Inception Report, which proposed focus groups as a mitigation strategy for anticipated risks with delegation travel. ICRC requested the shift in agreement with the evaluation team to accommodate the organisation's policy to suspend non-essential travel in 2023.

⁶ Staff without ICRC ICT accounts or those with limited digital fluency or fluency in one of the main ICRC languages.

⁷ “Blue line” refers to technical positions, “red line” refers to management positions.

- **Staff Survey (October – November 2023):** Online survey in English, Spanish, and French conducted with grade-levels B2 and B3 ICRC staff. The survey was sent to a random selection of 1,240 staff members from an overall population of 9,013. With a total of 388 responses (31% response rate), the survey reached the necessary sample size for a 95% confidence level within a 5% margin of error. The survey questionnaire and subset of demographic data on respondents are found in Annexes II and IV.
- **Document Review (Continuous):** Collection and review of relevant documentation, including ICRC strategies, learning publications, guidelines, work plans, and secondary data provided by PAC, LnD, and ICRC learning partners (IFRC and Kaya / Humanitarian Leadership Academy). Findings from the iDevelop evaluation additionally contributed to questions regarding the current state of ICRC’s learning culture and areas for improvement going forward.

Data compilation and analysis utilised quantitative and qualitative techniques, as appropriate. Qualitative data from interviews and survey open-ended questions were refined, organised, categorised, and coded for analysis. Quantitative data from the survey were compiled and analysed using descriptive statistics. Data are disaggregated where possible and as relevant, for example according to gender or the managerial role held by survey respondents. Methodological triangulation forms the basis of the evaluation report findings and reinforces their validity.

Deviations from the ToR and Inception Report

There are three deviations from the ToR (Annex VII) and approved Inception Report for this evaluation:

- Evaluation questions were modified and adapted from the evaluation ToR in agreement with the ICRC EAG during the inception phase and documented in the approved Inception Report.
- The evaluation replaced the delegation visits described in the approved Inception Report with remotely-facilitated métier FGDs. Delegation visits were cancelled to accommodate ICRC’s suspension of non-essential travel in 2023. Remotely-facilitated consultations were originally proposed in the approved Inception Report as a mitigation strategy to travel risks.
- The evaluation timeframe provided in the evaluation ToR and the approved Inception Report was extended to April 2024 in agreement with the ICRC to ensure adequate time for data gathering and consultation.

3.3 RISKS AND MITIGATIONS

The evaluation inception phase identified three risks to the evaluation approach and accompanying mitigation measures. Table II lists the risks with a description of how each was addressed during the evaluation, in agreement with the ICRC evaluation managers. The methodological rigour of the evaluation was maintained throughout the application of mitigation strategies.

Table II: Identified risks and mitigation measures

Identified Risks	Mitigation Measures
Due to remote data collection through KIIs and the staff survey, the evaluation may be unable to sufficiently represent the experience and perspectives of unconnected learners. These learners are less able to engage with online surveys and interviews conducted through teleconferencing platforms.	Two FGDs were conducted with unconnected learners in Sudan. This replaced the original plan to reach this group during delegation visits, which were cancelled as part of ICRC’s policy to suspend non-essential travel in 2023. Secondary data on unconnected learners were gathered through research conducted in Afghanistan ⁸ , findings from the iDevelop evaluation, and course evaluation data.

8 “Unconnected Learners: Use of Mobile Technology Survey,” LnD Kabul PowerPoint presentation (March 2023)

Identified Risks	Mitigation Measures
Due to time constraints and overlapping priorities (e.g., the start of the ICRC’s strategy planning season), the evaluation may be unable to complete the delegation visits within the evaluation timeframe for this activity.	Delegation visits were cancelled as part of ICRC’s policy to suspend non-essential travel in 2023. The evaluation pivoted to remotely facilitated FGDs with field-based staff across four métiers.
Data collected through KIIs and the staff survey encounter the risk of low response rates or engagement.	Key informants were purposively selected according to their relationship to and current engagement with learning and staff development, increasing the likelihood of their response to an invitation for an interview. Response rates to the staff survey were actively monitored and the ICRC shared a series of reminders until the response rate target was reached.

3.4 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS AND SAFEGUARDING

The evaluation was conducted in accordance with international best practices and standards, respecting the key principles of evaluation including:

- Clarity
- Integrity
- Independence
- Honesty
- Transparency
- Accountability
- Accuracy
- Non-discrimination and impartiality
- Do no harm
- Respect for the dignity of affected persons
- Confidentiality
- Protection of the data collected respecting ICRC’s Rules on Personal Data Protection and the ICRC Handbook on Data Protection.

ICRC staff and external stakeholders participating in key informant interviews were assured of the anonymity and confidentiality of their responses at the beginning of the interviews and were provided the opportunity to give their informed consent. ICRC staff responding to the online survey were assured that their responses would be treated confidentially and anonymously.

The evaluators maintained professional integrity by ensuring that information, knowledge, and data gathered during the evaluation were used solely for the evaluation process and purpose. No conflicts of interest were identified between evaluators and the area of focus. The evaluation team was able to work independently and free from undue influence to produce their findings and evaluative judgements. The evaluation team complied with the United Nations Evaluation Group’s (UNEG) [2020 Ethical Guidelines for Evaluations](#) and [2014 Guidelines on Integrating Human Rights and Gender Equality in Evaluations](#). The evaluation team adhered to the [ICRC Code of Conduct](#), the Accountability to Affected Populations commitments and humanitarian principles, and relevant ICRC policies on ethics and safeguarding.

The Owl RE team understood that this evaluation methodology did not require any approval and/or review by an Ethics Review Board as there were no vulnerable populations being canvassed by the evaluation.

4. EVALUATION FINDINGS

This section presents findings for the nine evaluation questions listed in Table I, Section 2.3. It is organised by the categories of “current state” and “future view” of learning culture at the ICRC. The iterative formation of a learning culture ToC is provided at the end of this section, incorporating findings across the evaluation questions. It highlights areas for action over the next strategic period.

4.1 CURRENT STATE

EQ1. Purpose.

How does the ICRC currently understand its objectives for fostering a learning culture in the organisation? In what ways does the ICRC’s current vision of a learning culture contribute to the mission of the ICRC?

Finding 1: Multiple ICRC strategies outline objectives to foster a learning culture. There is not, however, a formal definition for learning culture active in the organisation and staff hold different understandings about its purpose and value at the institutional, departmental, and individual levels.

Multiple organisational strategies outline the ICRC’s objectives to foster a learning culture. These objectives include: (i) enhancing organisational performance and quality, (ii) enabling professional growth and empowering talent, and (iii) cultivating learning transfer and application. The ICRC validated these objectives together with targeted learning outputs during this evaluation’s Theory of Change workshop. Targeted learning outputs are addressed under Evaluation Question 6.

There is not, however, a formally adopted definition for learning culture and its meaning is not consistently understood by ICRC leadership or staff. During the evaluation, ICRC staff expressed varied interpretations of the purpose and value of a learning culture in the organisation.

Organisational strategies. The ICRC’s organisational strategies outline several objectives to foster a learning culture. The Institutional Strategy 2019–2024 defines the ICRC as a learning organisation and its Orientation 4 (Creating an Inclusive and Diverse Working Environment) places the professional growth of staff as central to organisational performance (i.e., sub-objective Learning Culture). The ICRC People Strategy 2020–2025 (“People Strategy”), which guides the work of the PAC Directorate, emphasises the place of learning as one of its five priorities for “empowering and growing talent.” This is further reflected in the guiding framework of the LnD Division within PAC, including the Vision and Strategic Orientation 2020–2025 (“LnD Strategy”) and its six strategic areas articulating the place of building a learning culture in how the organisation offers institutional learning and development pathways. Beyond the institutional vision for learning, métiers may have specific strategies and work plans for on-boarding, skill transfer, capacity building, and exchange of best practice that complement these objectives (see for example the Protection Learning Strategy and the Economic Security Learning and Development Path).

The ICRC’s learning culture objectives are further articulated in the performance metrics used for tracking the Institutional Strategy 2019–2024 and the LnD Strategy. The indicator for learning culture reported through the Planning/Monitoring for Results system gauges the degree to which staff believe their job enables learning and the development of new skills, with a comparative benchmark for ICRC in the non-profit sector. Additionally, LnD surveys training participants on the degree to which their work environment is conducive to the application of learning as part of its institutional reporting.

Definition of learning culture. Although objectives exist for what the ICRC aims to achieve by fostering a learning culture, there is not an accepted definition for what learning culture itself means for the organisation. A definition was proposed for the Learning Council’s 2022–2023 workplan, but has yet to be approved or mainstreamed into the organisation. It comes from the Association for Talent Development⁹:

A culture of learning is one in which employees continuously seek, share, and apply new knowledge and skills to improve individual and organizational performance. The importance of the pursuit and application of learning is expressed in organizational values and permeates all aspects of organizational life.

The People and LnD strategies advance several characteristics of a learning culture featured in this proposed definition, including continual engagement in learning and learning autonomy. While staff are supportive of these ideas, ICRC stakeholders noted this proposed definition places a heavy emphasis on individual motivation and staff interest in pursuing their own learning. It does not adequately describe the responsibility of the organisation to ensure staff can access learning opportunities or to provide an environment where learning can be applied. As highlighted in LnD’s “Initial Report on Learning Culture,” *“the focus is too heavy on wanting [staff] to be proactive, which ignores structural challenges to do so.”*

Interpretations on the purpose and value of learning culture. The absence of a clear definition of learning culture that the ICRC can promote across the organisation is exhibited in the varied interpretations held by ICRC leadership and staff on the purpose and value of an ICRC learning culture. Interviews with ICRC stakeholders and FGDs revealed divergence between those that believe the role of learning culture is to enable staff to pursue learning for their own benefit, versus those who link it more concretely to the promotion of departmental or institutional goals. The former group stressed a vision for learning culture that centres staff motivation and interest in learning. The latter group focused on institutional responsibilities to direct learning. There is also a tendency for ICRC leadership and staff to conflate “training” and formal learning opportunities with “learning culture.”

Finding 2: The ICRC has not consistently tied its current vision of a learning culture to the unique mandate of the organisation. Staff value the role of formal, social, and experiential learning in promoting core aspects of the ICRC’s humanitarian mission: (i) organisational identity and adherence to principles and (ii) organisational capacity to respond in complex environments.

Learning culture and the ICRC mandate. The Institutional Strategy 2019–2024, People Strategy, and LnD Strategy reference the importance of learning to the ICRC’s mandate and humanitarian mission. The Institutional Strategy 2019–2024, for example, connects it directly to integrity, accountability to affected populations, and leadership and representation of the ICRC (p. 21, Orientation 4). The emphasis in this document, however, is on institutional courses and training (e.g., the Integrity training), not the overall culture of learning or other aspects of social or experiential learning. The new Institutional Strategy (2024–2027) continues this attention on training, with more discussion on staff onboarding (section 8.2).

The LnD Strategy presents learning culture holistically, including dimensions of formal, social, and experiential learning, and describes a learning culture that “supports shared learning directed toward the mission and goals of the organisation” (p. 3–4). Beyond this reference, however, there are no details as to how learning or learning culture contribute to the specific features of the ICRC’s mandate. For instance, the section of the LnD Strategy for “context and rationale” (p. 1–2) and moving “towards a more diverse and dynamic learning environment” (p. 9) explain the need to ensure workforce readiness and continuous learning (upskilling and re-skilling) in “today’s rapidly changing world.” It does not mention how this enables the ICRC to uphold humanitarian principles, provide humanitarian assistance or protection, promote international humanitarian law (IHL), or coordinate responsibilities and partnership within the Movement.

9 Source : <https://www.td.org/education-courses/learning-culture>

These gaps, together with the absence of an accepted definition for learning culture at the ICRC and the different understandings of its purpose in the organisation, have led to inconsistent views and even doubts on how fostering a learning culture contributes to operational priorities. During key informant interviews, this was especially noted as an issue for ICRC senior leadership and the “red line” within operations.

Learning modalities and the ICRC mission. ICRC staff value the role of formal, social, and experiential learning in promoting the ICRC’s humanitarian mission, particularly the core aspects of (i) organisational identity and adherence to humanitarian principles and (ii) organisational capacity to respond in complex environments.

During FGDs, participants highlighted the importance of different learning modalities to shape a sense of identity within the organisation, develop staff expertise, and support staff in navigating challenging situations. Success in these areas, staff noted, depends on creating a wider culture of open communication, safety to ask questions, and reinforcement from line managers and leadership on the importance of learning. Limitations in these areas present a risk to the organisation, such as when people are hired with limited experience with the ICRC’s humanitarian approach or unique mandate.

This was illustrated in one discussion with Protection staff: *“There is not a sufficient mentorship for colleagues, in guiding them through challenging situations or even supporting them through hard days. ICRC Protection work is unique, which exposes staff to a range of situations, stresses, and challenges that previous experience would not adequately prepare them to handle. It is necessary that Protection staff have colleagues with whom they can exchange and share.”*

Responses to the evaluation survey confirmed these reflections from the FGDs, as evidenced below in Table III. The description summarises responses to two open-ended questions structured to gather information on the impact of learning for B2 and B3 grade-level staff.

Table III: Learning and the ICRC Humanitarian Mandate, Staff Survey

Survey Question	Description
Of the learning opportunities (internal or external) you have experienced at ICRC, which ones were the most impactful and important? Why?	Internal ICRC structured courses and social or experiential learning opportunities enhance one’s identity within the organisation and ability to operate within ICRC’s humanitarian principles. The structured courses most identified as beneficial in this regard include Working at ICRC, Staff Integration Programme (SIP), Code of Conduct, and the Integrity training. As one respondent described: <i>“From the courses that I attended, Working at the ICRC had the most impact because I understood better the context of the ICRC and could explain to others what is the essence of our work.”</i> The social and experiential learning modalities most identified as impactful in this manner include: in-person workshops, exposure missions, peer exchange, and mentorship opportunities.
Can you share an example(s) in which learning contributed to your professional growth at the ICRC?	Learning contributes to the necessary skills or knowledge required to perform one’s job, including improving the quality of ICRC programming in complex environments or otherwise increasing the impact of the organisation to affected populations. Respondents cited opportunities to improve communication skills, onboarding (i.e., Working at ICRC and métier-specific), peer exchange, and targeted technical support from within métiers as especially influential to the quality of ICRC’s programming in complex environments. As one respondent shared: <i>“Internal courses, group discussions, and technical support helped me tailor the documentation of sensitive cases and best collect information from traumatised populations without causing them additional harm.”</i>

EQ2: Purpose, Modalities, Environment.

How has the organisation invested in cultivating a learning culture over the last three years (2020–2023), including policies, messaging, and support systems?

Finding 3: Over the 2020–2023 period, the ICRC progressively invested in fostering a learning culture through strategies and governance for learning, strengthening learning partnerships, and improving evaluation and measurement for learning. Financial resources dedicated to learning, however, largely decreased from 2019 through the end of 2023. Communications and messaging remained weak, despite efforts to cultivate “learning ambassadors.”

The ICRC invested in fostering a learning culture from 2020 through 2023 through key areas of strategy and governance, learning partnerships, and learning evaluation and measurement. Although these areas marked considerable progress in the organisation, financial resources dedicated to learning largely decreased from the 2019 benchmark through the end of 2023. Communications and messaging remained weak. ICRC stakeholders engaged in evaluation activities additionally identified management accountability and endorsement of learning and assessment of learning needs as areas for improvement. Stakeholders also expressed the need to clarify the ICRC’s responsibility to direct learning in balance with promoting learning autonomy. Outside the period under review (2020–2023), the new Institutional Strategy for 2024–2027 features learning under “bolstering organisational readiness and efficiency” and “cross-cutting approaches.”

Strategy and governance. At an institutional level, multiple organisational strategies from 2019 through 2025 reference objectives for fostering a learning culture at the ICRC (see Evaluation Question 1). At the métier level, the evaluation found specific strategies for learning and development within Protection, EcoSec, and Health.

The ICRC’s approach to learning is best defined in the LnD Strategy, which frames learning modalities according to the 70:20:10 model. Namely, 70% of learning occurs through experience, 20% through social interaction, and 10% through formal instruction. LnD has established goals to further support the “70” and “20” aspects of learning, expanding opportunities to include more experiential, social, and informal learning pathways. Evaluation Questions 3 and 4 discuss the degree to which this has been achieved.

Learning ownership is shared and decentralised across PAC, LnD, the Learning Council, learning focal points, and line managers. While PAC and LnD hold the primary responsibility for the development and delivery of core institutional learning programmes, learning practices are also guided by the Learning Council and individual learning focal points appointed within the métiers. A decision from the ICRC Directorate in late 2018 formalised the creation of a Learning Council, a cross-departmental body with a mandate to “drive learning at the ICRC and set the learning priorities.”¹⁰ It was established in 2019 and formally meets six times per year, with ad hoc workshops organised as needed. It follows a 2-year workplan that outlines focus areas and ways of working.

At the departmental level, the métiers create and advance tailored learning and development strategies, with technical support available from the global LnD Division. Posting a learning focal point and formulating a learning strategy is at the discretion of the métier and not a required part of the ICRC’s structure. At the time of the evaluation, all operational métiers held learning focal point positions, while the role was more frequently missing within the support métiers. Learning focal points are actively engaged and supported through the Learning Advisory Board, the Learning Practitioners Path, and the LnD ecosystem community of practice.

At the individual level, line managers serve as an essential conduit for staff learning. This is principally supported through review and agreement of personal development goals within the Performance Management and Development Plan (PMD) drafted by line managers and staff on an annual basis. According to ICRC

¹⁰ See the Revised Mandate of the Learning Council (April 2022)

stakeholders engaged in the evaluation, the use of personal development goals is inconsistent and limited compared to other parts of the PMD. In addition to this, there are no mechanisms to ensure manager accountability for staff learning or clear guidelines on their responsibilities in this area (e.g., minimum time allocated to staff for learning).

As highlighted under Evaluation Question 1, the ICRC struggles to clearly articulate the degree to which the organisation is responsible for directing learning and the associated institutional supports necessary to accomplish this role. This includes the ICRC's responsibilities to set learning priorities for staff, concretely guide staff into these opportunities (including voluntary learning), and create the supporting links between learning and key career transitions (promotion, contract changes, handover, etc.). During the evaluation ToC workshop, ICRC stakeholders recommended that the LnD Strategy should clarify how the ICRC "pushes" learning versus "pulls" staff towards areas of their own interest as part of the organisation's goal to promote learning autonomy.

At the end of 2023, a new Institutional Strategy was launched for 2024-2027. Compared to the previous strategy, learning is less prominent and features in sections combined with multiple aims, such as "enhancing skills, trust, cohesion, and responsibility" and "impact, evaluation, learning, and innovation." Positively, these sections connect learning to two areas of the organisational approach for the next four years: "bolstering organisational readiness and efficiency" and "cross-cutting approaches."

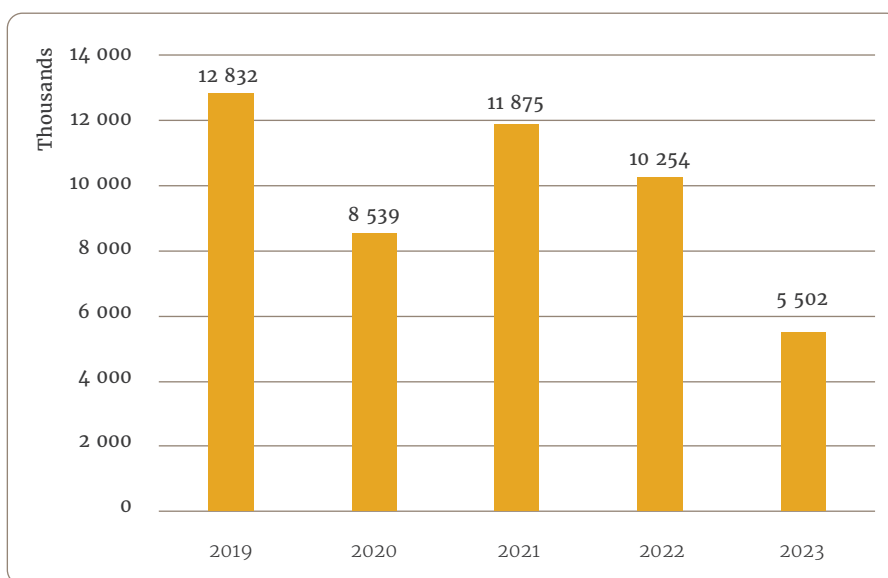
Advocacy and endorsement. The evaluation found little evidence of a communications campaign or messaging plan for learning in the organisation. This includes awareness building on the availability of various learning opportunities, as well as broader advocacy on the value of learning itself (e.g., learning as a daily habit, learning as a value at ICRC). Despite a clear goal at the ICRC to further social and experiential learning modalities, the ICRC continued to invest the bulk of its resources in formal learning courses and training (see Evaluation Question 3). Largely initiated in 2022, the positions and plans created to support the development of social and experiential learning were eliminated due to the budget constraints of the 2023 financial crisis. In terms of messaging, this has reinforced the idea that learning equals training. FGDs and evaluation survey respondents expressed challenges with understanding, accessing, and navigating available learning offers. As one evaluation survey respondent stated: *"I didn't know these learning opportunities existed at the ICRC until taking this survey."* This is described in more detail under Evaluation Question 8 and "factors hindering learning" at the ICRC.

Over 2020-2023, the ICRC invested in supporting the role of the Learning Council and learning focal points to act as "learning ambassadors" for the organisation. This included cultivating this identity through official documents (e.g., workplans, the Learning Council Revised Mandate) and collaborative approaches to working. According to ICRC stakeholders, the learning focal point role benefits awareness and encourages learning through the placement of knowledgeable learning advocates across multiple levels and departments of the ICRC. During the evaluation ToC workshop, however, ICRC stakeholders underlined that all management, not only those engaged in the Learning Council or serving as a learning focal point, should endorse learning and signal this through personal example. Despite this intention, the evaluation found that line managers are not consistently supportive of learning (see Evaluation Question 8) and may not fully understand their role in promoting or recognising staff learning. Few ICRC staff engaged by the evaluation could describe instances of senior leadership promoting learning through personal example. During key informant interviews, participants from ICRC leadership demonstrated favourable attitudes towards learning in theory, but conveyed their own struggles to access relevant learning opportunities in practice. As described in one interview with a member of ICRC senior management: *"At the ICRC, the learning culture resides within the métiers, not the 'red line,' and with younger colleagues who expect to be trained, equipped, coached."* As portrayed by stakeholders participating in the evaluation ToC workshop, the ICRC's strategies may target endorsement of (and engagement in) learning by management and senior leadership, but this vision remains largely aspirational.

Partnership and resourcing. The ICRC maintains several successful learning partnerships with universities (e.g., IMD Management School in Lausanne, Swiss Federal Institute of Technology in Lausanne, University of Geneva, Geneva Centre of Humanitarian Studies, and the University of Luzern, etc.), humanitarian learning platforms (e.g., Kaya), learning content providers (e.g., CrossKnowledge, Ashridge Hult Leadership Live), and the IFRC. Learning opportunities developed within these partnerships include online and in-person courses, targeting ICRC staff, the wider Movement, and external audiences (e.g. the popular course in IHL). This area is viewed by ICRC staff as one of the most successful investments over the 2020–2023 period, a view echoed by representatives of the partners interviewed for the evaluation. Actual participation by ICRC staff in the programmes provided through these partnerships, however, appears limited (see Evaluation Question 4).

Organisational spending on learning largely decreased from a benchmark in 2019 through the end of 2023. Although the ICRC experienced a slight increase in spending over 2021, this primarily represents a shift in the organisation emerging from the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020 (e.g., intensified travel and face-to-face gatherings in 2021 compared to 2020). Spending in 2021 never recovered to 2019 levels. It was then followed by progressive decreases over 2022 and 2023. This is demonstrated in Figure I.

Figure I: Spending on staff training (CHF), 2019–2023



Source: LnD Financial Statistics, provided in LnD PowerPoint titled “LnD 2019 VS 2024) in March 2024

With the onset of the financial crisis faced by the ICRC over the last year, organisational spending on learning decreased a substantial 46% from 2022 into 2023 (see above, Figure I). The ICRC workforce felt the decline of available funding for learning in 2023. The evaluation’s analysis of the 2,174 comments to the 2023 all-staff survey (“Our Voice”) indicated that budget constraints and the suspension of programmes like iDevelop contributed to staff frustration and the perception that the ICRC reduced learning and development opportunities. As one respondent said: “The budget cuts severely limited our access to training and development programmes, making it challenging to enhance our skills and knowledge.” The role of reduced financial resources as a hindering factor to learning is addressed under Evaluation Question 8.

Evaluation and measurement. LnD has developed approaches for evaluating learning at the learner level (e.g., assessment of knowledge and skills acquisition of the participant), the course level (e.g., course evaluation by participants), and at the organisational level to monitor progress against the ICRC’s objectives for a learning culture. In line with the adoption of learning objectives in the 2019–2024 Institutional Strategy, a specific question to assess staff perceptions about learning and the organisation’s learning environment was included in the annual Our Voice survey. This was first deployed in 2022 and measured again in

2023. LnD additionally invested in tracking key indicators for individual courses and started monitoring learning impact on a limited number of courses. Information for both areas is available in high-quality and accessible LnD dashboards, with reporting into the ICRC Planning/Monitoring for Results system. During the 2020–2023 period under review, LnD launched four centralised externally-conducted evaluations into learning in the organisation (i.e., two evaluations of the ICRC Management Program (2020), the iDevelop evaluation (2023), and this report). Internal assessments were conducted on the learning culture (exploration of associate staff experience), the staff onboarding and induction programs, leadership and management training, and learning in Protection (at the métier level). Notwithstanding these advances, the organisation struggles to capture the level and impact of decentralised learning. This includes social and experiential learning occurring informally within teams or delegations, as well as formal learning delivered within métiers. LnD lacks an overview on how the métiers conduct learning measurement.

The details of the ICRC’s evaluation and measurement approaches for learning are described under Evaluation Question 9, including areas for improvement to better gauge the existence, growth, and benefit of learning culture in the organisation.

During the evaluation ToC workshop, ICRC stakeholders noted weaknesses in learning needs assessment. This includes self-assessment by staff (e.g., how staff determine what they need to learn), as well as a broader needs analysis for learning in the organisation that determines priorities for staff development (as required by ICRC and according to staff interest) and how to best validate skills for career progression. Key informants stated that LnD planned to undertake an organisational learning needs assessment in 2023. It was postponed as the ICRC responded to a financial crisis that reduced available resources.

EQ3: Modalities.

What are the formal, informal, and social learning modalities available in the organisation right now?

Finding 4: A significant portfolio of formal learning modalities exists at the ICRC, covering mandatory and voluntary offers at organisational and métier levels. Informal learning, including social and experiential modalities, is less available and not well institutionalised.

The ICRC provides staff with a range of internal, external, mandatory, and voluntary formal learning opportunities that aim to develop institutionally required knowledge or skills (e.g., Cyber Security) and support independent learning (e.g. individuals selecting and following their own continuous personal and professional learning). These modalities exist at the organisational level, largely managed by LnD, and within métiers (e.g. targeted onboarding and technical training for staff). Informal learning opportunities, including social and experiential modalities, are less available and occur primarily at the discretion of interested métiers or individual line managers. Initiatives by LnD to structure and institutionalise social learning experiences through coaching and mentoring remain under-developed. This is expected to continue through the near future, as the ICRC addresses the financial crisis that emerged in 2023.

The degree to which ICRC staff access, engage, and value these modalities is addressed under Evaluation Questions 4 and 5. The impact of the financial crisis on the reach and accessibility of formal learning opportunities in 2023 is highlighted under Evaluation Question 8, “hindering factors.”

Formal learning. As stated in the PAC and LnD 2020–2025 strategies, the ICRC provides a diverse range of formal learning opportunities that target specific competencies required by the organisation and support independent learning. Formal learning takes place in structured courses or training (online, face-to-face, and blended) and through webinars or online modules (e.g. mandatory and optional iLearn platform). Courses may be institutional (e.g., Humanitarian Leadership and Management School) or departmental (e.g., métier specific competency modules), mandatory or voluntary (e.g. Cyber Security versus IMaP), and internally developed and delivered or externally provided (e.g. Digital Skills Forge through CrossKnowledge). Through the iDevelop programme, staff under an active ICRC contract can access funding for professional

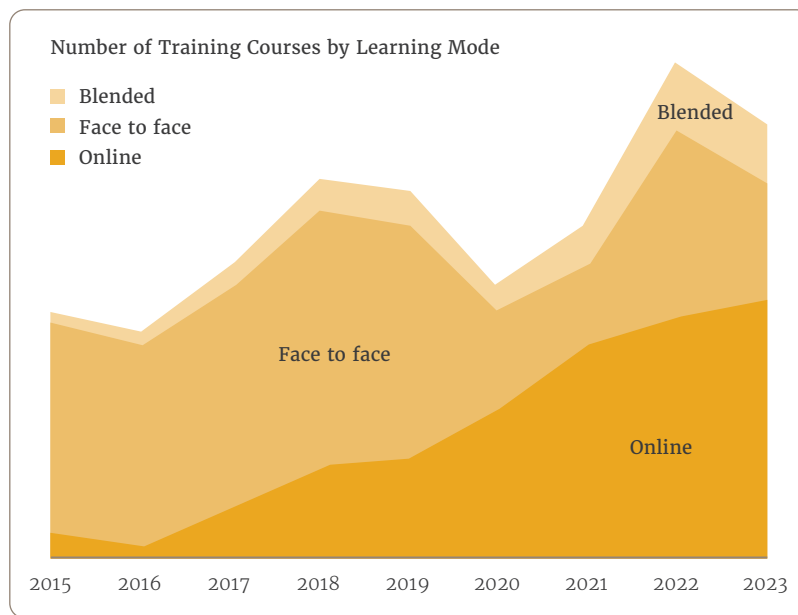
development activities with external providers after two years of employment. This current portfolio of formal learning targets a variety of capacities and skills, including institutional policies and practice (e.g. Code of Conduct training), project management or leadership development, technical proficiency (e.g. role or métier-specific), language training or academic certification (often through iDevelop), and “soft” skills such as communication or time management.

Formal learning modalities also exist for the wider Movement, available on a shared platform used by ICRC and IFRC staff. ICRC trainings on IHL are externally available to the wider humanitarian community. This offering is popular, with over 11,000 people participating to date¹¹.

Through iLearn (a learning management system), the organisation enables “bite sized” and “digestible” formal learning that fits more easily into learner schedules compared to longer programmes. This follows sectoral trends¹². This includes development courses on topics like communication, team work, and emotional regulation largely provided through the CrossKnowledge partnership and library.

Growth and learning mode. As seen in Figure III below, the number of active institutional courses nearly doubled from 2015 (100 active courses) to 2022 (193 active courses), with incremental growth in online modalities that now encompass more than half of the available courses¹³.

Figure III: Training growth by learning modality



Source: ICRC Institutional Training Catalogue dashboard

The Covid-19 pandemic prompted a sharp decrease in face-to-face and blended modalities in 2020, which the ICRC endeavoured to offset by moving courses online. As offices and travel re-opened in 2021, the use of face-to-face and blended modalities partially regained traction. This shifted downward again, however, as the organisation faced a financial crisis that limited staff travel and reduced budgets for trainers, training venues, and attending external training courses.

11 As of October 2023, 11,400 individual users had taken courses on the shared learning platform; the most popular course was “Introduction to IHL” in English, taken by over 5,000 persons. Source: ICRC-IFRC learning platform, user statistics.

12 “Evaluation of UNHCR’s approach to learning and development for workforce and partners,” section 3 (2020) and “Initial Report on Learning Culture at the ICRC”, section on “Understanding the Potential Solutions” (2022)

13 Source: ICRC institutional training catalogue dashboard

The steady increase in online course offerings is also a feature of organisational growth and contextual realities. Online modalities have the potential to reach more staff, more quickly, in a range of locations according to individual availability compared to in-person or face-to-face modalities that require travel, dedicated blocks of training time, and trainer access. According to interviews with ICRC staff and partners, online modalities can be especially relevant for staff operating in hard-to-reach locations (e.g. Syria, Afghanistan) or in contexts of rapid scale up and sudden onset crises (e.g., Ukraine). As found in the iDevelop evaluation, however, online modalities can also exclude certain staff. This includes unconnected learners and those with limited literacy or digital skills. Staff preferences across these modalities are reported under Evaluation Question 5.

Informal learning. Experiential and social learning activities at the ICRC remain scattered and under-developed. This includes coaching, mentoring or shadowing, exposure missions or job rotations, communities of practice, and team reflection exercises. Stakeholders participating in the evaluation ToC workshop confirmed that, despite strategic ambitions to develop social and experiential learning opportunities, the primary focus in 2020–2023 remained on formal training. Initiatives formulated by LnD to provide guidance in these areas or institutionalise approaches were either insufficiently supported or ultimately suspended in response to the financial crisis and corresponding resource constraints. Informal learning that occurs through on-the-job exposure, reading guidelines and other documentation, or peer exchange is valuable, but difficult to quantify. Limited data exist on the scale of informal learning occurring across the organisation.

The range of informal learning pathways active at the ICRC and their degree of institutionalisation is summarised below in Table V. Evidence for this summary is drawn primarily from ICRC documentation, key informant interviews, focus group discussions, and qualitative responses to the evaluation survey.

Table V: Informal learning pathways at ICRC

Activity	Description
Coaching	The ICRC created a career coaching centre (“The Career Centre”) in 2017, providing one-to-one coaching with an external coaching agency in addition to coaching workshops. The centre was eliminated in 2023 as part of the ICRC’s response to the financial crisis. Although the centre closed, LnD maintains an offer to support coaching requests through external providers and internal coaches. iDevelop provides funding for coaching, but the amount requested and allocated for this activity is small compared to funding for training.
Mentoring & Shadowing	Individual mentoring and job shadowing takes place on an ad hoc basis, depending on the interests and approach of line managers. In 2022, PAC and LnD piloted an initiative to formalise mentorship opportunities at the ICRC, but plans to scale the effort in 2023 were cancelled due to the staffing and budget cuts that occurred in response to the financial crisis. According to the mentoring pilot survey, the programme generated an “overwhelmingly positive response” from participants. Over 100% of mentees and 96% of mentors joining the pilot suggested they would participate in mentoring again, if possible.
Exposure missions & Job rotations	Exposure missions and job rotations take place on an ad hoc basis, depending on the interests and approach of line managers, delegation leadership, or métier approach to staff development and capacity assurance.
Communities of practice	Communities of practice are supported through the Jive Communities platform, but require active administration and facilitation to encourage participation. Community is also promoted through workshops, conferences, or short online meetings where colleagues can exchange learning, promising practice, etc. (e.g. the EcoSec “coffee chats” hosted online by the métier for all colleagues in English and French).

Activity	Description
Team reflection	While the ICRC engages in “lessons learned” exercises after significant events, there is no established format for team reflection as part of regular programme delivery or even in the formulation of annual team, delegation, or métier strategies. When it occurs, it reflects the interests and approach of line managers, delegation leadership, or métier approaches.
Guidelines & documentation	The ICRC produces a range of guidelines and documents across all areas of operation. These resources are available on the ICRC intranet (“Red Pulse”), SharePoint libraries, and iLearn. According to the evaluation Focus Group Discussions, staff can find it difficult to navigate and engage these resources. Efforts exist within métiers to address this challenge, for example through the creation of resource guides or métier entry pages on iLearn. The degree to which these efforts exist depends on the interests and approach of each métier.
Peer exchange	Structured opportunities for peer exchange exist, but are not consistently prioritised. Ad hoc peer exchange is also active, but reflects the degree to which métiers, delegation leadership, and line managers nurture connections within offices and across sectors.

Staff exchange and learning mode. ICRC staff consulted across evaluation activities highlighted the negative impact of increased online learning on social and experiential exchange. Although online modalities can include opportunities for remote collaboration, discussion, and networking, staff generally believe this format limits possibilities to establish ongoing human connections. This is exacerbated in the context of online formal learning, when learner commitment and focus may be compromised by a distracting work environment or competing demands on time and attention. Informal online modalities singularly targeting peer exchange within short periods of time (e.g., 30 mins, 1 hour) during the workday, however, are appreciated and well-attended. An example of this includes the EcoSec “coffee chats” hosted online by the métier for all colleagues in English and French.

Finding 5: Quality assurance exists for LnD learning products, with additional coverage for ICRC digital learning modules. A framework for training quality was produced by LnD, but is yet to be adopted. The Learning Quality Group formed by LnD in 2022 was suspended in 2023 due to resource constraints. Staff recommend improving the contextualisation of training content and to professionalise its delivery.

Systematic quality assurance for LnD learning products and ICRC digital learning modules is provided by teams in Belgrade (instructional design) and Bangkok (deployment and technical), including one staff member dedicated quality assurance. LnD provides guidelines, templates, and courses to support quality in the learning offers developed within the métiers, including the Digital Learning Toolbox and the Learning Practitioners Path. Although LnD strives to provide pedagogical and technical oversight for the full ICRC learning portfolio, there is no one adopted mechanism for ensuring quality across all learning modalities active across the organisation. In 2022, LnD formed a Learning Quality Group to strengthen quality assurance for learning products, but activities were suspended in 2023 due to resource constraints. Likewise, a framework for managing training quality in the ICRC was produced by LnD, but is yet to be adopted by the organisation or widely promoted. Gaps primarily exist for face-to-face learning modalities, which are not consistently covered by the Belgrade and Bangkok quality assurance teams.

Staff engaged across evaluation activities indicate two key areas for improvement on the quality of the ICRC’s learning portfolio: content contextualisation and professionalised delivery. FGDs and responses to the evaluation survey raised a need for the ICRC to greater contextualise learning to the environments where staff operate. Focus group participants described “*very theoretical*” learning modules that are “*not connected to the reality*” of field constraints. The structure of learning frequently occurs in “*one off trainings*” without continuous support for how content is then adapted to distinct roles or deployment settings. Evaluation survey

responses recommend improving internal learning opportunities by “focusing more on practical application than theoretical knowledge” and increasing the availability of blended learning approaches. As advised by one respondent: “While webinars and online modules are essential, combining them with practical exercises, case studies, and real-life scenarios would enhance their effectiveness.” In this regard, the use of scenario-based training is widely appreciated, when available.

Stakeholders also expressed concerns with internal trainer and facilitation expertise. Key informants advocated reviewing and strengthening the qualifications required for trainer or facilitation roles in the organisation and better equipping line managers to provide mentoring to new staff. As illustrated during interviews:

“ICRC needs qualified trainers in training roles. There are so many people moved into facilitator or trainer roles who are not qualified for the post.”

“Staff arrive in the field expecting to be mentored by their line manager, but the line managers themselves are not equipped to do this. It is hard to recruit fully qualified people into deep field posts.”

Notably, LnD recognized this need and developed a face-to-face “Training of Occasional Trainers” course that targeted upskilling ICRC staff that hold training roles with no or limited learning and development background. This was suspended due to resource constraints. An additional LnD plan to include training skill assessments as part of this course did not materialize. LnD now refers ICRC staff with training roles to external facilitation courses and participation is at the discretion of individual staff. The “Learning Solutions” community of practice led by LnD provides a forum for ICRC staff to exchange on facilitation skills and techniques, but engagement is voluntary and driven according to members’ interests.

EQ4: Modalities, Environment.

To what extent are formal, informal, social, and external learning modalities utilised and actively contributing to learning in the organisation?

Finding 6: Formal learning at the ICRC has a wide reach, with significant levels of participation in mandatory modalities. There is no significant difference in relation to gender or region on the completion of mandatory training. Comparatively, the use of voluntary formal modalities is limited. Social or experiential learning modalities are valued, but reach is hampered by inadequate availability. Informal learning through self-directed pursuits or daily work is present, but not well quantified.

Formal learning reach and utilisation. Nearly all ICRC staff engage in some type of formal learning, with significant levels of participation in mandatory training. For mandatory courses, LnD data from 2015 through 2023 reveal high rates of engagement for the ICRC Code of Conduct, Integrity, and Cyber Security trainings (Figure IV). The evaluation survey confirmed this finding (Figure V), with almost all respondents confirming participation in the Code of Conduct (98%) and Cyber Security (93%) trainings. High rates of participation were also reported for the Integrity (83%) and SAFE (79%) trainings. Across the options for formal learning opportunities, only one evaluation survey respondent reported not participating in any of these courses.

This mirrors the LnD mandatory training cockpit, which showed that 92% of all staff (18,538 of 20,086) had completed the mandatory Code of Conduct training by October 2023. The LnD training completion dashboard further displays that 98% of all ICRC staff completed at least one of the mandatory courses by the end of 2023¹⁴. Rates provided by the LnD training completion dashboard for completion of at least one mandatory course did not meaningfully vary by gender (98.16% for women versus 98.04% for men) or region (96.1% for Asia Pacific as the lowest compared to 99.5% for HQ as the highest). Resident staff only had a slightly lower rate of completion (97.7%) compared to mobile (99.7%) or HQ (99.5%) staff.

14 Data pulled from the dashboard on November 30th, 2023.



Of the 5,448 unconnected staff active at the ICRC at the end of 2023, 94% (5,128) completed at least one institutional training course, such as the Code of Conduct training. These were supported through face-to-face modalities, in addition to participation in the online versions of these courses available on iLearn. Unconnected staff achieved greater access to iLearn for mandatory and voluntary course participation when LnD created a mechanism for these learners to access iLearn from their private email address.

With the high level of completion for institutional trainings, participation rates for the global onboarding modalities (i.e. the Working at the ICRC training and the Staff Integration Programme) are lower than might be expected for a central component of new staff induction to the organisation's ways of working, policies, values, and mandate. According to LnD data (Figure IV), only 13,371 staff completed a version of Working at the ICRC between 2015–2023. This represents roughly 67% of the workforce with an average of about 20,000 ICRC staff per year. From here, there is steep drop for the Staff Integration Programme (SIP) (an in-person course), reaching only 4,264 staff during this period (roughly 21% of the workforce). This may be explained by a backlog caused by restrictions to staff travel in 2020–2021 during the Covid-19 pandemic, followed by the financial crisis in 2023 that also restricted travel and cut resources.

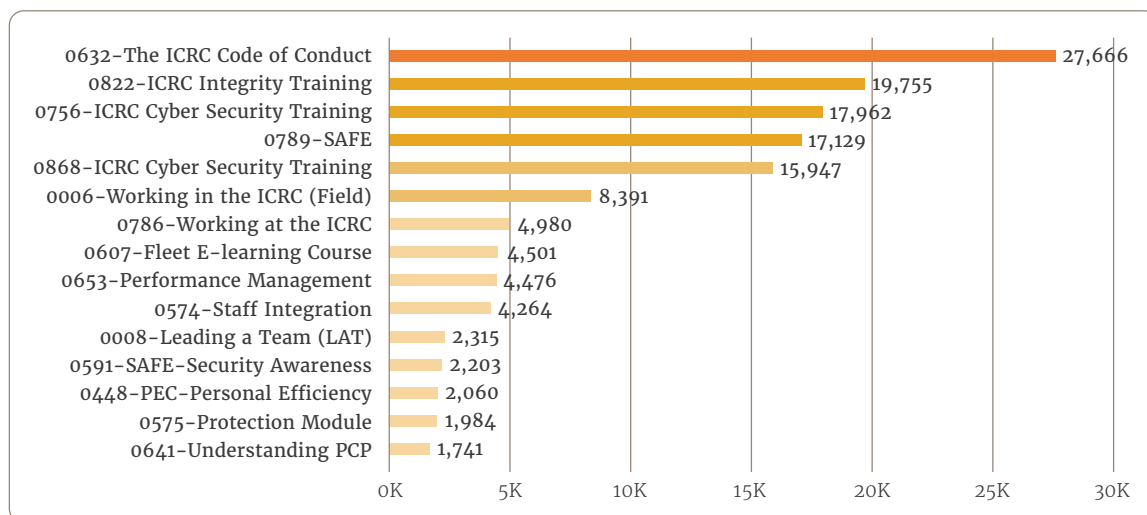
Responses from the evaluation staff survey (Figure V) mark an improvement on these rates, but only represent a subsection of the organisation (B2 and B3 grade-level staff). In the evaluation survey, 75% of respondents participated in the Working at the ICRC training and 60.5% in the SIP. The ICRC's challenges with and initiatives to ensure adequate reach and completion of staff onboarding are further discussed below, under Finding 7.

Fewer staff participate in structured voluntary modalities such as the Digital Skills Forge, HLMS, iLearn on demand, and métier technical training or webinars (see Figures IV and V). iLearn statistics indicate that the platform has relatively high rates of engagement¹⁵, but this is driven primarily by participation in mandatory courses hosted on the site (i.e. the Integrity and SAFE trainings). According to iLearn site statistics for 2022–2023, only 63% of the courses available through the platform registered activity during that year. This implies that some one-third of iLearn courses were not accessed and used at all.

15 According to iLearn user statistics for July 2022–July 2023 the platform hosted 23,280 learners for an average of 24.7 hours of learning activity during the year. These numbers, however, do not reflect “unique” learners and include double counting across available courses.

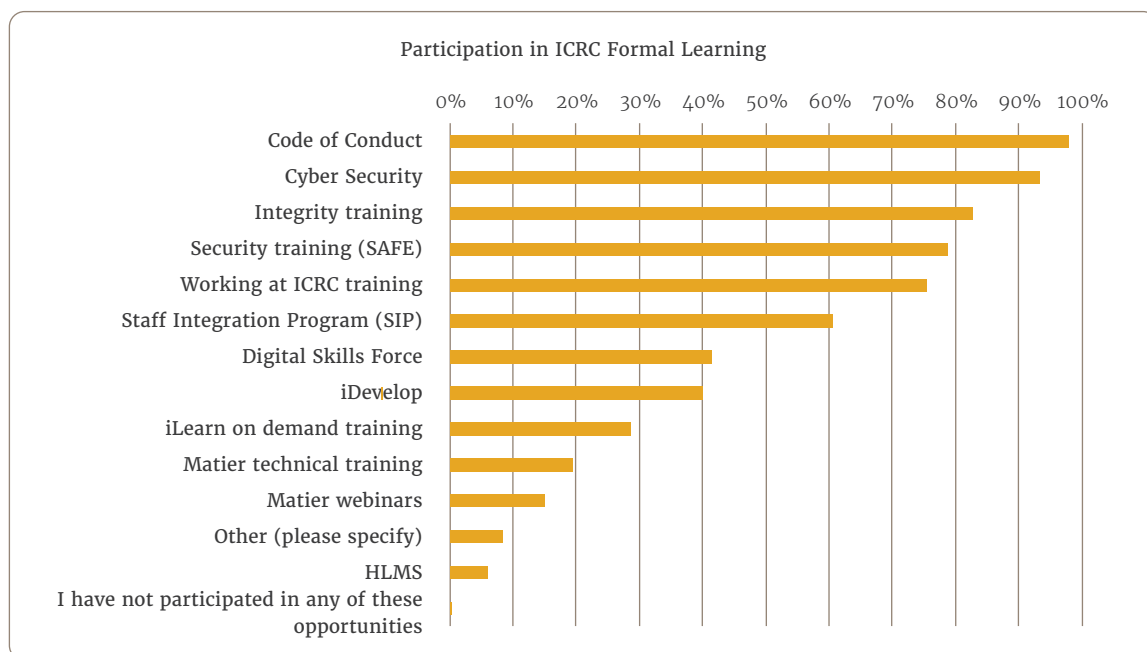
Of the voluntary, formal modalities available at the ICRC, iDevelop appears to be the most well attended, reaching more than one third of the entire ICRC workforce since its launch in 2014. At the end of the 2nd cycle in 2021, more than 13,000 iDevelop learning activities had been approved. Eligibility for iDevelop opens after two years of employment.

Figure IV: Total number of training participants per offer, 2015-2023



Data Source: LnD Mandatory Training Cockpit

Figure V: Participation in ICRC formal learning, Staff Survey



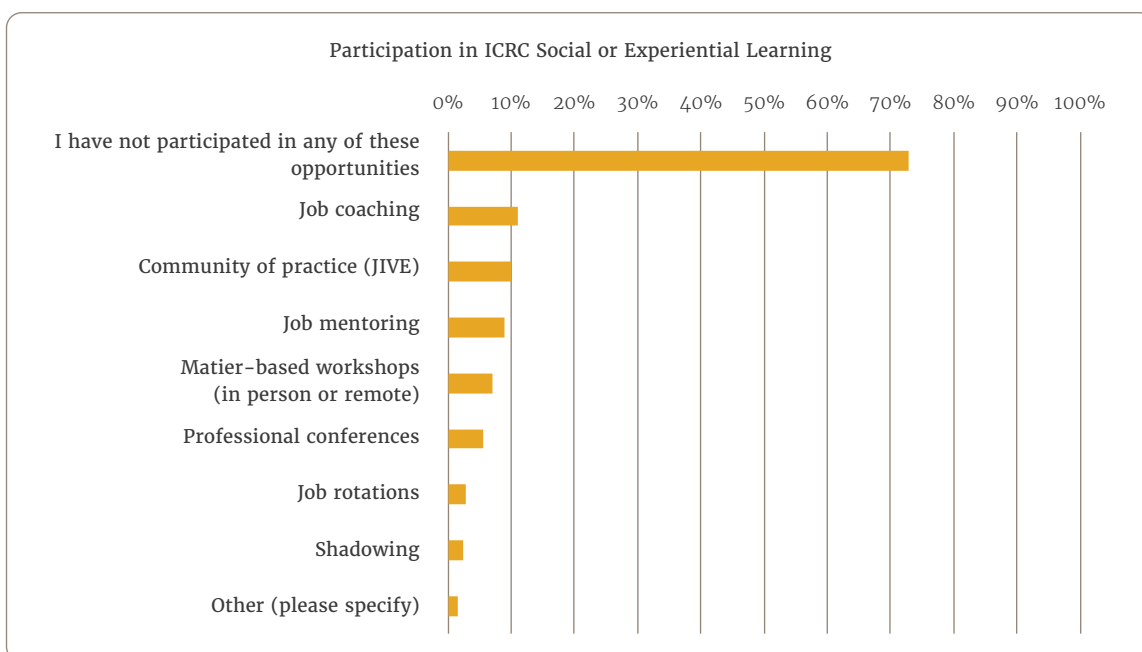
Informal learning reach and utilisation. Compared to formal learning, limited data exist on the reach and utilisation of informal learning that occurs at the ICRC. The evaluation survey found that 73% of respondents had not experienced or participated in any of the social and experiential modalities that included coaching, mentoring, job rotations and shadowing, communities of practice, and métier-based workshops or professional conferences (Figure VI). Likewise, a 2022 LnD survey of ICRC associate staff¹⁶ found low levels of participation for coaching or mentoring sessions, job rotations, and Jive communities, with respondents selecting “no time” or “not much time” spent on these activities.

16 See “Initial Report on Learning Culture at the ICRC,” section on “Associate Learner Engagement” (2022)

Based on the evaluation findings for the availability of social and experiential learning modalities (Evaluation Question 3), the evaluation survey responses suggest that the low rate of utilisation for these learning pathways is a factor of limited or no opportunity to engage. It does not reflect staff interest.

Self-directed, informal learning primarily occurs through ad hoc exchange with colleagues and reading guidelines or other documentation. Over 82% of evaluation survey respondents reported engaging with self-directed, informal learning, with the highest reported rates for peer exchange (63%) and reading guidelines or other documentation (56%). The associate staff surveyed by LnD also rated exchange with colleagues and reading guidelines or other documentation as where they dedicated most time to learning, apart from the learning that occurs through daily work (e.g., exposure to new ideas or systems, etc.).

Figure VI: Participation in ICRC social or experiential learning, Staff Survey



Arguably all ICRC staff gain knowledge, skills, and practical experience through their daily work (an assumption of all workplaces). As shared by respondents to the evaluation survey: *“The most impactful learning experiences for me have been my time in the field. Direct interactions and first-hand experiences there provided invaluable insights that shape my professional outlook. While webinars or trainings offer theoretical knowledge, the tangible lessons from on-site work are unparalleled in guiding my decisions.”*

“The most impactful learning for my professional growth has been my day-to-day work and what I am doing from one position to another over my 10 years in ICRC.”

These themes are repeated in an evaluation analysis of the comments provided in the 2023 Our Voice survey, where staff emphasised the role of on-the-job experience to their learning and skill development. There is not, however, a systematic approach in the organisation to capturing the value of this learning or for fostering structured opportunities for it through routine job rotations or regular exposure missions. As a result, the extent to which staff concretely benefit from the learning that occurs through one’s daily work is not possible to quantify. Based on testimonies from staff consulted by the evaluation, it features as an important part of the learning and professional development environment at the ICRC.

Finding 7: Staff are broadly able to apply their learning, while reporting challenges with organisational culture, management support, contextualization of learning material, and professional recognition and career growth. Learning modalities are not well linked to specific career transitions or directed according to learner needs.

Learning application. LnD’s impact data¹⁷ suggest that learners reached by the ICRC’s institutional courses are broadly able to apply their learning, with “high” self-reported scores for behaviour change (3.1), results (3.1), and usefulness (3.48) on a rating scale of 0 to 4. The evaluation survey also found that only 13% of respondents believe that the ‘inability to apply learning’ is a hindering factor. This mirrors the results of the LnD post-course satisfaction surveys¹⁸, which found that 93% of ICRC staff believe their work environment is not an obstacle to the application of learning.

Comments provided to the open-ended questions of the evaluation survey demonstrated a favourable attitude towards the immediate applicability of learning content to one’s position. For instance, in a question asking “*of the learning opportunities you experienced at ICRC, which ones were the most impactful?*” over half of the responses focused on the direct benefits of internal structured trainings in developing practical and immediately applicable skills that enhance one’s ability to operate within the organisation or otherwise improve daily work. FGDs also pointed to the importance of immediately applicable learning tailored to staff roles, deployment context, and *métier*. Beyond formal learning opportunities, the staff consulted across evaluation activities emphasised the lasting impact of their experiences (when available) with mentoring, shadowing, exposure missions, and opportunities for peer exchange. The value staff place on these experiences and their perceived impact is addressed under Evaluation Question 5.

Individual surveys collected by LnD and staff consulted by the evaluation do indicate, however, that multiple barriers reduce the application of learning within the organisation. This includes aspects of organisational culture, insufficient management support, inadequate contextualisation of learning materials to one’s role or deployment context, and limited professional recognition or career growth.

Further details on the role of these challenges in staff perceptions about the learning environment and as hindering factors to learning are presented under Evaluation Questions 5 and 8. Inadequate contextualization of learning is additionally highlighted under Evaluation Question 3, Finding 5.

Career transitions and directed learning. Learning opportunities available at the ICRC are not well directed towards the key career transitions where support is most required: joining the organisation, moving into a supervision role, moving from a resident to mobile contract, and transfer from / to a new delegation or context.

Of these transitions, the ICRC is most invested in staff onboarding. Voluntary managerial and leadership training and development opportunities also exist through IMaP and HLMS, but completion rates only represent about one third of staff holding these roles¹⁹. It is unclear how the organisation directs staff into these opportunities during their transition to supervisory responsibilities. Staff responding to the evaluation survey shared examples of not being able to participate in IMaP or HLMS despite meeting the selection criteria and having an interest in developing these skills. The evaluation did not find any learning or development opportunities specifically targeted at resident staff desiring to transfer or recently moving into mobile contracts or evidence of a systematic and comprehensive process for handover and re-boarding during staff transfer from / to a new delegation or context.

For the first transition—joining the organisation—the ICRC offers mandatory, institutional courses introducing key components of institutional values, mandate, and security protocols that are well attended (see Finding 6). Within the *métiers*, additional role or sector specific courses are available to introduce core concepts and ways of working in the ICRC context. The two institutional courses for comprehensive staff induction (Working at the ICRC and the SIP), however, have experienced severe backlog before and during

17 Source: LnD Impact Dashboard, results for February 2022 – February 2023

18 Review of the Implementation of the ICRC’s Institutional Strategy 2019–2024 (2022)

19 According to LnD figures on HLMS and IMaP participation in 2022 for that year’s SO4 report, 306 managers completed the IMaP Essentials 1 training, 360 managers completed Essentials 2, and 5 completed IMaP Fast Track. For HLMS, 292 participants completed one of the three HLMS modules by the end of 2022. According to this report, these figures represent 35.7% of ICRC managers completing IMaP or HLMS in 2022.

the evaluation period, leading to low rates of participation and a growing number of ICRC staff deployed into new positions without a full orientation to the organisation. According to key informant interviews, the SIP faced challenges when the offer was first expanded to include all ICRC staff (versus only HQ or mobile contracts) without adequate preparation or resources at the regional or delegation level. By 2019, a Protection Audit²⁰ found a “considerable delay” in SIP participation that constituted a “significant risk regarding the quality and relevance of operations.” LnD started to address this in 2019, but the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020 stalled progress. In 2023, LnD initiated a comprehensive redesign of the SIP with the aim of creating a “smooth and coherent learning journey.”

More generally, the ICRC provides little direction or guidance on “what to learn” amidst the myriad of formal, voluntary options (internal and external) or patchwork of social and experiential modalities. Stakeholders engaged across evaluation activities raised questions about how staff can determine their learning needs to pursue the most relevant opportunities, noting that learning plans are not consistently developed as part of the PMD. According to the ICRC’s survey of associate staff and internal mapping of learning solutions²¹, there is “a lot of noise in the LnD ecosystem” and “too much choice” with “little direction.” LnD is working to address this through its initiative on redesigning the iLearn interface.

Within the métiers, there are examples of clearly articulated learning pathways that direct individuals to learning content according to their role (e.g, Protection Learning Channel on iLearn, EcoSec Learning and Development Path, Health functional competency booklet). However, this practice is not consistently applied across métiers.

EQ5: People.

What are the beliefs, values, and perceptions of ICRC staff about learning opportunities in the organisation, the broader learning culture of the ICRC, and their own participation in learning?

Finding 8: On average, ICRC staff moderately believe the organisation provides an enabling environment for learning and moderately perceive the ICRC as a learning organisation. Evaluation data indicate that perceptions vary by gender, grade level, and managerial responsibilities.

Staff responding to the 2023 Our Voice survey rated the ICRC a 7.4 (out of 10) for its learning driver question “My job enables me to learn and develop new skills”. This is a slight decrease from the 2022 result of 7.8. According to the industry benchmark applied by the survey administrator, these scores position the ICRC in the middle, or moderate, range of the non-profit sector. Across the staff grades responding to the 2023 Our Voice survey, grade levels A2 (8) and B1 (7.7) scored the highest and the grade levels C2 (6.6) and C3 (6.8) scored the lowest. The lower grades (A–B) and the higher grade (D) tended to have higher scores while those in the middle (C grades) had lower scores²².

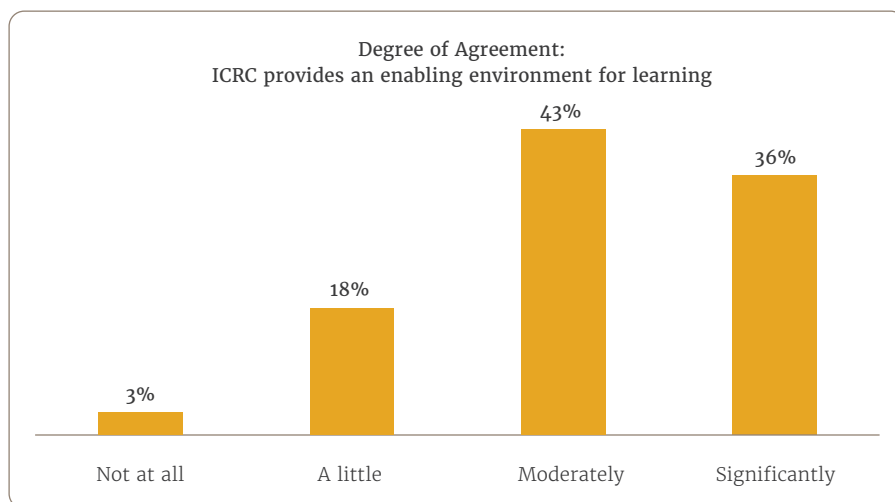
The evaluation survey likewise found that respondents moderately perceived the ICRC as providing an enabling environment for learning and staff development. On a scale of 1–4, with 4 rated “significantly”, the average rating for whether the ICRC provides an enabling environment for learning and staff development was 3.1 (“moderately”). The distribution of responses is displayed below in Figure VII.

20 “Internal Audit Note on ICRC’s Capacity to protect through law, operations and policy,” Section 7.2.1 on “SIP attendance backlog” (2019)

21 “Initial Report on Learning Culture at the ICRC,” Section on “Understanding the Potential Solutions” (2022)

22 Source: Our Voice survey (2022 and 2023).

Figure VII: ICRC learning environment, Staff Survey



Perspectives slightly varied according to management responsibilities and gender. Survey respondents with management responsibilities provided a marginally more favourable response overall (3.2 rate average) compared to non-managers (3.0 rate average). Disaggregated by gender, men indicated a more positive perspective (3.2 rate average) compared to women (3.0 rate average). The distribution of responses is displayed in Figures VIII and IX.

Figure VIII: ICRC learning environment, Management Disaggregation, Staff Survey

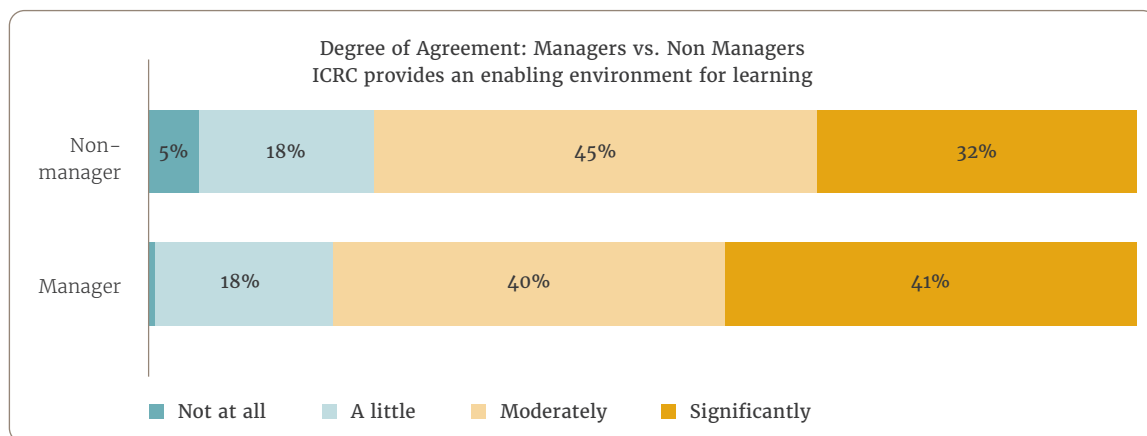
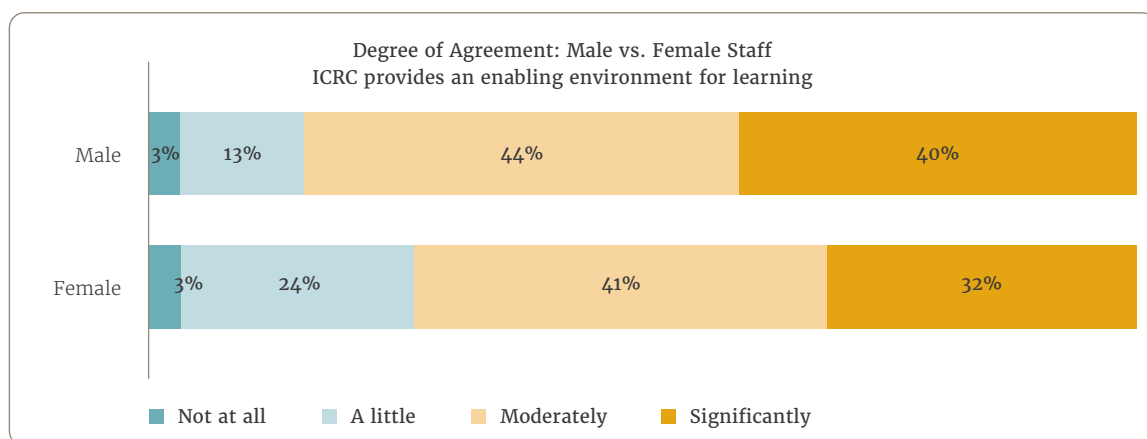
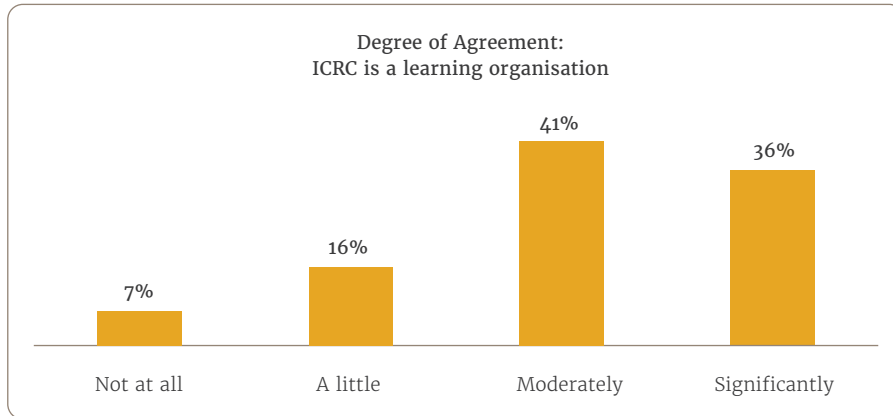


Figure IX: ICRC learning environment, Gender Disaggregation, Staff Survey



The evaluation survey asked participants to rate the degree to which they agreed with the statement “The ICRC is a learning organisation.” Respondents moderately rated the ICRC as a learning organisation with a rate average of 3.0. The distribution of responses is displayed in Figure X.

Figure X: ICRC is a learning organisation, Staff Survey



Again, perspectives slightly varied according to management responsibilities and gender. Managers provided a marginally more favourable response overall (3.1 rate average) compared to non-managers (3.0 rate average). Disaggregated by gender, the rate average for men (3.2) was more positive compared to women (2.9). This is a larger difference in perspective than recorded on the learning environment. The distribution of responses is displayed in Figures XI and XII.

Figure XI: ICRC is a learning organisation, Management Disaggregation, Staff Survey

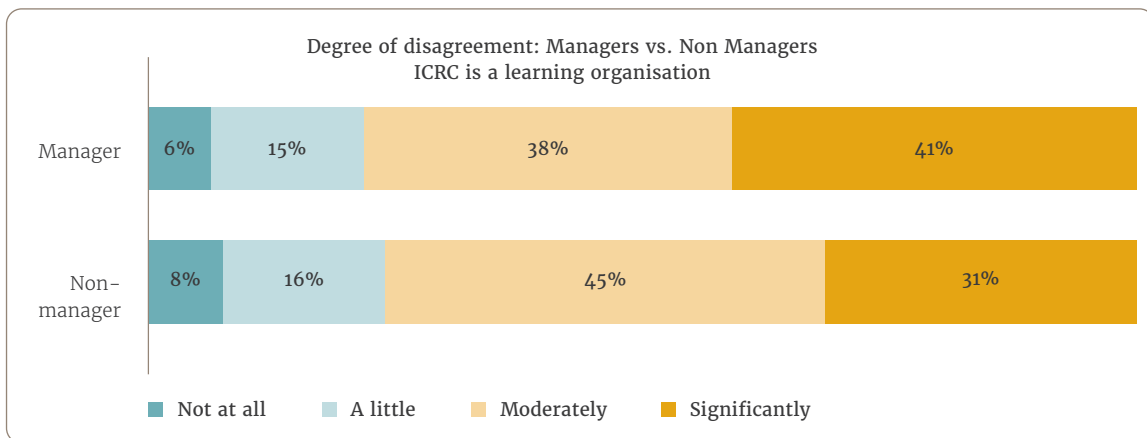
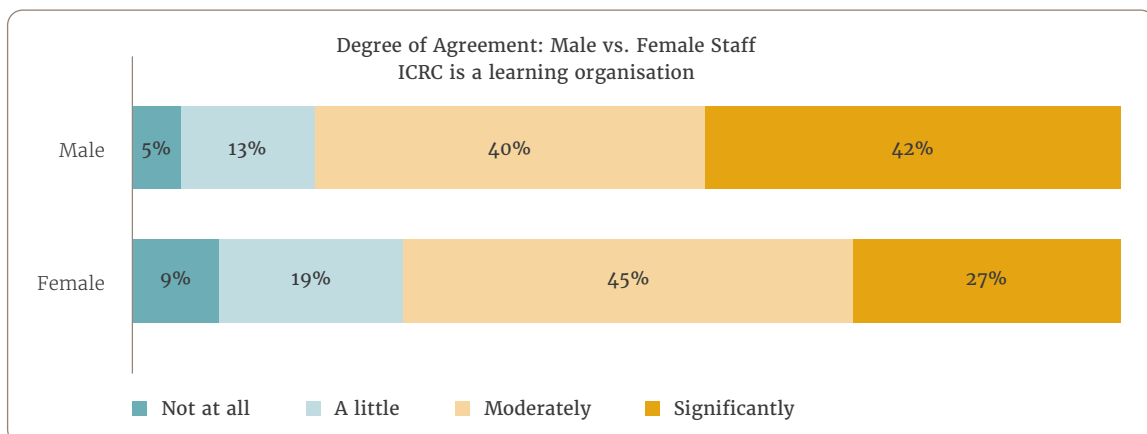


Figure XII: ICRC is a learning organisation, Gender Disaggregation, Staff Survey



During the evaluation ToC workshop, ICRC stakeholders noted challenges with organisational learning (e.g. learning from the past, adopting lessons learned vs. recording lessons learned) and ways this impacted the learning culture. Key informants and focus group participants highlighted that while the ICRC invested in formal learning opportunities during the evaluation period, less effort was made by the organisation to foster a wider culture of safety to ask questions, reflection, sharing doubts or failures, human connections, and knowledge capture during hand-over or after significant events that would strengthen the learning environment. As described in one focus group discussion: *“Learning possibilities are wide within the ICRC, but the learning culture is not about learning opportunities only but also about open communication (which is essential) and knowledge sharing.”*

Finding 9: Staff value the available suite of mandatory and voluntary formal learning opportunities. There is a preference for face-to-face interactions for learning modalities. When experienced, staff rate social and experiential learning as the most impactful to their work.

Formal learning opportunities. Staff responding to the evaluation survey rated “available learning opportunities” as the strongest enabling factor for learning in the organisation (see Figure XIV, Evaluation Question 8). Reviewing the comments to the open-ended survey questions on learning impact and data on frequency of participation across learning activities (Evaluation Question 4), the evaluation found that most respondents had only experienced or accessed mandatory formal learning opportunities. Of those that engaged with voluntary formal learning, respondents shared a strong appreciation for iDevelop, Digital Skills Forge, IMaP, métier specific technical training, and development of “soft” skills such as communications skills. The entire suite of mandatory courses was also highlighted as impactful and valuable by staff, with an emphasis on the Integrity, Working at the ICRC, and SAFE trainings. For those that completed SIP, this too was frequently mentioned as among the most impactful learning experiences for staff. Findings from recent evaluations found that participants in the Strategic Foresight Initiative training believed it was “a unique learning opportunity”²³ and those engaged with iDevelop reported the programme as the second highest contributing factor to job performance after personal motivation.²⁴

Based on survey results from over 23,000 training participants of institutional courses, more participants of face-to-face courses rated themselves as “highly satisfied” (70%) compared to those engaged in self-paced courses (64%) (Figure XIII). FGD participants underlined several challenges with online or remote modalities, including insufficient space in the work environment to concentrate, “screen fatigue,” and technical limitations such as weak bandwidth in certain deployment contexts. As illustrated in these conversations:

“LnD really tried to build exchange into online training through group discussions, etc., but I am distracted by the notifications on my screen. We are checked out during online training—even if there are breakout rooms intended to facilitate exchange with others.”

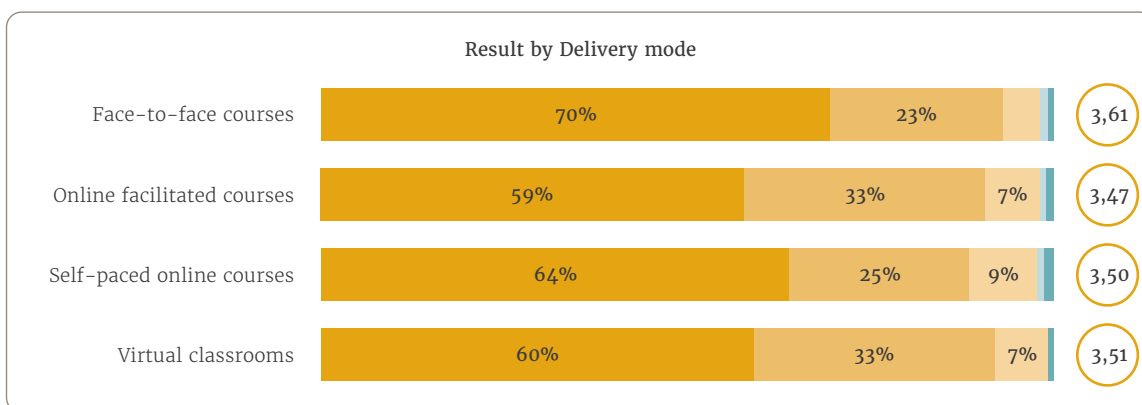
“The video is off due to limited bandwidth and it feels disconnected.”

“Not everyone is capable of learning online. Transformative experiences of learning usually require face-to-face learning that enables exchange, exposure to new contexts, and dedicated time to focus.”

23 ICRC Innovation Evaluation 2017–2023 (2023)

24 Evaluation of the 2nd Cycle of the ICRC’s iDevelop Programme 2018–2021 (2023)

Figure XIII: Learner preferences for course delivery mode



Source: LnD survey results²⁵, 2023

Social and experiential learning. Staff consulted across evaluation activities consistently rated their participation in social or experiential learning as the most impactful and meaningful to their work. Frequently cited examples for this include mentoring, exposure missions, peer exchange (structured and ad hoc) and learning within daily work. Table VI highlights key quotes describing the value of these activities, according to ICRC staff.

Table VI: Staff Impact, Social and Experiential Learning

Activity	Description
Mentoring	“The mentoring that I received in the early years of my career at ICRC had the most impact on my professional growth.”
Exposure missions	“My exposure mission was of extreme added value and a very good learning experience.” “The exposure mission was very crucial. The face-to-face exchange with colleagues from different contexts is super helpful for learning and networking.”
Peer exchange	“A lot of my learning happened when I sat down with resident staff who had been there for a very long time. The value of their contribution is massive. The history of the delegation is not well documented so when you speak to resident staff you tap into a great institutional memory which is very interesting and informative.” “I do not feel that any of the formal trainings helped me much compared to guidance from my colleagues.”
Learning from daily work	“We learn daily in the ICRC. We are not only learning in formal courses but also by our working experiences and exchanges with our colleagues. This is part of the learning culture.” “Despite the limitations, I’ve been able to develop new skills through adaptability and resilience, learning from the diverse experiences I’ve encountered.”

Finding 10: Staff report frustrations with limited recognition of learning achievements and benefit to career progression.

²⁵ Note that figures may be influenced by the number of courses available per delivery mode (e.g. only 13 face-to-face courses included this survey vs 100 self-paced online courses from January 2020–February 2024).



Recognition for learning. While certification exists for some internal courses (nearly always for external training/courses), rewards and recognition for learning at the ICRC are limited. Evaluation key informants described scenarios where, after the completion of a learning programme such as iDevelop or HLMS, their line managers showed little interest in spotlighting or rewarding the effort. For example:

“What the ICRC expects to gain from trainings is not clear and not valued. The organisation needs to recognize the investment it makes in staff development, even if it is just asking staff to share learning or report back to colleagues. I, myself, did a certification, but it was never recognized. My manager never even asked me about it after I was done.”

“What is valued is that one takes initiative to develop themselves, but not the actual learning that comes of it. The ICRC wants people who want to learn, but is not concerned about the learning itself.”

Limited career benefit from learning was also frequently cited as a frustration for staff across interviews, focus group discussions, and within the open-ended responses to both the evaluation and 2023 Our Voice surveys. When asked to share examples in which learning contributed to professional growth at the ICRC, less than 10% of respondents to the evaluation survey shared experiences of promotion or career progression. Additionally, over 20% of responses to this question were actively negative. Rather than skip the question, staff chose to express frustration or disappointment on the topic. For example:

“I have neither been upgraded or enjoyed any career benefits from my professional accounting certification.”

“Unfortunately, the ICRC does not recognize staff learning achievements—it has no contribution to one’s development or growth within the ICRC.”

When asked about learning impact more broadly, less than 4% of evaluation survey respondents described professional recognition or career advancement. Comments shared in the 2023 Our Voice survey expressed similar experiences, with a recurring theme of stagnation. As one mentioned: *“I feel like I’m stuck in a cycle of repetition.”*

During interviews and focus group discussions, resident staff (and managers of resident staff) shared a less favourable view on career benefit or advancement through learning compared to mobile staff. As described in the focus groups, limited opportunities to discuss learning pathways with managers impact resident staff more than mobile staff. Resident staff participants listed examples of learning opportunities promised by managers that never came to fruition due to resistance at the delegation level and unwillingness to fund the opportunity. There was a feeling that the ICRC prefers recruiting external candidates at the expense of developing resident staff. As one participant said: *“They used me as a delegate, but never invested in me.”* Notably, this sentiment persists despite the wide availability of voluntary, formal learning opportunities for resident staff, for example through iDevelop and iLearn. Key informants shared similar experiences during

stakeholder interviews, indicating that while learning is valued by resident staff, it is not concretely linked to promotion. As one key informant described: “Professional development varies between resident and mobile staff. Mobile staff have many opportunities for advancement, but resident staff do not. Learning is not the issue (or the reason for advancement for mobile staff)—the dynamic exists for other reasons.”

4.2 FUTURE VIEW

EQ6: Purpose.

How should the ICRC frame its learning culture to reach its strategic objectives? What should the ICRC expect to achieve through an enhanced learning culture?

Finding 11: The ICRC can orient its learning culture around the organisation’s unique mandate, contributing to strategic objectives through formal, social, and experiential learning opportunities.

As described in Evaluation Question 1, perspectives on the purpose and value of a learning culture vary across the organisation and there is no central definition for what it means to the ICRC. This contributes to confusion and competing visions, particularly over the responsibility of the ICRC to direct learning in balance with supporting learning autonomy. Despite LnD’s efforts to articulate a learning approach that champions social and experiential learning, the focus has been on formal learning. As a result, ICRC leadership and staff tend to equate “training” with “learning culture.” Insufficient attention has gone into aspects of learning culture that extend beyond individual staff development, including team reflection, cultivating trust within the organisation, and connections between individual and organisational learning.

To address this, the ICRC can strengthen the association of learning culture with the organisation’s unique mandate. This includes clearly articulating an aim to foster a learning culture that advances: (i) organisational identity, (ii) adherence to and promotion of humanitarian principles, (iii) organisational capacity to provide humanitarian assistance and protection, and (iv) coordination and partnership within the Movement. As described under Evaluation Question 1, ICRC staff value the role of formal, social, and experiential learning in shaping their capacity to uphold ICRC’s mandate.

Beyond its mandate, the organisation articulates strategic objectives for learning within the Institutional Strategy. The new Institutional Strategy (2024–2027) connects learning to two areas of the organisational approach over the next four years: “bolstering organisational readiness and efficiency” and “cross-cutting approaches.” Learning activities are listed together with “enhancing trust, cohesion, and responsibility” and “impact, evaluation, and innovation.” This framing offers an opportunity to reorient learning culture towards collaborative environments that develop the necessary talent to address a rapidly shifting humanitarian sector.

When asked how—or if—learning contributes to the strategic aims of the organisation, key informant interviews with ICRC staff underlined the importance of creating safe and transversal learning environments, peer exchange and support networks, readily-applicable and targeted skills development (“soft” and technical), and ensuring comprehensive onboarding for new staff. FGDs confirmed this perspective with particular emphasis on transversal learning and peer exchange. As illustrated in one discussion: “*Transversal trainings are missing—we are expected to work transversally but each department has its own training with no transversal training. We are expected to work transversally but our management does not have the skills to facilitate this process. We need learning environments where we work as a team.*”

Finding 12: The ICRC can continue pursuing its current learning culture objectives, while expanding their scope for future relevance.

ICRC stakeholders explored the future relevance of the organisation’s current learning culture objectives and targeted learning outputs during the evaluation ToC workshop. This covered the objectives: (i) enhancing organisational performance and quality, (ii) enabling professional growth and empowering talent, and (iii) cultivating learning transfer and application. Targeted learning outputs included: (i) diverse and dynamic learning environment, (ii) learner engagement and satisfaction, and (iii) certification and professional recognition.

The workshop validated each of the “current state” objectives and targeted learning outputs for continued future relevance. During the discussion, participants further identified ways each area should conceptually or practically expand to better reflect the “future view” of learning at the ICRC. Themes for the “future view” objectives and learning outputs are outlined below in Tables VII and VIII.

Table VII: “Future View” Learning Culture Objectives, ToC Workshop

Learning Culture Objective	Future View
Organisational Performance and Quality	The ICRC understands and values how people learn at work and the role of learning in organisational performance. The ICRC’s humanitarian response to affected populations improves through the development of new skills (“soft” and technical) and supporting staff to meaningfully adapt existing skills to the organisational context. Learning culture is a contributing factor to long term organisational transformation and sustainability.
Professional Growth and Empowering Talent	Professional growth occurs through all learning modalities: formal, as well as social and experiential. On the job learning is valued and reinforced. The ICRC provides incentives for learning. ICRC leadership maintains a “learning posture,” empowering talent through their own example of continued learning and curiosity. There is a connection between learning and career development. Learning and professional development improve staff retention.
Learning Transfer and Application	Learners have and can apply new or adapted skills appropriate for the context. Learning transfer and application occurs within a supportive environment for professional growth and reflective practices (individual / collective). Collective learning occurs within teams, between colleagues, and across the ICRC. Learning opportunities are linked to clear aims for the organisation and the individual. Managers understand how to direct the skills staff acquire during learning.

Table VIII: “Future View” Learning Outputs, ToC Workshop

Learning Outputs	Future View
Diverse and Dynamic Learning Environment	Represents investments in formal, social, and experiential learning opportunities. Learning offerings are diverse and learner-centric. They are available to ICRC staff in a timely manner. Inclusive of a learning environment that is safe to share mistakes, doubts, and questions. Spaces exist where people can meet and exchange (including leadership). Informal learning spaces are led by senior managers. The ICRC’s learning culture includes organisational learning (e.g. learning from the past, lessons learned activities, institutional M&E).
Learner Engagement and Satisfaction	Learning opportunities are accessed and utilized by a range of ICRC staff who are satisfied with the content and experience. Inclusive of staff motivation and learning disposition (e.g. interest, intent). Recruitment should assess learning motivation and disposition during the recruitment process to determine alignment with the ICRC’s culture and mission.

Learning Outputs	Future View
Certification and Professional Recognition	Learner completes the right offering of selected learning opportunities. Learning is certified or otherwise professionally recognized by management and the organisation. On-the-job learning is reinforced and recognized. Certification and professional recognition of learning is a meaningful incentive to learn.

Aligned with these objectives, the open-ended responses to the evaluation survey provided examples of learning achievements that the ICRC can nurture in the next strategic period:

- Exposure to new contexts and ways of working (*examples: job rotations, shadowing*)
- Networking and relationship building (*examples: métier webinars, external learning partnerships*)
- Professional motivation and job satisfaction (*examples: iDevelop*)
- Development of practical and immediately applicable skills (*examples: iLearn catalogue, Digital Skills Forge*)

EQ7: Modalities, Environment, People.

What are the gaps between the current and desired state, including (i) available learning modalities, (ii) the means through which employees access learning and how often, (iii) the ways ICRC constructs a meaningful learning culture and learning governance, and (iv) the beliefs and preferences of ICRC staff?

Finding 13: Gaps between the current state of the ICRC learning culture and the organisation’s desired performance include opportunities for social and experiential learning, the practice of learning needs assessment and directed learning, available time and management support for learning, defining the intent and scope of learning culture at the ICRC, management accountability for learning, and recognition and reward for learning.

Reflecting the findings across Evaluation Questions 1–5, several gaps exist between the current state of the ICRC learning culture and the organisation’s desired state as articulated in its strategic documents (Institutional, PAC, and LnD) and the Learning Council mandate and associated workplans.

Available learning modalities. Compared to the ICRC’s approach to learning that emphasises the role and importance of social and experiential modalities, limited opportunities for these pathways exist in a consistent or structured manner. Current efforts to re-design SIP and the onboarding process aim to address issues with staff induction and orientation. These efforts are ongoing at the time of the evaluation and not yet complete.

Means through which staff access learning and how often. Compared to the ICRC’s intention to assess learning needs at the individual and organisation levels, efforts in this area are limited. Individual assessment of learning needs is inconsistently applied during the PMD process. Métier support to individual assessment of learning needs varies considerably within the operational and support departments, in line with the approach and prioritisation of this area by métier leadership. The organisational needs assessment for learning, planned for 2023, was paused due to financial and staff constraints.

Beyond heavy investment in the staff onboarding process, learning is not well directed to key career transitions or according to staff positions. As shown in Evaluation Question 8, the ICRC needs to address issues with available staff time and management support for learning to reach the desired levels of participation in learning opportunities. The increasing reliance on online modalities for learning may support access to and frequency of learning under circumstances that limit staff travel or availability for face-to-face or blended learning. However, it can also reduce learning participation for unconnected staff and staff with limited literacy or digital skills.

Constructing a meaningful learning culture and governance. The ICRC signalled a desire to codify the purpose and meaning of learning culture in the organisation through the definition proposed by LnD to the Learning Council. This definition is yet to be adopted and remains contested by the stakeholders consulted

in the evaluation. Although PAC includes “open communication” and “cultivating trust” as part of its role and strategy, these areas received little attention during the 2020–2023 period as part of the scope of fostering the learning culture. Additionally, few connections exist between the focus on individual staff development and organisational learning, despite organisational learning featuring as part of the 2019–2024 Institutional Strategy.

Within its 2020–2025 Strategy, LnD identified the importance of learning leadership and the active participation of learning ambassadors in the development of a learning culture at the ICRC. While learning ambassadors exist in the role and active leadership of the Learning Council and the learning focal points, learning endorsement by senior management and line managers is limited. Mechanisms to support management accountability for learning are absent (e.g., guidelines or policies for practice) or weak (e.g., inclusion of learning in the PMD).

Beliefs and preferences of ICRC staff. Support for peer-to-peer interaction and structured opportunities for social and experiential learning are limited. Staff highly value these modalities and rank them as among the most impactful learning pathways enjoyed by those who have had the chance to participate.

Staff value and seek recognition and reward for learning. Although certification exists for some internal formal learning opportunities and through external providers, learning recognition by management is generally weak or not practiced. This includes forms of recognition such as spotlights, interviews, badges, presentations, or even discussion between managers and staff during the PMD on the learning that occurred. Staff desire career benefits from learning. However, mechanisms to link internal recruitment or promotion to completion of learning are not consistently available in the organisation. It is also unclear how learning concretely supports the career matrix, e.g. how staff can mix and match learning modules from different functional areas to make lateral career moves.

EQ8: Modalities, Environment, People, Purpose.

What are the factors helping or hindering progress on learning in the organisation? Where are opportunities to strengthen or advance learning?

Finding 14: Factors helping learning in the organisation include the availability and flexibility of formal learning opportunities, relevance and applicability of learning content to one’s current role in the organisation, individual motivation, and supportive management (when present). Staff experience may vary by gender.

Helping factors. Factors currently *helping* learning in the organisation include:

- Available and flexible opportunities for formal learning
- Relevant and applicable learning content to one’s current role in the organisation
- Individual motivation and interest in learning
- Supportive managers (when present)

Available opportunities for formal learning and relevant, applicable learning content to one’s current role in the organisation are helpful factors for learning at the ICRC (see Evaluation Questions 3, 4 and 5). Staff participating in the evaluation survey rate these two dimensions, together with flexible learning opportunities, as the strongest enablers for learning and professional development (Figure XIV). This is followed by supportive managers, when present.

While the evaluation survey data are favourable towards the availability of learning opportunities, results from the 2023 Our Voice survey indicate that staff perceptions in this area were impacted over the last year by the financial crisis and decreased financial support for iDevelop, SIP, and other formal learning opportunities. This is described below under “hindering factors.”

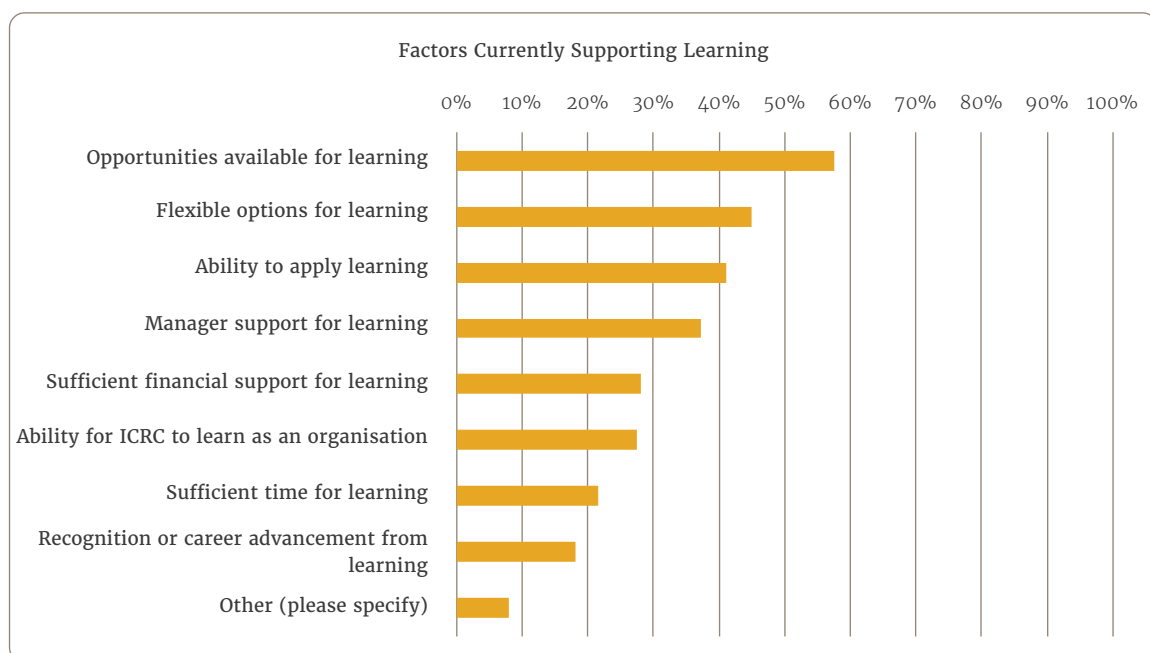
While not addressed in the evaluation survey, individual motivation and interest in learning were cited in focus group discussions and key informant interviews as important factors that can support learning. It also features as a finding within the iDevelop evaluation, which linked individual motivation to improve job performance with participation in iDevelop.

When present, the evaluation found that supportive managers are vital contributors to staff accessing, completing, and applying learning. This is especially important when staff enter the ICRC or move into a new position, as described by a focus group participant: *“When I started at the ICRC, I had access to iLearn and the onboarding channel. I read through the relevant guidelines on procedures, etc. Across those first 5 months, everything was theory. There was no support available on how to apply this theory or how to be autonomous in putting the theory into practice. Eventually, there was a change in management and this improved the learning experience. The new manager is very supportive in guiding the application of the theory.”*

In contrast, management can also greatly limit access to and application of learning when it is not supportive. In a survey of staff who completed the digital integration course (2021–2022), nearly half of respondents (47%) judged a lack of manager support as an obstacle to applying what they learned (see “hindering factors” below). Associate staff surveyed by ICRC mentioned managers’ impact as both “a promoter and impeder” for their engagement with learning. As that report²⁶ found, “managers play a large role in the facilitation of learning,” including “the damage that a manager who does not facilitate learning can inflict upon the wider learning culture.”

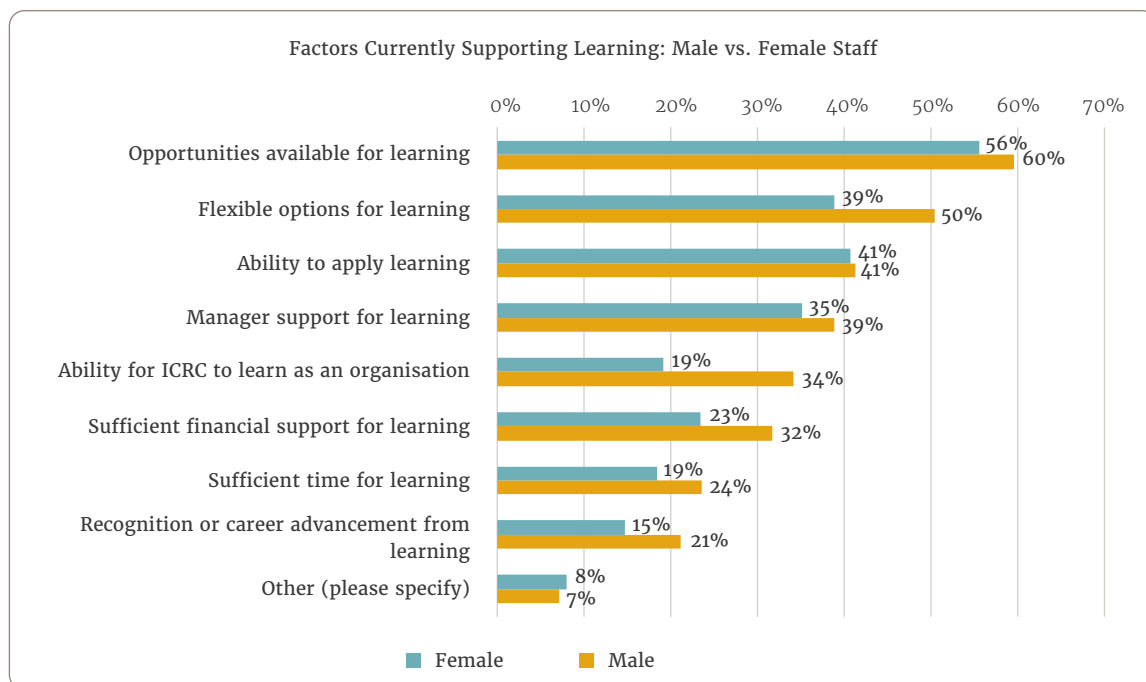
Experiences across these factors may vary by gender. Responses to the evaluation survey demonstrate a contrast in perspectives between male and female staff (Figure XV). Notably, there is around a ten-percentage point difference on the portion of men selecting flexible options for learning as a helpful factor compared to women. This indicates that more men view the ICRC as providing flexible options for learning that are helpful compared to women. While the selection rate is low for these areas, men responding to this question are also more positive towards financial support for learning, recognition and career advancement, and the ability of the ICRC to learn as an organisation.

Figure XIV: Factors currently supporting learning at ICRC, Staff Survey



26 “Initial Report on Learning Culture at the ICRC,” (2022)

Figure XV: Factors currently supporting learning at ICRC, Gender Disaggregation, Staff Survey



Finding 15: Factors hindering learning in the organisation include insufficient availability of social and experiential learning modalities, limited recognition or career benefit from learning, inadequate or unavailable financial support, insufficient time, challenges with unsupportive managers, and organisational culture. Staff experience may vary by gender.

Hindering factors: Factors currently *hindering* learning in the organisation include:

- Insufficient availability of social and experiential learning modalities
- Limited recognition or career benefit from learning
- Inadequate or unavailable financial support for learning
- Insufficient time and space for learning
- Challenges with unsupportive managers
- Organisational culture

The insufficient availability of social and experiential learning modalities and limited recognition or career benefit from learning are hindering factors for learning at the ICRC (see Evaluation Questions 3, 4 and 5). Staff participating in the evaluation survey rate inadequate financial support, insufficient time, and limited recognition or career benefit from learning as the strongest hindrances to learning and professional development (Figure XVI). This is followed by challenges with unsupportive managers. Although staff rated relevant and applicable learning content as an enabling factor within the evaluation survey (Finding 14), FGDs and key informant interviews raised concerns with limited contextualisation of learning content to different roles and deployment environments as challenge to learning quality (Finding 5).

Insufficient time and space for learning was frequently cited as a difficulty across evaluation activities. As described by focus group participants:

“Timing is a personal obstacle to learning, especially today when the workload is higher. We do not have enough time to learn in a consecutive manner.”

“Sometimes it is difficult to keep learning online, due to interruptions. Online learning is not separated from the daily workload—there can be interruptions.”



Linked to frustrations with inadequate time or space for learning, ICRC staff raised issues with unsupportive managers and inadequate funding as limiting progress with learning. This included pursuing voluntary formal learning opportunities such as iDevelop or HLMS, participation in métier-specific learning opportunities (online and in person), engaging with social or experiential learning (e.g. exposure missions), and completing onboarding courses such as SIP. As described by a focus group participant: *“I was told by my manager that I would do SIP, but this never happened due to budget cuts.”*

Challenges with unsupportive managers featured across interviews and focus group discussions. According to staff, the degree to which line managers support learning depends on individual personality and perspectives, with little opportunity for staff to appeal their decisions. As described in focus group discussions:

“It changes from one manager to another—you get a new manager and then their views are very different vis-à-vis training from the prior manager.”

“When I started my course, a new team leader would not grant me the time required to do my studies that had been validated by my previous manager.”

Regarding budgets, staff raised concerns about the financial crisis, funding cuts, and uncertainty over what learning programmes would remain open or, if suspended in 2023, would be reopened. As one individual expressed in the evaluation survey, *“There is no money for training now—even the welcome course is cancelled. If anything, I may have regressed professionally by working here because I have started to forget what good practice looks like.”*

While not prominent in the evaluation survey results, the influence of organisational culture as a hindering factor was evident across interviews, focus group discussions, and existing ICRC data. During the evaluation ToC workshop, stakeholders described how staff often do not feel safe to ask questions, reveal mistakes, or share doubts. Key informant interviews suggested that the ICRC’s “emergency response” culture can be used as an excuse to de-prioritise learning within operational and support métiers or at the delegation level. In an LnD survey of staff completing the digital integration course (2021–2022), over 50% of respondents believed a misalignment between actual ICRC culture and what is promoted in the course is an obstacle to applying what they learned.

As with supportive factors, experiences may vary by gender. Responses to the evaluation survey show a contrast in perspectives between male and female staff (Figure XVII). There are significant differences between the portion of women identifying (i) insufficient financial support for learning, (ii) insufficient time for learning, and (iii) limited recognition or career advancement from learning as hindering factors compared to men. Female staff also identified limited manager support for learning as a hindering factor more frequently compared to men.

Figure XVI: Factors currently hindering learning at ICRC, Staff Survey

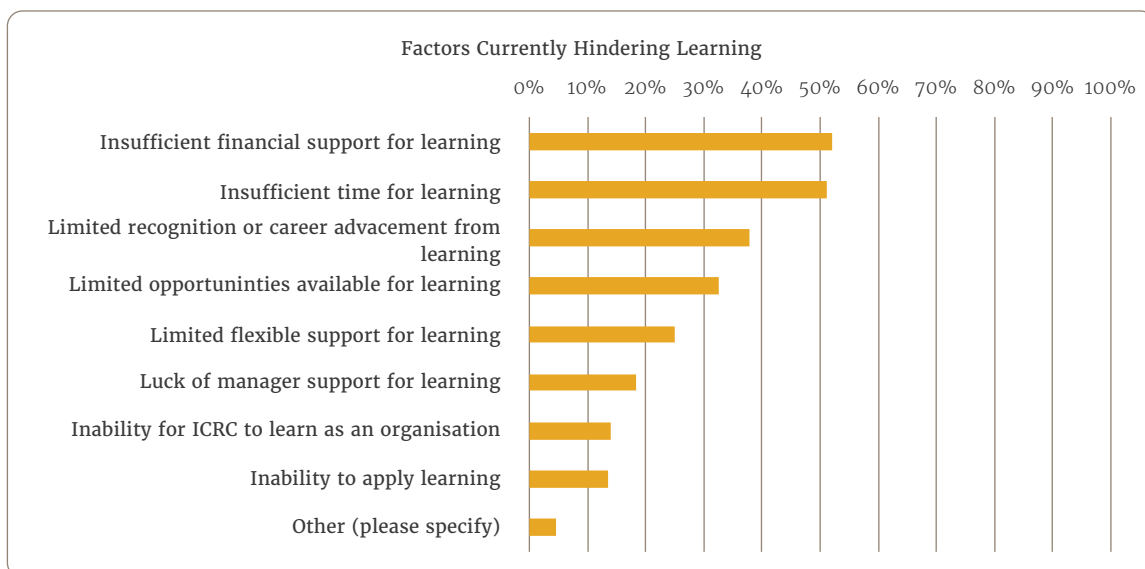
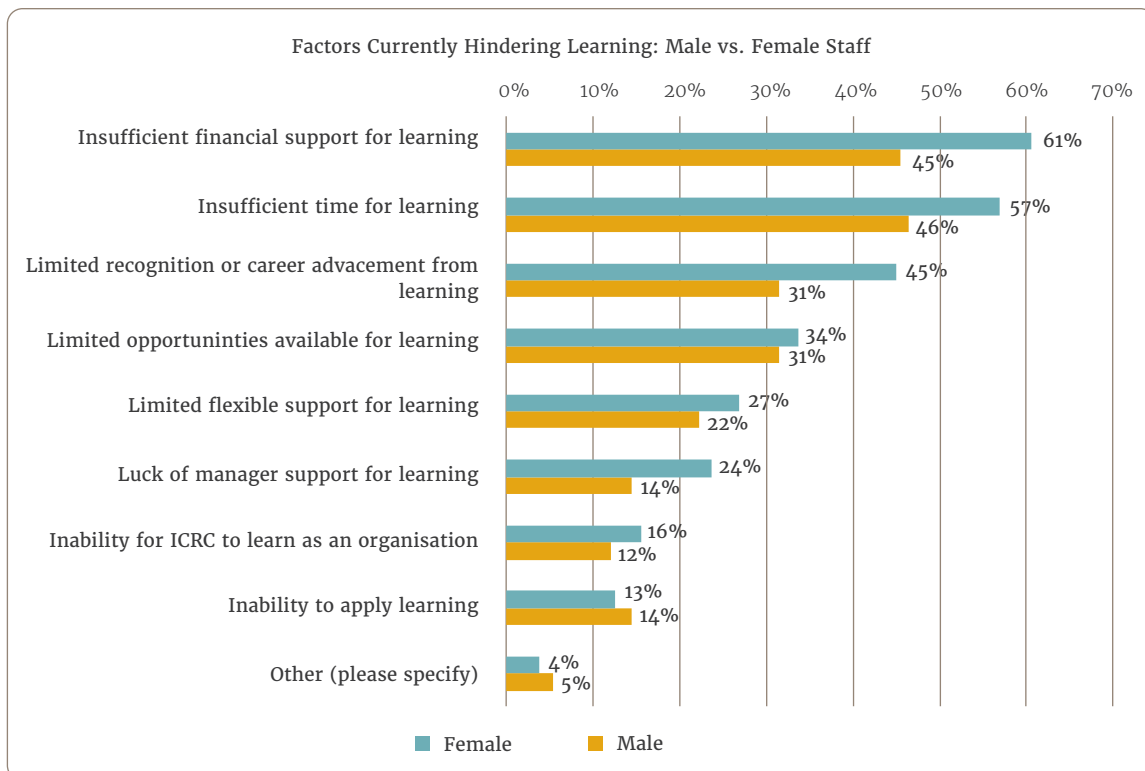


Figure XVII: Factors currently hindering learning at ICRC, Gender Disaggregation, Staff Survey



Finding 16: The ICRC can build on current enabling factors and promising practice that support learning to advance its relevance, impact, and uptake in the organisation. Following the examples from the field, LnD focal points within the delegations can champion learning for unconnected staff.

Enabling factors and promising practice. The ICRC can build on current enabling factors for learning and promising practice in the Health, Protection, and Economic Security métiers (Table IX) to strengthen the relevance, impact, and uptake of learning. This includes increasing awareness of existing learning opportunities, directing staff to relevant learning content, and improving career advancement through learning. This applies across all learning modalities—formal, social, and experiential.

- **Awareness of learning opportunities:** Key informant interviews and FGDs highlighted ways in which staff may not know what learning opportunities exist or how to successfully access them. The participation or selection parameters for voluntary, formal opportunities like iDevelop or HLMS are not always well understood. Staff also raised questions about the availability and accessibility of online resources, exposure missions, and mentorship programmes. As advised by focus group discussion participants: “Communication about available training and how it is accessed should be improved. If you do not know where to find information, you will miss it.” Promising practice from Protection through the “Protection Learning Channel” and Economic Security through the “EcoSec Resource Centre” demonstrate the benefit of creating user-friendly online portals to guide staff through their learning options.
- **Directed learning:** Key informant interviews and FGDs raised questions about how staff can determine their training needs and pursue the most relevant learning content from the available options. Learning plans are not consistently developed across the ICRC, either with managers as part of the PMD or within métiers as part of a career development or capacity assurance approach. Promising practice from the Health, Protection, and Economic Security métiers demonstrates the benefits of creating plans that direct learning content to an individual according to their role or career progression.
- **Individual motivation and recognition:** While individual motivation to learn reflects a person’s values and interests, in the context of a workplace it is also linked to concrete expectations for professional recognition and career advancement. Creating systematic and structured career development plans that recognise or validate learning would boost staff interest in learning and its impact for individuals. Promising practice from the Health métier demonstrates the benefit of career development pathways tied to learning.

Table IX: Best practice models of learning, métier cases

Métier	Promising practice models
Protection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development and adoption of evidence-based Protection Learning Strategy. • Dedicated Protection Training Unit and learning staff. • Protection Toolbox: launched in October 2023, a “one-stop Wiki page” of ICRC Protection information and knowledge management tool. • Protection Learning Channel: launched in November 2023, available on iLearn, the channel maps all training available for Protection and Generalist staff, including which offerings to follow for different career stages.
Economic Security	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development and adoption of evidence-based EcoSec Learning Strategy and Learning and Development Path. • Dedicated Learning Focal Points and training relays. • EcoSec Resource Centre: Includes relevant handbooks, tools, and diverse resources for EcoSec activities in one location with a user-friendly interface. • “Coffee Breaks”: launched in 2023, series of online webinars that foster exchange and reflection of EcoSec colleagues across the organisation.

Métier	Promising practice models
Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Functional competency booklet and clearly articulated career development pathways tied to learning and set forth in a functional competency booklet. • Learning “Logbook”: Tool to validate skills and competency acquisition, serves both Health métier staff and external candidates seeking to enter the ICRC. • “Health Wiki” provides information about career paths and linked training; all offerings accessible via a single portal. • Internal protocols to ensure coordinators direct staff to relevant training opportunities.

LnD delegation staff and support for unconnected learners. LnD focal points within delegations can champion learning for unconnected staff. During focus group discussions with unconnected learners in two sub-delegations in Sudan, staff emphasised the importance of a connected learner accompanying unconnected learners as a “go between” to access formal, mandatory courses like the Code of Conduct training, follow online courses according to personal interest (e.g. through iLearn), and enhance language skills (e.g. English language training). Although participants identified limited internet and access to IT tools as barriers to their participation in learning, the delegation’s Training Facilitator (Learning and Development—HR) acted as a connector to the technical resources necessary to access these offerings.

EQ9: Modalities, Environment, Purpose.

How can the ICRC measure the advancement of a learning culture in the organisation?

Finding 17: The ICRC can build on existing measurement approaches to assess the strength and advancement of a learning culture more holistically.

The ICRC employs useful approaches for monitoring individual courses and tracking progress against objectives for organisational learning. These methodologies, however, primarily assess learning impact at different levels (learners, métier, the organisation) and not learning culture. As described under Evaluation Questions 1 and 2, learning culture is not well defined and is often conflated with “training.” The incomplete portfolio of strategy level indicators for measuring progress on a learning culture contributes to this idea. As part of the ICRC’s messaging and advocacy on learning culture, it is imperative to strengthen the data available on learning culture’s multi-faceted dimensions.

To do this, the ICRC can expand on existing M&E approaches to holistically assess the advancement of a learning culture by tracking:

- *Activities:* Degree to which the ICRC offers the right mix of activities to nurture a learning culture.
- *Motivation:* Degree to which ICRC staff are motivated to engage in learning.
- *Management support:* Degree to which ICRC leadership and line management support learning.
- *Operational support:* Degree to which learning is resourced (funding, expertise, time).

Specific guidance for how the ICRC can build on current practice and incorporate additional elements to cover these four areas of learning culture are provided under “Recommendations” in Section 5. Findings presented here summarise the ICRC’s existing measurement approaches and the degree to which they inform an understanding of learning culture in the organisation.

Learning impact and individual courses. The LnD Division is responsible for how learning is measured and tracked at the institutional level (e.g. for mandatory or centralised but voluntary courses), while providing methodological guidance for decentralised learning initiatives across teams or métiers. For courses managed directly by LnD, there is a significant amount of data routinely gathered on key indicators and metrics for coverage, completion, satisfaction, and immediate learning objectives. This information is posted in



Tableau dashboards that enable data visualisation, disaggregation, and trend analysis. Post-course surveys and success case interviews allow LnD to explore course success factors, limitations, and the broader impact of learning for the individual and the organisation.

Although methodological guidance for learning M&E is available for the métiers, it is not consistently adopted or applied across decentralised learning opportunities. Reflecting weaknesses in the overall availability of social and experiential learning modalities, the ICRC does not consistently assess the use, quality, or benefit of these activities. Where data exist for informal learning, it is in connection with centralised initiatives such as the 2022 mentorship

pilot led by PAC and LnD. As a result, the importance of these efforts is often invisible during discussions on learning in the organisation, contributing to an institutional focus on formal courses and “training.”

Strategic objectives for organisational learning. The ICRC tracks three performance metrics to assess progress against strategic objectives for organisational learning (see Evaluation Question 1). These indicators include the degree to which staff believe their job enables learning and the development of new skills (measured through the annual Our Voice survey), a comparative benchmark in the non-profit sector for ICRC’s results on this question, and the degree to which LnD training participants believe their work environment supports the application of learning.

While these metrics helpfully review progress against the ICRC’s objectives and goals for a learning culture—e.g. what is the ICRC achieving through a learning culture—they miss important aspects of the existence and strength of the learning culture itself.

Each of the current indicators offers an indirect or proxy assessment into management support for learning, but neglects to assess the extent to which the ICRC has active “learning leadership” to demonstrate how the organisation values learning. As described under previous Evaluation Questions, challenges with leadership and management support for learning are viewed within ICRC as limiting progress on fostering a learning culture despite the relatively positive rates across current strategic indicators for learning.

Measurements for staff motivation to learn and operational support for learning can additionally be incorporated within these current approaches to better assess the presence and advancement of a learning culture at the ICRC.

4.3 ICRC LEARNING CULTURE: THEORY OF CHANGE DEVELOPMENT

As described in Section 3, the evaluation constructed three ToCs in a theory-building process that occurred in collaboration with the ICRC. This included:

- **Inception phase “current state” ToC** (Diagram I, Section 3.1). This ToC started the theory-building process that shaped the evaluation. It was presented and approved in the Inception Report.

A workshop held in September with ICRC stakeholders kicked-off the discussion, review, and revision of the inception “current state” ToC. It also began a conversation on the ICRC’s “future view” for a learning culture in the organisation. The themes identified in this workshop informed the evaluation’s approach to data collection, including exploring perceived strengths and weaknesses, defining areas of inquiry, and addressing topics where information was not readily available or where perspectives diverged.

- **Adjusted “current state” ToC** (Annex VI). During analysis and reporting, the evaluation pinpointed key sections of the inception “current state” ToC that required adjustment to accurately reflect existing objectives and practice as described under findings for Evaluation Questions 1-5.

This adjusted “current state” ToC is presented in Annex VI, including a summarized table of changes between the inception and adjusted “current state” ToCs.

- **Proposed “future view” ToC** (Diagram II, below). Based on evaluation findings, a “future view” ToC is proposed to support the next strategic period. It incorporates areas where the ICRC needs to strengthen its current approach to reach its stated desired practice (e.g. Evaluation Question 7), as well as new priorities or ambitions relevant for the next strategic period (e.g. Evaluation Questions 6, 8, and 9).
- This “future view” ToC is presented below in Diagram II. Sections of the “future view” ToC that are different (e.g. signal a shift from current practice) from the adjusted “current state” ToC are reflected in black text.

The proposed “future view” ToC is included in Annex VI as an evaluation deliverable.

Next steps. A discussion on the “future view” ToC and its relevance for the new LnD strategy is planned for late March, after the submission of this report. As agreed with the ICRC evaluation management, this will enable the evaluation managers and the EAG to consider the proposed “future view” ToC in the context of the evaluation findings. Changes to the “future view” ToC that result from the review process will reflect in the final evaluation report.

Diagram II: ICRC Learning Culture, Proposed “Future View” ToC



5. CONCLUSIONS

The evaluation assessed the ICRC's learning culture against a framework of learning purpose ("why"), learning modalities ("what"), learning environments ("when and where"), and people—or the beliefs of ICRC staff about learning ("who") (see Section 3). This assessment explored the "current state" of learning culture and practice, alongside the "future view" for learning culture at the ICRC. Based on the evaluation findings presented in Section 4, this assessment supports a shift in priorities over the next strategic period to bolster a learning culture that aligns with the future direction of the ICRC.

- **Learning purpose:** Multiple ICRC strategies outline objectives to foster a learning culture, which is reflected in the organisation's approach to evaluation and measurement for learning. While the ICRC holds several clear objectives for what it wants to achieve by fostering a learning culture, the meaning of the learning culture in the context of the organisation is not defined. This undermines the ICRC's ability to coherently understand the value of learning and its criticality to the institutional mandate. As a result, individual staff, métiers, and the organisation may fail to provide the level of endorsement, support, and resourcing to learning that is required for the ICRC to meet its strategic objectives for a learning culture.
- **Learning modalities:** Over 2020–2023, the ICRC invested in the availability and utilisation of mandatory and voluntary formal learning opportunities. This included strengthening learning partnerships to expand available learning content and platforms. However, there remains a significant gap in the availability of structured opportunities for social and experiential learning. Quality assurance mechanisms exist largely for learning opportunities developed by LnD, but there is no singular mechanism to ensure the quality of learning products across the organization. Staff report that training delivery could be better professionalised and training content is not sufficiently contextualised to varied deployment environments. The lack of organised social and experiential learning presents the largest risk to the ICRC's ability to realise both its desired current state and future vision for learning. Staff greatly value these opportunities and rate them as the most impactful to their work, when experienced. Failure to advance these dimensions of learning compromise the highest goal of the "future view" of a learning culture at the ICRC: organisational performance and quality.
- **Learning environments:** ICRC staff perceive the organisation as moderately providing an enabling learning environment. Multiple aspects of the learning environment act as barriers to learning participation, as well as limiting learning impact to individuals and the organisation. This includes weak communications and messaging on learning, challenges with organisational culture, inconsistent management support, and inadequate professional recognition and career growth. Addressing these areas is necessary to ensure staff access and enjoy the variety of learning opportunities developed by the organisation during the period under review. This is foundational work to cultivating a healthy and vibrant learning culture.
- **People:** ICRC staff appreciate the learning opportunities afforded to them by the organisation. Staff frustrations with the limited recognition of learning achievements and benefit to career progression indicate that learning culture is not adequately linked to professional development. The variation of staff perceptions on learning by métier and gender should be explored through learning M&E to ensure an adequate understanding of the unique barriers and enabling factors experienced by different sub-groups of the organisation.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are based on the evaluation's 17 key findings and corresponding conclusions that consider the ICRC's "current state" of learning and the "future view" for fostering a learning culture in the organisation. The recommendations are prioritised according to timing. The "high" level priority recommendations need to occur first as a foundation for the subsequent "medium" level priority recommendations. Recommendations are addressed according to ownership for the action, including LnD, PAC, the Learning Council, and métier learning focal points. Recommendations will be integrated in the strategic and operational discussions pertaining to the learning ambitions of the ICRC, which requires leadership and involvement of a range of stakeholders beyond the LnD Division and PAC. The recommendations were discussed and reviewed by the ICRC evaluation managers and the EAG prior to finalisation.

Recommendation 1: Develop a holistic learning strategy with comprehensive communications plan.

(Linked to Findings 1, 2, 11, and 12)

Ownership: LnD, in collaboration with EODG, the Learning Council, and métier learning focal points

Priority: High

Develop a new learning strategy for 2025–2030 that covers learning for the entire organisation. This can build on the progress made by the current LnD strategy, while expanding to promote a common vision of the purpose, value, and approach to learning inclusive of different levels of the ICRC (e.g. delegation, regional, global), types of positions (e.g. red line, blue line), and the métiers. The strategy is accompanied by a comprehensive communications plan that supports the visibility, uptake, and implementation of the strategy by raising awareness of available learning opportunities.

Recommendation 2: Develop and validate a comprehensive definition of learning culture.

(Linked to Findings 1, 2, and 11)

Ownership: LnD, in collaboration with EODG, PAC, and the Learning Council

Priority: High

Develop a comprehensive definition of learning culture that is validated by the ICRC Directorate. The definition states how the institution's learning and learning culture contribute to the specific and unique features of the ICRC's mandate, linking this to the role of the ICRC in terms of upholding humanitarian principles, promoting IHL, providing essential humanitarian services, and fostering Movement coordination and complementarity. Aspects of learning culture that extend beyond individual staff development are featured in the definition, including reflection, cultivating trust and a safe environment for exchange in the organisation, and specifying links between individual and organisational learning. The definition balances the importance of staff motivation to learn with the responsibilities of the ICRC to direct learning. Once validated, the definition should be included (where appropriate) in all institutional and departmental learning-related strategies and policies.

Recommendation 3: Increase investment and focus on social and experiential learning modalities.

(Linked to Findings 4, 6, and 10)

Ownership: LnD, in collaboration with PAC, the Learning Council, and Operations (delegation leadership)

Priority: Medium

Bolster the social and experiential learning modalities identified as most impactful for ICRC staff. Building on the evaluation findings, conduct an organisational learning needs assessment to pinpoint priority areas that warrant further investment. Produce a concrete organisational roadmap for how social and experiential learning are made available in structured ways by the ICRC for staff development (e.g. producing clear formats for reflection or a defined system for the timing and application of opportunities).

This includes addressing structures for supporting:

- In-person workshops and team reflection
- Exposure missions
- Mentorship or shadowing opportunities
- Coaching
- Communities of practice
- Knowledge transfer between incoming and outgoing positions / during handover

Staff preferences for face-to-face interactions influence how these opportunities are shaped. Strengthen LnD guidance for line managers on how these opportunities contribute to staff development, including ways line managers can recognise social and experiential learning through discussions with staff on how the learning applies to current and potentially future posts. Consider utilising iDevelop to fund a more diverse range of social and experiential learning modalities offered by external providers.

Recommendation 4: Increase direction on individual staff learning pathways.

(Linked to Findings 4, 7, 8, 10, and 13)

Ownership: PAC, in collaboration with LnD and the métier learning focal points

Priority: Medium

HR and Talent Managers provide increased guidance and direction on individual staff learning pathways. This responsibility is included in HR and Talent Manager job descriptions, as well as in the job descriptions of all staff with line management responsibilities. At métier level, learning focal points within the métiers provide access to a list of pre-validated courses and other learning options (e.g. social and experiential modalities) that link to career progression (promotion and lateral moves), advancing visibility on the certification and skills required to progress within each métier (see examples provided under Table IX for Health, Protection, and EcoSec).

This is a long-term activity that may take several years to establish.

HR and Talent Managers work collaboratively with the métier learning focal points to ensure consistent messaging, guidance and support is provided to staff on their learning pathways and career development opportunities.

Recommendation 5: Improve management accountability for and capacity to advance learning.

(Linked to Findings 3, 5, 14, and 15)

Ownership: LnD, in collaboration with other sections of PAC responsible for HR

Priority: Medium

Provide guidance for line managers on their responsibilities to advance staff learning, including direction on the amount of time to allocate for learning in staff schedules and the use of the PMD in setting individual learning objectives. Where necessary, train and qualify HR and Talent Managers to provide professional support to staff in relation to career progression. Line managers would benefit from the development of soft skills to improve their capacity to recognise learning needs of staff and encourage staff professional development, including communication and mentorship skills.

Recommendation 6: Expand learning M&E approaches to assess the advancement of a learning culture.

(Linked to Findings 2, 14, 15, 17)

Ownership: LnD, in collaboration with the Learning Council and métier learning focal points

Priority: Medium

Adapt the system for learning M&E to holistically assess the advancement of a learning culture by tracking:

- *Activities:* Degree to which the ICRC offers the right mix of activities to nurture a learning culture.
- *Motivation:* Degree to which ICRC staff are motivated to engage in learning.
- *Management support:* Degree to which ICRC leadership and line management support learning.
- *Operational support:* Degree to which learning is resourced (funding, expertise, time).

The system engages with métiers for data collection, analysis, and reporting. Acknowledging the time and resource intensive nature of learning M&E, the ICRC identifies a range of basic indicators it can reasonably track (between 5 to 10) for gauging progress on a learning culture. The system builds on what currently exists, including methodology, data capture tools, dashboards, and indicators. Reporting on progress continues to occur in the ICRC Planning/Monitoring for Results system, promoting visibility at the ICRC Directorate level. Table X provides possible indicators to consider tracking for this approach.

Table X: Possible indicators to track to assess progress on learning culture

Activities: Degree to which the ICRC offers the right mix of activities to nurture a learning culture.	
Expected Result	Possible indicators to track
A range of activities exist to support learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Range and usage of available social and experiential learning activities offered across the organisation (including disaggregation by métier and gender) • Range and usage of available formal learning activities offered across the organisation (including disaggregation by métier and gender) • Degree to which staff report that managers allow staff autonomy to pursue learning opportunities. • LnD impact data are considered together with qualitative information.
Motivation: Degree to which ICRC staff are motivated to engage in learning.	
Expected Result	Possible indicators to track
Staff are motivated to learn	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Range and application of learning recognition and rewards (e.g. adaptation of job objectives according to the new skills acquired, written praise and evaluation). • Degree to which staff report their learning activities align with career development aspirations and/or career pathway. • Degree to which staff feel informed about learning opportunities.
Management support: Degree to which ICRC leadership and line management support learning.	
Expected Result	Possible indicators to track
The ICRC leadership and line management prioritise and endorse learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Usage of formal, social, and experiential learning modalities by ICRC leadership and management (including disaggregation by gender, geographic location, and type of role) • Degree to which line managers report utilising coaching or mentorship of staff as part of their role. • Inclusion rate of personal development goals within staff PMDs, e.g., sample a portion of PMDs from the HR system to query the inclusion of learning development goals or assess the portion of training participants who confirm inclusion of the training / learning opportunity in PMD development goals.
Operational support: Degree to which learning is resourced.	
Expected Result	Possible indicators to track
Adequate staffing and funding exist to enable learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual budget vs. actual analysis (e.g. variance analysis) for learning expenditure (including disaggregation for spending by learning modalities and staffing levels) • Degree to which métier learning focal points and métier staff report adequate available resources (funding and staffing) to enable implementation of métier learning strategies. • Degree to which senior leadership and line management express agreement with the following statements: “Securing adequate funding for learning is important for me / my team.” “Learning is a meaningful investment for me / my team / the ICRC.”

