

ICRC

NEWSLETTER

SIERRA LEONE

September 01 - February 02

Empowering Women in Sierra Leone

Assisting Sierra Leone women to resettle and rebuild their lives after years of conflict is a priority for the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and the Sierra Leone Red Cross Society (SLRCS). Women are generally those most affected in situations of armed conflict.

A large scale community-based vegetable farming project was launched by the ICRC and the SLRCS to improve the living standard of women and enhance their income-generating capability.

17 women's associations (11'700 beneficiaries) were assisted in the Western Area and parts of the Northern Region during the pilot stage of the project in September 2000. The impact of the programme convinced the ICRC and the SLRCS to extend its scope to Bombali, Tonkolili, Koinadugu, Kambia, Port Loko, Bo, Pujehun, Kenema and Kailahun districts in 2001.

Ya Alimamy Sesay, a widow and mother of five children, is one beneficiary from the Tamaraneh Women's Agricultural Development Association in Kholifa Mabang chiefdom (Tonkolili). She hails from Kainkordu village in the Kono district where she lost her husband five years ago. Ya Alimamy is now 49 and is living with her children and the aged mother of her late husband as displaced persons in Maworr village. She had not registered at any of the established displaced / transit

camps. Life had been a miserable routine until recently when Ya Alimamy joined a women's agricultural group supported by the Red Cross. "My children had not been going to school because there was nobody to support them... If they are hungry, sick, or needed clothes to wear, I'm the only parent to provide. This Red Cross project has greatly changed my life. Now we have enough to eat and to sell and I can afford to send my children to school even in the absence of a husband".



Translating theory into practice – teaching Kenema women how to prepare a nursery.

Training opportunities

The programme initially focused on different women's associations grouping persons such as war widows, displaced women, and refugees. It was later conducted directly at the household level. "Over 60'000 women from 954 groups benefited from the programme at the end of 2001", explained Peter Klinck, the ICRC Agronomist. "Participants receive lectures on how to prepare a nursery, and where to locate a garden. They also get acquainted with pest control, soil conservation, and receive information on marketing and other issues of production." Assistance is usually preceded by a training workshop organised by the ICRC and the SLRCS and supported by the Ministry of Agriculture. At the end of every workshop beneficiaries receive a package which consists of imported and local vegetable seeds, a hoe, a shovel, a metal bucket, a machete, and a wheelbarrow.

Spreading the message

Experience has shown that women can be effective promoters of the Law of War at grassroots level. During their agricultural training, women were sensitised to basic concepts regarding their rights and the protection afforded to them by International Humanitarian Law.

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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 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. The ICRC has been working in Sierra Leone since 1991. In agreement with all parties to the conflict, the ICRC carries out humanitarian activities such as medical support, relief assistance to civilians, restoration of family ties and promotion of International Humanitarian law.



INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE OF THE RED CROSS

Although the primary responsibility for teaching the law lies with the government, the ICRC has provided support to Sierra Leone over the years by engaging combatants in sensitisation sessions on rules for behaviour in combat.

In a bid to strengthen the protection of women, key rules such as the obligation

to respect and protect women against "rape, enforced prostitution, humiliating and degrading treatment, and any form of indecent assault" are underlined.

The resilience of Ya Alimamy and her partners in the Tamaraneh group in Kholifa Mabang proves how much women can do to rebuild Sierra Leone

from the ashes of war.

Tens of thousands of Sierra Leonean women like Ya Alimamy can now improve the diets of their families and earn supplementary income. The ICRC and the SLRCS will continue to conduct the programme in 2002, in areas where a need is identified.

ICRC ACTIVITIES

From September 2001 to February 2002

Water, habitat and construction

A majority of health problems affecting people in Sierra Leone are related to lack of clean water and hygiene. Access to safe drinking water and adequate sanitation are essential for disease control. The ICRC works together with communities in rural areas to improve their habitat, ensure access to clean water and raise awareness on hygiene and waste management.

In the past 6 months the ICRC has supported the construction of dozens of protected wells and hundreds of traditional latrines in rural villages in Pujehun, Port Loko and Kailahun. In 2002 the programme will continue in Kono and Kailahun. In addition, the ICRC has significantly improved the sanitation facilities at health facilities, including Kenema Government Hospital (KGH) and Koidu Government Hospital.



Koidu Govt. Hospital Toilet before...



... and after rehabilitation.

From September 2001 to February 2002 the ICRC constructed:

- 3 protected wells and 140 traditional latrines in Makpele Chiefdom (Pujehun)
- 7 protected wells and 160 pit latrines in Maforki Chiefdom (Port Loko)

and supported the rehabilitation of:

- the kitchen and plumbing in the maternity ward of Kenema Government Hospital
- the inpatient and outpatient departments at Koidu Government Hospital
- the Sierra Leone Red Cross clinic in Makeni
- the kitchen in Pademba Road Prison.

Relief activities

The ICRC works in close cooperation with the Sierra Leone Red Cross Society (SLRCS). It is this synergy that has contributed to the achievements of the Red Cross in the field of humanitarian assistance. As the felt-need to resettle displaced persons and returnees to their place of origin gathers momentum, the ICRC has adapted its programmes to this reality.

From September 2001 to February 2002, the ICRC:

- in collaboration with the SLRCS, provided tarpaulins, blankets, buckets, kitchen sets, mats and used clothing to 10'933 families in four chiefdoms in Kono (Kamara, Gbense, Tankoro and Gbane) and to 7'549 families in six chiefdoms in Kailahun (Mandu, Dia, Malema, Peje Bongre, Peje West and Jawei). Among them 80% were returnees.



Delivering the goods: An exhibition of vegetable seeds and tools before distribution – Tonkolili.

- in co-operation with the SLRCS and the Ministry of Agriculture, conducted a programme targeting some 650 women's association in nine districts and providing 40'000 women with local and imported vegetable seeds, farming tools, and training in vegetable cultivation.
- in conjunction with other humanitarian organisations, helped resettle internally displaced persons from Port Loko camp to their homes in Upper Maforki. 600 families were assisted with tarpaulins, blankets, kitchen sets, mats, soap, and used clothes.
- provided 2'578 fishermen of 268 associations in ten chiefdoms in Kailahun, Kenema and Pujehun Districts with 888 fishing kits. Over 14'018 persons benefit from this assistance.



Even Wars Have Limits: dissemination to enlisted combatants in the Military Reintegration Programme (MRP).

Medical activities

- together with the government medical staff, carried out 955 operations at Kenema Government Hospital.
- provided access to basic health care and monitored use of basic drugs and medicines at Segbwema mobile clinic (12'150 consultations).
- conducted basic rehabilitation of Koidu Government Hospital and the provided essential drugs.

Persons deprived of freedom

In accordance with the "Agreement between the Government of Sierra Leone and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) on humanitarian activities for detained persons" the ICRC...

- had access to the persons deprived of freedom in places of detention in Sierra Leone.
- provided material and medical support to the most needy inmates.

Restoring and maintaining family links

Since January 2002, only outstanding and pending Red Cross Messages and first replies had been processed by ICRC/SLRCS. The family message network within the country has been scaled down because of the improvement in the security situation. Commercial and passenger traffic have therefore resumed throughout Sierra Leone and people are now returning their place of origin.

From September 2001 to February 2002, the ICRC:

- in co-operation with the SLRCS, distributed 8'283 and collected 9'967 Red Cross Family Messages.

- reunited 92 unaccompanied Sierra Leonean minors with their families. 374 families of unaccompanied children are currently being traced.

Information, training and promotion

The teaching of International Humanitarian Law constitutes one of the best ways of preventing its violation. This activity takes place before, during and after armed conflicts.

From September 2001 to February 2002, the ICRC:

- delivered eleven lectures to 1040 officers of the Republic of Sierra Leone Armed Forces, non-commissioned officers and privates being trained in Benguema Armed Forces Training Centre.
- delivered nine sessions to 917 former RUF and CDF fighters.
- carried out different lectures for 600 women associations.

Promoting and Implementing International Humanitarian Law in Cooperation with the Armed Forces

"International Humanitarian Law, also known as the Law of War or the Law of Armed Conflict, is a question of common sense and decency."
RSLAF Director of Training

These were the words of the Director of Training of the Republic of Sierra Leone Armed Forces (RSLAF), during his opening remarks in a training course on humanitarian law at the Armed Forces Training Centre in Benguema, held in February 2002. The course, which involved 55 officers from different command units, was conducted by the ICRC, in collaboration with the RSLAF and the

International Military Advisory and Training Team, IMATT.

In recent years the ICRC has supported Sierra Leone in raising awareness of International Humanitarian Law (IHL). Several thousands of soldiers of the RSLAF and other arms carriers have been sensitised to key concepts, such as the obligation to protect and respect civilians as well as wounded and detained adversaries no longer taking part in the fighting. They were reminded that even wars have limits, and the choice of weapon and behaviour in combat is regulated by internationally approved rules.

It is the duty of every commander to ensure compliance with IHL at his or her level of responsibility. The February training course aimed at building the capacity of the participants to instruct private soldiers and non commissioned officers in the field on basic notions of humanitarian law, behaviour in action and conduct of operations. The programme was designed to create a sustainable capacity within the RSLAF to teach the Law of War. The ICRC will continue to conduct ad-hoc briefings for the RSLAF, focusing on the Red Cross mandate, and its fundamental principles and activities.

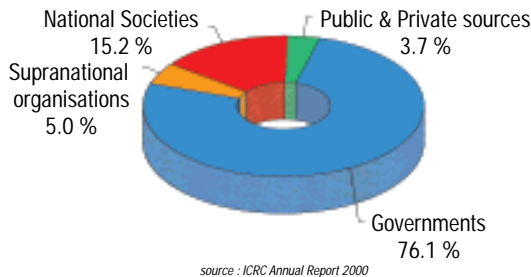
In parallel to the training course in Benguema, the ICRC awarded a scholarship to two senior officers of the RSLAF to pursue advanced military training on the Law of War at the International Institute of Humanitarian Law in San Remo, Italy. These officers are to provide the basis for developing a syllabus on the subject for RSLAF, to be incorporated in all training courses at the Armed Forces Training Centre. The ICRC is also jointly developing didactic materials like flip charts, and will provide video tapes to enhance the teaching of IHL at the battalion and brigade level.

How is the ICRC financed?

Unlike many other organisations, the ICRC can help victims before it has received funding for its programmes. Once urgent needs have been identified it can act immediately, and request to be refunded at a later stage. The ICRC

enjoys the trust of its donors because it seeks to ensure that its operations and activities reply to essential needs and are realistic in dimension. All the financing of the ICRC relies on voluntary contributions.

**Contribution received for Field and Headquarters Budgets
(in cash, kind and services in 2000, by donor category)**

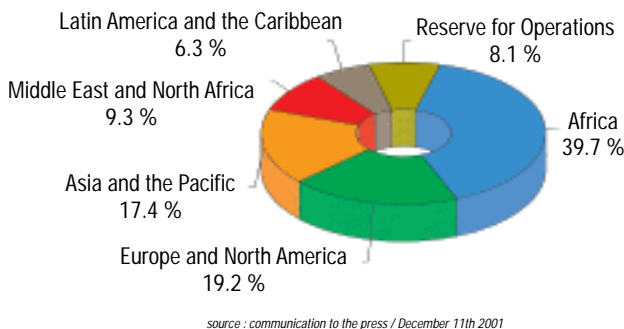


ICRC appeals for 2002

In order to obtain the necessary funding, the ICRC launches appeals, generally once a year. These appeals explain the issues and needs that the ICRC has decided to address and the objectives it has set for the year. The appeals cover the ICRC activities at the Headquarters and its operations in the field.

The number and the intensity of the situations covered by the ICRC varies from year to year, as do its budgets. The general trend over the last decade, however, is towards an increase in the number of conflicts and thus an increase in the ICRC's budget.

ICRC Appeal for the year 2002



Budget 2002 for the ICRC activities in Sierra Leone

**ICRC Budget 2002 - Sierra Leone
(USD 14'460'695)**



General ICRC budget for 2002

The general budget drawn up for 2002 amounts to 557.6 million USD, of which 466.4 million USD are for operations throughout the world and 91.2 million USD for the support provided by ICRC Headquarters in Geneva.

The ICRC's independence towards its donors

The bulk of cash financing for the ICRC's field operations comes from some 20 governmental and supranational donors. Efforts are made on an on-going basis to encourage new donors to contribute. Budgetary difficulties and internal control structures within the different donor States sometimes lead them to designate (' earmark') their contributions to the ICRC for a specific purpose. Earmarked funds are accepted providing that the balance and independence of its operations are not jeopardised. Otherwise, the conditions attached to the contribution are re-examined with the donor. Where no agreement is reached as to an acceptable allocation, the contribution may have to be refused. Fortunately, this occurs very seldom.

In 2002, the ICRC will continue to fulfil its commitment to assisting and protecting victims of armed conflict and situations of internal violence throughout the world. Maintaining and if possible improving access to these victims under acceptable security conditions are among the main challenges facing the organisation. In addition, the ICRC will continue to do its utmost to ensure that its programmes take into account the special needs of women and children.

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