

ICRC in Sri Lanka

Enhancing the Humanitarian Dialogue

Dear Reader,

Welcome to the second edition of the newsletter of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) delegation in Sri Lanka. The ICRC's continued role in post-conflict Sri Lanka to contribute to addressing the medium and longer term needs of persons who have been affected by the conflict was acknowledged recently in the Report of the Commission of Inquiry on the Lessons Learnt and Reconciliation (the Commission). The Report encouraged continued cooperation between the Sri Lankan authorities and the ICRC in matters relating to missing persons, detention, re-establishing and maintaining family-links and on the promotion and implementation of International Humanitarian Law (IHL).

During a conflict many people go missing, causing unspeakable anguish and uncertainty for their families and friends, sometimes for decades. Unlike the relatives of deceased persons who can mourn the death of their loved ones, uncertainty about the fate of missing persons means that families are unable to move on with their lives or begin the process of recovery. This edition carries a story of a woman coping with the loss of her husband after the conflict in Nepal (see page 10). In Sri Lanka, the Commission, in its Report, called for all efforts to be made "by the law enforcement authorities, in cooperation with relevant agencies, especially the ICRC, to trace the whereabouts of the missing persons and ensure reunification with their families", including children who were separated from their parents. (LLRC Report, para. 5.35 and 5.38). The ICRC remains committed to support the authorities in these endeavours.

The Commission also underscored the plight of those women and children who continue to suffer as a result of prolonged separation from a detained family member. The Commission noted that through the Red Cross Family Visit Program (FVP), delivered

jointly by the ICRC and the Sri Lanka Red Cross Society (SLRCS), travel allowances are provided to families requiring financial support to visit family members who are held in relation to the past conflict (LLRC Report, para 5.59). In 2011, this enabled over 5000 families to re-establish or maintain essential links with their relatives held in detention.

In Boosa and Omanthai (the latter is now closed) the ICRC, with the consent of the authorities, conducts bilateral interviews with detainees about their conditions of detention, which are then shared in a confidential manner with the authorities with the aim of improving their welfare. The Commission, in welcoming this policy of cooperation with the ICRC, recommended that "the Government expands its cooperation and constructive engagement with the ICRC ... to ensure the welfare of the detainees." (LLRC Report, para. 5.60)

The ICRC's work to improve the conditions of individual detainees, in Sri Lanka and worldwide, extends beyond visits to individual detainees. An individual detainee's welfare is invariably affected by the general prison conditions. In the Philippines, Rwanda, Bolivia and Tunisia, the ICRC is working with the prison authorities to alleviate the humanitarian challenges that arise from severe overcrowding in prisons. In Sri Lanka, the ICRC is embarking on an initiative to assist the authorities in their endeavours to address the causes and consequences of prison overcrowding. Legal and practical aspects relating to this systematic endeavour are highlighted in pages 2 and 3.

Another highlight of the Report was the Commission's extensive analysis of the complexities and challenges on the application of IHL - the legal framework governing the conduct of hostilities. The ICRC continues to engage with the

authorities, in particular the National IHL Committee, on the implementation of IHL (see page 5).

As the Commission noted, the humanitarian consequences of any conflict continues to be reflected in the "immense economic hardships and poverty under which the families are living at present...", especially in instances where the breadwinner is missing, detained, disabled or deceased due to the conflict. (LLRC Report, para s. 5.112 and 5.114) The ICRC, together with the Sri Lanka Red Cross Society is conducting a pilot project in the Vavuniya District, aimed at providing sustainable livelihoods for women-headed households and the disabled (see pages 6 and 7). In addition, the ICRC continues its technical and financial support to national institutions, such as the Jaffna Jaipur Centre for Disability Rehabilitation (JJCDR) and Navajeevana Centre in Tangalle (see page 8) to enable them to better assist persons who lost their limbs due to the conflict, to live a normal life. (LLRC Report, para. 5.124 and 5.125)

In the next quarter, the ICRC will continue to work in close collaboration with Sri Lankan authorities and national institutions and organizations, foremost the Sri Lanka Red Cross Society, to contribute to addressing the remaining humanitarian challenges in post-conflict Sri Lanka. Some of these initiatives are described in the following pages. The ICRC remains committed to support the endeavors of the national institutions with its international comparative experience and the specialized professionals assigned to the ICRC team in Sri Lanka.



Ruwanthika Gunaratne
Legal & Political Advisor
ICRC Delegation
Sri Lanka



ICRC



A Systemic Approach to Address Recurrent Problems in Prisons

Carrying out confidential humanitarian visits to persons detained in relation to an armed conflict or other situation of violence to assess their conditions of detention, is an integral part of the ICRC's work. The ICRC is currently carrying out this humanitarian mandate in over 70 different countries around the world.

Similarly, in Sri Lanka, the ICRC has been visiting places of detention to meet with persons whose liberty has been deprived as a result of the past conflict. These visits, which have been carried out since 1990 with the agreement of authorities, aim to ensure that the treatment and material conditions of persons being detained, whatever the reason for their arrest and detention, are in accordance with internationally recognized norms and humanitarian standards.

The ICRC works with the authorities concerned to ensure respect for these legal norms and standards, and thereby to ensure the adequacy of their application in the treatment of individual detainees in places of detention. The ICRC's observations and recommendations following visits to places of detention and the ensuing discussions

From the LLRC Report...

"They (detainees) have spent long periods in detention without charges being preferred and consequently their educational prospects have been severely affected." (LLRC Report, para 5.51).

"Some detainees were referred to by the next of kin as their breadwinners and it was stated that the release of the breadwinner would help begin the restoration of normalcy in their lives. This would also help them to move their families into independent sustenance within a short period without entirely depending upon the Government and other external sources." (LLRC Report, para 5.55 d).

with individual detainees are shared in a constructive spirit with the relevant authorities with a view to improving the treatment afforded to detainees. These discussions, which are confidential and bilateral in nature, provide an opportunity for the ICRC to share its expertise and knowledge with the authorities and to

offer support, whenever appropriate. Apart from these visits, the ICRC also focuses on recurrent humanitarian problems in prisons that affect the treatment of detainees and conditions of detention, in general.

The fact that these recurrent problems exist in prisons worldwide tends to indicate that they might be due to common challenges encountered in the criminal justice system of that country and would require a systemic and multi-functional approach when they are being addressed.

In Sri Lanka, the existence of overcrowding is acknowledged by all national authorities concerned. It has been referred to repeatedly in the media as, presumably, one of the most pressing of the recurrent issues prevailing in Sri Lankan prisons, at the moment. It poses a significant humanitarian problem for both authorities and inmates alike.

The multiple factors contributing to overcrowding and the serious consequences of overcrowding in the Sri Lankan penitentiary system, which are well known to both the prison authorities and those involved in the criminal justice system,



affect stakeholder Sri Lankan authorities in different ways. With nearly 22 years of experience working with the Sri Lankan penitentiary system, the ICRC has offered its services, to explore with the authorities concerned, ways in which it can contribute to address prison overcrowding in Sri Lanka through a systemic and multi-professional approach to the causes as well as the consequences of this matter.

Admittedly, any person deprived of his or her liberty is entitled to benefit from the legal safeguards that apply throughout the criminal justice process including those that are specific to the pre-trial and trial phase.

What is less obvious is the causal link between ensuring respect for these legal procedures and the humanitarian problem of overcrowding in prisons.

The adequate application of legal procedures, insofar as ensuring the appropriate administration of justice is concerned, can influence the rate of admissions to prisons as well as the duration of a prisoner's term in the prison, which in turn can help to reduce overcrowding.

In the Philippines, the ICRC has been working with the Government to document and analyze the problem of overcrowding and its consequences for detainees and prison staff. In 2007, the findings were documented in a report titled "Call for Action", which aimed at persuading and mobilizing national authorities to address legal shortcomings, overcrowding and ill health in prisons.

This was followed by bilateral dialogue with the relevant authorities, which culminated in a government-organized conference in June 2008. With the support of the ICRC, relevant ministries, prison authorities and other stakeholder organisations discussed pragmatic and specific solutions to improve prison conditions and how to meet the budgetary and technical requirements for their implementation in 2009.

Following the conference, the government established three working groups tasked with discussing the issues of prison infrastructure, TB in detention and judicial follow-up. ICRC is involved in the work of each group, in collaboration with the Bureau of Jail Management and Penology (BJMP).

At the local level, the relevant authorities and the ICRC have carried out assessments and projects, and training sessions for BJMP engineers. By the end of 2008, the relevant government agencies, with ICRC support, signed a memorandum of understanding to support the efforts of the national TB programme to ensure that detainees are also covered by TB control measures.

They developed technical and operational guidelines for TB control which were adopted by the relevant agencies and drafted a road map for programme implementation in 2009.

With its international comparative expertise and the specific knowledge it has gathered through years of visits to prisons in Sri Lanka, which have enabled the ICRC to meet with detainees in private and also maintain a confidential bilateral dialogue with the relevant authorities, particularly on the legal issues mentioned above, the ICRC stands ready to contribute to the ongoing efforts of the relevant Sri Lankan authorities to address this matter of humanitarian concern in a systemic way.



Dr Ananda Samarasekera, Chief Judicial Medical Officer, leading the National Consultative Workshop

ICRC and SLRCS Contribute to the Formulation of a National Plan to Manage Dead Bodies in Disasters

Manmade and natural disasters, sometimes on an unprecedented scale like the tsunami of 2004, highlight the need to have an effective mechanism to manage dead bodies. Working closely with Sri Lankan stakeholders, the ICRC and the Sri Lanka Red Cross Society (SLRCS) have been providing technical and material support to advance, collectively, on a National Plan to manage dead bodies at times of disaster.

The Head of the Institute of Legal Medicine and Toxicology, the apex body responsible for providing forensic services in Sri Lanka, Dr Ananda Samarasekera, Chief Judicial Medical Officer (JMO), led this initiative to integrate the appropriate guidelines and procedures for the management of dead bodies during disasters into a national response framework. Here, he shares his views on the initiative:

1. Why is there a need for a National Plan at this time?

Sri Lanka has no guidelines and specific Standing Operating Procedures (SOPs) for the management of dead victims in disaster situations and catastrophes. We have, so far, relied on guidelines used in other countries, such as India, and by organisations like the WHO and the ICRC. But, it is important to have a properly laid down procedure,

because what is required is to have tailor-made SOP for each country, which is adapted to specific national needs.

These needs have become more relevant because Sri Lanka has a Ministry of Disaster Management, which is responsible for the management of all disaster situations – manmade or natural. Health issues relating to victims of disaster are also very important and the Ministry of Health, too, has established a separate unit to respond to these disasters.

The experts in this unit have identified the relevant health issues and are preparing protocol guidelines and procedures regarding health issues in disaster management.

The management of dead bodies is an important aspect in the preparation of these procedures and guidelines. The management of dead bodies during the tsunami raised ethical, legal and humanitarian questions and now people are more aware and concerned about the need for disaster management. This was the background for a consultative workshop, which was organised in December last year, with the participation of all stakeholders. The ICRC and SLRCS provided technical

and financial support for the workshop. The SLRCS also appointed a doctor to serve on the Steering Committee, which was entrusted with drafting the SOPs.

2. What was the outcome of the workshop?

The workshop was a tremendous success; because, we were able to identify problems such as the lack of legal provisions to deal with disaster situations and the large-scale loss of life and the infrastructure needed. We were able to reach a consensus on the remedial measures that can be taken in such situations.

A draft was drawn up with recommendations, which after it is finalised, hopefully within this year, would become a part of the National Plan of the Ministry of Disaster Management. International documents, particularly the ICRC document on the management of disaster victims, would also be adapted to the Sri Lankan context.

There will be committees set up at regional or district level to monitor the implementation of the recommendations as well as to update procedures.

3. How important is it to have a streamlined disaster management procedure for families of persons who die during disasters?

What we are trying to do is for the benefit of survivors. First of all to ensure as far as possible that the bodies of their loved ones can be properly identified. These measures will ensure that they get their civil benefits and their dead relatives have a dignified burial. It will also be important to avoid social harm such as claiming property illegally and getting false death certificates. Through streamlined procedures, health hazards for survivors will also be minimised.

4. What are the difficulties emergency services have to face in disaster situations?

Majority of disasters are unpredictable, like the tsunami, which was exceptional. The legislation to deal with it proved inadequate in its aftermath. For example, the current law only permits one inquest for every dead person and this is not possible when there is death on a mass scale. There are also many other issues, such as the lack of trained human resources and problems relating to logistics and issuance of death certificates.

5. In March this year, the National Steering Committee had its first meeting to draw up a National Plan of Action to handle dead bodies. How far has the Plan of Action progressed?

The draft Action Plan was finalised within the framework of the strategic plan of the Ministry of Health, which is already in place. This is also in keeping with the fundamental principles of the National Disaster Plan. The Committee discussed the contents of SOPs in three situations, namely at the scene of disaster or emergency, the procedure to be adopted when dead bodies are brought to the hospitals and when dealing with medico / legal activities at the JMO's Office or at the mortuary. They hope to finalise the drafting of these SOPs by the end of May this year.

Dr Ananda Samarasekera

Chief Judicial Medical Officer



Justice P. Dep, member of the Sri Lanka Delegation, chairing a session at the IHL Conference.

Role of Authorities in IHL Implementation Highlighted at the South Asia Conference

The 4th South Asian Conference on International Humanitarian Law (IHL) held in Bhutan, in February, emphasized the importance of the role played by the national authorities in the implementation of IHL in their respective countries.

Forty representatives including officials from Ministry of Defence, External Affairs, law-related ministries, office of the Prime Minister and parliamentarians from ten countries in South Asia and Iran participated in a meaningful dialogue on how IHL experts and the authorities can work together, more closely on the application of IHL in complex and challenging contexts. The officials also shared their upcoming plans on accessions and implementation of IHL treaties.

Every year, the ICRC organizes the South Asian IHL Conference with the broader objectives of updating IHL officials and authorities from various ministries on the latest developments in IHL as well as to set out their countries' priorities on IHL accessions and national implementation of international norms. It also encourages sharing of best practices and measures to ensure implementation of IHL among the countries of South Asia.

"At this Conference, discussions were held on new international norms and best practices, for example, in matters relating to ensuring better protection for those detained in relation to non-international armed conflict" said Christopher Harland, the ICRC Regional Legal Advisor. "Discussions were also held on possible new implementation mechanisms", he said.

The ICRC in Sri Lanka continues to support national authorities, in particular the National International Humanitarian Law Committee. This Committee is an inter-ministerial group, headed by the Ministry of External Affairs, and is responsible for the implementation of IHL treaties in Sri Lanka. In addition to its work with the authorities, the ICRC also works closely with the Sri Lanka Army, academic institutions and the Sri Lanka Red Cross Society in promoting and disseminating IHL and principles of international humanitarian norms.

In the wake of the recommendations of the Commission of Inquiry on the Lessons Learnt and Reconciliation, the ICRC is committed to enhancing this cooperation through a meaningful dialogue with the authorities. This includes supporting the participation of national officials at international conferences to enable them to share their experience, learn from others in the region and to broaden the knowledge of participants on the latest developments of IHL and international best practices.

Justice Priyasath Dep, Judge of the Supreme Court, Mr. Thusantha Wijemanna, Legal Advisor of the Ministry of External Affairs and Mrs. Dilhara Amarasinghe of the Ministry of Justice represented Sri Lanka at the 4th South Asian Conference.



Micro-economic initiatives (MEI) refer to income-generating undertakings at the level of a single household or, possibly, a group of households, by which the beneficiaries are encouraged to identify the most appropriate use of the humanitarian assistance they receive.

MEI seek to increase the compatibility of the assistance with the beneficiaries' skills and their specific needs. By putting the beneficiaries at the top of the decision-making process geared towards obtaining a revolving fund and enhancing their economic sustainability, MEI ensures a greater ownership of the income-generating project and, likewise, contributes significantly to strengthening their dignity.

While this approach definitely requires more time than the usual one-size-fits-all delivery of humanitarian assistance, its advantages over the longer term are invaluable as it assists the households to overcome their hardships through their own initiatives.



MEI program helps Yogalingam Siyanthan to start his own grocery shop

Persons who became vulnerable or disabled following the conflict benefit from the MEI program. In all of these situations, it is particularly difficult for these households to shoulder the economic burden of their families in the recovery phase. As the LLRC Report noted: "These immediate needs include economic assistance by way of providing them with means of livelihood and other income generating means so that they could reduce the immense economic hardships and poverty under which they and their families are living at present." (LLRC Report para. 5.112)

20 year old Yogalingam Siyanthan lives in Varudaiyaar Illuppaikkulam in the Vavuniya Division. He was disabled during the conflict and has to use a wheel chair. He lives with his elderly parents and three siblings. "As I am a disabled person and cannot walk, I decided to open a small grocery shop close to my home. With the cash grant of LKR 68,802 I received, I built a small shop in the village and bought all the groceries for the shop. I hope to expand the shop at the end of the project. Through this, I can be confident that my own business will fulfil my economic needs. I want to resume my education from where I stopped and this business will help me to pay for it. It will help my family overcome our current financial difficulties and allow my younger sisters to continue with their studies".

"I received a good training on how to manage a business venture successfully. It was very useful and I was continuously motivated by the technical support I received from the SLRCS. What I learnt about maintaining a simple accounting system, strategies to get more customers and methods to sustain my business in the long term were all very useful. It is only one month since I started the business; but there has been significant progress already. My sales for the day are around LKR 1500 of which around LKR 300 is profit".



Micro-Economic Initiatives:

Tailor-made Humanitarian Assistance to Enhance the Beneficiaries' Ownership of Income-Generating Projects

Sivalingam Ansika, 32, from Kilavikulam started a sewing business through the MEI program

In Sri Lanka, the Red Cross Micro Economic Initiative Project (MEI) is conducted in partnership with the ICRC and the Sri Lanka Red Cross Society (SLRCS). This pilot project, which started in October 2011, focuses on providing assistance for income generating activities foremost, to women-headed households. By end March 2012, 142 households in the Vavuniya and Vavuniya South Divisions of the Vavuniya district had received cash grants and Business Management Skills Training (BMST) to start a livelihood program of their choice. Most of these beneficiaries of the MEI program are those who fled their homes during the conflict and are now returning from Anuradhapura and adjoining districts.

The MEI program takes into account the diverse and specific needs of women who have lost their breadwinner and who are forced to take up unfamiliar roles as independent home managers and income providers for themselves and their children. This includes women who are war widows and whose husbands went missing during the conflict, or currently in prison or in a rehabilitation centre. Limited education and professional experience, coupled with reduced job opportunities, and the traditional roles and expectations placed on women, make it difficult for some of these women to adapt to the new realities they have to face. The obstacles faced by these women headed households, in particular, were documented in the Report of the Commission of Inquiry on the Lessons Learnt and Reconciliation (the Commission). The Commission noted that, "...women, children and elderly are the segments

that have taken the brunt of the conflict, seriously disrupting their lives. Many women have either lost their husbands or their whereabouts are unknown. Despite such trauma and hardship, they continue to support their families with young children and ageing parents". (LLRC Report pt. 5.102)

Sivalingam Ansika, 32, is from Kilavikulam in the Vavuniya Division. As a single woman who lost both her parents during the final stages of the conflict, she became eligible to receive a cash grant to start a sewing business through the MEI program. She has stitched three dresses and earned LKR 1500 in the first month since starting the business, increasing her monthly income by 35 percent. "I have sewn clothes for women and children in the past. As it is a business I know very well and I am skilled in, I chose this project confidently. There are no other tailoring shops in my village, so I know there is a need for one. I also chose this because I can run the business from my home. I received LKR 33,100 as a grant with which I purchased a sewing machine, materials, a big table and two chairs. The grant was sufficient to meet most of what I needed to start my business".

The beneficiaries receive Business Management Skills Training (BMST) on how to manage and develop their businesses before receiving conditional cash grants to begin their income generating projects. Ansika says the BMST was a very useful preparation for starting her own business. "The most useful part of the training for me was the education given on the local marketing techniques for our products and on the methods to build better

relations with customers and to maintain basic accounts. I have started applying some of these skills during my day-to-day business already. I am happy that I am maintaining my accounts since I started the business. I am confident this business will be my main source of income. I intend to open a shop, purchase another sewing machine and recruit one more person to work with me". The SLRCS team, with technical support from the ICRC, will continue to visit these households over a period of four to six months to monitor the progress of the projects and provide guidance for the beneficiaries to sustain their projects.

Gerald Jesudasan, who coordinates the program for the SLRCS, is happy with the progress made. "With the support of the ICRC we have been able to build the capacity of the staff while the program has been going on", he explains. "We have also learnt to adapt the MEI concept to the Sri Lankan context to honour cultural values. For example, during the household economy assessment to identify the most economically vulnerable households, we found that people don't like to discuss their debt. So we had to simplify the methodology to get the answers".

The targeted number of beneficiaries for the current phase of the program is 300 families. The desired outcome of the program is for an increase in beneficiary income by 50% after seven to nine months so that they are able to live independently. The program is likely to be expanded to other divisions in Vavuniya and the adjoining districts of Killinochchi and Mullaitivu in the future.



The Jaffna Jaipur Centre for Disability Rehabilitation (JJCDR) will celebrate 25 years of service on 1 July. The Centre has planned a series of activities to commemorate this landmark. Among the activities planned is a sports event where male and female beneficiaries who have been fitted with prosthesis will participate in bicycle, tricycle and wheelchair races. There will also be a dance performance by beneficiaries.

"We are planning to have a speech and poetry competition for school children to reflect the importance of creating public awareness about the Centre and the services it offers", said Dr S. Theivendran, the Centre's Treasurer. "We anticipate that between 75 and 100 schools in Jaffna will take part in the Competition", she added. There will also be a Flag Day for the Disabled to raise awareness in the Peninsula. The highlight of the planned activities will be the unveiling of a statue to symbolise some of the Centre's work. The statue, which will be erected close to the Centre, will consist of a person who has been fitted with a prosthesis,

a person in a wheelchair and in crutches. The Centre has produced calendars for this year, mugs and mouse pads as commemorative souvenirs in the run up to the celebrations. The JJCDR produces artificial limbs and orthotic devices for disabled people, including for victims of landmines. The Centre was founded in 1987 as the Jaffna branch of the Friend in Need Society and has been functioning as a separate entity since 2001.

The ICRC, which supports Sri Lankan institutions and organisations to address remaining humanitarian problems that have arisen from the past, has been supporting the Centre with material assistance and technical advice since 1994, with an interruption between 2003 to 2007. It supplies the Centre with raw materials such as polypropylene and components for building artificial limbs and orthotic devices and provides staff with professional training in prosthetics and orthotics. Physiotherapy training by ICRC

specialists for JJCDR staff has enabled them to teach beneficiaries how to use their limbs, once fitted. The ICRC plans to continue its support to the Centre until 2014. In the first quarter of this year, over 320 disabled people, mainly from the Jaffna Peninsula, benefited from the services of the JJCDR. With due regard to the needs for disability assistance that will continue to prevail, the JJCDR is currently seeking to diversify its donor support with a view to achieving self-sufficient sustainability for its undertakings.

For more information on the Jaipur Centre please visit the ICRC website at: <http://www.icrc.org/eng/resources/documents/feature/srilanka-feature-071008.htm>. The Jaipur Centre can be contacted via the following email address: jaipurj@sltnet.lk

As part of the ICRC's continuing support to other national orthopaedic organisations, in 2011 it linked up with the Navajeevana Ortho Centre in Tangalle, which provides mobility aids to disabled in the surrounding area.

Between January and March 2012, the JJCDR and Navajeevana Centre have:

- provided over 70 prostheses to amputees;
- provided over 45 orthoses to persons suffering from congenital or acquired disabilities, such as polio and club foot;
- provided physiotherapy to over 200 persons who were fitted with prostheses and orthoses;
- delivered three wheelchairs and produced 50 walking aids.



SLRCS volunteers participate in a training at the Anuradhapura Center

SLRCS Staff and Volunteers Conduct Training in Disaster Preparedness for Communities at Risk

Prolonged internal conflict and natural disasters such as floods, landslides and the unprecedented tsunami of 2004 resulting in death, displacement and destruction to property and environment highlight the importance of disaster risk reduction initiatives and the need for emergency preparedness and response.

The Sri Lanka Red Cross Society (SLRCS) has drawn up a five-year development plan to meet this need. The disaster preparedness and response program is supported by the ICRC in Sri Lanka as a part of its engagement with other Red Cross Movement partners to strengthen the response capacity of the SLRCS. The initiative, which is two-pronged, focuses on preparing vulnerable communities to withstand the impact of natural and manmade disasters through risk reduction measures. This also aims to strengthen the capacity of the SLRCS response teams and staff/volunteer skills. To compliment these efforts a Training Centre has been set up in Anuradhapura to facilitate future training

requirements in a cost effective manner. Training will be geared towards building competencies in the SLRCS while working strategically with national and international training partners for mutual benefits such as accreditation, affiliation and recognition on training and capacity building programs. As part of the Centre's expansion plans, the training infrastructure will be outsourced for other programs.

Some of the training programs planned are community-based search and rescues, leadership, First Aid, community development programs to support livelihoods, relief distribution and logistics, financial and narrative reporting and trainings for trainers.

The SLRCS will network with the National Disaster Management Centre, schools, associations such as the scout movement, youth and social clubs and NGOs, to improve their capacity to manage disasters. This will be done in coordination with government officials at various levels to develop joint

training programs to respond to disasters efficiently and to enable the formation of Disaster Response Squads. In the initial phase, operation and maintenance of the Centre will be donor-driven. Donor support will be phased out over the five-year period of the development program at the end of which the Centre is expected to function independently and generate its own income.

"This innovative 'Volunteer Driven' Field Training Centre will focus on delivering basic and practical training for emergency preparedness and response supported by the SLRCS Anuradhapura branch, which currently has very limited or no provision for field training" said Janath Hettiarachchi, the ICRC's Coordinator for Cooperation and focal person for the Emergency Preparedness program. "The objective at the end of the five year period will be for the emergence of a National Resource Centre with a recognized affiliation. This will also include the development of training calendars and modern training infrastructure", he said.



ICRC donated public address systems & manual sirens to the SLRCS Mullaitivu, Killinochchi, Batticaloa and Jaffna branches to support the community early warning system. This will help these branches to increase their knowledge and capacity to prepare and respond effectively to emergencies and disaster situations.

Families of Missing Persons: Living Daily in a State of Anguish and Uncertainty

"Disappearance is far worse than death, because when a person dies, when I know that, so and so is dead, the story ends and somehow or other we close the chapter. But when a person has disappeared, it is an eternal suffering."

A representation made before the Commission of Inquiry on Lessons Learnt and Reconciliation, 12th November 2010.

Every country, including Sri Lanka, which has overcome a prolonged conflict, experiences the challenge to address the sufferings of families whose relatives are unaccounted for as a result of the conflict. When the armed conflict in Nepal ended in 2006, around 17,000 people were dead and 3,100 reported to the ICRC as missing by their families. Today, while the fate of many are known, over 1,400 people are still on the ICRC's list of missing persons.

The vast majority of missing people in Nepal, and in the world, are men. Their wives are left in a state of anguish and uncertainty.

Laxmi Devi Khadka has not known the fate of her husband for over 9 years. In 2003, armed people came to her house in Bardia, Southern Nepal and took her husband, saying they wanted to speak to him for a few minutes. He has never been seen again. She says: "I have

few hopes but there is still hope until you see something." In Laxmi's district of Bardia, more disappearances were recorded than in any other district of Nepal. The tree outside Laxmi's house stands as a daily reminder of her husband. She planted it the year he disappeared. It now stands tall, towering over her house.

Pauline Boss is a professor and clinical supervisor in the doctoral training programme in Marriage and Family Therapy at the University of Minnesota and was previously a visiting professor of Psychology at Harvard Medical School.

She explains this concept of loss. "(These) people are physically absent, but remain psychologically present. Even if they are dead their remains have never been found. Family members are preoccupied with the lost person, and think of nothing else, even years later."

Beyond the anguish of not knowing the fate of her husband, Laxmi, and families of missing persons everywhere, face many practical problems. Economically, they have often lost the breadwinner. They also face a multitude of legal and administrative problems. Laxmi Devi Khadka explains: "There is a small amount

of land in the name of my husband. To transfer ownership of land, you need to show a death certificate. However, I cannot be sure my husband is dead, so I can't get a death certificate."

Laxmi is just one of the thousands of women that the ICRC has come across in its work in conflict areas including the former Yugoslavia, Nepal, East Timor, Guatemala and Peru. "These families all want to know the fate of the missing persons, otherwise they are left in a status of perpetual doubt. Until they receive credible information on the fate and whereabouts of their loved ones, they alternate between hope and despair," explains Zurab Burduli, ICRC Tracing Delegate in Sri Lanka.

The phenomenon of missing persons occurs in almost every situation of armed conflict or internal violence. In the contexts where the ICRC is working, it has sought for decades to forestall disappearances, to restore family links when they have been broken and to ascertain the whereabouts of missing persons. Owing to its particular mandate and well-known role as a neutral humanitarian intermediary, the ICRC has, in many contexts, accumulated significant caseloads of missing persons. These cases have mostly been filed on the request of the

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end the silence



family members concerned. In many countries, the ICRC has worked with the authorities to collect and manage data on missing persons.

Often, the ICRC should, however, not be considered as the only organization that is keeping cases of missing persons as it is very likely that the bereaved families approach various organizations and national institutions.

In fact, many countries experiencing the aftermath of an armed conflict have endeavoured to respond, as far as possible, to the many needs and concerns that relatives of missing persons are confronted with daily.

An adequate national mechanism will be required to gather all relevant authorities, institutions and existing information to undertake and fulfil all necessary and possible actions and functions to trace missing persons and to serve and assist their families.

Today, this mechanisms can be found in Kosovo, Bosnia and Hezegovnia, Cyprus, South Africa and in some other countries. The expectation is that through these mechanisms, women like Laxmi Devi Khadka, can finally find solace and closure on a search that has taken almost a decade.



Sri Lanka Police and ICRC Continue their Joint Endeavour



Lilram Deal, Police and Security Forces Delegate of the ICRC conducting the training for Police Officers

Fifty-eight police officers from the Police and the Special Task Force attended a workshop on "Use of Force by Law Enforcement Officers", on March 8th, 2012, conducted by Lilram Deal, Police and Security Forces Delegate of the ICRC.

The main objective of the workshop was to sensitize senior police officers on the relevance of Standing Operating Procedures (SOPs) on the use of force in situations of public unrest and disorder and to strengthen their knowledge on the appropriate use of force and firearms in these situations.

DIG Personnel and Training Ajith Wickramasekara who officially launched the workshop highlighted the importance of conducting trainings to sensitize police officers on use of force alongside the drafting and implementation of SOPs.

Police Media Spokesman, SP Ajith Rohana speaking at the awards ceremony of the workshop said that it has today become a necessity for police officers to enhance their

knowledge on the adequate use of force. "As law enforcement officers, we need to protect the lives and property of the people".

"In situations where Police have to use force, we need to have knowledge on the international standards and norms, the rights of the people, the boundaries, the restrictions and also domestic laws and legal practices", SP Rohana said.

"There are many incidents today where police officers are expected to use their knowledge on the adequate use of force. In the future too, we will have to control crowds during protest campaigns, processions, and on every one of these occasions it will be the duty of the Police to adhere to the code of ethics for law enforcement officers that was adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations", SP Rohana added.

"Sri Lanka has ratified the Universal Declaration on Human Rights and International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and therefore as



SP Ajith Rohana handing over a certificate to a participant



Yves Giovannoni handing over a certificate to a participant

a Police Officer we should respect international laws, instructions and guidelines," he said.

ICRC, using its international comparative experience in countries across the globe, will facilitate the Sri Lanka Police in the drafting of SOPs on the adequate use of force, taking into account these international standards and norms as well as relevant national laws and judicial decisions.

ICRC Head of Delegation in Sri Lanka, Yves Giovannoni stressing the importance of SOPs stated, "It is very important to be aware of the fact that all the training dispensed can only become sustainable if it is accompanied by the adequate Standing Operating Procedures which allow every Law Enforcement Official to follow a commonly agreed set of behaviour and tactics in accordance with the law and the given situation."

First of the six training for trainers programs proposed for 2012 with the Police was held at the Police College in Kalutara for 28 trainers / Police Officers.



ICRC

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