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NEWSLETTER

FIGHTING TUBERCULOSIS IN JAILS

ONE-ON-ONE WITH JEAN-DANIEL TAUXE



Outgoing head of delegation Jean-Daniel Tauxe first stepped on Philippine soil more than three decades ago and it left a lasting impact on him. He retired last month after a 32-year career in the

ICRC ranging from experience in the field (Iran, Poland, Namibia, Iraq and Philippines) to key positions in the organization's headquarters in Switzerland, including Delegate General for Africa, Director of Operations and head of donor relations.

His contributions to the ICRC especially during his time in the Philippines, where he chose to spend his final mission, will not be forgotten. Below, he shares memories of his first time in the Philippines and his bird's eye view of the country, its people and its future.

Can you tell us about your first experience in the Philippines?

I first arrived as a backpacker in 1978. I was 24. I like to discover places. I arrived through the south, so it was immediately for me the trademark of the Philippines: paradise and conflict situation at the same time. In the south in 1978, there was heavy fighting, especially in Jolo. It didn't prevent me from going because I liked this adventure. I like nature and the people. I stayed three months in the Philippines, but I had come from Indonesia. You see, at that time, a place like Puerto Galera had little or absolutely no development.

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A canvas, a paintbrush and a spectrum of colors are simple tools that, when combined with imagination, can produce beautiful works of art—even when coming from a crowded, damp and dreary place.

This year, the fight against tuberculosis was taken to an inspirational new level when inmates from 15 jails and prisons created paintings for a competition aimed at increasing awareness on the highly infectious disease. The ICRC supported the activity to promote the campaign against tuberculosis (TB) in jails to commemorate World TB Day (March 24).

Today, TB is second only to HIV/AIDS as a single infectious disease that kills the most people worldwide, despite some positive trends in its containment observed on the global level in the last two years.

This airborne disease can be transmitted through coughing, sneezing and spitting. Its symptoms may include cough for more than two weeks, weight loss, night sweats, fever, chest pain, lack of appetite, and weakness. Certain conditions like overcrowding, poor nutrition and ventilation, and lack of proper health care cause TB to thrive, making places of detention an ideal breeding ground. Without adequate treatment, it can eventually result in death. The good news, however, is that it is also curable.

Managing TB in jails is one of the components of the Call for Action process launched by the ICRC in the Philippines, in cooperation with national authorities, in 2007. This process is a multi-stakeholder initiative that aims to respond to overcrowding in jails, tackling both causes of jail congestion, such as delays in the judicial system, and its consequences on the health and living conditions of detainees.

The ICRC helps facilitate the implementation of the National TB Control Program in seven pilot jails and prisons of the Bureau of Jail

Management and Penology and Bureau of Corrections, with over 30,000 inmates benefiting when it started in 2010. As part of the technical working group on TB control, the ICRC supports the development of policy documents, guidelines and training materials; capacity building of health care providers in jails and prisons; improvements in infrastructure; and provision of medical equipment.

In 2011, the ICRC provided technical support for TB management training of medical staff, achieving full coverage of the detainee population in the National Capital Region, Regions 7 and 11. A three-fold increase compared to the previous year, 480 patients were also enrolled in the treatment program from BJMP jails. Meanwhile, the ICRC's refurbishment of a 60-bed infirmary in Quezon City Jail is nearing completion.

"The joint effort of the Philippine authorities and their partners, including the ICRC, have been so far very efficient. All needed policy and technical documents are in place and the implementation of the program is expanding. However, the quality of care still needs to be enhanced," said Dr. Gegham Petrosyan, the ICRC's health coordinator in the Philippines. "The ICRC is committed to continue supporting authorities in this battle against TB."

The prevalence of TB is still five times higher in jails than among the general population. The 12 winning paintings (including the one above), to be featured in a calendar, will serve as a year-long reminder that detainees, authorities and continuous support from key stakeholders are crucial to beating TB.

Sarah Velasco



ICRC



ICRC/Olav Sinsuat

Cagayan de Oro, Iligan and Bukidnon—within the first 48 hours.

“Every year about 20 to 22 typhoons hit the Philippines, and being in the Pacific Ring of Fire, it is also a country prone to earthquakes and other natural disasters. When there is a great need for humanitarian response, the ICRC will not hesitate to lend a helping hand to our partner, the PRC,” said Aziz Syed, coordinator of ICRC’s cooperation programs with the PRC and other Red Cross and Red Crescent agencies in the Philippines.

The ICRC has pre-positioned relief stocks in case of emergencies. This readiness and forward thinking proved to be vital during Sendong when rapid response was needed.

Within 10 days following the flash floods, the ICRC’s relief efforts continued, reinforcing the initial aid to Cagayan de Oro and Iligan and helped people in other areas affected by both disaster and the ongoing internal armed conflict, such as Negros Oriental and Surigao del Sur. The food and emergency items in these distributions reached 20,400 people.

INCREASING ACCESS TO CLEAN WATER

Because access to clean drinking water emerged as a major humanitarian concern after Sendong damaged water pipelines in Cagayan de Oro, a team of six ICRC water specialists was rapidly dispatched to support the PRC’s disaster management team on the ground. Serving five evacuation centers and affected surrounding neighborhoods, together they helped 20,000 people get approximately 15 liters of drinking water per day by increasing storage capacity for available clean water, setting up water bladders and tap stands.

DEALING WITH DISASTER: HOW THE ICRC RESPONDS TO EMERGENCIES

ICRC water specialists worked with PRC’s disaster management teams to increase access to drinking water after Tropical Storm Sendong damaged pipelines in Cagayan de Oro last December.

the immediate 48 hours after catastrophe strikes. This is when they are their most vulnerable—likely losing their homes, farms, or worse, their loved ones.

The ICRC’s mandate focuses on protecting and assisting victims of armed conflict and other situations of violence. But when major emergencies like Sendong strike, the ICRC jumps into action with the Philippine Red Cross (PRC), its partner organization that usually responds to local emergencies.

In support of the PRC’s Sendong relief efforts in December, the ICRC immediately dispatched 3,000 relief kits consisting of food, household and hygiene items. Thanks to the strong partnership between the two organizations, the kits reached 18,000 people in three of the worst-affected areas—

The wrath of tropical storm Sendong (Washi) hit Northern Mindanao and parts of Visayas months ago, but it has not been forgotten. It caused flash floods that wiped away entire villages. More than 1,000 people were killed while scores were hurt. Many of the remaining victims, who only had the clothes on their backs, were without food, water or shelter.

The needs of people affected by large-scale natural disasters are most urgent in

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There were only a few foreigners. Then, I never thought I would be assigned to the Philippines.

What is the notable humanitarian trend you have seen affecting the Philippines over the years?

The issue is not strictly humanitarian but it’s important: population growth. It’s taboo to speak about the risk that the increase in population puts the Philippines in danger of collapse. Unfortunately, I see as an even stronger trend today. For me, this is extraordinarily important because there is a lack of recognition of this situation. There are over 100 million Filipinos in the country today, with 10 million abroad, compared to the total population of 16 million in 1946. Today about 21 million people live below the poverty line in a country with a relatively good economy. There would be no economy in the world that could balance this. This trend has been ongoing since the 1980s despite brave efforts of very few individuals to counter it.

With the bigger population and increased exposure to the world though, I think Filipinos are more exposed to more cultures. Hopefully, this can be a positive reverse of trend for the future.

What are some of the ICRC’s priorities in the Philippines in 2012?

This year continues to be a consolidation of what we have been doing. We try to take care of not only displaced persons but also those who

are suffering in areas where conflict with the New People’s Army has been present for more than four decades. These populations are affected by a conflict that’s analyzed as “low-intensity.” But for those actually living there on the spot, there is no experience of “low” or “high” intensity. There are armed men around all the time, meaning they never have peace of mind. Their communities experience no development, and put pressure on them to give up living in the places they were born in to move to slums in the big city. It is important to continue working for those millions of people who are squeezed into this kind of life in areas without development.

Also, we continue to work to provide a quicker and stronger response to natural disasters with the Philippine Red Cross. That is enough, I think, for 2012.

What do you think has been the most significant initiative during your ICRC missions in the Philippines?

During my first mission in 1984 was the moment we received the agreement to visit detainees and to do our job, what we call a headquarters agreement (the official and signed recognition from the Philippine government for the ICRC to carry out its humanitarian work in the country). I signed it with the late Foreign Secretary Blas Ople.

More recently, from 2008 to today, I think the contribution has been to restart humanitarian activities outside Central Mindanao. This helps to bring back the faith of those people in those areas where there is no development because of the conflict. This has begun

"The ICRC was able to deploy its team of water specialists on the ground so quickly because they are already working in the country to improve water, sanitation and health infrastructures in jails and prisons, and in communities affected by conflict," said Graziella Leite Piccolo, deputy head of the ICRC delegation in the Philippines, who coordinated the ICRC response to Sendong.

While the PRC and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies are the primary responders in situations of natural disasters, the ICRC provides assistance together with the PRC in some circumstances, particularly in areas exposed to armed violence. From February to August 2011, nearly 137,000 victims of flooding in Northern Samar, Surigao del Norte, Surigao del Sur, Sulu, Compostela Valley, Cotabato, Sultan Kudarat and Davao received food supplies and household items from the ICRC and PRC. Including the response to Sendong, the ICRC and PRC together assisted 175,000 persons affected by disaster and conflict last year.

ENHANCING PREPAREDNESS

However, taking quick action in the initial phase of emergencies is not the ICRC's only work in disasters. As part of its long-term support to the PRC for disaster preparedness, the ICRC donates equipment, such as the water-supply kits that are pre-positioned in areas at high risk for climate disasters—three of which have been used during emergencies including Sendong. Around 40 PRC staff and volunteers also underwent basic training last year to ensure they have the necessary skills to install the facilities. Putting in place this kind of equipment and skills in advance are vital in responding to emergencies like Sendong.

"I think the response of the Red Cross movement during disasters has been effective. We have the expertise, trained staff and volunteers, pre-positioned goods and equipment. We already know what to do—we assess what and where the needs are. But since the trend of disasters is increasing, we cannot stand still. We have to continue enhancing our preparedness," stressed PRC secretary general Gwendolyn Pang.

To prepare more effectively for future emergencies, the ICRC and the PRC have agreed to institutionalize the creation of dedicated and structured teams of specially trained volunteers to rapidly respond to emergencies. About 20 young professionals will form each Red Cross Action Team (RCAT), which will be implemented in 10 conflict and/or disaster-prone chapters in this year's pilot program.

In 2012, more systematic support, like training of trainers being held in the coming months, will be focused on these teams to ensure that the RCAT will be ready to provide immediate and effective response to its local community.

Once an RCAT is in place, chapters will have a bigger and specially trained pool of volunteers to rely on when catastrophe happens. The RCAT is set to expand to more chapters in the coming years.

"When disasters strike, people support each other more. Disaster unites rather than divides. Disaster in a community connects the community. They help each other. We should try to tap into people's connectivity and willingness to help each other, and mobilize them for an organized response," Syed said.

Allison Lopez

already, rather positively in Samar and Negros, and we would like to do even more outside Central Mindanao.

You have held a number of key positions in the ICRC. What position would you say you liked best?

It's impossible to say what I liked the best, but if I had to choose, it would be Delegate General for Africa. No doubt about it, because we saved a lot of people. In the early 1990s, we saved millions of Somalis distributing 24,000 metric tonnes of food monthly, serving 3 million hot meals every day. There was a drought and conflict—the same as today. At that time, the ICRC and the Somali Red Crescent were alone before others in the international community came. That's the single biggest event we ever had. Can you imagine what that means: 3 million meals a day in 1,500 places of distribution?

You'll soon be handing over the reins to the new head of delegation, Pascal Mauchle. What can you tell us about him? What would you like to tell him about the Philippines?

He has immense experience, having been the head of delegation for big operations. Somalia was his last posting, before that Pakistan, which is not an easy place as well. He has worked in Nepal and Afghanistan—someone with maximum field experience. Pascal has already discovered the complexity of the context in the Philippines. In addition to the complexity he has seen in other contexts in Asia, for instance, here in this archipelago, one might encounter a way of thinking that sometimes originates on one island, even going down to one group of family or tribe. And that is something that makes the Philippines a little bit different.

But the people here are open, and it is a country that is in between "second" and "first" world, despite the too many extreme poor it has. Pascal can count on very, very good national staff. This is also something important since a growing trend in the ICRC that national staff will take more responsibility. In this regard, he can count on a solid team.

A SONG OF HOPE

Last year at a popular mall in Davao City, a very special contestant was preparing to perform before a large audience. It was a competition for National Disability Prevention and Rehabilitation Week. This young woman was doing what she loved best—singing her heart out. Performing a capella before a crowd was quite a feat and won her third prize in the contest for the theme song of "Mutya," a local TV drama about a girl who was born with mermaid-like legs.

*Sana wala ng away
(I wish there was no more fighting)
Sana'y pag-ibig na lang ang isipin ng
bawa't isa sa mundo
(I wish it was love that every one in the
world was thinking about) ...*

This 14-year-old's name is Kimberly, and her story is one of courage and determination.

Kimberly and her family lived in Basilan, where armed violence potentially impacts on everyday life. It came face-to-face with Kim and her family in February 2010 when a bomb exploded into the barangay captain's house, killing her mother and two sisters. Kiko, the 5-year-old nephew of the barangay captain's wife, also survived the blast, and both children received terrible burns and injuries.

At the time of the explosion, Kim was evacuated to Zamboanga City Medical Center for treatment, as the island's hospitals could not cope with such severe injuries. Both her legs had to be amputated, while her face and limbs, which were partly burnt, required treatment. In June 2010, she was

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Kimberly sings her heart out at the 25th anniversary celebration of Davao Jubilee Foundation last year.

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transferred to the Southern Philippines Medical Center, the largest hospital in Mindanao, which includes the Mindanao Burn Center. Later on, she underwent more surgeries.

"After what happened, I don't know what to do. In the hospital, I always cry in fear and in pain, especially when they call me to take a bath. My wounds are so painful. Every time I look at my face in the mirror, I remember what happened. I don't like seeing my face. I always end up crying," said Kimberly, who used to hide her face due to the injuries she sustained.



At DJF's new workshop, orthopaedic technologist Glorycel Lasquite checks a prosthetic device made of polypropylene for correct balance.

Throughout Kim and Kiko's ordeal, government hospitals, local authorities, church personnel, NGOs and the ICRC supported the two children. The ICRC, which assists victims of armed conflict and violence including weapon-wounded, shouldered some of their expenses during hospitalizations and sponsored their physiotherapy and prostheses at Davao Jubilee Foundation Physical Rehabilitation Center.

Medicines and surgical items are also being provided by the ICRC to 17 hospitals throughout Mindanao. At times, the ICRC supports key hospitals with needs for equipment, such as sterilizers, fixators and bone drill sets, to enhance the treatment of weapon wounded or burns patients.

The caring staff at Jubilee center welcomed Kim last June and have generously cared for her these past few months, as she waited for her new legs. Special prostheses were required and these were imported especially for her. She very stoically went through her physiotherapy sessions to prepare for walking again. Finally, in December, Kim started walking.

"When I started walking, I was so happy because I now have legs," shared Kimberly.

The ICRC supports the center through a three-year agreement (2011-2014) to enhance its physical rehabilitation services, and has built a gait training area at the site. The ICRC has constructed a new orthopedic workshop at Jubilee where polypropylene technology was introduced last month. Previously, the center produced artificial legs and braces using lamination process.

"It's about time to shift to polypropylene technology to provide a better quality of devices and service, and to serve the needs of the clients at a reduced cost," said orthopaedic technologist Glorycel Lasquite, who was trained at the Cambodia School of Prosthetics and Orthotics in Phnom Penh with ICRC assistance. Another student is currently engaged in ICRC-sponsored three-year training there.

Despite all the support, the emotional upheaval was still too much for Kim. She was away from her familiar surroundings, coping with many changes to her body, dealing with grief, and not ready to return to school. Having lost most of her family, it was unclear where she would live following her rehabilitation. After some effort, the DJF social worker found a family member who is happy to take care of Kim.

"Sometimes I lose the enthusiasm to live. I just carry on by singing. One of my favorite songs is 'Pursue your dreams' because I can relate to it," she said.

Davao Jubilee Foundation is actively seeking other sources of support for Kim, for further surgery for her burns that might be required in the future, and also for her education.

Amazingly, Kim is smiling again, though she is still rather shy. She loves nothing more than to sing. Her resilience and good spirits is admirable.

"When the time comes, I hope I can visit my mother's tomb in Basilan, with my artificial legs and a better condition of my face and body. I would like to study again and learn how to speak in English so that if someone talks to me in English, I can also converse," she said.

And as the song continues, so will Kimberly's dreams.

*Sa isang pangarap ako'y naniniwala
(In one dream, I believe)
Hindi ako titigil hangga't aking makakaya
(I won't stop while I can still go on)
Unti-unting mararating, tagumpay
ko'y makikita
(Slowly I can reach, and see my success)*

Maureen Bennett

ANOTHER MILESTONE FOR IHL IN THE PHILIPPINES

Filipino victims of international armed conflict will now have more protection after the Philippine Senate passed Additional Protocol 1 to the Geneva Conventions on March 6.

This instrument of international humanitarian law imposes constraints, for humanitarian reasons, on the way in which military operations may be conducted in international armed conflicts. Its ratification will result in greater protection for Filipino military personnel deployed abroad for peacekeeping or other military operations undertaken in connection with an international armed conflict. Armed forces medical units and medical transportation will also be entitled to enhanced protection.

BETTER FACILITIES FOR 200 DETAINEES OF MASBATE PROVINCIAL JAIL

Two sites of Masbate provincial jail have benefited from ICRC's continuing efforts to help improve living conditions in places of detention.

The ICRC, in cooperation with the provincial government, built 32 three-tier bunk beds and two toilets in the temporary holding area of the Masbate provincial jail located in the city. In the main holding facility in barangay Matiporon, Milagros municipality, 16 toilets were constructed, and the sunning area refurbished. The ICRC also constructed a new septic tank in each location, and improved an existing septic tank at the Matiporon site.

The beds will help reduce the consequences of overcrowding while the new toilets and work on septic tanks aim to improve sanitation. The renovation of the area around a basketball court allows inmates access to sun and fresh air. Internationally accepted standards recommend that inmates have at least one hour daily of outdoor access.



Bunk beds for Masbate detainees

International Committee of the Red Cross in the Philippines



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