**INITIAL FINDINGS**

**Main points from the survey responses**

1.There is solid support across the organisation for the National priorities.

2. There is solid support for the **International Priorities** within the membership, the youth section and staff. Among members, there is consistently strong or very strong support for all the Internationalpriorities, particularly **Priority 1** (*Provide funding and/or direct support service to communities in need in times of disaster and crisis, to save lives and strengthen recovery*, 81%) and **Priority 3** (*Promote and advocate for adherence to international humanitarian law*, 75%). Among members, support is lightly weaker for **Priority 5** (*Directly provide funds and expertise to assist National Red Cross societies build their capacity*, 62%), **Priority 2** (*Work with the Federation and the ICRC to link with communities in need in identified areas of Africa and the Middle East* 60%) and **Priority 4** (*Advocate and raise funds for people on the migration trail* 56%). However, this support needs to be viewed in the context of the low priority that members appear to assign elsewhere in their survey responses to international work and working with refugees. This seems to create signs of tensions over the IRC’s involvement in International work and over the IRC’s work with refugees within Ireland. Some staff consider that international **Priority 2** (*work with IFRC and ICRC*) and **Priority 3** (*promote adherence to international humanitarian law*) are not relevant. The responses from the Youth Section indicate strong support for the organisation’s international relief and advocacy work. Among the Youth Section there is a high level of priority for *Work with other national societies in order to deliver aid* (91%), *Fund-raise for overseas initiatives e.g. earthquakes* (87%), *Promote that people abide by International Humanitarian Law/the Geneva Conventions* (73%), and *Raise funds for people on their migration trail* (59%)

3. There is a diverse pool of skills and expertise embodied in the membership, particularly in the following areas: Community & Voluntary (61%), Health (44%), Private sector (38%), Public sector (36%), Teaching (30%) and Self-employed (22%).

4. Most adult members have been members for 6 years or longer, however the largest group of members includes those who have been a member for 1-5 years. Within the Youth Section, 97% have been members for between 1 and 6 years, 3% between 7 and 9 years; none have been a member for 10 or more years. The age profile of the Youth Section suggests that most Youth members (59%) are aged between 10 and 15; 34% are between 16 and 18; 7% are between 4 and 9 years.

5. The organisation need to improve its communications and become better at telling its story, leveraging its brand, and positioning itself more accurately as a leading organisation within its sector in Ireland

6. Members strongly identify the following words with IRC:

* Voluntary (90%)
* Humane (56%)
* Professional (53%)
* Reliable (53%)
* Trustworthy (53%)
* Competent (50%)

7. 42% of members associate the word ‘prepared’ with IRC

8. There is a relatively weak sense of connection to the global Red Cross movement. 45% of members associate the word ‘global’ with IRC

9. Members associate the following words least strongly with IRC

* Creative (15%)
* Developmental (27%)
* Traditional (28%)
* Warm (33%)
* Structured (36%)
* Challenging (36%)

10. Overall cohesion among the various parts of the organisation is patchy or weak, although at local branch level the opposite appears to be the case. Almost two thirds (64%) of members feel very strongly or strongly connected to the local branch. This means that around one third of members do not feel connected to the local branch.

11. Members feel distant from Head Office, and Head Office staff do not feel a strong sense of connection with the local and area structures, and the survey responses suggest that the level and frequency of contact is a factor here. Only 9% of members feel strongly connected and a further 12% feel somewhat connected to the IRC National structures.

12. Members are least satisfied with the following aspects of their membership:

* Quality of communication locally and regionally
* The support they receive to help deal with governance, regulation, compliance, reporting and similar requirements
* Opportunities to have an input into decisions
* Services/supports provided by IRC Head Office
* Effectiveness of the new national organisation structure
* Quality of communication from Head Office
* Quality of social events
* Frequency of social events

13. The only 2 issues where members are more dissatisfied than satisfied are (a) quality of communication from Head Office and (b) frequency of social events

14. 73% of members are likely to attend Regional information and social events with guest speakers.

15. 72% of members are likely to attend an Annual General Meeting open to all members.

16. 66% of members are likely to attend an annual one or two-day national conference type event with guest speakers.

17. There is a core of around 30% of the membership who identify as “unlikely” or “highly unlikely” to attend any of the types of event proposed

18. Organisational structure and culture are core issues, and these impact on members’ and staff views and experiences in many ways. There is evidence of dissonance between the goals and ways of working across the various parts of the entire organisation. The global dimension of being part of the Irish Red Cross does not feature strongly in members’ responses. Communication and organisational culture seem to be behind most of the challenging issues raised and may account for the apparent dissonance between the various parts of the entire organisation. There is evidence of ‘rivalry’ between different parts of the organisation, possibly arising from role confusion and/or lack of clarity on responsibility/authority, and this could also be connected to issues such as self-awareness, management skills and training.

19. Competition from other voluntary providers of training and services is not considered a significant threat.

20. Staff identify the following organisations as the main competitors: (ranked in order): Concern, Order of Malta and St John (joint second), Trócaire, GOAL, Oxfam, Civil Defence, UNICEF and Barnardo’s (joint seventh).

21. Competition from private sector operators is not considered significant and no private operator of services is considered a significant competitor

22. For the new strategy, members identify the following issues as the most important are (in order or priority):

* Recruitment of new and diverse members
* Maintenance and provision of equipment, hardware and vehicles
* Training structures of organisation for members AND Training structure of organisation
* RC Youth membership development
* Membership development services
* Cohesion across the whole organisation and how the organisation is structured
* Public perception of charities
* New learning management systems supporting online learning
* Reviewing the organisational culture of the IRC
* The IRC’s identity and brand
* Funding strategy for the organisation locally and nationally
* Training for community development
* Leadership role for IRC in promoting the seven principles of the movement
* Regulation and governance issues
* Ageing population

23. For the new strategy, staff identify the following issues as the most important are (in order or priority)

* developing new services within communities,
* international work,
* funding strategy,
* restoring family links,
* youth development,
* community development,
* working with refugees,
* training in community development,
* the IRC’s identity & brand,
* planning for an ageing population,
* public perception of charities,
* membership development,
* leadership role for IRC,
* regulation & governance issues,
* climate change,
* added value of changing demographics in Ireland
* competition from private sector

24. Members identify a complex range of issues and concerns that need to be addressed in the new strategy and these include:

* funding;
* organisational structures and controls; balance of local/national/international work;
* HR issues;
* role of private sector/commercial providers;
* recognition of skills/qualifications/experience;
* tension arises from funding international work and work with refugees over local/domestic needs;
* communication issues;
* delays in membership process; cost/quality of uniforms;
* some branches feel alienated because of focus on international work (“charity begins at home”).

**Note on the surveys:**

Surveys were carried out with adult members, youth members and IRC staff:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Survey** | **Responses** |
| Members | 539 |
| Staff | 35 |
| Youth | 198 |

PRIORITIES FOR THE IRC: The surveys asked respondents to comment on the following National Priorities and International Priorities:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | **NATIONAL PRIORITIES** |
| 1 | Preparedness for fulfilling our unique role as an auxiliary body to the Government of Ireland protecting and saving lives in emergency situations |
| 2 | Promoting healthy and safe living within our communities and being present in this capacity at community events |
| 3 | Providing information and training services on first aid, so that at least one person in every household in Ireland is trained in first aid |
| 4 | Acting as a catalyst in communities to promote wellbeing, peace and a culture of non-violence |
| 5 | Targeting services and information to be used in assisting the most vulnerable in our communities (e.g. prisoners, refugees, homeless people) |
| 6 | Supporting young people by providing learning and development activities |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | **INTERNATIONAL PRIORITIES** |
| 1 | Provide funding and/or direct support service to communities in need in times of disaster and crisis, to save lives and strengthen recovery |
| 2 | Work with the Federation and the ICRC to link with communities in need in identified areas of Africa and the Middle East |
| 3 | Promote, and advocate for adherence to, international humanitarian law |
| 4 | Advocate and raise funds for people on the migration trail |
| 5 | Directly provide funds and expertise to assist National Red Cross societies build their capacity |

**People who responded to the surveys rated the importance of these priorities as follows:**

**PRIORITY SCORES based on surveys (expressed as % of respondents who assign importance or high importance to each priority)**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **NATIONAL PRIORITIES** | **Members** | **Youth** | **Staff** |
| 1 | Preparedness for fulfilling our unique role as an auxiliary body to the Government of Ireland protecting and saving lives in emergency situations | 82 | 91 | 75 |
| 2 | Promoting healthy and safe living within our communities and being present in this capacity at community events | 79 | 38 | 79 |
| 3 | Providing information and training services on first aid, so that at least one person in every household in Ireland is trained in first aid | 75 | 65 | 83 |
| 4 | Acting as a catalyst in communities to promote wellbeing, peace and a culture of non-violence | 56 | 17 | 62 |
| 5 | Targeting services and information to be used in assisting the most vulnerable in our communities (e.g. prisoners, refugees, homeless people) | 64 | 67 | 79 |
| 6 | Supporting young people by providing learning and development activities | 70 | 31 | 67 |

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **INTERNATIONAL PRIORITIES** | **Members** | **Youth** | **Staff** |
| 1 | Provide funding and/or direct support service to communities in need in times of disaster and crisis, to save lives and strengthen recovery | 81 | 87 | 87 |
| 2 | Work with the Federation and the ICRC to link with communities in need in identified areas of Africa and the Middle East | 60 | 91 | 71 |
| 3 | Promote, and advocate for adherence to, international humanitarian law | 75 | 73 | 74 |
| 4 | Advocate and raise funds for people on the migration trail | 56 | 59 | 70 |
| 5 | Directly provide funds and expertise to assist National Red Cross societies build their capacity | 62 | n/a | n/a |

At this stage in the consultation process (February 2018), the following are emerging as the main themes and issues:

1. **Strategic**: National priorities, International Priorities; connectedness to IFRC and ICRC; awareness of competition and threats; clarity of purpose; sense of common purpose; position and influence within the broader sector; funding
2. **Membership**: services, value and utility of membership to individuals and communities, connectedness locally, regionally and nationally; specific issues to do with relationship with Head Office; the nature of the relationship between members and IRC;
3. **Organisational culture**: sense of common purpose; issues to do with the effectiveness of the environment for individuals and groups within the organisation (decision-making, troubleshooting, learning); harmony and disharmony between different organisational modes (volunteer, member, committees, fulltime staff); issues to do with managing authority, power, responsibility; competing identities (individual, group, structural elements);
4. **Communications**: within and across the various structural elements of the organisation (volunteers, committees, management, governing body); between IRC and
5. **Operational**: equipment and facilities; process for becoming a member & member recruitment; funding

**External stakeholders – initial overview of themes and issues from interviews: (nb not all interviews yet completed at time of writing 22 Feb 2018)**

1. The IRC’s role at the international level is vital, the organisation is held in high regard and is seen as an innovative member; however, the IRC could be more audible and visible
2. The IRC’s brand is remarkably strong, and it is seen as an impartial, neutral humanitarian organisation; however, the full picture of what IRC does is not always clear, and the organisation is often seen as either a national service or an international service, rarely as both
3. There is a leadership gap among the larger voluntary service organisations in Ireland, in the face of privatisation and increased competition; and perhaps there is a role for the IRC to lead or instigate work with others to advocate for community and societal value
4. It is becoming harder to differentiate among the multiple providers of training and other services, yet the IRC has a brand, history and global network that is unique – is there a niche that the IRC can develop?
5. The IRC’s contribution to the international agenda is considered valuable and necessary, but it needs to be more innovative; IRC supporters want to see IRC play a fuller role, realising more of its potential.
6. IRC has shown its capacity and ability to develop creative and innovative responses to situations, it excels in some areas yet seems over stretched or diluted in others – does the organisation try to do too much all the time?
7. The IRC has the capacity and connections to play a leading role in supporting vulnerable people in Ireland, including refugees and migrants, at times of need when other official services have played their part and moved on – there are gaps that IRC seems uniquely placed to fill.
8. IRC’s processes and ways of working seem outdated and cumbersome, things can take too log and today people have different models in mind for having a relationship with an organisation – the challenge is that IRC may have limited room to change or adapt some aspects of how it works
9. IRC needs to remind Ireland what it stands for and why it exists – there is a risk that it loses its identity in a very crowded and competitive environment; and Ireland, officially, needs to get the most from its association with the Red Cross movement at all levels internationally.