



## Over 76,000 Families receive seeds and tools

**After 14 years of war in Liberia and the wanton destruction of life and property, peace has returned to the country and so has the population. However, the ravaged homes need to be reconstructed and the people resettled. As part of its humanitarian mission, the ICRC is helping returning rural communities restart their lives.**

To buttress their efforts, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) has distributed tools, beans and rice seeds to thousands of villagers and returnees. This distribution began in March this year and ended in August. During this huge exercise, 76,864 families comprising an estimated 460,984 Liberians received 1,623 metric tonnes of rice, beans seeds, and 85,000 farming and building tools.

Among the beneficiaries were 4,062 families in Bopolu, Gbarma and

Kongba in Gbarpolu County who received 81,240 kg of beans and rice seeds. While another 43,189 households in Salayea, Zorzor, Voinjama, Kolahun, Vahun, Foya, Honeyahun and Popalahun in Lofa also received 863,780 kg of the same items.

In Barrobo, Maryland County, 3,400 beneficiaries were given 68,000 kg of seeds, and 439 occupants in Upper Jedepo, Sinoe took delivery of 8780 kg of seeds. In Nimba County 6,370 households in various communities received 127,400 kg of seeds, and 7,540 families in Gbeapo and 4,164 heads in Morweh in River Gee and River Cess benefited from 150,800 kg and 83,280 kg respectively.

In the coming months, the ICRC will continue to distribute agricultural tools and essential household items to 40,000 families all over Liberia. At the same time, the organization will closely monitor the progress of the population towards sustaining itself.

### ICRC in Liberia since January 2005

- 1,623 tonnes of seeds distributed
- 85,000 farming and building tools
- 460,984 beneficiaries
- 382 pit latrines constructed
- 231 wells constructed/rehabilitated
- 11 health facilities: clinics and health centres rehabilitated/constructed and supported
- 145 children reunited with their families after separation by the war
- 359 separated children were able to contact their families.

### contents

Editorial	page	2
Health	page	3
ICRC in Pictures	page	4-5
Restoring Family Links	page	6
Cooperation	page	7
ICRC in Sudan	page	8

## “Continued Commitment to Liberia”



*Tobias Epprecht,  
Head of Delegation, ICRC*

**Liberia has witnessed some drastic changes over the last two years. Thanks to the relative peace and stability in the country, hundreds of thousand of Liberians are finally able to return to their counties of origin and to rebuild their shattered livelihoods. Often having to start from scratch the returnees are also confronted with a near total lack of infrastructure in the areas of return.**

In order to assist the population in their difficult task, the ICRC has provided basic relief items as well as seeds and tools since 2004 in the various areas of return. This effort was doubled in 2005 where during the first half of the year more than 1'600 metric tons

of seeds were distributed to over 75'000 families.

Parallel to this the ICRC has reconstructed and rehabilitated a number of clinics and health centres in Lofa and Grand Kru Counties. These very same health facilities are continuously supported through supplies of pharmaceutical drugs as well as providing training and paying salary incentives to the health staff. Nevertheless, besides the difficulty to access certain areas due to the deplorable road conditions, one of the main challenges faced by the organization is the lack of trained health staff to run the rehabilitated clinics.

As further element in the ICRC's effort to assist in the reconstruction of the dilapidated infrastructure wells and latrines are constructed in the areas of massive return.

Besides these very visible assistance programs, the ICRC is putting a lot of effort into locating the families of some 1'000 children separated from their relatives due to the past conflicts. Most of these children are still living in a neighbouring country where they are regularly visited by staff of the ICRC

delegations in Guinea, Sierra Leone or Ivory Coast. Once reunited with their relatives, families in need are supported with material assistance in order to facilitate reintegration of the child.

As a final but nevertheless important element in the organization's assistance to Liberia is the support to its local partner the Liberian National Red Cross Society (LNRCS). Together, the two organizations are for instance able to deliver over 5'000 Red Cross Messages every month to family members still separated by the past conflicts.

While a lot has been done by the ICRC as well as the various other humanitarian organizations working in Liberia, the need for continued support to the most vulnerable part of the population still remains. Given this the ICRC has already started preparations for the third consecutive large scale seeds and tools assistance program since the end of the conflict.

With over 300 Liberians, 48 international staff and a budget for 2005 of close to US\$ 25 million, the ICRC operation in Liberia is currently the organization's

### Interview: Delivering Assistance in Liberia

One of the most serious challenges to the delivery of humanitarian assistance by the ICRC in Liberia is the state of rural roads across the country especially during the rainy season. Delivering 15 trucks of rice and beans seeds to rural Liberia during the rainy season between June and September is a mammoth task.

Gerald Robertson is the outgoing ICRC convoy leader charged with responsibility of delivering assistance in the field. He reflects on some of the difficulties encountered travelling to rural Liberia. “The roads are in bad

shape and those potholes and bumpy spots, patches of mud and dirt are everywhere.” he explains.

“The holes are deep and slope so the vehicles slide heavily into the bank and in other parts, it could slide off the road”

Dangerously, small mud spots have grown bigger with the rains and ICRC's vehicles sometimes get stuck in them. These road conditions have made it impossible to deliver assistance by truck therefore the ICRC has employed the use of the smaller four-wheel Toyota

Land Cruisers. Although the Land Cruisers can plough their way through the mud spots, it takes our experienced drivers more hours to cover a

shorter distance. The makeshift bridges constructed of wood logs make it dangerous to use weighty trucks.

Gerald has served the ICRC in Sri Lanka, Ethiopia, and Sudan.



*Gerald Robertson,  
ICRC Convoy leader*



## Re-building Medical Laboratories

The collapse of medical services during more than a decade of conflict in Liberia has caused much suffering for the population in Liberia. Hospitals were destroyed in most parts of the country. In some communities medical services are virtually non-existent and the nearest hospital or healthcare centres are several hours or days away from the villages.



*Laboratory equipment in transit to the Barclayville Healthcare Centre.*

In line with its mission to bring assistance to the victims of war, the ICRC is contributing to healthcare services in the country to remedy the aftermath of the war. In this regard, the ICRC has rebuilt four medical centres that were destroyed, and is installing medical laboratories to help diagnosis of diseases. The need for such laboratories in post-conflict Liberia is glaring.

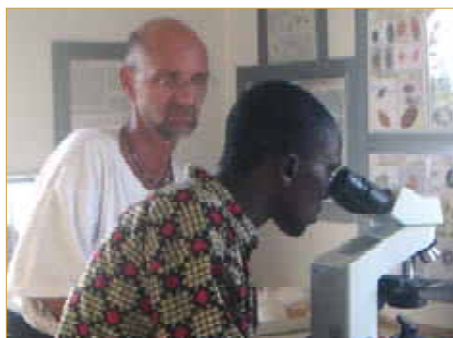
Although medical laboratory services are available in Monrovia, serious economic constraints and access to district health units limit their availability in the rest of the country. After careful assessment, the ICRC decided to establish medical laboratories first in Voinjama, Lofa County and Barclayville, Grand Kru County.

### Simple but valuable tests

The laboratories in Barclayville, Grand Cess and Voinjama are equipped with essential start-up facilities, and now make simple examinations to help the health centres staff make good diagnosis of ailing patients. The tests include haemoglobin and other blood tests, malaria, urine and stool examination. The present range of tests seems to adequately meet the needs of the communities living there. However, other useful tests such as the Sputum tuberculosis test and STD-screening will be added to the repertoire.

Access to rural Liberia remains a formidable challenge

The challenges the ICRC face are logistical and administrative. The foremost is gaining access to rural communities where there is pressing need for laboratory services. The road conditions make transporting laboratory materials very difficult. Where it is possible, the ICRC uses airplane to transport the equipment from Monrovia. A canoe is used to reach the health centre in Barclayville. The lack of qualified and skilled staff in rural areas is another problem.



*Robert Kreusen looks on as Lab Assistant examines a specimen.*

### Ensuring reliability of Test

To ensure reliability of all the medical tests, Robert has provided Standard Operational Procedures (SOPs), a written series of methods for producing and/or testing samples which include all the information necessary to complete the tasks. These SOPs have been

printed as posters and pinned on laboratory walls for reference.

In the face of these challenges, Robert's enthusiasm is steadfast. He is excited about the laboratory technicians whom he has trained. He is also encouraged by the support and collaboration that the ICRC receives from the Laboratory Technician Association in Monrovia.

The ICRC supported Voinjama Health Centre laboratory was opened in March, 2005. Starting with malaria testing, the laboratory now makes 60 to 120 malaria and other tests. The clinic is manned by two laboratory technicians and an assistant. The routine laboratory in Barclayville began work in April, 2005. It does 20 to 40 routine examinations daily. For the time being, there is only one laboratory assistant running the facility.

Plans are underway to setup laboratories in Grand Cess, Sasstown and Lukas. The laboratory in the Buchanan Hospital is also functioning and supported by the ICRC.

"I spend my time installing laboratories and teaching technicians how to examine specimens." Robert Kreusen, ICRC's Laboratory Technician.

# ICRC Action in Pictures

During the past few months the ICRC graduated more than 100 children from its agro farming projects thus making a contribution to reintegrating children who were associated with fighting forces into their communities. The Water and Sanitation Department in Monrovia organized an exhibition to mark 20 years of global ICRC operations in this area. Tracing operations to find and reunite children who were separated from their families by the war continued to bear fruit. Dissemination of International Humanitarian Law also known as the Law of War went on among the military. And the ICRC's assistance activities were up into high gear. All this was accomplished against the difficult road conditions.



*Vera Radovic, ICRC Head of Voinjama office (extreme left) and Lawrence Golightly, Economic Security delegate (in yellow) with children involved in ICRC's Garden Project in Lofa County.*

*The Garden Project is helping reintegrated children who were affected by the conflict into their communities and equipping them with skills through learning how to grow vegetables.*



*Difficult road conditions have made it harder to reach some areas in the country in order to deliver assistance.*

Robert Kreusen / ICRC



*Collapsed bridges rendered some places inaccessible to deliver assistance.*

*From left are ICRC's Protection delegates Nashwa Mostaguir and Karen Strugg, and Robin Waudu, Communication delegate with Major Mohammud Hussain at the UNMIL Pakistani Battalion's Sector Headquarters in Tubmanburg.*

*The ICRC is training UNMIL officers and troops in International Humanitarian Law. This is an ongoing initiative in the field and at UNMIL Headquarters in Monrovia.*



UNMIL / PAKBATT



# ICRC Action in Pictures

During the past few months the ICRC graduated more than 100 children from its agro farming projects thus making a contribution to reintegrating children who were associated with fighting forces into their communities. The Water and Sanitation Department in Monrovia organized an exhibition to mark 20 years of global ICRC operations in this area. Tracing operations to find and reunite children who were separated from their families by the war continued to bear fruit. Dissemination of International Humanitarian Law also known as the Law of War went on among the military. And the ICRC's assistance activities were up into high gear. All this was accomplished against the difficult road conditions.



*Attendants to the Water and Habitat (WatHab) Exhibition held at the Monrovia Delegation last May marking the 20th Anniversary of the ICRC's WatHab Department.*

*The exhibition was attended by representatives of international NGOs, the media and the Liberia National Red Cross Society.*

*Princeton Kwahmie, LNRCs Tracing Volunteer in Bahn addressing widowed women as Xenia Gamulin, Head of Sub-delegation in Sanniquellie looks on. The ICRC donated gardening tools and seeds for the women to plant vegetables for food and small business.*



*Tears of joy flowed freely when this mother invited her child back home through ICRC's tracing operations.*



*Leila Blacking, Tracing delegate based in Sanniquellie speaks to Amelia after the reunification with her family.*

## A Child Soldier's Story

"I will not reveal my name, but you can call me "A"; it is my alias, my fighting name. The humanitarian workers call me a child who was associated with fighting forces during the war. For my part, I feel like an adult, though I am only a child, because I have been on my own for a few years now."



SOS Children. <http://child-soldier.org/Rwanda>

My past experience being involved in combat has taught me a thing or two. I am actually Ivorian, but fled my home to Liberia when war broke out. I joined up in the fighting, as many children in Liberia at the time. A lot of bad things happened. Things that I do not wish to talk about. People try their best to get me to open up, but I see no reason to reveal the truth to them. They mean well, but they could probably not comprehend what I have witnessed and done. I just want to get on with my life.

In any case, the ICRC delegate told me the other day that they have found my mother in Ivory Coast. The Red Cross Message sent to me stated how happy my mother was to know that I was alive and wanted me to come home. A picture of her was included in the message. She looked very pretty and I could see that her letter was sincere. I carry this Red Cross Message and the picture with me everywhere as this is the only link to my family, which I have not seen for three years.

The day had arrived when the ICRC car came to pick me up in Grand Gedeh County to take me to Ivory Coast. We travelled down to Harper, and then on

to the border crossing. Though the road is long and difficult to travel, I am happy to be on my way. I feel that I am one step closer to seeing my mother.

At the Pedebo border, everyone is in a joyous mood. The ICRC delegate presents to the Liberian Immigration Authorities my ICRC travel document, a little booklet used for people under ICRC protection who do not possess identification papers for travelling purposes. The document will be sent to the archives at ICRC headquarters in Geneva, Switzerland, after my journey home has been completed. I actually learnt to write my name for the occasion, so that it was my signature on the document. This made me quite proud, though I tried not to show it through my tough guy exterior.

The ICRC delegate from Ivory Coast accompanied me to the canoe that would take me back to my motherland. When I reached the other side, I turned around to take a last look at the country that had been my home for three years. I could see people waving farewell. I turned around and headed for the ICRC car that was awaiting me. I was on my way home at last."

### Liberian Children Return Home



Christine Bossi / ICRC

On 12 April 2005, five Liberian children who were separated from their families due to the conflict returned home from Ivory Coast. ICRC, the Ivorian Red Cross National Society and the children crossed the river by boat into Liberia. It was a grand celebration when they arrived. The children's travel documents were stamped for entry by the Liberian Immigration Authorities.

Two children were reunited with their families in Maryland County, two in River Gee County and one with her family in Nimba County. All the children were happily welcomed back home after a long separation.

The ICRC pays visit to the reunified children to ensure that the children are well cared for and that their reintegration into the families and home communities is going smoothly.

*This story was recounted by Christine Bossi, ICRC's Tracing delegate in the Zwedru sub-delegation. Christine was instrumental in this cross-border reunification between the former child soldier and his family in Ivory Coast.*



## ICRC Supporting the National Society

**As partners in the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, the ICRC works together with and supports 181 National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies around the world in delivering much needed humanitarian assistance to people affected by conflict and disaster.**



*Alice Neilsen, the ICRC's First Aid delegate from the Danish Red Cross lectures LNRCS volunteers.*

The ICRC works with Red Cross and Red Crescent societies worldwide to enhance and build up their capacities so that they can fulfil their responsibilities as members of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement: to provide humanitarian services in their respective countries. In Liberia, the ICRC is working to strengthen the capacities of the Liberia National Red Cross Society (LNRCS).

### Cooperation with LNRCS

These cooperation programmes towards the LNRCS focus on: preparing to assist those affected by conflict and internal strife (preparedness and response); promoting international humanitarian law and spreading knowledge of the ideals and activities of the Movement; and restoring family links of families separated by more than a decade of conflict in the country as part of the worldwide Red Cross and Red Crescent tracing network.

### Restoring family links

The programme to restore family links, also known as tracing, enables family members who were separated by the war to contact loved ones through the exchange of thousands of Red Cross

Messages. This is made possible through the presence of 127 tracing stations located throughout Liberia and staffed by 215 LNRCS volunteers. The volunteers receive tracing requests and Red Cross Messages at the tracing stations, and distribute them to even the most remote areas of the country by bicycle, public transport, boat, and on foot.

The tracing program also involves finding families of unaccompanied children and reuniting them (see previous page). In this way, the ICRC and LNRCS collaborate to bring hope to distressed families and put an end to worry caused by uncertainty of the whereabouts of loved ones.

### Health and First Aid

Health services are closely associated with the Red Cross all around the world. The most common health-related activity of the National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies is First Aid. To improve the capacities of the LNRCS, ICRC has developed a First Aid training project for the LNRCS. More than 400 LNRCS volunteers have been trained under this project. The LNRCS also offers First

Aid training for corporate companies in order to raise funds. Since May more than 200 workers of the Firestone Rubber Company have been trained.

### Mutually supportive relationship

This mutually supportive relationship and the coordination of capacities between the ICRC and the LNRCS ensure that victims receive wider and more efficient services. Subsequently, the ICRC's accumulated knowledge and expertise form a solid basis on which national societies can build their capacity. In return, the ICRC benefits from national societies' knowledge of the local context, conditions, people and culture, and support to its work.



**ICRC**



International Federation  
of the Red Cross and Red  
Crescent Societies

The ICRC is the origin of the Movement which includes the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, and 181 National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies worldwide working to alleviate the suffering of victims of war.

# ICRC elsewhere in the World: Sudan

A large silver disk hangs undecidedly over the dark silhouette of the distant hills. The snake the driver killed last night is still hanging, white and grey striped, over a bush behind my tent. The cooking pots are lying where we left them near the camp fire, spattered with sand and rinsed by the heavy night rain.

The silver disk shakes off its lunar disguise and asserts itself as a glowing, rising ball. It is going to be another hot day on the plains of North Darfur.

Across the sandy scrubland we can see the thatched huts of Miskeen, where the villagers are preparing for a day's work in the fields. Yesterday we spent the whole afternoon with them, distributing food, seed and farming tools.

## Long trek to camps

Last summer, their village was attacked and burned and their goats and sheep looted. The people fled to the hills, taking with them what little they had and could. Many remained in the hills for months, while others made the long trek to the camps set up for displaced persons in the provincial capital of Al Fashir, in search of food, water and shelter.

Now, 70 families have returned to Miskeen in time for the new planting season, despite fears for their safety. The land is not rich, but produces enough to cover a household's needs, leaving a small amount over for sale at the market.

The rains have come early this year, and what was an arid plain a few days ago is now covered with a thin green stubble, as the first timid blades of grass emerge through the sand. In one more week this land will be a carpet of green, and the dry river bed, lined by parched yet majestic trees, will again host torrents of water.



*Talks to a community member in Darfur*

## Thousands of displaced

We take a slow three hours' drive through sand and scrub from the packed-earth highway that links the towns of Al Fashir and Nyala. A host of aid agencies provide food, water and medical care for the tens of thousands of displaced who are crammed into camps in and around the towns.

For those who decided to stay in their home villages, and those who have since returned, life is even more difficult, as they are left to their own resources: they must rebuild or repair their homes as best they can and prepare for the planting season, while they have few food reserves, seeds or livestock. If they are not supported at this critical moment, the exodus from rural areas to the camps will continue to increase.

Across Darfur, the ICRC is helping country dwellers make a fresh start by providing them with seeds and tools for the planting season, and food to tide them over until their own harvests are ready.

The distribution day itself is the culmination of a weeks-long, meticulous process during which ICRC teams visit village after village, assessing the needs and drawing up registration lists, in close cooperation with the community leaders or sheikhs.

## Food for two months

At first, progress is slow and faltering. The women, attired in brightly coloured

robes, wait patiently under a nearby tree until they are called forward, one at a time, to collect their due. In line with the ICRC's careful calculations, each family is given enough food to see them through the next two months.

The supplies include 24 kg of sorghum, 8 kg of lentils, 4 litres of oil and 600 grams of salt per member, as well as an 8 kg sack of millet seed, 4 kg of sorghum seed, some okra seed, and locally produced tools for weeding and harvesting.

Soon, the process gathers speed as the volunteers get used to their tasks and settle into a comfortable rhythm. By mid-afternoon the scene resembles a vibrant, colourful fair ground: the sheikh is calling out names from his list; groups of men sitting behind piles of sorghum are counting out weights and measures, while families discuss animatedly as they fasten new loads onto the backs of their donkeys.

## Sharing with newcomers

An argument breaks out, as ten new families who arrived recently and are living in the nearby *wadi* are not on the registration list, and therefore will get nothing. A solution is found quickly, in discussion with the sheikh: at the end of the day, the village will share what it can with them.

It has been a long and tiring day for all. We have supplied 2,700 people from eight different villages with 111 tonnes of food, oil and seeds. Tomorrow morning another 20 trucks will be arriving from Al Fashir, with life-saving supplies for another eight villages.

It's time now to put the tents up. A burning orange sun slips gracefully behind the rounded, dark silhouette of the hills across the plain; another day in Darfur is over.

Adapted from the ICRC's website [www.icrc.org](http://www.icrc.org) August 2005



International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)  
Bushrod Island, Monrovia, Liberia.  
Tel: (231 6) 533 579 or (07) 70 22 499  
E-mail: [monrovia.mon@icrc.org](mailto:monrovia.mon@icrc.org)  
For further information, visit our website at [www.icrc.org](http://www.icrc.org)

Editor: Robin Waudo  
Reporters: Varney Bawn and John Jallah

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.



ICRC