

# MYANMAR



ICRC delegation    ICRC office    ICRC-supported prosthetic/orthotic centre

## EXPENDITURE (IN KCHF)

Protection	1,106
Assistance	1,124
Prevention	703
Cooperation with National Societies	612
General	-

► **3,545**

of which: Overheads 216

## IMPLEMENTATION RATE

Expenditure/yearly budget	86%
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## PERSONNEL

Expatriates	4
National staff (daily workers not included)	100

## KEY POINTS

### In 2011, the ICRC:

- facilitated family visits for 629 detainees
- finalized an agreement with the authorities on the rehabilitation of water and sanitation infrastructure in 3 prisons
- with the Myanmar Red Cross Society, provided services to 1,791 patients at the Hpa-an Orthopaedic Rehabilitation Centre
- started discussions with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs regarding ICRC support in advancing IHL understanding among government officials
- helped build the capacities of Myanmar Red Cross branches in conflict-prone areas
- with the National Society, trained 294 Red Cross volunteers to carry out their humanitarian activities in a safer manner

The ICRC began working in Myanmar in 1986, providing physical rehabilitation for mine victims and other disabled people. Between 1999 and 2005, delegates visited detainees, assisted and sought to improve the protection of conflict-affected civilians, and provided supplies to hospitals treating the wounded. By the end of 2005, restrictions imposed on the ICRC's ability to work according to its standard procedures had led to a progressive downsizing of activities. The ICRC actively seeks dialogue with government authorities with a view to resuming priority activities. It also works with the International Federation to enhance the effectiveness of the Myanmar Red Cross Society.

## CONTEXT

The new Myanmar parliament met at the end of January 2011 after general elections in November 2010, the first in nearly two decades. It elected U Thein Sein as the new president. The State Peace and Development Council ceded power to the new government at the end of March.

The new government proceeded to introduce a range of reforms and initiatives. The president met the leader of the opposition National League for Democracy (NLD), Daw Aung San Suu Kyi. The law on political party registrations was amended, which led to re-registration of the NLD as a political party. Some 21,000 detainees, according to official figures, were released in two presidential amnesties. A National Human Rights Commission, set up in September, started accepting complaints about human rights abuses.

The international community responded by sending high-profile diplomatic missions to Myanmar. However, sanctions imposed by Western countries remained in force.

Low-intensity armed conflict spread to northern Shan State and Kachin State in the first half of the year, where government forces clashed with the Shan State Army-North and the Kachin Independence Army. Addressing ethnic minority issues, the government offered peace talks with armed opposition forces in August, and subsequently signed ceasefire agreements with several groups, including the United Wa State Party and the Shan State Army-South. Other armed groups pursued negotiations with the government. Nonetheless, tensions remained high between government forces and the Kachin Independence Army, sparking the displacement of thousands of people.

Myanmar Red Cross Society recovery and reconstruction efforts in areas hit by Cyclone Nargis in May 2008 were completed by the end of September 2011.

## ICRC ACTION AND RESULTS

Government restrictions on the ICRC remained in place and did not allow the organization to discharge its mandate in accordance with its internationally recognized working methods. However, preliminary meetings were held with a number of senior officials from the new government to introduce the ICRC delegation to them and explore possible avenues for the development of ICRC work in the country. Subsequently, the government allowed an ICRC expatriate engineer to assess water and sanitation

Main figures and indicators		PROTECTION		Total
<b>CIVILIANS (residents, IDPs, returnees, etc.)</b>				
<b>Tracing requests, including cases of missing persons</b>				
People for whom a tracing request was newly registered			Women	Minors
	35		3	
People located (tracing cases closed positively)	27			
Tracing cases still being handled at 31 December 2011 (people)	35		3	
<b>UAMs/SCs*, including unaccompanied demobilized child soldiers</b>				
UAM/SC cases still being handled by the ICRC/National Society at 31 December 2011	5		Girls	Demobilized children
				5
<b>PEOPLE DEPRIVED OF THEIR FREEDOM (All categories/all statuses)</b>				
<b>Restoring family links</b>				
Detainees visited by their relatives with ICRC/National Society support	629			
People to whom a detention attestation was issued	62			

\* Unaccompanied minors/separated children

Main figures and indicators		ASSISTANCE		
<b>PEOPLE DEPRIVED OF THEIR FREEDOM (All categories/all statuses)</b>				
<b>Economic security, water and habitat</b>				
Water and habitat activities	Beneficiaries	3		
<b>WOUNDED AND SICK</b>				
<b>Physical rehabilitation<sup>1</sup></b>				
Centres supported	Structures	7		
Patients receiving services	Patients	5,804	768	451
New patients fitted with prostheses	Patients	818	73	18
Prostheses delivered	Units	1,580	131	65
	<i>of which for victims of mines or explosive remnants of war</i>	976		
New patients fitted with orthoses	Patients	731	243	223
Orthoses delivered	Units	1,492	388	669
	<i>of which for victims of mines or explosive remnants of war</i>	18		
Crutches delivered	Units	1,843		
Wheelchairs delivered	Units	10		

1. One centre directly supported. Six centres working with material provided by the ICRC in previous years. Figures include data from all seven centres.

conditions in three prisons, and work to upgrade relevant infrastructure in all three sites started in December. It also allowed an ICRC specialist to assess the operational capacities of six physical rehabilitation centres run by the Defence and Health Ministries in preparation for a possible resumption of ICRC support to those structures.

However, several proposals on key issues, such as resuming discussion on ICRC visits to detainees and assistance to people in conflict-affected areas, remained unanswered at year-end.

Meanwhile, a number of longstanding programmes continued. Detainees received visits from their families with ICRC support. Physically disabled people enjoyed treatment and services at the Hpa-an Orthopaedic Rehabilitation Centre, run by the Myanmar Red Cross with ICRC support.

The ICRC started discussions with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on ways in which it could support IHL training for ministry officials. With ICRC sponsorship, government representatives attended events abroad to strengthen their knowledge of IHL and the ICRC's role and mandate.

The Myanmar Red Cross received ICRC support to strengthen its operational capacity and to conduct dissemination sessions on IHL and basic humanitarian principles for various target audiences across the country. Capacity-building training was organized for Red Cross volunteers in order to enhance their ability to address the humanitarian needs of communities in conflict/tension-prone areas. Red Cross volunteers were trained in the Safer Access approach so that they could carry out their activities more safely, even in conflicts. Joint ICRC/Myanmar Red Cross

assessment missions and dissemination sessions across the country led to an ICRC presence in some of the most conflict/tension-prone areas, in some cases for the first time since 2006.

The ICRC worked closely with Movement partners in supporting the National Society's development.

## CIVILIANS

Low-intensity armed conflict, which spread to Kachin State and the northern part of Shan State in 2011, affected greater numbers of civilians, with thousands displaced as a result of fighting between government forces and the Kachin Independence Army.

To address the humanitarian consequences of the violence, the ICRC submitted a proposal to the authorities regarding the provision of medical assistance to conflict victims. A substantive dialogue on the matter had still to start by year-end.

Meanwhile, people continued to approach the ICRC for help in locating relatives who were unaccounted for. Written representations were submitted to the authorities regarding six additional minors who had allegedly been recruited into the armed forces. Five of them were reunited with their families, while five cases were still being handled.

Communities in conflict/tension-prone areas of southern Shan, Kayah and Mon States received humanitarian assistance from Myanmar Red Cross branches, although the National Society was able to operate only in government-controlled areas. Their volunteers received relevant capacity-building training, conducted with ICRC support. Joint Myanmar Red Cross/ICRC assessment missions and dissemination sessions across the country

(see *Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement*) led to an ICRC presence in various areas, including some where the ICRC had not been authorized to travel since 2006.

- ▶ 60 Red Cross volunteers from southern Shan State, trained as community-based first-aid trainers, conducted 5 multiplier sessions for 150 village representatives in the region, through whom local communities (1,500 households) reaped the benefits of hygiene education.
- ▶ After 151 Red Cross volunteers in Shan, Kayah and Mon States were trained in vulnerability and capacity assessment, the southern Shan Red Cross branch conducted an assessment together with the ICRC, which led to plans for joint community projects in the field of hygiene promotion.
- ▶ As part of the National Society's efforts to set up emergency-response teams all over the country, 294 Red Cross volunteers were equipped with Safer Access knowledge to enable them to deliver humanitarian assistance effectively and more safely in disaster and conflict situations.
- ▶ The Kachin Red Cross branch was provided with mobile communication equipment and taught emergency-response skills, benefiting 73 Red Cross volunteers.
- ▶ The Kayah Red Cross branch received ICRC support for its ambulance repairs.

### PEOPLE DEPRIVED OF THEIR FREEDOM

Detainees had not received ICRC visits aimed at monitoring their treatment and living conditions since December 2005, as the authorities would no longer allow the organization to carry out visits in accordance with its standard procedures. Nonetheless, 629 detainees benefited from ICRC-supported family visits, often from remote areas of the country. Upon their release, 368 former inmates had the cost of their journey home covered by the ICRC.

In May, the president granted an amnesty that commuted death sentences to life imprisonment and reduced all other sentences by one year. About 50 security detainees were among those benefiting from early release. In another amnesty in October, 6,359 detainees were released, including nearly 350 security detainees.

From May, members of the new government and the ICRC discussed project proposals, submitted to the authorities in 2010, to upgrade water and sanitation structures in three prisons. As a result, an expatriate engineer surveyed these prisons in July. The authorities approved the final project proposals in December and work started immediately afterwards. Discussions included a potential expansion of the project to other prisons with a population of over 1,000 detainees, along with building the Myanmar Prison Department's technical capacity.

Given the priority of starting with engineering work in prisons and the delay in commencing such work, a project to provide medical training to Prison Department staff could not be carried through. Nevertheless, three officials from the Ministry of Home Affairs attended an ICRC regional workshop on prison infrastructure (see *Bangkok*).

It was not possible to initiate a meaningful dialogue on the resumption of ICRC visits to detainees.

### WOUNDED AND SICK

Some 1,791 physically disabled people, mainly from south-eastern Myanmar, received services at the Hpa-an Orthopaedic Rehabilitation Centre, run by the Myanmar Red Cross with ICRC

managerial, technical, financial and training support. Victims of landmines were the recipients of 65% of the prostheses produced.

Amputees in many regions continued to face considerable difficulty in reaching the centre, owing to financial or security concerns or other travel restrictions, while others did not know of the centre's existence. To help overcome these constraints, the Myanmar Red Cross, together with the ICRC, ran an outreach prosthetic programme, which referred 183 patients to the centre. It extended the scope of the programme to Kayah State, Thanintharyi Region and eastern Bago Region after training 72 staff members and volunteers from the local branches there. To further enhance the professional skills of the centre staff, two employees continued their three-year course at the Cambodian School of Prosthetics and Orthotics, while an assistant physiotherapist and a prosthetic technician followed a three-week course at the Special Fund for the Disabled training centre in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

Following an ICRC offer to consider resuming its support to government-run physical rehabilitation structures, an ICRC delegate visited three formerly supported centres run by the Ministry of Health and three run by the Ministry of Defence. Services provided by the centres had sharply decreased since the end of ICRC support in 2007, mainly because of the lack of imported components and the absence of a support mechanism to facilitate patient access. The authorities and the ICRC were to discuss follow-up plans in 2012.

In addition to the wheelchairs distributed by the Hpa-an centre, the Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement received 30 wheelchairs for amputees, while the Kachin Red Cross branch received 11 wheelchairs for disabled people in relief camps.

### AUTHORITIES

After the new government took office, meetings with high-ranking officials at national level provided opportunities to explain the ICRC's mandate and activities and to explore areas for the possible development of ICRC work in the country. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the ICRC discussed ways in which the ICRC could help train ministry officials in IHL.

Four officials from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Attorney-General's Office took part in regional IHL conferences and teaching sessions held in India and the Maldives (see *New Delhi*) and in Nepal (see *Nepal*). Two officials from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs followed a distance-learning postgraduate diploma course in IHL from the NALSAR University of Law in Hyderabad, India, for which the ICRC supervised an exam in Myanmar.

Moreover, local government officials learnt more about IHL, humanitarian principles and the Movement at dissemination sessions run by the Myanmar Red Cross with ICRC support (see *Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement*). An ICRC documentary film, *Panorama 2008*, translated into Myanmar language, backed these sessions.

Representatives of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations and the wider international community regularly received information about the ICRC and humanitarian concerns in Myanmar to bolster support for the organization's work.

### ARMED FORCES AND OTHER BEARERS OF WEAPONS

The Office of the Judge Advocate General responded to the ICRC's offer to support IHL training for its staff. Five military legal officers and one police officer participated in regional IHL conferences

and teaching sessions held in India, Malaysia (see *Kuala Lumpur*), the Maldives and Nepal and in a seminar on the 1977 Additional Protocols held in Kyoto, Japan (see *Kuala Lumpur*).

With ICRC support, one military officer followed the NALSAR University of Law distance-learning IHL course. An invitation to take part in an ICRC-supported overseas training event, the Senior Workshop on International Rules Governing Military Operations, was declined.

Following discussions regarding the possible resumption of ICRC support for government-run physical rehabilitation structures, the Directorate of Defence Medical Services allowed the ICRC to assess three physical rehabilitation centres (see *Wounded and sick*).

Mid-ranking police officers attended joint ICRC/Myanmar Red Cross dissemination workshops (see *Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement*).

## **CIVIL SOCIETY**

The media in Myanmar continued to pick up ICRC press releases, relaying information on the organization's neutral, impartial and independent approach and its humanitarian activities worldwide. Myanmar Red Cross activities, including those run jointly with the ICRC, were widely covered in the national and local media.

After the new government took office, the Ministry of Education responded positively to the ICRC's invitation to IHL events. Two university lecturers attended regional IHL teaching sessions in India and Malaysia. Two university lecturers followed the NALSAR University of Law distance-learning IHL course.

University students and military officers doing postgraduate degrees in law made 147 visits to the ICRC's resource centres in Yangon and Mandalay to consult reference works on IHL and the ICRC.

With ICRC support, the Myanmar National Human Rights Commission was equipped with IHL reference books.

## **RED CROSS AND RED CRESCENT MOVEMENT**

The Myanmar Red Cross responded to the needs of people affected by natural disaster and armed conflict, strengthening the capacities of its branches to do so, with ICRC financial, technical and logistic support (see *Civilians*).

Backed by the International Federation and other Movement partners, the National Society completed recovery and reconstruction activities in areas affected by Cyclone Nargis.

To increase support for its activities and knowledge of the basic rules of IHL, humanitarian principles and the Movement, the Myanmar Red Cross conducted 26 dissemination sessions for 1,775 government and local authority officials, including police officers, school teachers, students from the Military Institute of Nursing and Paramedical Science, members of social organizations and Red Cross volunteers. It produced communication and education materials with ICRC support.

The National Society continued to improve the capacity of its family-links service within the framework of an Australian Red Cross-supported project, with the ICRC providing technical advice. Myanmar Red Cross/ICRC dissemination sessions included briefings on this service.

Nine second-hand vehicles, loaned during the Nargis recovery operation, were donated to the Myanmar Red Cross to enhance its logistic capacity. With ICRC support, construction of an office for the eastern Shan Red Cross branch started.

The Myanmar Red Cross started revising its legal base, setting up a Red Cross Law drafting committee and drafting a plan of action. It developed a strategic plan covering 2011–15 and participated in the Movement's statutory meetings, with ICRC and International Federation support.

The Myanmar Red Cross and its Movement partners held regular meetings to strengthen coordination.