



International Federation  
of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

## Italian Red Cross teams up with academia to train volunteers in IDRL



In a unique new partnership, the Italian Red Cross (IRC) and the Università Telematica Internazionale Uninettuno (UTIU) in Rome are collaborating to educate IRC volunteers on laws relating to international disaster response (IDRL) and related topics. The first training course was held in May, delivering specialized knowledge on the topic and providing an opportunity for volunteers to become IDRL instructors.

Approximately 45 IRC volunteers gathered at the Institute of International Humanitarian Law in San Remo for a three-day course on legal preparedness for international disaster response. Distinguished scholars from several Italian universities, including UTIU, Roma Tre and the Universities of Bologna and Milan, presented the latest developments in this relatively new field of law. In addition to IDRL, topics included disaster risk reduction, European disaster response mechanisms, the Tampere Convention as well as human trafficking. The course consisted of theoretical as well as practical sessions, the latter of which were delivered by IRC experts and linked legal issues in disaster situations to field experience.

The idea for the training course was born in 2010 when scholars from the UTIU delivered a presentation on IDRL to Red Cross volunteers in Gaeta, Italy at the 9<sup>th</sup> National Conference on International Humanitarian Law (IHL). Until then, National Society workshops had focused exclusively on IHL. IRC was quick to recognise the high demand for IDRL education in Italy, owing in part to Italy's exposure to natural hazards and the severe earthquakes experienced in recent years.

Interest in the training was high, and due to the numerous applications only volunteers who had already gained experience as IHL and civil protection instructors or emergency managers were accepted. In addition, one of the requirements for participation in the course was successful completion of the interactive IDRL online training module. Dr Flavia Zorzi Giustiniani, Scientific Coordinator of the joint project, recalls the positive feedback from all of the participants. This has encouraged the organizers to run a second edition of the training course next year and they are hoping that it will turn into an annual event to allow more volunteers to participate.

“We are very excited and impressed by this initiative of the Italian Red Cross and its partners,” says David Fisher, IFRC Disaster Law Programme Coordinator. “We often hear that National Societies lack knowledge and capacity in the area of disaster law although the related issues are very relevant to their work. Partnerships like the one between IRC and UTIU are a great way of building a base of capacity and expertise within National Societies and of sharing knowledge between academia and practitioners. We hope that other National Societies might be inspired to follow suit and establish similar programmes.”