

ICRC LIBERIA

# FACTS AND FIGURES

January to December 2017



Varney Bawn/ICRC

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) in Liberia supports the Liberia National Red Cross Society activities, helps the authorities in national implementation of the international humanitarian law, and works with the Armed Forces for integration of the Law of Armed Conflict. Here is a summary of our work performed from January – December 2017



## DETENTION

The ICRC works closely with prison authorities in various countries to improve conditions of people detained, put them in contact with their families, ensure humane treatment and improve respect for judicial guarantees. After 44 years of detention activities including regular visits to 16 prisons in Liberia, the program closed in April 2017. Before the closure, the ICRC conducted

refresher training for prison maintenance teams set up at all prison facilities with its support. The teams help to mitigate the effects of old and degrading prison infrastructures. Detainees also benefitted from the distribution of non-food items and hygienic materials as well as prison clinics supported with essential medicines.



## RESTORING FAMILY LINKS

In times of armed conflict, families separated from one another, especially children are often the most vulnerable to abuse and neglect. Reuniting them with their family members is important to ensure their protection and is a core part of the ICRC's work. The program targeted Ivorian refugees since 2011 till its closure in December 2017.

**670** phone calls were made to family members from people in 3 refugee camps

**39** Red Cross messages collected for children and vulnerable adults and **21** distributed

**14** children reunited with their loved ones

Bahn Refugee Camp, December 2017. An ICRC staff discusses with a caretaker before the departure of Jesus Oulai, the last kid reunited with his parents before the family tracing program closed.



## PROMOTING INTERNATIONAL HUMANITARIAN LAW AND HUMANITARIAN PRINCIPLES

The ICRC works with political authorities and the armed forces for the promotion, implementation and integration of the international humanitarian law. Likewise, it dialogues with law enforcement officials to enhance knowledge and understanding of its mandate, work, and international rules and standards applicable to law enforcement.

**33** combat medics and combat life savers of the Armed Forces of Liberia benefitted from Red Cross and international humanitarian law knowledge

**17** officers of the Armed Forces of Liberia drafted a code of conduct for behavior in combat, while **20** others benefitted from international humanitarian law training focused on law of armed conflict in military operations planning

**6,828** joint security personnel received knowledge on humanitarian principles and international rules and standards applicable to law enforcement

**2** government representatives attended the ICRC-ECOWAS IHL Seminar in Abuja, Nigeria



## SUPPORTING THE LIBERIAN RED CROSS

The Liberia National Red Cross Society (LNCRS) regained its image and trust after a successful transition through an immense and concerted recovery effort from both the ICRC, government and other Movement partners following a corruption scandal. This recovery led to changes of governance, management and financial stewardship.

**29** positions funded and programs such as Organizational Development, Disaster Management, Communication, Restoring Family Links and the Women training and integration project supported

**30** persons from the Board and senior management of the Liberian Red Cross and Movement partners attended Safer Access training

**35** emergency responders' kits replenished

**3** motorbikes donated to support emergency response teams activities in **3** counties

**51** staffs and volunteers received refresher emergency response training in first aid

**6,828** joint security and **33** Armed Forces of Liberia personnel received basic first aid training

**402** storm and fire victims' families benefitted from construction materials

**198** vulnerable women and girls graduated from skills training in cosmetology, food and nutrition, tailoring and interior decoration



## COOPERATION WITH JOURNALISTS

The ICRC offers opportunities for journalists to participate in international media workshops and also facilitates their access to the field.

**4** journalists from Agence France-Press and the Liberia Broadcasting System traveled with the ICRC to Cote d'Ivoire and in the field on two separate family reunification events



## ICRC CLOSES TRACING PROGRAM IN LIBERIA AFTER 7 YEARS

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) closed its Restoring Family Links (RFL) program commonly known as tracing after successfully reuniting more than 350 unaccompanied/separated Ivorian children with their parents and relatives in Côte d' Ivoire with support from the Liberian and Ivorian Red Cross.

The program came to a close following an ICRC assessment in 2016 that revealed that RFL needs for Ivorian refugees in Liberia were limited due to the voluntary repatriation program of the UNHCR and that the Liberian Red Cross has the capacity to respond to existing RFL needs. To locate these children, tracing booths were built in host communities and refugee camps, radio spots

were broadcast, poster campaign - displaying the children's pictures at public places were launched and a webpage set up, while red cross volunteers trekked to high to reach places.

"These reunifications mean these children get their lives back. We wish them the best of luck," says Bernard Metraux, ICRC head of Mission for Liberia and Guinea. "The children have been living in camps and host communities in Grand Gedeh, Maryland and Nimba Counties in Liberia with caretakers. We wish to thank the Liberian and Ivorian authorities for allowing the ICRC to conduct the cross border reunification. Likewise, we thank the Red Cross volunteers and staff from Liberia and Cote d'Ivoire and other partners for

their collaboration.” Restoring the family links of Ivorian children began in 2010 following an assessment that proved that the places that the children were to be reunited with their parents or relatives were safe for cross border family reunification. Between 2011- 2017 December, 3,500 Red Cross Messages were exchanged and over 10,000 phone calls made by refugees to their relatives in Côte d’ Ivoire and the diaspora.

Though the program has ended, but the ICRC remains in Liberia to strengthen the capacity of the Liberian Red Cross to deliver humanitarian services. Likewise, it will continue to work with the Armed Forces of Liberia and the International Humanitarian Law Committee for the implementation and integration of International Humanitarian Law; and the Liberia National Police and Immigration Service on humanitarian principles and international rules and standards applicable to law enforcement.

### **Support to Liberian Red Cross Restoring Family Links activity**

The ICRC continues to support the Liberian Red Cross RFL activities that targets refugees in camps and host communities in Liberia and others in the diaspora with tracing needs. Boima Holmes is the Liberian Red Cross RFL focal person. He said before the closure of the ICRC program, the Liberian Red Cross has integrated RFL activities into its Disaster Management program at both headquarters and chapters levels for quick and timely response. “Today, we are responsible to intervene in any RFL case that may surface in the Ivorian refugees camps and host communities; and the refugees, stakeholders and other humanitarian actors appreciate our RFL services,” he said. Boima worked for the ICRC from 2003 – 2008. He later joined the Liberian Red Cross in 2009 as Tracing Assistant and rise to

the position of a RFL focal person, a position he currently holds.

### **More than 20 years with the ICRC**

Albert Diatokpa Jamah is the former head of the ICRC Liberia RFL program. Albert works for the ICRC for more than 20 years in the tracing department, serving in various capacities from tracing and protection field officer to a Database responsible. He left the ICRC when the program ended in December 2017. Albert describes the time he worked for the ICRC as “working for his own people” and he enjoys doing family reunification. “When families are separated due to conflict and there is no news about their whereabouts, then after a tedious and prolonged searching processes, one day you see an ICRC Land Cruiser driving into the yard with a lost child. You see the tears of joy rolling down the cheeks of parents or relatives and at that moment, you feel that you have achieved and done a good job,” he says with a smile.

### **A long history of RFL activity in Liberia**

In 1991, the ICRC started its RFL activities in Liberia as a result of the Liberian armed conflict. The ICRC registered and reunited the children with their relatives in 1994, allowing the program to end at the time. As tension mounts in Liberia again, the ICRC reopened the program in 2001 and provided RFL services to all Liberian refugees in West Africa, especially those that were in Ghana, Guinea, Ivory Coast, Nigeria and Sierra Leone. After seven years in which the ICRC reunited more than 2,000 Liberian children, in April 2008, the ICRC again closed the program. In times of armed conflict, families separated from one another, especially children are often the most vulnerable to abuse and neglect. Reuniting them with family members is essential to ensure their protection and is a core part of the ICRC’s work.

The ICRC helps people around the world affected by armed conflict and other violence doing everything it can to protect their dignity and relieve their suffering, often with its Red Cross and Red Crescent partners



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