

AUTHOR'S DESCRIPTION OF A THESIS (PhD)

NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF PUBLIC SERVICE
Doctoral Committee

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**Theoretical and technical issues of humanitarian
assistance regarding the international activity of the Red
Cross Movement**

author's description of a doctoral thesis (PhD)
and its official evaluations

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NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF PUBLIC SERVICE
DOCTORAL SCHOOL OF MILITARY ENGINEERING

Brigitta Sáfár

**Theoretical and technical issues of humanitarian
assistance regarding the international activity of the Red
Cross Movement**

Doctoral Thesis (PhD)

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FORMULATION OF THE SCIENTIFIC PROBLEM

Over the past decades the frequency of disasters, their devastating effects and the number of fatalities have increased throughout the world. This growth is apparent despite the increasing efforts of governmental organizations and NGOs to protect the population and the environment from the destruction of disasters.

Governments and professional disaster management organizations face a growing challenge by the ever-increasing number of disasters, so there's a growing need for the involvement and support of international and local humanitarian organizations all over the world. The question is how humanitarian organisations can contribute to reduce the impact of risk factors, and how can the efficiency of their activities be improved. What are the attributes that make them appropriate for this function?

Protecting the population against dangers is an old endeavor. Its modern form is the "resilience" of individuals and communities. It is important to determine what resilience means, what are its features, by what programs it is served, and how humanitarian organizations can contribute to this.

The existence of capacities against threats is an important factor in the defense work, since immunity depends on the ratio of potential impacts and existing capacities. It is important to see how humanitarian workers can measure the capacity of communities to support decision making processes for the organizations responsible for defense. The elements of the capacity that contribute to the mitigation of damages and reduction of losses are still to be determined. It is important to define the capabilities of humanitarian organizations to supplement and support defense work, and the areas of defense in which they can be applied.

The oldest humanitarian organization is the Red Cross, with a clear perception of the changes in the world and the demands of governments, focusing on preparedness and response in its long-term strategies. The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (hereinafter IFRC) and the International Committee of the Red Cross (hereinafter ICRC) cover almost all countries in the world so their reaction can be immediate and adequate in case of a potential crises. An important feature of the Red Cross is that the National Red Cross / Red Crescent Societies (hereinafter National Societies) are present on the premises of the disaster before, during and after the events, and when a disaster exceeds the national capabilities they can request the assistance of the international network of the Red Cross, which can increase the response rate and mobilize supporting forces according to the degree of the disaster and the damages caused. Disaster response systems of the Red Cross

Movement (hereinafter Red Cross) respond to challenges as quickly as possible, with their help immediate supply of information, assessment of situation and coordination, rescue, recovery and relief can also be managed. Both unit volunteers and staff are highly-qualified and can provide effective and worldwide assistance in short notice according to plans prepared beforehand. Therefore the scientific examination of the Red Cross's activities can provide an adequate basis for the practical approach of humanitarian work and the deduction of conclusions for further exploitation.

Roles and possibilities of the Red Cross, the oldest and largest international humanitarian organisation, change according to the continuously varying challenges. The question is what new activities, actions and programs are required to be implemented or adapted for the Red Cross to respond to humanitarian needs adequately.

Furthermore, what are the features that can increase the efficiency of humanitarian work, what are the principles by which it is executed and what abilities make the Red Cross suitable for the task. Analyzing concrete hazards, the conclusion is that climate change ranks amongst the greatest global programs of today, against which and in favor of adaptation all organizations should act. In this context it is important to investigate how do the Red Cross, as the largest humanitarian organization, respond to this challenge and how can humanitarian organizations contribute to protecting and preparing the population?

Scientific approach of the above issues can give answers and results that can serve the purposes of humanitarian work, increase the efficiency of humanitarian organisations, thereby increasing the immunity of the population against emergencies and in the same time strengthening the support of defense organizations.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

In the dissertation, I intend to justify the following objectives:

1. ***Through the example of the Red Cross, I present and overview*** the milestones of the development of humanitarian aid in order to reveal general and special needs of the population.
2. ***I provide a complete picture*** of the organization, structure and capabilities, and also the development of the Red Cross in order to identify the necessities for the renewal in the effective humanitarian work to meet the challenges of modern days.
3. ***I examine*** the trends in the development of disasters, and their effects, and the fundamentals of humanitarian aid needed in order to identify the most effective disaster management methods.

4. *I review and methodize* resilience as a new concept according to different layers of society, with the aim of using the results in the preparation of communities for emergencies in the future
5. *I explore* the potential in resilience programs, focusing on new environmental challenges, climate change and health risks.
6. *I examine* the hypothesis that the Red Cross's practice for community resilience is effective and can easily be adapted, and provides a solid foundation for capacity assessment and decision support.
7. By analyzing and evaluating psychosocial needs of the population, I *highlight* the importance of psychosocial support and the protection of aid workers, so as to include it in the preparation programs to increase chances of survival. I focus on the protection of children, the most vulnerable part of the population.
8. *I develop* a methodology for measuring vulnerability and capacity of communities, and I propose a methodology for the survey.

RESEARCH HYPOTHESIS

During my research I have set the following hypothesis:

1. *I assumed* that by reviewing the milestones of the evolution of the Red Cross it is possible to identify the capabilities that make it able to support the work of public enforcement bodies, and to determine the framework for future development. Furthermore, the Red Cross, in addition to its current strategy and response system, will need to adapt and implement new activities, measures and programs in order to meet the requirements in fulfilling humanitarian needs.
2. *I assume* that the humanitarian preparedness program of the Red Cross is an effective support for the different communities, in developing their own resources to help others and themselves, as a part of the network. *I believe* that the improvement of the emergency response and health care units of the Red Cross is indispensable to reduce disasters risks and to enhance efficiency of preparedness and intervention.
3. *I presume* that individual and social resilience can only be approached and interpreted as an integrated system. Psychosocial assistance has a significant impact on resilience, its principles, methods, and tools can easily be defined by observing current practice of the Red Cross, and by their identification effective support can be provided to other humanitarian organizations.

4. *I assumed* that the improvement of individual and community resilience is a complex process, based on identifying areas of vulnerability and defining factors that enhance resilience by the means of capacity assessment.

RESEARCH METHODS

During my research I employed various research methods to achieve the research objectives:

1. Mainly general research methods were used for my work, including analysis, synthesis and adaptation testing.
2. For the logical conclusions both induction and deduction method were used.
3. In collecting the data I used the "one source is not enough" principle, that is I compared at least two sources and I tried to divide the research into logical segments to analyze data completed with my and my colleagues experiences in the Red Cross Movement.
4. I studied Hungarian and international scientific literature and legal environment related to the topic. The publications were categorized according to the research guidelines using analytical methods and then I synthesized theoretical and practical findings.
5. I consulted with local and international experts that gave me the opportunity to participate in the Resilience Program of the IFRC.
6. I applied logical comparative analysis to the basic general definitions of the research (resilience, community resilience, individual resilience, domino effect) depending on the approach of the definition.
7. As an external expert I participated in the EU project "Snowball - Cascading Effects", in which I examined the individual's behavior as a catalyst in a potential domino effect and I used during drawing conclusions.
8. I have tested the proposed methods in practical application in case of various disasters in Bosnia (2010), in Haiti (2013) and during the floods in the Balkan (2014).
9. Results of my research were published in professional publications, national and international conferences in Hungarian and English, and I have included the opinions into my conclusions and propositions.

CONCISE DESCRIPTION OF THE STUDY CARRIED OUT

Chapter I of my dissertation is on one hand a brief overview of the circumstances of the foundation of the Red Cross Movement and examines the steps that were necessary to protect the population and lead to the humanitarian aid activities at present. In the chapter I analyze the Geneva Conventions as the cornerstone of international humanitarian regulations regarding civilian protection, and unfold the Principles that define present-day humanitarian aid. In this chapter I study the activities of the International Committee of the Red Cross, its efforts in civilian protection, humanitarian rights and modern, ethical humanitarian aid, mainly the current activities. Besides, I highlight the steps and renewal necessary to face changing challenges.

The *II. chapter* is a presentation of the activities of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, focusing on the potential in disaster response activities. I analyze the key elements of preparedness and response, highlighting the methods used in international humanitarian aid. I analyze the standard response and technical support systems used in disasters and other crises, and the responsibilities of the IFRC and Red Cross / Red Crescent National Societies during a disaster or emergency event, examining the potential of international and national capacities.

In *Section III*. I unfold the concept, the elements and development possibilities of resilience. I analyze the factors influencing the use of community resilience programs and the aspects of forming the most effective and progressive methods of community preparation. I examine the results of the community-based preparation on the network of the Red Cross, and the improvement possibilities of current methods regarding new challenges. I present the interpretation of community resilience programs in complex humanitarian education.

Section IV. is an overview of the origins of individual resilience and psychosocial health. I present the importance of psychosocial aid in case of disasters, examining the events that affect psychosocial health, individual coping strategies, and the possibilities of recovering psychosocial health. I define psychosocial needs of the individual, the aid workers, and the children as group with special needs, categorizing methods for restoring psychological balance. I analyze the function of psychosocial resilience programs and their impact on the psychosocial health of individuals and communities.

In *Chapter V* I examine measuring methods for the preparedness regarding vulnerability and capacity. defining the concept of vulnerability and capacity, and developing the model of processes, tools and methods that can be used in the survey. I define the process of the development of an effective and efficient humanitarian program, highlighting the difficulties

in vulnerability and capacity assessment, planning and implementation, and I make suggestions for the project-oriented application of program development.

SUMMARIZED CONCLUSIONS

Looking at the circumstances of the foundation of the Red Cross Movement **I found** that the Movement was the first worldwide initiative to prevent human suffering and to unify humanitarian aid. **I determined** the actions required in humanitarian aid to face new challenges and the development and changes needed to be executed for the Red Cross to preserve its achievements in humanitarian aid. Within these the most important points are the trainings and standard operating procedures related to safety and security.

Overviewing present-day humanitarian challenges, I **found** that the success of humanitarian operations depends predominantly on the consideration of new security challenges. I made a suggestion regarding security aspects of preparation and aid to develop new forms of preparations and actions, reaching new agreements and revising existing ones by humanitarian organizations – primarily the Red Cross – on global and national scales.

Looking at the tasks of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, **I proved** that in the past decades the focus of Red Cross activities was the people whose vulnerability increased dramatically due to an unexpected disaster or crises. Overviewing the activities, **I revealed** that the prevention of suffering lies in the thorough understanding of local communities, helping the population to face challenges, and avoid dangerous situations that might increase their vulnerability. **I proved** that the reduction of vulnerability and the improvement of capacity could ease the suffering of those whose socioeconomic security and human dignity is subject to constant threats and disaster.

Analyzing the disaster response mechanism of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies from financial assistance to the task of sector-specific technical assistance units, **I found** the unique ability of cooperation between the units of the worldwide network in any part of the world within 48 hours, thanks to the standardized operations, providing prompt help to communities in need. **I revealed** that different intervention units operated by National Societies – considering international standards, quality requirements and regulations – can take part of an international humanitarian aid if necessary, because of their professional background and their wide knowledge on international humanitarian assistance. I made a suggestion regarding the technical development of the emergency health care unit called HERO, operated by Hungarian Red Cross.

Analyzing the social layers of resilience, **found** that resilience is an attribute of individuals, households, communities, organizations, countries that is intertwined on different levels of society and have mutual impact on them. **I highlighted** the concept of community as one of the most effective elements in a resilience program. Exploring new challenges **I revealed** the need to involve volunteers in resilience programs and in connection of a specified threat, climate change, and **outlined** the use of knowledge in reducing vulnerability and risks.

I revealed that risk analysis based on the assessment of losses caused by disasters or other incidents and estimates of potential losses, are essential for effective decision-making. **I made a proposition** for governments, legislators, and other key partners to encourage the planning and funding of resilience programs across the different sectors. **I proved** that international and national disaster laws and regulators can enhance the role of community resilience and social responsibility, and encourage governments to implement effective, up-to-date legislation in respect of disaster response.

Categorized methods and tools of psychosocial aid and **found** that the diversity of methods ensures that the reaction on psychosocial needs of the disaster-stricken population meets all individual and community requirements in all situations. **I revealed** that psychosocial needs vary for different individuals and communities, some groups, particularly children, have special needs, and **found** that special psychosocial programs are needed in order to restore their mental health. **I found** that during the interventions assuring physical security is the primary task of rescue professionals, so **I proposed** the involvement of psychosocial helpers to the rescue phase. By examining the psychological effects on the aid workers, **I demonstrated** that regular measurement of their psychological competence is necessary for their efficiency and to preserve mental health, besides psychosocial preparation programs and psychological support after extremely stressful events. I demonstrated that humanitarian organizations can take part in this work with efficiency, and the practice of Red Cross based on their experience, can be adaptable for other organizations as well.

I observed that the improvement of community resilience is only possible if we have a thorough understanding on the attributes, environment, weaknesses and resources of a community, which needs to be measured. **Developed** a methodology for measuring resilience considering vulnerability and capacities of the population. It gives an exact and actual picture about the resources of the population and about the factors which makes them vulnerable against possible hazards. **Categorized** processes, methods and tools that can improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the survey, and **discovered** that their selection is the key to the

authenticity of future measurements. By analyzing the immediate and long-term needs emerging in case of disasters or other crises, **I found** the importance of complex assessment methods in order to ensure that post-disaster intervention and long-term recovery truly serve the interests of the communities concerned. **Highlighted** the difficulties in vulnerability and capacity assessment, planning and implementation, **I made a proposal** for project-based application of humanitarian program development, with continuous monitoring and evaluation.

NEW SCIENTIFIC ACHIEVEMENTS

1. Based on the scientific study of the history and the programs of the Red Cross, *I verified* first the existing capabilities and methods that enable it for the humanitarian work with respect to new challenges, and besides *I specified* the possibilities and directions of renewal to ensure effective and successful performance for its member national societies.
2. In order to improve the efficiency of disaster risk reduction, preparedness and response, ***I defined*** the practical structure and tasks of disaster response units, assessment and coordination teams of the IFRC, and the health units operated by its national societies, and ***I made a proposal*** for the technical modernization of the emergency health care units. Based on this *I justified* first the need for the supportive role of humanitarian assistance abilities in the work of national governmental defense bodies.
3. ***I categorized*** the components of individual and social resilience to disasters and other crises, and ***defined*** the factors and requirements needed for the development of psychosocial health. On this basis ***identified and modeled*** the humanitarian aid activities and programs contributing to the preservation and improvement of psychosocial health, and ***proved*** the proportionality in the interaction between resilience and social welfare.
4. By analyzing the resilience programs of the Red Cross, ***I defined*** the abilities that contribute to the improvement of community resilience and ***developed a new methodology*** - including data collection and evaluation - for planning and execution of the assessment of a population's capacity.

RECOMMENDATIONS

I recommend to use the analysis and research results revealed in the dissertation for the following aspects:

- development of new concepts and sector strategies aimed to support and improve the resilience of the population,
- the integration of tools, methods and processes effective on international level to local practice, and their adaptation to local patterns and capabilities,
- to strengthen the international role and importance of international scientific relations, local research results and innovation knowledge transfer,
- to include in researches aimed at the long-term impact of resilience measuring methods and tools on the population's resilience.
- as an expansion of local publications regarding the subject, for all researches and practical project management uses that aim the improvement of knowledge and abilities related to resilience and humanitarian aid.

PRACTICAL APPLICATION OF THE RESEARCH RESULTS

I recommend the practical use of the dissertation in the following fields:

- for the development of programs to assess vulnerability and capacity of the population,
- for the use in the curriculum of higher education students specialized in related fields, and in the studies and training programs for defense specialists,
- to support the work of professionals and decision-makers of governmental organizations and NGOs in the field of disaster response,
- to raise awareness for the supportive role of the Red Cross for the prevailing governments

LIST OF PUBLICATIONS OF THE AUTHOR RELATED TO THE TOPIC

Publications in authoritative magazine

- 1.) Brigitta SÁFÁR, Árpád MUHORAY: Implementation of standardized field assessment teams in the international disaster response system of the Red Cross. *Hadmérnök*, VII. Évfolyam, 2. szám. 2012. június, pp. 173-183. ISSN 1788-1919

- 2.) Brigitta SÁFÁR, Júlia HORNYACSEK: The psychosocial support programme of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies. *Műszaki Katonai Közlöny*, 2011. december, Különszám, pp. 35-50. ISSN:1219-4166
- 3.) Brigitta SÁFÁR: The climate change programme of the Red Cross Movement. *Bolyai Szemle*, XXII. évf. 1. szám, 2013. pp. 147-158. ISSN: 1416-1443
- 4.) Brigitta SÁFÁR: Silent Disasters. *Műszaki Katonai Közlöny*, XXIII. évfolyam, 2013. Július, Különszám, pp. 367-378. ISSN 1219-4166
- 5.) Brigitta SÁFÁR: The disaster response system of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies. *Védelem Online*, 2012. <http://www.vedelem.hu/letoltes/anyagok/246-a-voroskereszt-es-vorosfelhold-tarsasagok-nemzetkozi-szovetsegenek-katasztrofavedelmi-rendszere.pdf>
- 6.) Brigitta SÁFÁR: Child soldiers – The reintegration programme of ICRC. *Humana Emberi jogi magazin*, 2010. március. I. évf. 4. szám. p. 26. ISSN 2061-697X
- 7.) SÁFÁR Brigitta: The auxiliary role of Red Cross National Societies in the task system of preparedness and response. *Bolyai Szemle*, ISSN 1416-1443, Expected to be published: 2018. Vol. 2.

Publications in foreign language

- 8.) Brigitta SÁFÁR, Árpád MUHORAY: The Practice of International Search and Rescue in Haiti, *AARMS*, Vol. 12, No. 1. 2013. pp. 67–72. ISSN 2064-0021
- 9.) SÁFÁR Brigitta: Deployment of standardized emergency response units in large scale emergencies. *Műszaki Katonai Közlöny*, ISSN 2063-4986, Expected to be published: 2018. September.

Papers in conference publication

- 10.) Brigitta SÁFÁR: *The role of volunteers in the humanitarian support of the population.* „Duna-Dráva flood experiences, flash floods in Baranya county” Conference, PTE, Pécs, 2015. október 16.
- 11.) Brigitta SÁFÁR: *The task system of cooperation of governmental and non-governmental organizations in the field of preparation for disasters and crises.* In serve of society – Preparedness and preparation for disasters Conference, PTE, Pécs, 2017, november 23. Expected to be published: 2018. autumn.

Conference lectures

- 12.) Brigitta SÁFÁR: *HERO 2016 – About a humanitarian preparedness exercise, IV.* Conference about the vulnerability of big cities – The future is already the past. Budapest Főváros Kormányhivatala, Budapest, 2016. december. 8.
- 13.) Brigitta SÁFÁR: *The community resilience programme of the Red Cross.* In serve of the country 2017 Conference, Ludovika, Budapest, 2017. november 24.
- 14.) Brigitta SÁFÁR: *The task system of cooperation of governmental and non-governmental organizations in the field of preparation for disasters and crises.* In serve of society – Preparedness and preparation for disasters Conference, PTE, Pécs, 2017, november 23.
- 15.) Brigitta SÁFÁR: *The role of volunteers in the humanitarian support of the population.* „Duna-Dráva flood experiences, flash floods in Baranya county” Conference, PTE, Pécs, 2015. október 16.
- 16.) Brigitta SÁFÁR: *Rebuilding communities.* „Conference on the 5th anniversary of Red Sludge Disaster”, Kolontár, Művelődési Ház, 2015. október 5.

AUTHOR’S PROFESSIONAL AND SCIENTIFIC CURRICULUM VITAE

Name: Brigitta Sáfár

Date and place of birth: 24 June, 1978, Budapest

Professional career:

I graduated from Mihály Károlyi Bilingual Grammar School in 1997, in Spanish and Hungarian, and continued my studies at the faculty of Communication and Psychology at the University of Szeged, where I acquired MsC in 2004. From 2007 I attended Zrínyi Miklós National University of Public Service, where I completed disaster management specialty in 2009 as a certified MSc defence administration manager. Regarding my professional career, after 3 years of volunteer service, I started working as a communications referent for the Red Cross in 2006. The experience I gained working for the Red Cross steered me to extend my knowledge in the field of disaster management. Having obtained my specialization degree, I became the disaster response referent for the Hungarian Red Cross Budapest Branch in 2009 where I spent 3 years. Meanwhile I joined the international disaster response system of the Red Cross. I became a member of the regional assessment and coordination unit of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) in 2009, and acquired the international mission readiness course for the International Federation’s water

and sanitation modules. Since 2012 I have been acting as the national Head of Disaster Management of the Hungarian Red Cross. I have been a member of the IFRC's „Resilience Task Force” since 2013. I am also a member of the European Psychosocial Support Network, which is responsible for the development and coordination of psychosocial programs for the IFRC, WHO and IASC.

Scientific activities

The focus of my research is the assessment and improvement possibilities of resilience, both of individuals and communities affected by disasters and crises. Furthermore I focus on the research of psychosocial health of the individual, and the possibilities of resistance to damaging factors. My research also covers the assessment of the needs of the population affected by disasters, and the exploration of the features that improve the efficiency of humanitarian organizations.

As an expert I participated in the international Snowball project between 2014 and 2017, where - amongst 11 consortium partners - I investigated human behavior as a potential domino effect trigger in various disaster situations. The unique findings of my previous research, in which I have studied the abilities, programs and the assistance techniques and methods of the Red Cross, can also be applied to other organizations. At present I am researching the international application possibilities of standardized response units.

I have regular publications as lead author and as a co-author, both in English and Hungarian in journals such as AARMS, Bolyai Szemle, Műszaki Katonai Közlöny, Hadmérnök, Védelem, Humana and Világunk. I was a founder of „Világunk” the online journal of the Hungarian Red Cross. I published 7 articles in reviewed professional journals and 2 more manuscripts have been submitted. I also have 8 more publications in non-reviewed professional journals and conference publications. I attended a significant number of scientific conferences with lectures both in Hungarian and English. I am a regular lecturer at conferences organized by the National University of Public Service and the University of Pécs.

Language skills: Spanish, English

Future research plans:

I would like to research the possibilities regarding the the psychosocial preparation and support of the volunteer responders. Further I would like to continue analyzing the effectiveness of the measurement methodologies for community resilience programmes.

Brigitta Sáfár

