

SRI LANKA



ICRC / AR_2010

- ⊕ ICRC delegation
- ⊕ ICRC sub-delegation
- + ICRC office
- ⊖ ICRC-supported prosthetic/orthotic centre

EXPENDITURE (IN KCHF)

Protection	7,747
Assistance	4,347
Prevention	1,685
Cooperation with National Societies	1,468
General	-

▶ **15,247**

of which: Overheads 931

IMPLEMENTATION RATE

Expenditure/yearly budget	73%
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PERSONNEL

Expatriates	35
National staff (daily workers not included)	326

KEY POINTS

In 2010, the ICRC:

- ▶ visited 26,318 detainees, monitoring 3,575 of them individually, in 123 places of detention
- ▶ facilitated family visits for more than 9,000 people detained by the authorities, including those held in rehabilitation centres
- ▶ with the local authorities, provided farmers and fishermen who had returned to or resettled in the Vanni with the means, including tractors, seed, canoes and fishing kits, to re-establish livelihood activities
- ▶ distributed shelter materials to 760 of the most vulnerable families returning to or resettling on the Jaffna peninsula, enabling them to build temporary homes
- ▶ closed its Vavuniya and Jaffna offices, at the government's request
- ▶ increased its support to the National Society's ongoing structural reform and its island-wide capacity-building efforts, in cooperation with Movement partners

The ICRC has worked in Sri Lanka since 1989. Operations focus on: protecting and assisting civilians affected by the past armed conflict; visiting detainees and enabling family members to remain in touch; providing adequate water supply and economic security for IDPs, returnees and resident communities; improving access to physical rehabilitation facilities; and supporting military training in IHL.

CONTEXT

During 2010, Sri Lanka's ruling coalition consolidated its position. The incumbent, Mahinda Rajapaksa, won January's presidential election, and pro-government coalition parties secured a comfortable majority in April's parliamentary elections. A cabinet reshuffle followed the president's swearing-in.

With the end of the armed conflict in 2009, the country entered the early recovery phase; most of the 280,000 displaced civilians who had

hitherto been accommodated in government camps resettled in their areas of origin, mainly in the north. The resettlement process proved complex, however, as full security and access to resources, infrastructure and sustainable income-generating activities was reportedly not guaranteed in the areas of return, particularly in the Vanni.

Despite waves of releases in 2010, several thousand people suspected by the government of being formerly associated with the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) were still being held in so-called rehabilitation centres.

MAIN FIGURES AND INDICATORS

PROTECTION

CIVILIANS (residents, IDPs, returnees, etc.)			
Red Cross messages	Total	UAMs/SCs*	
RCMs collected	1,102	6	
RCMs distributed	1,449		
Tracing requests, including cases of missing persons	Total	Women	Minors
People for whom a tracing request was newly registered	490	57	16
People located (tracing cases closed positively)	581		
Tracing cases still being handled at 31 December 2010 (people)	13,474	490	1,158
UAMs/SCs,* including unaccompanied demobilized child soldiers	Total	Girls	Demobilized children
UAM/SC cases still being handled by the ICRC/National Society at 31 December 2010	47	17	
Documents			
People to whom travel documents were issued	28		
PEOPLE DEPRIVED OF THEIR FREEDOM (All categories/all statuses)			
ICRC visits	Total	Women	Minors
Detainees visited	26,318		
Detainees visited and monitored individually	3,575	313	10
Detainees newly registered	505	15	5
Number of visits carried out	287		
Number of places of detention visited	123		
Restoring family links	Total		
RCMs collected	2,102		
RCMs distributed	659		
Detainees visited by their relatives with ICRC/National Society support	9,059		
People to whom a detention attestation was issued	3,223		

* Unaccompanied minors/separated children

ASSISTANCE

CIVILIANS (residents, IDPs, returnees, etc.)					
Economic security, water and habitat			Total	Women	Children
Agricultural, veterinary and other micro-economic initiatives	Beneficiaries	45,956	40%	20%	
	<i>of whom IDPs</i>	45,956			
Water and habitat activities	Beneficiaries	20,445	33%	23%	
	<i>of whom IDPs</i>	20,445			
PEOPLE DEPRIVED OF THEIR FREEDOM (All categories/all statuses)					
Economic security, water and habitat					
Essential household items	Beneficiaries	19,253			
Water and habitat activities	Beneficiaries	6,687			
WOUNDED AND SICK					
Physical rehabilitation					
Centres supported	Structures	1			
Patients receiving services	Patients	1,280	327	63	
New patients fitted with prostheses	Patients	309	88	2	
Prostheses delivered	Units	416	122	5	
	<i>of which for victims of mines or explosive remnants of war</i>	143			
New patients fitted with orthoses	Patients	104	45	18	
Orthoses delivered	Units	154	63	26	
	<i>of which for victims of mines or explosive remnants of war</i>	9			
Crutches delivered	Units	232			
Wheelchairs delivered	Units	53			

ICRC ACTION AND RESULTS

The ICRC pursued discussions with the Sri Lankan government on the future of ICRC activities in the country and on the organization's role in the new post-conflict environment. A series of meetings took place between high-ranking government officials and the ICRC to review the organization's operational set-up and its proposals for a range of humanitarian activities. The year ended with a governmental order to close ICRC sub-delegations in Vavuniya and Jaffna and to cease its assistance activities in the northern regions.

As a consequence of these developments, most of the ICRC's proposed programmes to assist resettling or returning populations did not take place – including cash grants for the most vulnerable to invest in improving their livelihoods, vocational training for people who had surrendered, and the rehabilitation of urban water supply systems and health care facilities.

However, across the country the ICRC visited more than 26,000 people, including those arrested and detained in relation to the former armed conflict, with a focus on those held under the Emergency Regulations or suspected of affiliation with the LTTE. Delegates checked on inmates' treatment and living conditions and reported their findings and recommendations confidentially to the detaining authorities. Efforts to obtain access to people held in rehabilitation centres proved unsuccessful. Working with the Sri Lanka Red Cross Society, the ICRC also continued, albeit in a limited way, to enable IDPs separated from relatives by the former conflict to restore and maintain contact. More than 9,000 detainees received visits from family members thanks to the ICRC's reimbursement of their transport costs.

As the National Society was able to continue its assistance to returning and resettling populations, it distributed pre-positioned emergency ICRC stocks to cover water supply, sanitation and temporary shelter needs. These supplies, as well as water tanks donated to the local water authority in Jaffna, helped protect the health of more than 20,000 people. The provision of motorbikes and mopeds to Health Ministry staff and local authorities in the Vanni facilitated better access to patients in remote rural areas, and mobile clinics, run by the National Society with ICRC support, provided health care to people resettling in areas with inadequate health infrastructure. In the Jaffna peninsula, the ICRC continued to provide technical and material support to the Jaffna Jaipur Centre for Disability Rehabilitation (JJCDR).

In the second half of the year, and in cooperation with various ministries, a one-off ICRC donation of equipment to farmers and fishermen in the Vanni, including tractors for land preparation and canoes for fishing, helped the recipients kick-start livelihood activities, as well as food production for both them and their families, benefiting nearly 46,000 people.

While IHL promotion continued among influential members of civil society, such as the media and academics, the pace of activities targeting government institutions was slow. Support to the armed

forces in instructing troops in IHL was similarly slow, adversely affected by the ICRC's limited access to the parts of the country in which they were deployed. Nevertheless, some presentations did take place and, at the request of the Sri Lankan army, the ICRC conducted pre-deployment briefings for troops departing on UN peacekeeping missions.

As the ICRC scaled down its activities in Sri Lanka, its cooperation with the National Society became even more important for reaching returnees. The ICRC therefore continued to provide financial and technical support to build the Sri Lankan Red Cross's capacities at an institutional level, aiming to improve the services available to victims of the former conflict. With ICRC support, the National Society also continued its traditional countrywide activities, such as first-aid training and dissemination of the Fundamental Principles.

The ICRC coordinated its activities with those of the UN and other humanitarian actors in the country.

CIVILIANS

Family members get back in touch

More than 13,000 cases of conflict-induced family separation reported to the ICRC remained unresolved. While reliable postal networks and phone coverage allowed people to restore contact with relatives they had lost touch with during the former conflict, numerous families remained without news of relatives, many of whom had been the main breadwinners. Thanks to the combined efforts of the National Society and the ICRC, however, separated family members exchanged more than 1,000 RCMs. The National Society received specific ICRC training in all aspects of restoring family links and support in upgrading its database. Families with detained relatives, including those held in rehabilitation camps, visited them with ICRC financial support (see *People deprived of their freedom*), thus saving some of their meagre resources for other essentials such as health care or education.

In 2010, more families approached the ICRC for help in searching for relatives, including children, with whom they had lost contact during the fighting. Restrictions on the ICRC's access to most of the displaced population, the rehabilitation centres and designated resettlement areas limited its ability to help these people, but 581 people were still located. During contact with law enforcement officials (see *People deprived of their freedom*), the ICRC reminded them of their obligation to observe relevant international norms and standards, particularly in relation to arrests, with a view to preventing people becoming unaccounted for.

Given the number of people still missing, Health Ministry representatives and the ICRC continued to discuss the proper management and identification of human remains, although no progress was made on the formulation of a national strategy. To build momentum, a forensic specialist was sponsored to attend a conference organized by the American Academy of Forensic Sciences in Seattle, United States of America, to share his experiences and learn

from counterparts. In addition, four forensic practitioners shared experiences and knowledge with counterparts at the 10th Indo-Pacific Congress of Law, Medicine and Science, held in India.

Communities resettling in the north receive support

Agriculture- and fishing-reliant communities returning to or resettling in northern districts had lost their equipment and stocks during the former conflict, hampering their ability to generate an income or provide food for themselves and their families.

Despite ongoing discussions with the authorities regarding the ICRC's role, a lack of access to some areas and people prevented the organization from carrying out most of the assistance projects it had planned for the returning/resettling IDP population during 2010 (see *ICRC action and results*). However, as the Sri Lankan Red Cross was able to continue its activities, it distributed pre-positioned ICRC emergency stocks, covering water supply, sanitation and temporary shelter needs, to help ease the resettlement process for affected communities. These stocks, along with ad hoc donations to the National Water Supply and Drainage Board (NWSDB) in Jaffna, helped protect the health of 20,445 people in return areas. For example, the most vulnerable 760 families of the thousands who arrived in the Point Pedro area of Jaffna used ICRC-donated materials to build semi-permanent shelter, and some 2,500 people had access to a minimum of 15 litres of drinking water a day following the donation of 11 water tanks to the NWSDB. Those living in rural villages in the Vanni could access primary health care through ICRC-supported National Society mobile clinics, and Ministry of Health mobile clinics also provided health care, supported by ICRC donations of motorbikes and mopeds.

In the second half of the year, the authorities approved a one-off ICRC project to help farmers, fishermen and their families (45,956 people) living in the Vanni to restart income-generating activities. Farmers belonging to 278 farmers' organizations received 360 two-wheeled tractors, water pumps for irrigation, and seed and tools to prepare land for the Maha planting season, which began in September. Fishermen returned to the water after receiving fishing kits and canoes, along with bicycles and boxes for taking the catch to market. Tanks were also restocked with baby fish. This assistance, provided in coordination with the relevant ministries, helped the recipients to become self-sufficient and kick-started food production for the wider community. National Society staff and volunteers increased their capacities to implement such projects by attending ICRC-supported workshops.

In parallel, the authorities were reminded of their responsibilities to respect the rights of the people held in government IDP camps and to ensure that the return home of the displaced was voluntary.

PEOPLE DEPRIVED OF THEIR FREEDOM

Thousands of people were held in relation to the former armed conflict in many places of permanent and temporary detention around the country, and arrests continued to take place under the Emergency Regulations and the Prevention of Terrorism Act.

More than 26,000, among them those detained for conflict-related reasons, including in special police units, received visits from the ICRC according to its standard procedures. Following all visits, delegates made confidential reports to the relevant detaining authorities containing their findings and any recommendations with regard to detainees' treatment, living conditions and judicial guarantees. ICRC access to the 5,000 people who remained in rehabilitation centres on suspicion of being formerly associated with the LTTE, had yet to be granted. However, the authorities were reminded, when possible, of the legal provisions governing their treatment and of the procedural safeguards to which they were entitled.

RCMs and/or ICRC-funded visits, including to those in rehabilitation centres, allowed more than 9,000 detainees to maintain contact with their relatives. An evaluation of the family-visit programme found that the detention of a family's main breadwinner reduced overall household income generation by between 50% and 85%. With their transport costs covered, families did not have to reduce the number of times they visited or pawn their belongings in order to fund visits themselves.

During ICRC visits, detainees were given clothing and hygiene kits, as well as recreational materials such as games and books to keep them occupied. For the disabled, simple mobility aids such as crutches were provided, and 18 detained amputees at Boosa detention centre gained greater independence within six weeks of the launch of a prosthetic/orthotic service, run by a local NGO with ICRC support.

With a view to supporting the authorities in improving the general living conditions of detainees, the ICRC completed an assessment of places of detention initiated in 2009 and submitted the recommendations to the authorities. More than 6,500 inmates benefited from ICRC-constructed and rehabilitated toilet blocks in Welikada prison in Colombo and from the provision of hygiene kits and materials to, and the cleaning of a well at, Omanthai temporary prison in Vavuniya.

WOUNDED AND SICK

The final months of the conflict resulted in high numbers of injuries and placed a heavy demand on health facilities. There was a shortage of health personnel, especially in terms of physical rehabilitation. During 2010, however, public services began to resume as people resettled, and, having reopened, health facilities no longer required planned ICRC support.

Some of the people wounded as a result of the past conflict, either during the fighting or afterwards by explosive remnants of war, had had limbs amputated. The resettlement process increased the ability of such people to seek treatment, and 1,280 patients received services at the only longstanding centre in the north, the JJCDR, which continued to enjoy ICRC technical and material support, including the continuous training of local staff by two ICRC specialists. Those unable to reach the centre benefited from

its outreach programme. To meet the increased demand, staff worked longer days and stepped up production in order to deliver 416 prostheses and 104 orthoses to patients.

Plans to construct a similar centre in Anuradhapura in early 2010 were cancelled after long delays in obtaining the necessary government authorization. Moreover, the opening in the meantime of several prosthetic/orthotic workshops that appeared capable of meeting the needs of the country's amputees, had rendered it redundant. Limited access to the Vanni prevented the ICRC from helping provide treatment or mobility devices to the weapon-wounded and disabled IDPs in camps.

AUTHORITIES

The 2010 elections and subsequent cabinet reshuffle meant that many of the ICRC's key contacts changed. Nonetheless, meetings with high-level government ministers and officials – including the prime minister, the presidential secretary/minister of economic development, and the secretaries of defence and foreign affairs – continued to take place to redefine the ICRC's role in post-conflict Sri Lanka (see *ICRC action and results*). These officials, along with newly appointed key ministers, received ICRC publications and operational updates in local languages, to keep them abreast of activities.

Representatives of the UN, NGOs and diplomatic missions met frequently with the ICRC and received ICRC publications aimed at maximizing the impact of aid, fostering a better understanding of the organization's mandate and boosting support for its activities.

Sri Lanka was party to several IHL treaties, including the 1949 Geneva Conventions, but had not fully incorporated them into domestic law. Despite other priorities, such as the resettlement of IDPs (see *Context*), two senior officials from the Ministries of Justice and External Affairs exchanged experiences and ideas at the third Universal Meeting of National IHL Committees held in Geneva, Switzerland (see *International Law and Cooperation*). Senior officials from the Attorney General's Office and the Ministries of Defence and Human Rights discussed IHL implementation with regional counterparts at the South Asian Regional IHL Conference in Bangladesh (see *New Delhi*), while a High Court judge was among those who learnt about basic IHL at the 17th South Asia Teaching Session in Kathmandu (see *Nepal*).

ARMED FORCES AND OTHER BEARERS OF WEAPONS

The Sri Lankan armed forces continued to conduct most of their own IHL training, with regular ICRC support enabling them to reach more than 1,600 officers during the year. In order to maintain the quality of the courses, 22 military instructors brushed up on their IHL teaching techniques at an ICRC-run course and 18 officers who had previously attended international ICRC courses refreshed their knowledge at ICRC seminars. Meanwhile a senior officer better understood the law applicable to his work

after attending the Senior Workshop on International Rules governing Military Operations, held in Lucerne, Switzerland (see *International Law and Cooperation*).

Discussions with top-level commanders of the army, security forces and the police included possible ICRC support in raising IHL awareness, as well as its post-conflict role, with a view to securing unhindered access to people in need. Operational updates and ICRC publications were also provided to them to support these efforts. No progress was made in the implementation of the 2008 agreement between the ICRC and the Special Task Force, the Sri Lankan police's elite paramilitary force.

Meanwhile, more than 2,400 personnel taking part in UN peace-keeping missions in Haiti and Lebanon gained knowledge of their legal obligations and the role of the ICRC during briefings carried out in those countries.

CIVIL SOCIETY

Public awareness of the Movement's specific mandate, particularly in the post-conflict situation, remained important in fostering acceptance of and support for its activities. The media contributed to raising awareness by drawing on National Society/ICRC briefings and press releases to produce articles on humanitarian issues and ICRC operations in Sri Lanka. Religious leaders and NGO staff learnt more about IHL and ICRC activities during bilateral meetings.

Universities teaching IHL received reference materials in support of their efforts. Students attended National Society/ICRC presentations, and, after winning a national moot court competition, a team of students from the Open University of Sri Lanka competed in a regional moot court competition in India (see *New Delhi*).

Academics engaged in IHL teaching and research attended training abroad, including at the Advanced Training Course in IHL for University Teachers, in Geneva, Switzerland.

RED CROSS AND RED CRESCENT MOVEMENT

Despite its own access difficulties, the National Society remained an invaluable operational partner for the ICRC, including in restoring family links, assisting people in the Vanni and raising awareness of IHL and humanitarian principles (see above). It received financial, technical and material support and training from the ICRC for these, and its own, programmes.

At an institutional level, the ICRC supported the National Society's pursuit of structural reform, including the re-establishment of its branches in the Vanni. To strengthen its IHL-promotion efforts, it received written materials and devised a new internal training curriculum with ICRC technical support. The National Society's headquarters received two generators to support its day-to-day running and rented out ICRC-donated steel shelters to generate income.

The National Society's ability to deliver first-aid and medical services was boosted by ICRC-donated dressing materials, which were used, for example, by staff treating festival-goers in Jaffna. The National Society also ran mobile health clinics with ICRC financial support and, during the elections, deployed first-aid teams at polling and counting stations. Its disaster response capacity was bolstered by ICRC-donated materials and stocks – including tents, tarpaulins, pumps for well-cleaning, and hygiene kits, as well as by the funding of volunteer costs and fleet maintenance.