

The ICRC in Eritrea 2011

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) is a neutral and independent, strictly humanitarian organisation. Its mandate, based on the Geneva Conventions of 1949, is to work for the respect of international humanitarian law in times of armed conflicts and to alleviate the suffering of the victims of such conflicts. The ICRC opened its delegation in Eritrea in 1998, and has been active since then to address the humanitarian consequences of the 1998-2000 conflict with Ethiopia.

Assistance

Water and Habitat

The ICRC Water and Habitat Department, in collaboration with the Water Resource Department (WRD) and Zoba Authorities, initiated projects to provide an adequate water supply to resident, returnees and resettled communities in the border areas of Gash Barka and Southern Red Sea Regions.

Fact Box – Water and Habitat

- *8 water supply systems were maintained or repaired to benefit 9,535 people*
- *22 members of the WRD were trained for three weeks in collecting and analyzing of hydrological and meteorological data*
- *4 new water supply systems were constructed to benefit more than 10,000*

As one of the main organization providing water supply, the ICRC maintained its focus in developing and rehabilitating clean and sustainable water supply systems to communities that have been affected by the border conflict with Ethiopia. In addition, ICRC installed solar-powered water has reduced dependency on fuel for the rural communities.

19,685 people have benefited in 2011 from four newly constructed water supply systems in villages of Falasab in Gash Barka, Beilul and Rae-Bukra in Southern Red Sea. In addition, eight water supply systems were repaired to serve the people in Sheshebit, Elala and Ferer areas.

Economic and Security

In 2011, the Economic Security program continued supporting the productive means of the people located in the border areas with Ethiopia. The focus has been on projects aimed at enabling residents, returnees and resettled to regain a sustainable livelihood. This has included providing tractor ploughing, livestock anti-parasite treatments, foot-pumps and vegetable seeds.

Since 2004, the ICRC has addressed the lack of labour and ploughing forces by providing tractor-ploughing services to mostly women headed families who are residents of border areas with Ethiopia. In 2011 the villages selected in collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture were located in areas where people had returned or been resettled in the past few years. 3,984 farmers were supported through the ICRC's Tractor Ploughing program.

The ICRC also has made efforts in minimizing livestock mortality and increasing the chances of the livestock surviving the prolonged dry season by undertaking anti-parasite control program. In 2011, 171,700 people have benefited from the livestock antiparasite control program.

Fact Box – Economic and Security

- *Helped 3,984 farmers to preserve their livelihoods by ploughing their field with tractors*
- *treat over 1,000,000 livestock against parasites in Gash Barka and Southern Red Sea benefiting 171,700 people*
- *Distributed 77 foot-pumps, 774.4 kg of different kinds of vegetable seeds and farms tools for 308 farmers in Gash Barka and Southern Red Sea of which 88% of them are women.*

Protection

In 2011, the ICRC Protection Department has continued to support vulnerable civilians and restore family links for people affected by the past border conflict between Eritrea and Ethiopia.

Protecting civilians

The ICRC continued to provide financial assistance for vulnerable members of the Ethiopian community who were unable to renew their Eritrean residence permit due to lack of means, or to Ethiopians wishing to go back to their country on a voluntary basis, but who could not afford the administrative costs implied. Acting as a neutral intermediary, the ICRC enabled former students of the Universities of Asmara and Addis Ababa to retrieve their transcripts and degrees, to enable them to continue their studies or apply for work.

Restoring Family Links

With the Ethiopia-Eritrea border still closed and no cross-border telecommunication and postal services, the ICRC together with the Red Cross Society of Eritrea maintained the tracing and Red Cross message (RCM) network so that relatives separated by the border could keep in touch. It also continued to trace people who lost contact with relatives abroad.

Cooperation

In 2011, the ICRC continued to develop, support and build the capacity of the Red Cross Society of Eritrea (RCSE) to respond to disasters, restore family links through Red Cross Messages (RCMs) and tracing, and to create awareness on the international humanitarian law and the fundamental principles of the Red Cross Red Crescent movement.

Mine risk education 30 volunteers could benefit from this support through 245 awareness sessions, 37,500 civilians could learn more about the danger posed by mines allowing them to take suitable precautions.

RFL activities 7,446 Red Cross Messages were exchanged between family members separated by the sealed Eritrea-Ethiopian border, and Somali refugees in Eritrea continued to restore contact or exchange news through the family-links service run by the Eritrean Red Cross with ICRC training. 100 focal points and community volunteer facilitator continue to receive training to carry out their work.

Emergency Preparedness and Response During ICRC-supported training sessions, 87 volunteers learnt about managing relief operations. In addition, 168 school teachers, 572 school students from 23 secondary schools, 43 kindergarten teachers, 99 police members, 75 drivers and 75 industrial workers from 6 zobas garnered basic first-aid skills, enabling them to respond effectively to a variety of emergencies.

Communication

The ICRC continued to raise awareness and promote respect for internal humanitarian law (IHL) among civilians and the authorities. IHL is a body of rules that during war time protect people who are not participating in the hostilities by limiting the means and methods of warfare to prevent unnecessary suffering.

Promoting IHL

In coordination with the National Union of Eritrean Youth and Students, the ICRC has conducted dissemination sessions to hundreds of the Union members to raise their awareness on the basis of IHL and the activities of ICRC. In addition, the ICRC in coordination with the RCSE increased the awareness of IHL and ICRC mandate by organizing information sessions to around 23,000 people (including village elders, religious leaders, teachers, students, local administrators and Eritrean Red Cross volunteers).

Mission

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) is an impartial, neutral and independent organization whose exclusively humanitarian mission is to protect the lives and dignity of victims of war and internal violence and to provide them with assistance. It directs and coordinates the international relief activities conducted by the Movement in situations of conflict. It also endeavours to prevent suffering by promoting and strengthening humanitarian law and universal humanitarian principles. Established in 1863, the ICRC is at the origin of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement.

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Fact box: Protection

- 956 vulnerable Ethiopians were supported in renewing their resident permit, while 404 received financial assistance to go back to their country
- 7,446 Red Cross Messages were exchanged between separated families
- 44 official documents forwarded from Eritrea to Ethiopia.
- 57 travel documents were issued for Somalis in order to be resettled
- 13 Eritrean families were reunited abroad