



Women in armed violence in Africa



ICRC

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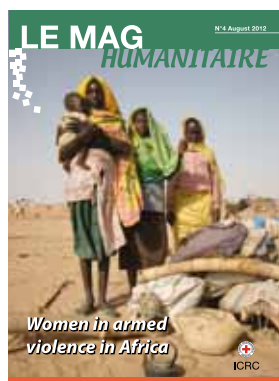
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TABALA
...echoes from elsewhere

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Cover photo : Gereida (Soudan) camp for IDP's. A family just arrived in the camp and has built an emergency shelter.

Boris HEGER/ICRC

Editorial: Women standing to the test

It is now a fact that civilians are the main victims of armed conflicts, and Africa, unfortunately, is no exception. In these contexts, the most vulnerable groups are usually composed of children, the elderly and women. They continue to pay a high price in conflicts in which they do not participate, but they show an extraordinary ability to overcome hardship, and to take their destiny.

«Women victims of violence, including sexual abuse»: The term has unfortunately acquired the status of a universal phenomenon. But behind the words, these are lives that are changed forever, in Democratic Republic of Congo, Central Africa and elsewhere. Too often, women have to flee the fighting and insecurity, taking their children but leaving their property behind them, as in the Ivorian conflict. In these situations, they can also be separated from their children. Or live in fear of what happened to their husband, their son, often the mainstay of the family, as recently in Libya. Sometimes, especially in Casamance, they are also victims of mines.

In those situations where the worst is lived, the women seize the slightest opportunity to get up, go on, and restore their life for themselves and their families.

Too often these women keep their pain for them. They are heard too little, too little understood. This issue of «Humanitarian Mag», through several witnesses that cannot be ignored,

specifically seeks to illustrate the difficulties they face, and show their ability to overcome hardship.

It is also an opportunity to recall once again the obligation of those involved in conflict, to respect, to save and protect the civilian population, and among which the children, the elderly and women.

The following articles also reflect the diversity of the response of the International Committee of the Red Cross, in partnership with the National Societies of Red Cross or Red Crescent, to the needs of women in this region.

As I begin my new role as Head of Operations for North Africa and West Africa, I would like to pay tribute particularly to the determination of thousands of women who cope with adversity. The ICRC will continue to help these women to enable them to regain dignity and hope.

Good reading.

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Head of operations for North and West Africa

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The views expressed are those of the contributors and do not necessarily reflect the opinion of the International Red Cross Committee (ICRC).

Artwork by greeneyezdesign.com

Central African Republic: Being a woman in a war zone

She is still traumatized by what happened to her. And when she has to talk about it, she wants at the same time to «forget all of that,» for how to put into words her own suffering. Woman in a war zone, this is the story of Yassi.*

*"I am trying to forget. To break with the past," says Yassi * nervously. "And now my parents worry every time I go out, that I go to the market. They are afraid that it happens again."*

This is the sad and terrible story that has recently experienced Yassi, 20 years, and her friend Djumé *, 21 years, in the north of the Central African Republic. Living in Kaga Bandoro, the two young women go in the course of January to Gondava to sell oil, cakes and rice porridge. They have been there for three days when, suddenly, violence sets the village alight. Gunfire is exchanged and bombs are dropped from helicopters. Along with all the villagers, Yassi and Djumé flee into the bush. Caught by panic. Soon, they find themselves completely alone.

A prey for armed men

This is the beginning of their ordeal that lasted almost a month. Disoriented, lost in the forest, Yassi and Djumé eat Nieri (a wild fruit) and drink at random from puddles they find. During the fifth night, their path crosses that of two men. They are unarmed and wearing civilian clothes: they are probably on the run, as them. They might be able to help them. Nothing alike: they rape them and abandon them to their fate.

It is only days and nights later, terrified and bruised, exhausted, that the two young women meet a group of fishermen on the edge of a river. At last, a helping hand: the fishermen take them to a small village from which they manage to reach Kaga Bandoro on a motorcycle taxi.

"I have lost the little money I had. My clothes too. And I'm too scared to return to Gondava, where I had my small business. Here I feel safe," testifies Yassi. "But I do not know how to resume my business."

Fragile among the most fragile

As sad and terrible it is the story of Yassi and Djumé has unfortunately nothing exceptional. For years, the civilian people of northern and south-eastern Central African Republic are the prey of many abus-



Obo in the Province of Upper Mbomou, a prostrated child.

es and are often forced to flee situations of armed violence. In these regions, insecurity is such that it significantly impedes the delivery of humanitarian aid, including that of the ICRC. In such circumstances, women are of course particularly vulnerable.

The story of Jassi and Djumé comes in numerous versions: capture by armed groups, sexual enslavement, separation from children, etc. While Djumé and Yassi were running away, another woman from the same region was forced to leave on the edge of the village her nine months of age daughter: the child survived two nights and three days before being found by chance and handed to the ICRC and the Central African Red Cross (who were then able to locate the grandmother and leave the child in her care). This violence prevents any development as evidenced by a figure that particularly speaks for itself: 48 years – it is life expectancy in the Central African Republic, the second lowest that is in the world. ■

* Aliases.

Perry Proellochs
Communication officer – Bangui ICRC

Ivory Coast: Amelie and Veronique: paths of exile and fear

It all started with an election that went awry. The reason that gives way to the language of arms. We know what happened next. Ivory Coast is trying today to heal its wounds. Some wounds have healed, others maybe will never close up. Unusual story of things experienced by two Ivorian women victims of arms in the west of the country.

Vero: "War steals from you even the death of your close relations"

Katouo, a small village by the roadside in line with oulepleu Bin Houyé, about five kilometers from Liberia by taking the «bush tracks» as they say over there. This is where we met Lady Boueu Zoueu Veronique, 35 years and widow. She looks 45. The trials of life ... Yet it is almost with a smile, but visibly shy, that she tells her story.

Life has not been very kind to her, sadness and distress followed one another on her path. Already in 2002, when the conflict broke out, she was lucky with her family to join the neighboring Liberia: her mother sick at that time, her father and her five children, one of whom was suffering from Buruli ulcer.

Her mother could be treated only when they were back to Ivory Coast, while her son poorly treated is now almost disabled. The only medical center in the region had to close because of war. This is at a time when Veronica thought she would soon get out of all these difficulties that the post-election crisis came suddenly in February 2011. They thought that only large cities would be affected. The villages also were not spared.

Leave everything behind and flee once again ... difficult for her family whose father had just died. On the fourth day of the funerals, they fled to Boutouo, in Liberia, with her mother and her children again.

Veronica's husband wanted to stay in the village, the time to put their belongings in a safe place. The family feared losing everything on their return. He was never seen again.

Displaced by war

In Boutouo, there are too many displaced persons and life is difficult. Drinkable or not, water was hard to find. Currently pregnant, Veronique decided to stay there again for some weeks. Upon returning, she discovered her house in ashes, burnt; her mother puts gives her shelter. Any news of her husband? *"I learned that my husband had been killed. Why and by whom? Will we ever know?"* she accepts her fate. She now lives alone with her children and her mother, too old to help her. To survive she manages to make four parcels of bottomlands rice. *"It was either that or to starve to death,"* she said.

"Everyone in Katouo was somehow or other affected by this crisis," adds Vero who was selling cassava before the crisis. Without resources, she had to stop. Before the pile of straw left of her house, she explains that the Red Cross decided to help to rebuild some houses destroyed, including hers. She will be then able to resume her activities in the hope of better days. She knows that the burden of all this is hard to bear. The loss of her husband will be never forgotten. They *"stole his death from her"* because they didn't even allow her to bury him. They were numerous that day in the courtyard of



Veronica hopes for a quieter life after the tragic events



B. Houdijk/ICRC

Amelie: I've never been so desperate. I was able to bounce back after the first attack but the second wiped me

Amelie: "We cannot stand seeing our children starve to death"

Chief Deinneu, a village located about fifteen kilometers from Zouan Hunnish in the west of Ivory Coast. It was during a visit of the ICRC. For most of them, the post-election crisis had only brought distress and perpetual renewal. Lady Amelie Touakeusseu, just about forty years old, frail little woman with a grave look, testified.

It all started in 2002, she confided, and since then her life has had only twists. She and her three children, that she raises alone, had to leave Zouan Hunnish and take refuge in Liberia for several months. On their return, she moved to Deinneu because there were too many armed men in her village of origin despite the cessation of hostilities. It was also easier for the people that returned to the villages to have access to assistance provided by the Red Cross and other humanitarian organizations.

Election crisis

In Deinneu, Amelie starts again from nothing with her small business. She had to be optimistic to feed her children every day and pray that disease spares them. Another presidential election which outcome was so much feared came and forced them to flee the fighting in February 2011. She went this time to Gbeuleu Liberia, like many people of her village. She must content herself with meager resources for not to die of hunger.

"It does not matter to stand hunger every other day... but it was unbearable to me to watch my kids without being able to feed them," she said in despair.

In Gbeuleu, Amelie and her children are sleeping in camps. No places for all the displaced persons. And when her sister's child becomes seriously ill, the situation is lost: *"The child died before our eyes due to the lack of adequate care."* After a difficult pregnancy and childbirth without medical assistance in the area, Amelie's daughter also loses her baby.

Food aid received from humanitarian organizations in Liberia *"was never enough for the many displaced persons,"* she says. Without resources, she resolves to return and discover all the granaries of the village looted. The houses are spared. Luck. The family managed to hold out drawing from the rest of the fields of manioc and banana.

Like Amelie, many displaced persons returned to recover their fields. Her three hectares of cocoa were cleaned with the help of the Red Cross and she thinks about restarting her business. Her last two children will be able to go back to school after the interruption of schooling these last six years. ■

Ambroise Tinde
Communication Officer
ICRC, Man Sub-Delegation

Senegal: Martine, 39 years disabled for life by a mine

It is in a very popular district of the town of Ziguinchor, in the south of Senegal where Martine lives, aged 39 years and mother of two children. One other morning an explosive device completely changed her quiet ordinary life. Disabled, she is fighting for better social integration.



Felipe M. Jacome/ICRC

It is in her native village of Kouring (Nyassia) that Martine, a former daily worker at a hotel in Cape Skirring, decided to go to help her mother following the illness of her uncle. She settled in her grandfather's house and the latter sends her one day to fetch wood, near the village.

Early in the morning, she attended to this task, not imagining for one moment the danger threatening her. She had not seen the device, she didn't even know that she was in a minefield that morning of June 8th, 2009. *"When I jumped on the mine, I was completely unconscious. This is after that I knew my leg had serious problems. In addition, I heard of mine accidents in other localities affected by the crisis,"* says Martine. The device made her lose a part of her leg.

Soldiers based in the village give her first aid, and evacuate her to the hospital of Ziguinchor where her medical expenses were covered by the ICRC until full recovery. Crutches were given to her before an orthopedic appliance was put at her disposal.

Trauma and feelings of helplessness

After recovery and return to home, she experienced moments of anxiety especially when she was alone, she could not help crying. A survivor of mine, understanding her situation, often visits her. This allows her thus to get in touch with people disabled by mines.

"It is thanks to the profits of the small business that I pay the rent and food for the family but also that I manage to meet certain needs."

Despite the physical and emotional trauma, she decided to move and to provide for herself. She put in place, with ICRC support, her small business and learned to live again. This activity, which allows her to support herself, changed the course of her life.

"When I got out of the hospital, I was overwhelmed by a constant fear of seeing my life to freeze due to inactivity. I wondered several times how to solve my problems and those of my family. ICRC support greatly relieved and comforted me."

With this small business of palm oil, condiments for cooking, etc., she even managed to help her family as before the accident. Fatherless, Martine supports her ailing mother, her own children and even those of some deceased relatives.

"It is thanks to the profits of the small business that I pay the rent and food for the family but also that I manage to meet certain needs."

Full of initiative and determination, she managed to expand the range of her products by selling charcoal and firewood because of the family needs and the ever increasing cost of living. *"These products from wood are very profitable"* she says.

Assist new victims

Since her accident, Martine did not return to her village. She has concerns and a different perception of the damage caused by mines.

"Laying a mine is an act that may endanger life. You never know who might drop on the mine. A child, a brother, a mom or a relative can face the consequences. Nobody should never again think of laying a mine."

Martine is still upset whenever a new victim is announced. This awakens very bad memories. *"I am very saddened when I am announced a new case of mine accident."* However, by an inner strength, she always goes at the bedside of the victim to provide comfort and share her experience. Moreover, she managed a gradual social reintegration thanks to

the strong support from members of her association of mine victims.

"The fact of meeting mine victims has helped to shape my life and I have learned a lot from it"

Martine plans to expand one day her activities for a greater financial autonomy. This involves for her a greater willingness to work and to join efforts. As someone who knows and experienced the situation of mine victims and their concerns, Martine has only one wish for them: that the latter can in their turn benefit from income generating projects to overcome their disability. ■

Lazar SAGNA
Communication officer
ICRC – Ziguinchor Sub-delegation



Martine all smiles in front of her business

Democratic Republic of Congo: “Houses”, a careful attention to women victims of war

In the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), rape is used as a weapon of war with more than 200,000 victims since 1996 according to the UN High Commissioner for Refugees. The South and North Kivu total the third of cases. Women's bodies have become a real battlefield. Broken lives, desecrated bodies. Sarah, Deborah and Emily* have experienced rape. The ICRC “Attention Houses” help to rebuild destroyed lives.

Sarah, 20 years: rape ruins your life, well after...

She is just 20 years old but yet so many hardships experienced! She lives in Kya, a village of the area of Mwenga in the South of Kivu in the DRC. In November 2011, around 10 pm, three unidentified armed men burst into her home. Their evil intentions are clear from the outset. She is controlled and raped by these armed men: “They ordered me not to scream,” she explains. Her husband has been away for two years, Sarah lives alone with her child, and no one comes to help her. They did not kill her but she is destroyed.

Since then, Sarah is anxious, losing weight day by day with the feeling that she is growing weaker. She is often afraid and her heart pounds. Sarah is afraid she caught HIV-AIDS and does not sleep at night. She feels dirty forever.

Turned in on herself, she stays away from the fields and neglects her child. Fearing rejection, Sarah kept her dark secret. Desperate, she confides in a friend who advises her to go to the “Attention House” of Mwenga. They go there together on December 1st 2011.

“Sew up” a life in tatters...

The psychosocial officer comforts her and praises her courageous decision to start a psychological

and moral rehabilitation. Her treatment begins with a discussion about what happened to her and the changes noted on her health. The problems plaguing the victim are then ranked according to importance.

Sarah has “established” the following order: fear of HIV, feeling of being sullied, recurring memories. Issues are addressed one by one. After three visits to the House, Sarah gradually resumed the field activities. “She even returned to the attention house and we saw her really happy,” said the psychosocial officer.

Deborah, 14 years only and a life to rebuild...

Deborah is a teenager aged 14 years and living in Ngando, a village in the South of Kivu. It was 2pm as she was coming back from the fields with her friend that December 24th, 2011. “Armed men surprised us along the way and threatened us,” she explains. More fortunate, her friend managed to escape...

“Me, they took me, threw me down and all three raped me. Back home, I told everything to my parents. They told me to leave home”. Her parents in a state of shock refused to believe her story. “I was forced to seek refuge elsewhere ...” she laments. Her parents hostile attitude left her in shock.

A need to be listened to...

Six days later, Deborah, feeling a sharp pain and traumatized, came to the attention house. Stigmatized by other students, she refuses to go to school and remain cloistered. But she especially suffers from this shame that never leaves her and the fear of AIDS. Her spirits are at low ebb. During the interview, the officer comforts her by praising her courage to come for consultation. The management of pain requires a well-developed strategy. She is oriented to the hospital for appropriate care.

“Me, they took me, threw me down and all three raped me. Back home, I told everything to my parents. They told me to leave home”.



Wojtek Lembryk/ICRC



Wojtek Lembryk/ICRC

North Kivu province, at DOCS clinic in Goma. Women victims of sexual violence.

Family reconciliation is attempted and at the request of Deborah, the pastor of her church and one of her uncles are involved. Sensitizations are conducted in school and in her village. After visits to the House and three sessions of reconciliation, Deborah returned within her family and to school. She continues to come to the “Attention House” of for follow up.

Emilie, 45 years, 5 children

“I begged them to kill me, I ‘d rather be dead”

She lives in the area of Fizi in the South of Kivu province. On the day of October 27th, 2011 with her husband, she was going to the market, and had to spend the night, they were wakened by four armed men....

“They kicked and beat us with rifle butts and we were all bound. My husband was bleeding badly, he was screaming in pain. They took him into the forest. When they returned, they told me they had killed him and that I would die too.

I had both arms tied on my back, they knocked me over and began to rape me. I had never experienced such an atrocity. I begged them to let me go or to un-

tie my arms that were hurting much. And they started to laugh ... When they finished, I begged them to kill me. They introduced a bayonet in my sex, I screamed before fainting. I woke up in the village, surrounded by people who were crying. Immediately admitted to the Health Centre, I could not sit.

“I had both arms tied on my back, they knocked me over and began to rape me. I had never experienced such an atrocity. I begged them to let me go or to untie my arms that were hurting much. And they started to laugh ...”

They called the mother of the “Attention House”, I was treated for free thanks to the ICRC. I really wanted to die. And even to take medicine or to eat, I needed help from the psychosocial officer. I left the center two weeks after continuing outpatient treatment until December 3rd. Keeping in touch with the mom gave me courage. God bless her so much. Now I’m fine and I go there every month. I have to know if my husband is dead or alive, it is important to me. “■

* Aliases

Psychosocial Unit - Attention House
ICRC - DRC

The “Attention Houses” to “sew up” the morale

The “Attention House” provides comfort and support to victims of violence and supports them in their social and psychological rehabilitation. The victim of trauma is helped in his/her transport to hospital. And reintegration into a social system or network is easier to overcome loneliness and / or depression. Medical follow up and access to emergency care is facilitated by the ICRC medical staff. A PEP kit (prophylaxis post – ex-

posure) is used to prevent infections of HIV, pregnancy, hepatitis B, other sexually transmitted infections and tetanus. The kit is administered within 72 hours. After this time the victim benefits from the other products except that of HIV.

The psychosocial unit has a community and local based approach. The ICRC selects as a priority locally, an association already offering these

services and gives support-training in counseling and therapy tailored to the management of cases. The ICRC psychologist conducts clinical supervisions twice a month for appropriate follow up.



I begged them for long not to cut my hands. I said, «Kill me instead. I was thirteen»



Sometimes I do not sleep at all for several days. I think about what happened to me and I cry.

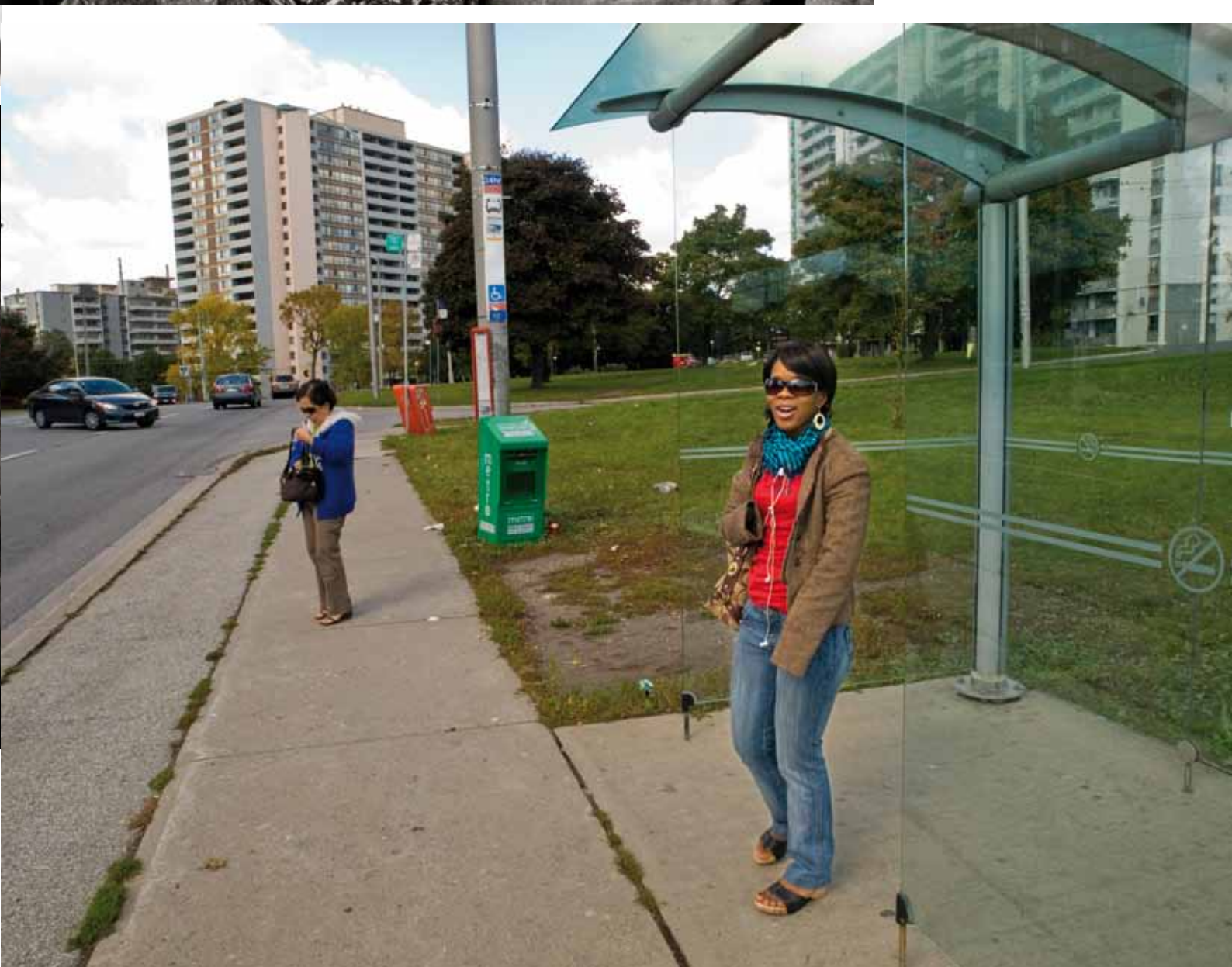
From the album *Eleven Women Facing War*, Nick Danziger,
 Lieux Dits Editions, 2011, www.nickdanziger.com
 All photos: © Nick Danziger / Texts: Frédéric Joli

My life has changed since ten years.
 Luck smiled on me. I could leave the
 village of amputees to immigrate to
 Toronto, Canada.

Mariatu Sierra Leone



I was given these metal hands,
but they do not look like hands,
sometimes I wear them but they
are difficult to use



Female staff in the armies

The example of Senegal and Niger.

Many countries have opted for enlistment. Brigadier General Meissa Niang, Director of control, studies and legislation of the department of the Armed Forces, relates the Senegalese experience. That of Niger is explained through the portrait of Salamatou, active officer cadet honored during the 6th edition of the National Competition of pleading in international humanitarian law (IHL).



What are the motivations and results of this option? Here are General Niang's responses.

Senegal : a success story

Women enlistment into the army

The recruitment of female staff began in 1984 at the Military School of Health (EMS) in Dakar. It only concerned the officer's category. Among the first to be recruited, one has already been promoted to the rank of lieutenant-colonel. It is in 2008, by decision of the president, that this recruitment for all categories (officers, non commissioned officers and non commissioned members) was generalized in the armed forces (army and gendarmerie).

Duty stations: administration or field?

All departments are open to female staff, although for the moment, a gradual approach is adopted to enable each component of the armed forces to take the administrative and operational steps necessary for an effective integration of female personnel into the existing departments.

The reasons for the integration of women in a "male environment"?

They can be multiple: the first being that the armed forces had a duty to carry out the political will of the authorities, the second, in my opinion, is that the context of the country has evolved and, in many re-

spects, is no longer the same. And the army being the product of society, its opening - up to women who are over 50% of the population seems quite normal nowadays.

Learning war to women who create life...

It's true, women give birth. But I do not think their presence in the armies and their possible involvement in conflict is an ethical problem. Several countries in the world for decades now, have had women in their armed forces, they are just as involved as men in the management of sometimes violent crises without it offending the conscience of the majority of their populations. The use of female personnel in the armed forces can not be universal, each country has its own socio-cultural realities and policies. However, the choice of several countries is to prevent women from being at the forefront during violent crises so as not to offend their public opinions. For example, despite their long experience, the United States decided to employ women in fighting units, only a quarter ago.

Assessment of the presence of women fighting for the flag

After just four years of general presence of women in the armies, a comprehensive and objective assessment may be premature. However, it is undeniable that women's presence in their midst has brought more to the armed forces. Thus, the armed forces better reflect the character of the Senegalese society.



Salamatou (Niger) :

"I have chosen the profession of the arms even though I am a woman"

Salamatou Boureima Moussa, Third year active officer cadet of the Training School of the Nigerian Armed Forces Officers (EFOFAN), was designated by the jury as "best litigant" of the competition! For this young woman, *"it is a surprise and a huge honor."*

Obviously, her performance during the preliminary stages of the competition convinced the jury, captivated by the strength and conviction with which the young officer set herself up as a defender of the victims of war and without contradiction with the profession she has chosen. According to Salamatou, to be a woman in the army is a challenge and more women in the army could be beneficial to the institution because, *"soldier women can help give a more human face to war, by their sensitivity and natural compassion"* she ensures.

The young woman of 25 years, holder of a degree in business law, continues her training as officer at EFOFAN. She ensures that this brief foray in the defense of victims of war has durably left traces in her mind. She thus hopes to have the opportunity to deepen the knowledge acquired in order to popularize them among those sharing the same profession with her. *"Anyway, she said, the forces of defense and security have an obligation to protect people and the pleading competition was a good opportunity to remember this."* ■

Daddy Rabiou Oumarou
Assistant/media relations
Regional delegation – Niamey ICRC



Niger: Moussa Salamatou Boureima, second from the left

From Sirte to Agadez: testimony of a Nigerien woman who returned from Libya

The conflict which raged in Libya in 2011 caused a massive movement of African migrants to their countries of origin. In Niger, it is said that 200,000 people have returned, fleeing the violence of the clashes. Agadez, a Nigerien city in the northern part of the country sharing a common border with Libya, has seen its population swell in six months. Entire families have returned to the fold but have difficulty integrating into socio economic life. The people of Agadez, affected by the 2007 conflict and this year drought, have difficulties to meet the needs of those who returned. Returned from Libya, Aljuwa Hassan is originally from the region of Diffa, in the south- east of Niger. Settled for several months with six children in the district Misrata of Agadez, she managed to resist the first days thanks to the aids received from neighbors. She also received from the ICRC, a lot of essential household goods and a food intake for three months. Thanks to the Red Cross, she was able to write a message sent to the ICRC office in Libya for news of her husband, remained in Sirte. Story of an experience.



Daouda Yacouba/ICRC

In Agadez (northern Niger), view of trucks bringing back people returning from Libya

When the bombings started...

"I left my village not far from Nguiguimi in the Diffa region at the age of 13 to join my husband who works in Sirte, Libya. My six children were born there, the oldest already went to school. We had left Sirte, on the 10th of the month of Ramadan, my children and I. The rebels did not enter in the city but the bombings had intensified.

People were leaving the urban center to take refuge in the surrounding gardens. The businesses were closed. Children hidden at home were no longer attending school. I assure you, we could not sleep at night, children were crying because of the noise of the shells falling. We left the house fearing that they would be hit. I know some neighbours who died following the collapse of their house.



Aljuwa Hassan coming back from Libya with her two children

Leaving by all means

Given this situation, my husband decided to make us leave. We sold off a portion of our goods to pay for our transportation. My husband chose to stay to keep the goods left in the house and he had not received his salary for more than three months. He promised to join us in Sabha in the South of Libya, if the situation did not improve. With 300 other Nigeriens, we rented a truck that transported us to Sabha, where the situation was calmer. A week later, I lost contact with my husband. When I tried to reach him by phone, it's another person who responded with a threatening tone. So I decided to sell blankets and some jewels belonging to my daughter to pay for our transport to Niger.

A month in the desert

The journey was very difficult for my children. They all got sick after more than a month of journey on a truck, exposed to sun and desert dust. Fortunately, an international NGO working in this area took them into care for free. Thank God, my children have recovered their health.

Although a native of Diffa further south, I preferred to settle in Agadez where many people share the same history as me, plus in any case, in Diffa, I could not see my family in this period: they are nomads, constantly moving in search of pastures for the livestock.

Starting again from scratch in Agadez

Here, we were able to have a shelter thanks to community solidarity. If we survived, it is thanks to this chain of solidarity. With 2000 or 3000 CFA francs received from good wills, I set up a small business. In the morning, I travel throughout the city of Agadez to sell incense. I can win up to 3000 CFA per day. This money allows me to vary the food for my children. I continue to wait because without news of my husband I can not move from here.” ■

Daouda Yacouba
Communication Assistant
ICRC Sub – delegation - Agadez

Assistance to migrants in the south of the country

Geneva / Tripoli (ICRC) - In recent days, with support from the Libyan Red Crescent, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) provided food parcels and other essential goods to some 1,100 migrants kept in centers in Qatroun and Mourzouq, near the border with Niger in the south-west of the country. The number of people living in these centers fluctuates day by day.

“These people recently arrived from neighboring countries,” explains Kemal Kimyongür, ICRC delegate in charge of distributions. “They are housed in very poor conditions and lack of food.” Despite aid put at their disposal by the local communities

and the Libyan aid agency LibAid, migrants face growing needs.

“Because we live in a border city, we are constantly under pressure,” laments Mohamed Ahmed Saleh, head of the local administration of Qatroun. “In recent months, we observed an increase in the number of migrants entering Libya. We are concerned about their living conditions. In addition to food and hygiene items, they must also have access to primary health care and drinking water. Unfortunately, we are not able to cope with this situation; this is the reason why we asked for help.”

The ICRC and the Libyan Red Crescent has distributed salt, sugar, rice,

pasta, tomato paste, oil and other food products and essential household items such as buckets, jerry cans, mattresses, sheets and sets of kitchen utensils. Reserves of these aids have been established in the premises of Sabha section of the Libyan Red Crescent, in case other distributions would be needed in the region.

Soaade Messoudi, ICRC Tripoli

Women, Armed Conflict and resilience: the ICRC's approach

Despite the endless suffering that women endure in times of armed violence, many of them show an uncommon strength and courage. Far from being mere victims, they often find ingenious ways to cope with difficulties protect their families and preserve their communities. Having lost everything, these women find in themselves the resources to rebuild everything and start over. By helping the ICRC to better identify their specific needs, they allow it to offer a humanitarian response closer to their needs.

A team at the headquarters of the ICRC in Geneva...

An office "*Women and War*" was established to better understand the plight of women in armed conflict. The Office assists the field teams in the systematic integration of the parameters of "gender" in the analysis of problems, designing of responses and monitoring of their implementation.

The creation of the office "*Women and War*" is the result of the study entitled *Women faced with war, on the impact of armed conflict on women*. For two years (1998-99), ICRC delegations around the world have made reports on activities of women affected by armed conflicts. As a result: a practical guide came out in 2004. Then, the Bureau developed a series of reference tools to enable the ICRC staff in the field to analyze and better address the needs of women. In cases of sexual violence for example, the support must be comprehensive and includes measures of protection and assistance, whether medical and psychosocial, economic or legal. The management of all of these needs as well as resilience capacity of women affected by adversity, often facilitates their reintegration into society.

And one at the regional delegation of Dakar

To decentralize the project launched in Geneva, the ICRC established in 2011 a "*Women and War*" unit based in Dakar to allow delegations of the region to better understand the needs of women in North and West Africa. Angelique Sarr, trained as a lawyer, is in charge of this project. In this region as elsewhere, women and girls confronted with armed violence must face dangers, problems and



Distribution of food aid in Casamance

challenges that are often beyond comprehension. As part of her field missions, Angelique was able to notice that the efforts of the ICRC in recent years are bearing fruit, although the challenges remain immense. According to her, the ICRC initiatives in Casamance are good examples for the integration of women and girls prospects in the operational activities.

An example in Casamance

Present in Casamance since 2004, the ICRC protects and assists victims of conflict, while integrating the specific needs of women and girls. It thus facilitates water supply, traditionally the responsibility of the fair sex, by building wells. –Grain husking mills also reduce their workload and facilitate the livelihood of 500 families in their communities. Income-generating micro projects also allow to support vulnerable people, especially women victims of mines or displaced by violence. Having a micro project can help avoid pitfalls, such as begging or prostitution, and helps improve the lives of the families of these victims. Women's incomes are further enhanced through the market gardens, and distribution of tools and seeds.

In rural areas, construction and equipping of health facilities and maternity hospitals complement a humanitarian response that seeks, in full to restore dignity for women who have sometimes lost everything. ■

Dénes Benczédi
Communication Coordinator – ICRC Dakar



Espace Jeanie Waddell-Fournier



Sandy Haessner/ICRC

Espace Jeanie Waddell-Fournier: a new platform on the web

Jeanie, 50 years, worked for the ICRC since 1980 and had provided assistance to people in various contexts: Thailand / Cambodia, Pakistan, Zimbabwe and Indonesia. She had spent almost half her life in the service of humanitarianism, to relieve the suffering of the most vulnerable people. That September 1st 2006 outside of the city of Sindian in Casamance, her vehicle jumped on a mine. Jeanie died, her three colleagues were wounded. A shock to all who knew her.

Today, in the premises of the ICRC delegation in Dakar, Jeanie Waddell-Fournier corner (EJWF) offers a research and reflection place on humanitarian action and law. Teachers and their students, journalists, researchers, soldiers and the public in general can thus come and see a diverse literature. Meetings of humanitarian, social or educational organizations are also held there.

The website of the space was launched on April 12th, 2012 and provides access to numerous documents related to humanitarian law. The opening

ceremony was an opportunity to highlight the growing importance for the ICRC of social networks like Facebook (facebook.com/icrcfans) and Twitter (twitter.com/cicr_francais). Frederick Joli has, for his part shared by videoconference, his experience with his blog "*humanitarian work in all its forms*": <http://cicr.blog.lemonde.fr>.

A web space to pay tribute to Jeanie Waddell-Fournier, and the opportunity to spare a fond thought for the family of our colleague Khalil Rasjed Dale, brutally murdered in Pakistan in April 2012 after being held hostage for more than four months. ■

Charles Sanches
Communication Assistant – ICRC Dakar
& Marie Berthe Emilienne Coly
Communication Assistant – ICRC Dakar

website : www.espacejwf.org



Sandy Haessner/ICRC

Senegal : Rose a driver for ICRC, evacuates the wounded during the pre-electoral riots in February



Rose: in front of an Ambulance

How did you come to do this job at the ICRC?

I like challenges. I arrived at the ICRC in 2009 and before, I was among the first women taxi drivers in the Senegalese capital through the program «Taxi Sisters». This was unseen for a job previously reserved for men. With my colleague Fatou Faye also driver at the ICRC, it was our baptism of fire for such an event in humanitarian emergency.

What was your role during the recent elections in Senegal and which difficulties did you encounter?

Our role was to evacuate the wounded to health centers in the capital. Visibility was hampered by tear gas. We had to force our way through streets blocked by crowds of protesters who scattered across burning tires. In total, the Senegalese Red Cross managed to assist more than 150 victims of election riots.

How did you manage to handle your stress and fear?

Strangely, we are not afraid in the theater of operations, it is much later when we look back that your stomach is tied, especially with regard to our children. I did not sleep well that night. You never know what could happen to us. The angry demonstrators, the windows that shatter, the throwing of stones, tear gas and the bloody wounded, it's still very impressive. But we focus on what we do. It's really emergency; the wounded must arrive as soon as possible to the health facilities. They depend on you. Our attention is at 100% focused on this goal, we think of nothing else.

The ICRC is leading a campaign on health care at risk. What were the attitudes towards you in the streets of Dakar during these events? Did you feel respected?

We felt much respected and this was expressed through the public applause as we passed by and the assistance we received from anonymous people to get the blocked passages cleared. The emblem of the Red Cross is respected in Senegal, and the protesters as well as the security forces have left us carry out our humanitarian work, despite the prevailing tension. And perhaps a mob makes way more easily to an emergency vehicle driven by a woman. This is not so common in Senegal, people seemed to enjoy it.

Did these events change your outlook on your work? And on the action of the Red Cross?

Seeing the wounded lying on the ground waiting for help gives you a real impression of usefulness and this is priceless. This is the heart of our mandate to repeat absolutely if the opportunity had yet to arise. But of course I hope it will not be the case! ■

Amadou Mansour Diouf
Communication Officer- ICRC Dakar

Tabala* ...echoes from elsewhere

ICRC

02.07.2012

Peter Maurer, the new President of the ICRC



Thierry GASSMANN/ICRC

Peter Maurer, the new president of the ICRC, took office July 1, 2012. He replaces Jakob Kellenberger who presided over the institution from January 2000 to June 2012.

DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO

11.07.2012

Responding to the most urgent needs in North Kivu

The humanitarian situation and the security of thousands of inhabitants of North Kivu province are becoming increasingly unpredictable and unsettled due to continuing clashes, such as those between the government forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the March 23 Movement (M23).



H.M.Kamara/ICRC

MALI

31.07.2012

ICRC visits detainees in the north

On 29 and 30 July, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) visited 79 Malian military personnel held by the National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad (MNLA) in the Tinzaouatène area of north-eastern Mali.

In its capacity as a neutral intermediary, the ICRC will also assist in the transfer of a detainee released for health reasons, who will be handed over to the Malian authorities.

ICRC staff spoke with and registered the detainees, and gave them the opportunity to contact their relatives in Bamako and elsewhere by telephone.

SOMALIA

17.08.2012

Food support for 420,000 people in Mogadishu

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) has just completed a distribution in Mogadishu of a one-month supply of basic food aid to some 420,000 highly vulnerable people, including displaced, orphaned, elderly and disabled persons

SYRIA

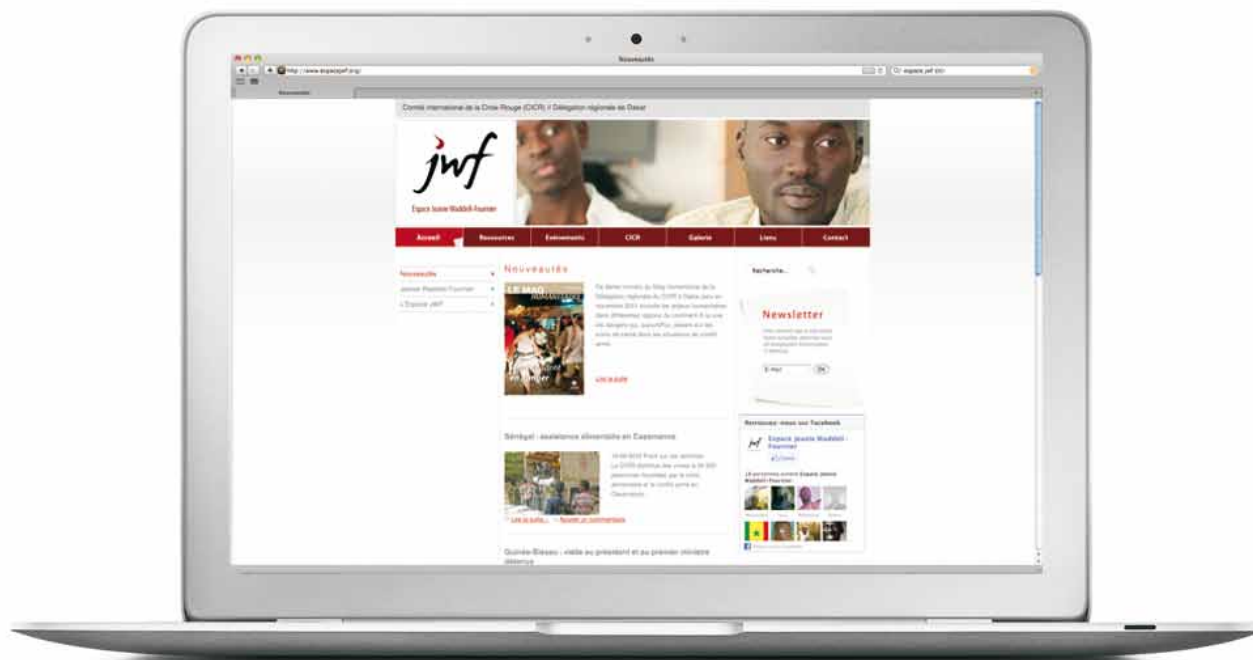
09.08.2012

More assistance reaches civilians in Aleppo and other areas

Thousands of civilians, especially in the governorates of Damascus and Aleppo, are struggling to stay safe. Despite facing increasing challenges over the past three weeks, the ICRC and the Syrian Arab Red Crescent assisted over 125,000 people affected by violence in several parts of Syria.

* Percussion instrument used in West Africa

A NEW PLATFORM ON THE WEB



ESPACE JEANIE WADDELL-FOURNIER

Launched on April 12th 2012, the ICRC web space gives access to:

- Quality electronic ressources and
- Reference documents on international humanitarian law

A wealth of information, only one address: www.espacejwf.org

Other links :

- On Facebook : facebook.com/icrcfans
- And Twitter : twitter.com/cicr_francais
- A blog powered by Frederick Joli: <http://cicr.blog.lemonde.fr>.



ICRC

www.espacejwf.org