



ICRC

ICRC Lebanon

NEWSLETTER

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EDITORIAL

In a few months, the ICRC will have been present in Lebanon for 40 years as it first set foot in the country in 1967 to act as a neutral and impartial intermediary in the conflict between Lebanon and Israel, a mission it continues to endorse until today. This comes in addition to its humanitarian activities undertaken during other rough times in Lebanon, hence the civil war that lasted 15 years in which the ICRC was able to carry out its mandate and provide assistance to the civilian population affected by the fighting. The ICRC also heavily supported the Lebanese Red Cross (LRCS) in order to help it in its daily life-saving situations. With the Israeli occupation of southern Lebanon (before it ended in May 2000), the ICRC was at the same time assisting the population in the occupied zone and managed to get access to the places of detention, like Ansar, where tens of thousands of Lebanese and Palestinians were visited by ICRC delegates. Since 2000, the ICRC in Lebanon continued to support the LRCS and developed, at the same time, a strong commitment into disseminating International Humanitarian Law to many Lebanese circles, in the government, the army, armed groups, universities, schools and the civil society.

With the capture of two Israeli soldiers by Hezbollah on 12 July 2006, the situation flared up once again between the two countries and a new conflict erupted. Civilians took the brunt of the hostilities as the ICRC was striving to provide assistance to the civilian population trapped in war zones in villages of southern Lebanon and near the Blue Line. Despite difficult and tough conditions, the LRCS medical services managed to evacuate the wounded and the dead from battle fronts, sometimes escorted by the ICRC in order to provide maximum security for the mission. On its side, the first ICRC humanitarian convoy reached the country by land on 18 July and could arrive quickly to Tyre where an office had been set up, along with another one in the South western locality of Marjayoun. Consequently, the humanitarian convoys and teams deployed from these two centres into border villages in order to bring some supplies to the most vulnerable persons in these areas. Unfortunately, access facilities to further southern parts of the country quickly deteriorated because of the fighting as the humanitarian situation was worsening day after day for the population. In that respect, the ICRC President, Dr. Jakob Kellenberger, came in a mission to Lebanon on 7 August, followed by a visit to Israel in order



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The ICRC ship Georgios K arrives in the port of Beirut. By the time hostilities had ceased on 14 August, the ICRC had shipped and airlifted over 1,600 tonnes of relief supplies to the region, with 12,000 tonnes to be delivered by mid-September.

to call upon the authorities to fully respect the medical missions on the field and the ICRC's humanitarian mandate to protect and assist victims of war.

A week later, a ceasefire was adopted by both parties and the ICRC further stepped up its operations to provide medical assistance, food and other essential items to the affected population and, above all, restoring water connexions and pumping facilities in the southern parts of the country.

We would like to dedicate this first issue of the ICRC's Newsletter for Lebanon to all those ICRC national and international staff, along with the LRCS volunteers and employees, who have been working so hard in the recent weeks, to protect and restore human dignity amidst the ongoing hostilities and difficult times. Our thoughts are with our partners of the LRC and family of the first aider, esteemed colleague and friend, Mikhael Jubaily, whom we lost during the war.

In recognition of the cooperation and complementarity between the ICRC and the LRCS, the first article of this newsletter will be underlining the effort that was done hand in hand. The issue will present, in the following pages, a feature on ICRC water and habitat activities in southern Lebanon, as well as a summary of the ICRC's integrated Assistance approach in Lebanon.

Do not hesitate to contact us for any further questions, comments and suggestions.

Andreas Wigger
Head of Delegation of the ICRC in Lebanon

Working hand in hand: ICRC and the Lebanese Red Cross Society

The recent conflict in Lebanon was a human catastrophe with hundreds of civilians reported dead, thousands injured and hundreds of thousands displaced. The Lebanese Red Cross Society (LRCS), through the efforts of its staff and volunteers, and with the full support of both, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, continues to help the most vulnerable. The LRCS has been playing a key role during the conflict, evacuating the wounded and distributing essential relief supplies to the civilian population.

In Lebanon, the LRCS and the ICRC have been working together to alleviate human suffering by organizing joint assistance operations for the victims of the recent conflict. The wide network and intimate knowledge of local conditions, which were provided by the members of the LRCS, were essential assets to the ICRC in the planning and conduct of its operations.



Lebanese Red Cross volunteers evacuate an elderly woman from the southern town of Tyre to a hospital in Beirut. The woman was trapped under rubble following a bomb attack (01 August 2006).

Direct assistance has been provided to civilians (residents, host families, internally displaced persons (IDP's) and returnees) mainly in villages reached by ICRC/LRCS convoys in areas of Mount Lebanon, Beirut, Saïda, Tyre and Baalbeck, and to some extent in areas south of the Litani river. By the end of August more than 51'000 families had received assistance to partially cover their needs in terms of food and essential household items, in particular due to the relentless efforts of the LRCS Youth branches.

Water trucking has been organized jointly by the ICRC water and habitat engineers and the Youth Department of the LRCS in Beirut. 1'200'000 litres of drinking water were distributed to some 25'000 IDP's.

The LRCS Emergency Medical Services have carried out 986 war-related emergency evacuations, 8'239 medical transfers and 402 transfers of human remains.

The purpose of ICRC cooperation with the LRCS is to provide them with operational means (equipment and financial resources) to carry out their daily activities and to enhance their capacity for them to fulfil their own responsibilities in providing humanitarian services in Lebanon. In particular, the ICRC assists and supports the LRCS in the field of:

- Emergency Medical Services (ambulance services),
- Medical and Social activities,
- Blood banks,
- logistic capacities,
- restoring family links.

The Lebanese Red Cross Society

The Lebanese Red Cross Society (LRCS) is a humanitarian organization established as an independent national society. In 1946, it was recognized by the State as a public non profit organization and as an auxiliary team to the medical service Lebanese Army. In 1947, the Lebanese Red Cross joined the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and became a member of the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies. Further more, it is a founding member of the Secretariat General of the Organization of the Arab Red Crescent and Red Cross Societies. The Lebanese Red Cross Society is led by volunteers, whose mission is to provide relief to victims of natural and human made disasters, and help people prevent, prepare for and respond to emergencies, and to alleviate the suffering of the most vulnerable.

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In addition, ICRC and LRCS are promoting exchange of operational information and coordination of activities with other National Societies of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement participating to this joint effort so as to make the best use of available resources and contribute to mutually supportive action for the victims of the conflict.

As lead agency for the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement in Lebanon, the ICRC, together with LRCS are promoting efficient coordination of activities with other National Societies of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement participating to this joint effort. Movement weekly meetings are organized in Beirut with the sister National Societies already present in the country (Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Qatar, United Arab Emirates, Palestinian Red Crescent and Netherlands Red Cross). A Movement meeting was organized by ICRC in Geneva for the main donor National Societies, with the participation of the LRCS, Palestine Red Crescent Society, Syrian Arab Red Crescent, and Magen David Adom. This led to a better understanding of the needs and operating procedures of each player.



ICRC works with members of the LRCS and the Lebanese Civil Defense to plan a rescue operation for a family trapped under rubble in Marroub village (09 Aug 2006).

ICRC's focus: restoring water and electricity supplies in southern Lebanon

A clearer picture is now emerging of the damage to vital infrastructure in southern Lebanon. The main water facilities have been damaged both by the earth shifting under bombing and shelling and by the destruction of bridges. While no water stations were destroyed in the conflict, a number of transformers were wrecked, and there was damage to generators, reservoirs and pumps. With the exception of Tyre, where service has now been restored, the entire south of the country was left without the electricity so badly needed to pump water from wells and other sources. Hence lack of drinking water made life close to impossible for people in southern villages throughout the weeks of hostilities. The shortage also caused extensive damage to crops and killed thousands of cattle. As displaced people have streamed back after the ceasefire, they have frequently found their homes without running water and their fields without irrigation. Adequate drinking water is essential if life in southern Lebanon is to resume. Supplies of the vital liquid must be restored quickly to prevent the spread of disease and an overall deterioration in the sanitary environment. The widespread destruction in some areas means that many will have to make do with emergency repairs until full reconstruction work can take place.

The ICRC's efforts are focusing on villages in the areas of Tyre, Saddiqin, Khiam, Hasbaya, Bent Jbeil and Wazzani, which has a key water station at the border, close to the source of the Jordan River. The Marjayoun area is less threatened by shortages thanks to its numerous wells. The ICRC is working in full cooperation with the water board for southern Lebanon to improve the situation. Teams of technicians including an ICRC engineer are touring villages to assess needs and carry out on-the-spot repairs. Bulldozers, compressors and other equipment accompany them as they move from place to place. Given the difficulty of trucking in water sufficient for all the needy villages in remote mountain locations, the ICRC

is concentrating on dispatching generators to provide local pumping capacity.

Since July, a team of technicians including an ICRC engineer delivered and installed a 10-tons generator (900 KvA) in the village of Saddiqin in southern Lebanon, between Tyre and



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A new 900 KvA generator donated by the ICRC at Saddiqin water pumping station in South Lebanon is inaugurated (02 August 2006).

Bent Jbeil, and in September a similar one was installed in Ibl Al Saqi in the Marjayoun region, in cooperation with Saïda Water Board. "This generator will power a major water-pumping station that will pump 4'000 cubic metres of water a day into over one hundred villages in the area", said Alain Oppliger, the ICRC's water and habitat coordinator in Lebanon. Two smaller generators (200 KvA) were installed in Aïtaroun and Aïta El Chaab in agreement with the concerned local authorities. Overall more than 200.000 people will have access to clean drinking water again. Generators that have been provided will then in a second phase be a back-up solution for the population to maintain the functioning of the pumps. ICRC is helping to pump up to 24.000 m³ of water per day, allowing over 200 villages to resume their essential activities. In addition the ICRC provided and installed 2 chlorinators for the main water-treatment plant of Saïda, benefiting 20'000 people.



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The ICRC accompanies engineers repairing the power station in Tyre on the first day of the ceasefire (14 August 2006).

During the same period, the ICRC delivered 80'000 litres of fuel per week for generators in Tyre and Marjayoun regions. The organization is also providing spare parts to the local authorities and is helping finance repair teams. The aim of the operation is to support returnees in the villages until the electricity can be restored. The main repair challenge has less to do with tanks and reservoirs than with the distribution pipes, which are often hard to access through thick piles of rubble. Restoring supplies throughout the south will take a very long time, according to experts.

ICRC's humanitarian approach in southern Lebanon

What started on the 12th July was a surprise for everyone, and suddenly many people found themselves in crisis, especially in the South of Lebanon. ICRC had to respond promptly to cover as many needs as fast as possible. There was no time for in depth assessments, and meticulous planning. Many people fled their homes, and others were left stranded with no access to water and food, not to mention shelter and healthcare. The ICRC decided on a flexible and pragmatic approach to ensure that assistance quickly reached the communities most in need.

Based on this assessment, the ICRC's emergency operation started immediately as a response to those needs. ICRC knew how important it was to take into account all the needs, and not just focus on one aspect such as food. At the same time, a speedy response was essential. Therefore, the ICRC decided to send teams from Marjayoun and Tyre, out to the affected villages including the district of Bint Jbail, that would both assess the needs and then react on the spot. These teams were made up of water and habitat engineers, health staff, and economic security staff. In this way, there were specialised people present on the spot to assess the water, shelter, and health problems as well as the basic needs such as food and essential items like hygiene kits and blankets. The teams could then decide immediately how the ICRC should respond to the urgent needs. Normal health services have been disrupted by the conflict, with geographical access cut-off to health workers, and people not able to reach health facilities. Even basic medical problems were left unattended.

Because of security constraints, the geographical area that was immediately accessible to the ICRC assistance teams was restricted, and only became accessible after the cessation of active hostilities. The villages along the main roads going south were the most affected. Some areas have been completely cut off from the rest of the country. The level of destruction in many villages was very impressive, and most urgent needs concern water and shelter. Unexploded ordnances (UXO's) remain in the olive trees and in the

fields, making it impossible for people to resume their farming activities. Without functioning electricity, water is sometimes difficult to find. Markets are not yet up and running again, and many families lost everything when their houses were destroyed and they rely completely on outside assistance for basic items, from toothbrushes to blankets.

The teams know they will come across such situations, and therefore they travel to the villages with trucks of goods in order to respond to the needs immediately. The economic security staff could decide if and how much food and which essential household items are needed, and offload the corresponding amount from the truck to the local authorities who will then distribute the goods to the people. Health facilities in the communities have also been supported. Water engineers are working to find a solution to the communities' lack of water, and have provided generators with fuel to run the water system, or repaired damaged pipelines. "The installation of generators, and in particular the one in Saddiqin, will allow for 100 villages on the heights to gain access to water again. This work is an absolute priority for the ICRC in southern Lebanon," says Jean Nicolas Marti, Head of the ICRC Sub-delegation in Tyre.

By conducting activities in this way, the ICRC has ensured that its response takes into account all of the needs. By being in the field together, there is a shared understanding between health, water and habitat, and economic security, on the problems faced by the people. And with the pragmatic approach of the field teams, people are able to receive the much needed assistance on time.

By Sarah Wilson, Economic Security delegate in Lebanon



Near Tyre, ICRC staff cross the Litani River carrying medical supplies (08 August 2006).

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