

## THE ICRC IN AFGHANISTAN – DECEMBER 2002

### *Facts and Figures (November-December 2002)*

Since the end of 2001 the people of Afghanistan have begun to tackle the huge task of developing the systems and structures needed to sustain stability.

Although localized fighting is still going on in some parts of the country, the general security situation has allowed roads to stay open, trade to pick up and more and more international organisations to carry out their programmes. Better rains have improved crop yields in some regions. Massive numbers of people who had fled conflict or drought have come back to their place of origin.

While these developments are encouraging, uncertainty about security, and the consequences of 23 years of war and three years of drought are still major concerns. Economic prospects are limited, farmers are still in the downward spiral of poverty and debt, infrastructure is destroyed and access to water supply, sanitation facilities and health care difficult. Recent fighting has left new concentrations of mines and unexploded ordnance and the return of people to contaminated areas has increased the risk of injury.

Since 1979 the ICRC has worked to meet the most acute needs of Afghans affected by conflict. During the past year the ICRC has adapted its activities to the changing situation. After meeting emergency needs in food, non food, medical supplies during the winter of 2001-2002, the ICRC has expanded its protection and assistance operations as far as security has allowed, to reach out further during 2002. As Afghanistan stabilizes, the ICRC will gradually hand responsibility for services to the government or to other organisations geared to peacetime or development activities.

### Protection

**In line with its mandate, the ICRC visits detainees held in relation to the conflict by the Afghan authorities and US forces to ensure that they are treated humanely and can communicate with their families.**

In November/December 2002, the ICRC visited over 1,900 security detainees and prisoners in 36 places of detention under the responsibility of Afghan authorities or United States forces. Of these, some 279 were seen and registered for the first time. The total figure includes prisoners transferred to the US military base at Guantanamo Bay.

Some 187 released detainees received assistance from the ICRC to return home.

In cooperation with the Afghan Red Crescent, the ICRC processed 3,074 Red Cross messages (RCMs) between January and August, of which 1,367 were exchanged between detainees and their families.

### Assistance

**The ICRC focuses on the northern and central regions affected by fighting and drought to provide the most vulnerable families and newly returned farmers with food and agricultural input (seeds, fertilizers, veterinary support).**



*Since the beginning of 2002, the ICRC has distributed 63,400 tonnes (MT) of food and 3,200 MT of seeds to about one and half million people.*

*Photo: P. Bourgeois/ICRC*

The second round of food distributions for 2002 started in September and is continuing in Ghor province and the southern parts of Mazar. This assistance should help the population through the winter.

In Ghor, 2,010 tonnes of food were distributed to some 84,700 people (more than 12,000 households). The food aid consisted of rice, split peas, ghee and salt.

In the northern region 51,961 households in Samangan, Balkh and Sar-i-Pul provinces received almost 6,000 tonnes of food during November and December (wheat, split peas, ghee and salt), and more than 52,000 blankets.

## Health

**The ICRC supports local medical services disrupted by over 20 years of conflict, to help them provide adequate care for wounded and sick.**

Overall, the facilities assisted by the health programme in November/December provided health services to 10,800 inpatients and around 63,000 outpatients, and performed more than 6,000 operations.

The ICRC continues to provide regular assistance to seven hospitals (Kandahar, Ghazni, Gulbahar, Jalalabad, Bamyan and two in Kabul). The Finnish and Japanese Red Cross societies are also carrying out health projects.

## Water and habitat

**One of ICRC's top priorities is to maintain access to safe drinking water for people affected by war, in order to prevent disease. These are some of the projects currently underway (also see previous editions of Facts & Figures):**

### Kabul

- Repairs to the water system at a main housing estate, in order to improve access to drinking water for an estimated 3,000 people.
- 234 hand pumps repaired - estimated 93,600 beneficiaries.
- 1,344 new latrines built and 92 existing latrines rehabilitated since the beginning of the year - estimated 14,000 beneficiaries.

### Mazar-I-Sharif

- 3'500 new latrines constructed since the beginning of the year - estimated 42,000 beneficiaries.

Water and sanitation projects are in progress at various hospitals around the country.

## Orthopaedic services

**The ICRC runs six orthopaedic centres (in Kabul, Mazar, Herat, Gulbahar, Faizabad and Jalalabad). Approximately 80 per cent of the amputees assisted are mine victims (70 per cent of them civilians).**

During 2002, some 6,170 new patients were registered and assisted.

Since 1999, a total of 1,682 patients have received micro-credit support to start up small businesses; 230 patients were granted this support in 2002.

## Mine action

**The ICRC tries to prevent injuries and deaths by gathering information on the cause of accidents and the location of mines and UXO, and by promoting safe behaviour in communities at risk.**

More than 500 mine awareness sessions were held by ICRC/Afghan Red Crescent teams and community volunteer instructors in 216 locations for around 11,900 adults and 13,000 children.

## Promotion of humanitarian law

**The ICRC's internationally-recognized mandate is not only to aid victims of armed conflicts but also to promote international humanitarian law.**

To this end numerous courses, presentations and lectures were given to government officials, members of the Afghan and US armed forces, the police, university lecturers and Afghan Red Crescent members.

## Cooperation with the Afghan Red Crescent Society (ARCS)

**The ICRC assists the Afghan Red Crescent Society technically and financially to build its capacity in various fields.**

This includes grassroots assistance to the most vulnerable members of the Afghan population, services to the population affected by the conflicts and natural disasters such as earthquake and drought.

Around 1,800 people continue to take part in the Vocational Training Programme, which teaches income-generating skills to men and women.

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