



Ravindra Gallage/ICRC

## PROMOTING RESPECT FOR HUMANITARIAN PRINCIPLES

Over the years, the ICRC has promoted international humanitarian law (IHL) by:

- supporting national authorities, Sri Lankan armed forces and academia integrate principles of IHL into their trainings and curriculum;
- sponsoring members of these institutions to participate in IHL seminars, workshops and conferences overseas to enhance their understanding of IHL;
- organising annual national moot court competitions to enable undergraduates of law to gain an insight into IHL;
- in view of Sri Lanka's role as a contributor to UN peacekeeping operations, conducting briefings on IHL for members of the armed forces to be deployed on peacekeeping missions abroad.

## WORKING IN COOPERATION WITH THE SRI LANKA RED CROSS SOCIETY (SLRCS)

The ICRC supports its national Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement partner, the SLRCS, with financial, technical and material support for the restoration of family links between family members separated by the past conflict or natural disasters, with the dissemination and promotion of fundamental humanitarian principles and values, and to develop the emergency response capacity of its volunteers in areas such as first aid, search and rescue and rapid assessment. Over the past five years, the ICRC has been helping the SLRCS to re-establish its branches in Kilinochchi and Mullaitivu.

## 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 armed conflict and other situations of violence and to provide them with assistance. The ICRC 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 Geneva Conventions and the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement. It directs and coordinates the international activities conducted by the Movement in armed conflicts and other situations of violence.



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## OUR ACTION

The ICRC has been present in Sri Lanka since 1989. Initially it responded to humanitarian needs resulting from the uprising of the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna in the South, and thereafter from the conflict between the Government of Sri Lanka and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam in the North and East of the country.

Today, the ICRC focuses on responding to the remaining humanitarian needs of people affected by the past conflict. Together with the relevant authorities, it provides livelihood assistance and water and sanitation facilities to vulnerable households and communities. It contributes to addressing the multifaceted needs of families of missing people, including clarifying the fate and whereabouts of their missing relatives.

The ICRC provides support to prison authorities to ensure better treatment and conditions of detention for all detainees in the

country. It also helps them to improve the existing prison management system, and supports judicial medical institutions and authorities to safeguard the dignity of the dead and the living by enhancing their technical forensic skills.

The ICRC promotes international humanitarian law among academics, national authorities, civil society and members of the security forces. It provides training for the Terrorist Investigation Division, Criminal Investigation Department, and the Narcotics Bureau of the Sri Lanka Police on international human rights law in the areas of correct use of force and firearms, and international standards in search and arrest procedures. It also supports and collaborates with the Sri Lanka Red Cross Society to promote humanitarian values and implement livelihood assistance activities in former conflict areas.

## ICRC IN SRI LANKA



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## SUPPORTING AUTHORITIES TO ENSURE THE WELFARE OF PEOPLE IN PLACES OF DETENTION

The ICRC has been visiting places of detention in Sri Lanka since 1989, in keeping with its global humanitarian mandate to support detaining authorities in their endeavours to ensure adequate conditions of detention and treatment of all detainees, and to enable detainees to maintain family links. Following its visits, the ICRC shares its findings and recommendations with the authorities on a bilateral and confidential basis. Currently in Sri Lanka, the ICRC:

- helps detainees' maintain contact with their families;
- contributes to small-scale infrastructure renovation or construction (e.g. kitchens, prison wards including roofing and toilets, installing solar panels and/or overhead water tanks, and improving ventilation systems); and
- distributes basic hygiene items, clothing, mattresses, and recreational items.
- assesses general material conditions of detention, treatment and supervision of all detainees;
- works with the relevant authorities to develop measures to address overcrowding;
- supports authorities' efforts to improve detainees' access to adequate health care services;

## ATTENDING TO THE HUMANITARIAN NEEDS OF FAMILIES OF MISSING PEOPLE

Since 1990, the ICRC has been contacted by thousands of families whose loved ones went missing in connection with the past conflict in Sri Lanka.

Under its humanitarian mandate, the ICRC has established a regular dialogue with Sri Lankan authorities on the comprehensive response required to address the multifaceted needs of these families which, from its experience worldwide, the ICRC knows remain present long after the conflict ends.

Between November 2014 and July 2015, the ICRC carried out an island-wide assessment in Sri Lanka to identify and better understand the specific needs of families of missing people. It will share with the relevant authorities the findings of the assessment, and its recommendations on the action needed in favour of these families.

The ICRC has also designed a programme to address the multifaceted needs of families of missing people in the country's Northern, Central and Eastern provinces. This programme will be implemented in partnership with local authorities and organisations.

## PROMOTING THE DIGNITY OF THE DEAD

The ICRC works to ensure that the remains of people who die during armed conflict, disasters (natural or man-made), or migration are handled with dignity and are professionally managed. It also provides guidance to local institutions on medico-legal issues related to the living.

In Sri Lanka, the ICRC supports the judicial medical community to enhance their technical forensic skills, especially those related to the recovery, analysis and identification of human remains. It also supports the judicial medical community and other concerned stakeholders to develop or refine policy-level issues, such as:

- contributing to the process of amending the laws, procedures and practices relating to the conduct of inquests into deaths; and
- addressing medico-legal issues in places of detention.
- facilitating the process of drafting and finalizing guidelines on the management of the dead after disasters, and administrative standard operating procedures on the management of mass graves;

## HELPING VULNERABLE HOUSEHOLDS AND COMMUNITIES WITH LIVELIHOODS

In the North and East of Sri Lanka, the ICRC supports women-headed households, people disabled as a result of the past conflict, released rehabilitees, extremely (economically) vulnerable households, and families of missing people to start or consolidate a livelihood activity through a Micro Economic Initiatives (MEI) programme. By engaging in activities such as crop cultivation, fishing, livestock farming, trade and craft, these beneficiaries are able to generate a sustainable income for themselves and their families. The ICRC also works to improve the livelihoods of vulnerable communities, including returnees, in the North, through a Community Based Livelihood Support Programme that is designed to meet sector-specific needs.

## IMPROVING ACCESS TO SAFE DRINKING WATER AND SANITATION

In the Kilinochchi, Mullaitivu, Mannar and Vavuniya districts, the civilian population benefits from the renovation and construction of open-dug wells and the repairing of hand pumps. Children benefit from the construction of water systems and sanitation facilities in their schools.