



ICRC

NEWSLETTER

Sierra Leone

March, 2007



The ICRC team in the Sierra Leone Police Training School, Hastings

Editorial

The presidential and parliamentary elections in Sierra Leone are fast approaching. Not really an issue for the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) to get involved in, you may think. Indeed, ICRC's mission to protect the lives and dignity of victims of war and internal violence seems of remote relevance to elections held during peacetime and expected to be largely peaceful. But some of ICRC's expertise is valuable nevertheless, and hence we have engaged in supporting some aspects of the preparations to the elections.

First, some work related to the training of the Sierra Leone Police (SLP). Identified by the police as necessary elements of training, and endorsed by other stakeholders working closely with the police, the ICRC trained the police instructors in topics ranging from democratic policing to maintaining public order (including crowd control) and the use of force and firearms. These issues, at the fringe of International Humanitarian Law and Human Rights Law, may prove relevant in the preparation of the police force in ensuring free and fair elections and the maintenance of law and order. The lessons prepared with the instructors have already found their way into the training curriculum of the SLP.

Second, preparing the Sierra Leone Red Cross Society (SLRCS) for its role during the elections. Typically, the SLRCS will be called upon to provide first aid facilities in situations of heightened risk of injury to the population. The first aid post

on Lumley beach is a year-round testament to this important contribution of the SLRCS. When political differences risk to turn violent, or when the population converges on election day, a neutral team of first-aiders caring for the well-being of their fellow Sierra Leoneans no matter who they are, is a welcome sight. The volunteers of the SLRCS assigned to that task need basic first aid equipment and training in first aid, as well as in how to operate in this environment safely. This is where the ICRC comes in, together with other partners in the Red Cross Red Crescent Movement.

Hundreds of volunteers of the SLRCS give their time and know-how across the country every day, in the service of the principle of humanity. Their work often goes unnoticed, or lacks the recognition it rightly deserves. We decided to give two volunteers some space in our Newsletter, to allow them to express their own view of what being an SLRCS volunteer is all about. We hope this will encourage our readers to respect the work of all volunteers, and support them in their duties. And maybe some readers will decide to give some of their own time for their community, why not?

I hope this Newsletter will make an interesting read, and wish Sierra Leone peaceful, free and fair elections.

Jürg Montani, Head of Delegation, ICRC Sierra Leone

Promoting Humanitarian Principles and Human Rights in the Sierra Leone Police

It's Thursday 12 October 2006 at the Sierra Leone Police Officers' Mess, Kingtom, in Freetown. The event is an Orientation / Planning Workshop offered by the ICRC for the leadership cadre of the Sierra Leone Police (SLP), with fifteen Assistant Inspector Generals, including AIG Training, and the Inspector General of Police.

The programme presents ICRC's offer of service to the SLP High Command and aims at reviewing operational policies, procedures and training to ensure conformity with the Constitution, international human rights standards and humanitarian principles. In countries where the ICRC works with police and security forces, support and commitment from the authorities is essential and indispensable in the implementation of its objectives.

Following this orientation session is a five-days sensitisation course for regional commanders to communicate aspects of human rights and humanitarian principles and the significance of such rules for officers with command responsibility. ICRC's ultimate goal is to improve the training capacities of the SLP in humanitarian principles and human rights in order to have these concepts integrated into the training curricula at all levels of policing.

The police in its quest to uphold the rule of law and maintain public order engage with civilian populations on a daily basis,

whether in times of peace, during internal disturbances and tension or even situations of armed conflict. The changing nature of modern conflicts has blurred the roles of police and armed forces because the police often become directly involved when tension mounts in the theatre of war.

Whenever police and security forces interrogate, search, seize, arrest, and detain, whenever they resort to use of force or firearms, they are exercising their law enforcement duties. By so doing, the police inevitably curtail or deprive certain fundamental rights of citizens such as the right to life; right to freedom and security of person; and physical integrity, which constitute universal humanitarian principles.

The ICRC works with police and security forces to develop a culture of respect for and compliance with universal humanitarian principles and human rights law in policing, to complement efforts of other stakeholders in training and development. It helps governments to meet their responsibilities in this respect by, among other things, making specialists available to support the training programmes of police and security services.

What started as sensitisation sessions in October 2006 culminated in a Training-of-Trainers course in January 2007 involving 38 participants from the Police Training School and Jui Training Centre (Operational Support Division).



Dissemination of human rights and humanitarian principles must be on-going": the ICRC trained 38 SLP trainers in January 2007

The ICRC works with police and security forces to develop a culture of respect for and compliance with universal humanitarian principles and human rights law in policing, to complement efforts of other stakeholders in training and development.

According to Police Inspector Sovula, the training was highly focused on human rights of individuals, gender discrimination, and serving and protecting vulnerable groups like women and juveniles.

"It was really useful most especially when the country is just emerging from war," he concluded.

The two-week course, normally split into two parts, is facilitated and supervised by retired ex-policemen. Practical teaching sessions conducted by the participants themselves form the high point of the Instructors' Course. "Most of the students were very interactive and there were a lot of discussions during the lessons and the working groups", declared Klaas Stad the ICRC Police pool officer based in Holland (see his article, below).

Working together with the ICRC Police and Security Forces Delegate based in Cameroon, the experts discussed topics like arrest, detention, ethics, the use of force and firearms, prevention and detection of crime, maintenance of the public order and vulnerable groups.

The ICRC further works for an understanding of its mandate, role, and fundamental principles in order to improve its access to victims of war and internal disturbances thereby creating an enabling environment for their protection and assistance.

Training the Trainers – experience is essential!

My name is Klass Stad. I was a police officer in Holland for over 35 years, including 5 years in South America as a drug liaison officer. I now work for the Internal Investigation Department of the Ministry of Justice in my country. I investigate criminal cases committed by the government, such as corruption within the police or fraud committed by civil servants.

I have been a pool officer for the ICRC since 1999. This means that I support the Police and Security Forces delegate in providing training and guidance to police officers in the field of human rights, humanitarian principles, ethics and integrity. So far, I have provided training with the ICRC to police officers in Eastern Europe, the Middle East, Africa, Asia and the Pacific region.

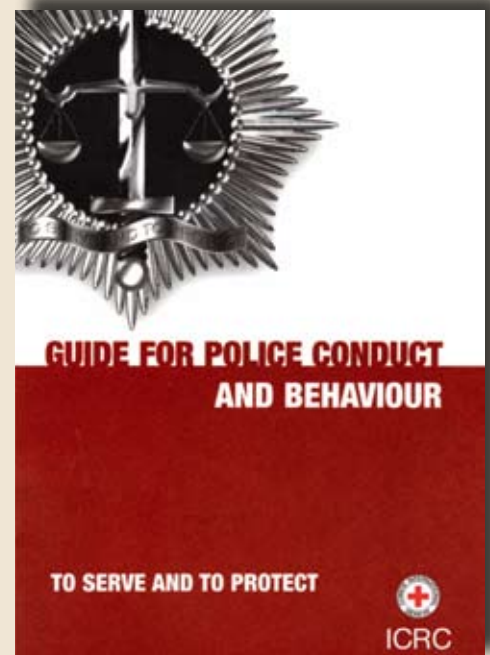
During all these years working for and with police forces, I can say that police officers all over the world are the same; they speak the same police language and face the same challenges in their work. This is why it is essential to have police instructors conduct the ICRC police training – these instructors speak the same language as the officers, and have experienced the same challenges.

It's important to train in an interactive way, through discussion groups, presentations and role plays. During the second week, each participant must give their own training session, which their peers assess. At the end of the day, the objective of doing this training is that the trainers will pass on

the understanding and methodology when they give their own training sessions to their colleagues in the Sierra Leone Police. Dissemination of human rights and humanitarian principles must be on-going; I hope that in Sierra Leone this will be the case.

Guide for Police conduct and behaviour

This is a handbook intended to guide the police behaviour and conduct as they carry out their work. It is based on International Human Rights Law (IHL) and Humanitarian Principles applicable in professional policing work. The booklet outlines the fundamental rights of a person that should never be taken away, and the responsibilities of the police and their powers. It explains how the police should treat vulnerable members of the public including women, children, victims of crime and internally displaced people and refugees. And finally the book explains ICRC's work in protection of detainees. The 16 paged handbook, published by the ICRC, is well illustrated and easy to read.



What is the ICRC doing?

Background

Most people are aware that on a global level, the numbers of HIV/AIDS cases are increasing at a terrifying rate. This fatal disease does not distinguish between its victims, affecting all sectors of society – including the workplace (employers and employees). In response to the pandemic, the International Committee of the Red Cross in Sierra Leone has introduced a workplace programme to look after the welfare of employees and their families. The programme began in September of 2006 following sensitisation sessions and regular condom distributions to all employees.

ICRC HIV/AIDS Workplace Policy

The ICRC as a humanitarian organisation is as affected as any other employer in the world by the AIDS pandemic; as such, the organisation has established a policy covering employees and their families. The policy has two main facets: firstly, to deal with the pandemic like any other chronic disease through awareness raising and education, by promoting prevention and acceptance through Peer Educators (see next article). Secondly, to support positive living and give hope for those who may be infected or affected with the disease by encouraging employees and their families to go for Voluntary Confidential Counselling and Testing (VCCT).

Hospital, to deal with the HIV/AIDS issue. ICRC will provide financial, technical and scientific support.

In addition, the ICRC has invested in a professional organisation from Kenya – National Organisation for Peer Educators (NOPE), to train 10 Peer Educators to help sensitise all employees.

ICRC Family Day

In line with the policy of the ICRC to raise awareness amongst employees and their families, a family day was organised first in Kenema (October 2006) and later in Freetown (1st December), marking World AIDS Day.

The ICRC family day organised for staff and their families attracted more than two hundred people from different socio-economic, cultural and religious backgrounds. This mixture of different backgrounds was unique and allowed for open participatory and animated discussions. Both days were interactive, interesting and innovative. Different learning aids including videos, practical exercises and group discussions hammered home the key messages – awareness, positive living and no discrimination.

The ICRC invited experienced and qualified persons from the People living with HIV and AIDS Association to deliver their personal

experience, and an employee from the Connaught Hospital Voluntary Confidential Counselling and Testing Centre (VCCT) to explain the HIV testing procedure.

A quiz competition formed an interesting part of the day with questions based on topics deliberated; 95% of the participants scored over 50%, which showed that information and messages passed and role-plays and video shown had helped to widen their knowledge on HIV/AIDS.

Join the ICRC to help stop the spread of HIV/AIDS

The ICRC through the HIV/AIDS Country Manager is inviting you reading this article to join in the fight against this world pandemic. "You are encouraged to take the message across Sierra Leone" quoting the words of the Head Delegation Mr. Jürg Montani in one of the staff sensitisation sessions facilitated by the Nairobi

based National Organisation for Peer Educators (NOPE) at the British Council in December 2006.

VCCT

Make up your mind, do not be coerced and go for a free of cost voluntary confidential counselling and testing. Know your status and then continue to live a positive and responsible life.

Remember, it concerns everyone, you, you, and YOU! I mean you reading this newsletter and all of us.

Zainab Thomas, HIV/AIDS Programme Manager,
ICRC Sierra Leone



Over 200 people came together to talk about HIV/AIDS on 1st December 2006

Management and collaboration with others

In collaboration with other partners in the country such as the Choithram Hospital, the National AIDS Secretariat, HIV/AIDS Care and Support Association, Marie Stopes etc. the ICRC will work to give better services that will help to prolong the lives of those who may be found to be HIV positive following Voluntary Confidential Counselling and Testing.

ICRC'S commitment

In view of the above, the ICRC has decided to contribute to set up an Outpatient Department (OPD), which will be operated by Choithram

Peer Educators - providing support in the workplace

I am Eric George, working as a driver in the ICRC Sierra Leone delegation.

In December 2006, for the first time, the ICRC organised a Peer Education training for the HIV/AIDS Workplace Programme, and I was privileged to have been one of those staff members selected to be trained for the HIV/AIDS programme within the ICRC Sierra Leone delegation.

As drivers, our job requires travelling from one place to the other; as such, we constitute a group that is vulnerable to sexually transmitted infections, including HIV. Peer education is one way to reduce these vulnerabilities. It is only when we take a positive stride to disseminate the knowledge of the epidemic within the workplace with family members and in our communities that we will be able to combat the disease. It is through preventive measures, advocacy for the dignity of those affected, as well as care and support for HIV positive persons that we will be able to fight this "Global enemy".

My participation in the training programme has widened my knowledge on the real facts about Sexually Transmitted Infections and HIV/AIDS. In the past, HIV/AIDS was described as a killer disease and this makes it difficult for people to talk about it: The way it is transmitted makes it sometimes a taboo subject as well. Peer education will increase awareness of the reality of HIV/AIDS and its impact on us all.

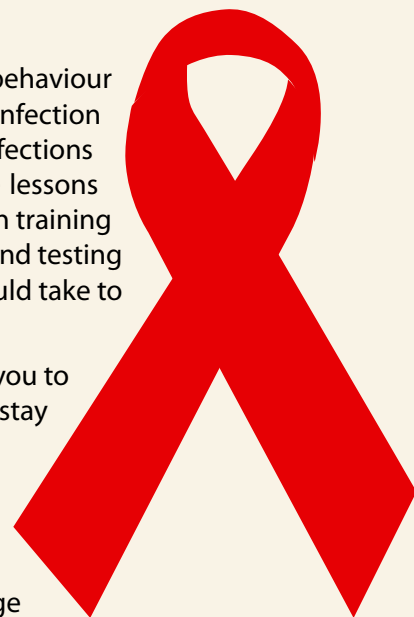
Peer education promotes behaviour change to minimise the risk of infection with Sexually Transmitted Infections and HIV infection. One of the lessons learnt from the peer education training is that voluntary counselling and testing (VCCT) is the first step one could take to know his or her HIV status.

Knowing your status enables you to take preventive measures to stay negative or live positively.

To achieve this goal, peer educators have a lot to do in the area of prevention, by disseminating the message through the support given to them.

HIV/AIDS is a global problem. Silence and denial will not help. "Live and Let Live" will help to overcome stigma and discrimination. Individuals living with HIV cannot do it alone - let us all come together to stop AIDS and keep the promise.

I thank the ICRC for setting up an HIV/AIDS workplace Programme, as this will enable colleagues to discuss with their peers about sensitive issues related to Sexually Transmitted Infections and HIV/AIDS.



CD4 counter – what for?

The aim of voluntary screening and counselling centres is to find out whether someone is infected with HIV (human immunodeficiency virus). The virus can stay in the body for many years without showing any signs of being there – unless a test is done.

Normally, the human body is protected against outside infection such as viruses and bacteria by its immune system, principally the white blood cells. These cells come in different types to protect against different things.

But when the HIV virus enters the body, and comes across the special white blood cells known as CD4s, it uses these white blood cells as hosts, where it reproduces itself and eventually destroys the cells. The more the virus reproduces itself, the less CD4s exist.

So counting the number of CD4s is a way of being able to know how quickly the virus is developing. As long as it is quiet, there will be hardly any change in the number of

CD4s. But when the virus begins to attack the body, the number of CD4s will drop to a point where the immunity of the body is in danger, and no longer able to fight against any infection it might get.

This is the time when heavy medication can be used against the virus. With a well-balanced medication, the quantity of virus will decrease and immunity increased. By monitoring the CD4 count, it is possible to foresee the next virus attack and take steps against it immediately.

The ICRC is supporting the establishment of a CD4 counter to be installed in Choitram Hospital, so that it will be possible to follow the evolution of the HIV virus in patients by counting the numbers of CD4 cells in their body. It will be for people who already know they are HIV positive, and we hope that it will improve the lives not just of ICRC staff and their families, but also the general population of Freetown, by allowing them access to high quality, low-cost treatment and follow-up.

Sierra Leone Red Cross Society – continuing to represent the spirit of voluntary service.

Voluntary service is one of the seven fundamental principles (along with independence, impartiality, neutrality, universality, unity and humanity) of the Red Cross/Red Crescent Movement, of which the ICRC and the Sierra Leone Red Cross are members. The SLRCS, with its long history as a strong National Society, has a wide membership all over the country. All of these members are volunteers, working for the SLRCS to assist fellow Sierra Leoneans in times of war and peace. To celebrate their work, the ICRC interviewed two SLRCS volunteers – one of the longest-serving and one of the newest...

Over 50 years of service to the Red Cross

Mr Daniel Anthony Ajivon, aged 78, is one of the oldest volunteers of the Sierra Leone Red Cross Society. He has served in different capacities of the Sierra Leone Red Cross Society and has made representation to several countries. It was a pleasure to meet and interview such a receptive veteran volunteer of the Red Cross Movement.



Daniel Anthony Ajivon has been volunteering with the SLRCS for over 50 years

ICRC: When was your first encounter with the Red Cross Movement?

My first encounter with the Red Cross Movement was way back when I was in college. One lady from the British Red Cross was recruiting volunteers from colleges to teach schoolchildren who were admitted at Connaught hospital and unable to go to school because of their admission at the hospital.

ICRC: When did you become a volunteer of the Red Cross Society?

I became a volunteer of the Sierra Leone branch of the British Red Cross Society in 1954 when I was a student at the Fourah Bay College, University of Sierra Leone.

ICRC: What motivated you to join the Red Cross Movement?

It is a question of sympathy to the suffering and needy. At that time, the Recruitment Officer of the British Red Cross wanted college students to volunteer and teach schoolchildren who were admitted at the hospital. Once I heard of the plight of these young children, I decided to offer free service to the needy by registering my name to become a volunteer of the Red Cross Movement.

ICRC: The reading populace would like you to share your life history in the Red Cross movement, the role(s) you played from the transition period of the British Red Cross to the present Sierra Leone Red Cross Society.

After I went through the Red Cross training in First Aid, Basic Nursing and Public Health and was certified as trained and qualified, I covered all first aid activities as requested during inter-house sports and football matches. Moreover, we worked closely with the police.

From the trainings I received in the Red Cross Society from the days of the branch of the British Red Cross unto present Sierra Leone Red Cross Society, I have served as First Aid and Basic Nursing instructor, examiner and recruited as Voluntary Blood Donor.

However, as time went by, I scaled down from practical Red Cross activities to functional or Administrative work.

In addition, I have served in various capacities as Branch Director of the Western Area Branch, Assistant to the President of the Sierra Leone Red Cross Society, Chairman Finance Committee and Adviser to the Sierra Leone Red Cross Society.

ICRC: Have you performed any function on behalf of the Red Cross Society outside of Sierra Leone?

Sure! I took part in a training that was organised in the U.K. when we were a branch of the British Red Cross. I have also represented the Sierra Leone Red Cross Society in a

Voluntary Service

series of trainings in Geneva, Ghana, and Kenya as a way of broadening my horizon in the Red Cross Movement.

ICRC: Can you share with us what were the major activities of the Red Cross in the early days?

Since, those days there were no wars, we were trained to carry out activities such as first aid and hospital duties. Hospital duties were carried out during weekends and holidays.

ICRC: How do you feel when you were at one time invited to serve as a guest speaker for the May 8th Celebration (Red Cross Day)?

Oh! I really felt honoured, the fact that I had been recognised as one of the oldest Red Cross volunteers. Recognition is a very strong factor for motivation.

ICRC: What message do you have for members of the Red Cross/Red Crescent Movement?

My message to the Red Cross volunteers: be committed and demonstrate the true picture of voluntary service by taking into account the fundamental principles. To the Red Cross employees, please maintain honesty in the dispensation of your responsibilities and contribute towards the protection of the Red Cross/Red Crescent image.

Just arrived: a new volunteer joins to strengthen the SLRCS

Aruna Turay is a newly enrolled volunteer of the Western Area Branch in the Sierra Leone Red Cross Society. During a community service by volunteers of the Sierra Leone Red Cross Society in February, he explained his experience to the ICRC.

ICRC: When was your first encounter with the Red Cross/Red Crescent Movement?

My first encounter with the Sierra Leone Red Cross Society to be specific was in June 2006, when the Communication and Tracing Volunteer of the Sierra Leone Red Cross Society carried out an outreach programme in our community. He gave a comprehensive explanation about the historical development and the fundamental principles of the Red Cross Movement and he distributed leaflets, giving us comprehensive information about the Red Cross Movement.

ICRC: What inspired you to get enrolled in the Sierra Leone Red Cross Society?

After carefully reading and understanding the information in the leaflets, I was inspired by the power of humanity to become a volunteer of the Sierra Leone Red Cross Society to offer my services - without financial gain - in order to alleviate human suffering.

ICRC: When were you enrolled in the Sierra Leone Red Cross Society?

I was enrolled in the Sierra Leone Red Cross Society as a volunteer in 2006, after an enrolment test on topics covered in six months on the Red Cross Movement and first aid.

ICRC: What is your present role in the Sierra Leone Red Cross Society?

I am an executive member of the senior youth group of the Western Area Branch in the Sierra Leone Red Cross Society.



Aruna Turay has just joined the SLRCS

ICRC: How have you contributed to alleviate human suffering?

I have contributed towards the alleviation of human suffering by voluntarily taking part in first aid activities, awareness-raising to communities that are prone to natural disaster, donating blood to those in need of it etc.

ICRC: Without realizing financial gain for the numerous voluntary services rendered to alleviate human suffering, have you realized any other gain from the Sierra Leone Red Cross Society?

Of course, yes, during my enrolment training as a volunteer in the Sierra Leone Red Cross Society, I learnt about first aid, which is a benefit to my family, community and myself. Moreover, I gained a lot of knowledge about disaster management and programmes for the community. I received a certificate of merit as well.

Pan-African Moot Court Competition in International Humanitarian Law – Arusha, Tanzania, November 2006

Winners of the 2nd national Moot Court Competition organised by the ICRC in August last year (see our newsletter, November 2006), Nelson Fofana, Abdul Karim Koroma and Abdul Rahman Kamara of Fourah Bay College represented Sierra Leone at the 6th pan-African Moot Court Competition in International Humanitarian Law (IHL) in Arusha, Tanzania, at the end of November 2006. After a gruelling but educative week of role-plays and tests, the team just missed a place in the final and did their country proud. It seems Sierra Leone is going from strength to strength!

Below, Nelson describes his feelings when he found out his team was going to Arusha:

"I cannot exactly describe the way I felt when my name, Nelson Sheku Fofana from Fourah Bay College, was called as the leader of Team 3 to move forward and receive a silver trophy as the first prize for the winning team in the Special Court for Sierra Leone.

We were fifteen of us drawn from constituent colleges nationwide: Fourah Bay College, Njala University College, Milton Margai College of Education and Technology and the Eastern Polytechnic, Kenema. The debate, organised by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), took place in the trial chamber of the Special Court

for Sierra Leone with the sole aim of promoting IHL in general and within Sierra Leone's academic circle in particular.

I came to have a special interest in IHL through the lectures of some lawyers from the Special Court for Sierra Leone upon the request of Mrs Cole, the head of the Mass Communication department in FBC.

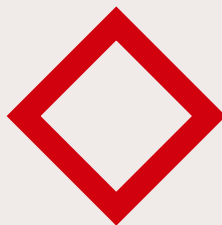
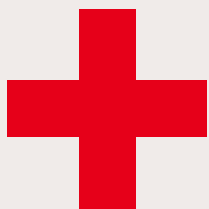
As soon as I heard about the competition it became a serious interest for me; I organised a team and started to scout around for additional materials. Finally, the long-awaited 8 August arrived, and my team emerged as the victor. A certification ceremony, the giving of ICRC bags to all the participants and a big VIP party was then the occasion to shake hands with and talk with high profile people in the community also interested in IHL.

A very big thanks to Mrs Cole, the Special Court for Sierra Leone and above all bravo to the ICRC for such a meaningful and timely venture".

All eyes will be on the winners of this year's national competition, organised by the ICRC and to be held on 20 April at the Special Court for Sierra Leone.

Congratulations to the team from Kenya, who were the final winners of the 2006 Moot Court Competition.

Red crystal becomes additional protective emblem



The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) welcome the entry into force on 14 January 2007 of the Third Protocol additional to the Geneva Conventions of 1949. The Third Protocol introduces a protective emblem called the red crystal alongside the red cross and red crescent emblems.

The adoption of the red crystal reaffirms the determination of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement to consolidate its universality and thereby to enhance its strength and credibility. By offering new possibilities for protection and identification to National Societies and States that wish to use the red crystal, the Third Protocol exemplifies the Movement's commitment to neutral and independent humanitarian action.

Ultimately, the goal is to improve protection for all those who need it, be they beneficiaries of humanitarian aid or persons striving to deliver it.

The Third Protocol was adopted by a large majority of States at a diplomatic conference held in December 2005 in Geneva. The 29th International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent, which took place in June 2006, amended the Movement's statutes to incorporate the additional emblem.

So far, 84 States have signed the Third Protocol and nine States have ratified it (Sierra Leone is among those states who have not yet done so).



Mission: 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.

It directs and coordinates the international relief activities conducted by the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement in situations of conflict. It also endeavours to prevent suffering by promoting and strengthening humanitarian law and universal humanitarian principles. Established in 1863, the ICRC is at the origin of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement.



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