



NEWSLETTER

THE ICRC: 150 YEARS OF HUMANITARIAN ACTION

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JOURNEY INTO THE HEART OF HUMANITY

What if Henry Dunant walked away from Solferino after he witnessed the horrible end of one of the deadliest battles during the 19th century? 150 years later, the course of humanitarian action would have taken a different direction. His heartaches, sleepless nights recalling the human suffering, unfolded before his very eyes, awakening compassion for humankind. Even with little or no experience in medicine, he did what he could to help the wounded. He took care of them, gave them water, and gave them food to eat.

Over the past 150 years, there have been many conflicts among humankind, which led to even more human suffering than Henry Dunant would have ever witnessed. These conflicts have led to a waging of wars for political, religious or ethnic reasons with unspeakable suffering for the victims. Many human beings have lost their lives, lost their loved ones, been injured, many children have been orphaned, and many have been displaced, lost their homes and belongings.

Sometimes it is easier to think that we, as individuals, cannot prevent larger human suffering. But, 150 years ago, Henry Dunant showed the world how his compassion for humankind extended beyond the limitations of knowledge, power and means.

Henry Dunant's legacy to younger generations was the creation of the biggest humanitarian movement: the International Committee of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement dedicated to protect human life and health,

to ensure respect for all human beings and to prevent and alleviate human suffering.

This year, in 2013, the International Committee of the Red Cross known as "ICRC" which is part of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement celebrates its 150 years of foundation in Geneva, Switzerland. The ICRC has a mandate to protect the life and dignity of the victims of international and internal armed conflicts.

In Sri Lanka, the three decade conflict ended four years ago and, as the country progresses in the recovery stages, it is important to pause and reflect and be sensitive to not so evident but remaining needs of the families affected by the past conflict. Sometimes it can be as simple as providing material support to help them resume their livelihoods or complex as helping them to find their missing family members.

In this issue of the newsletter, the ICRC commemorates the official creation of the organisation and looks at some of the ICRC's initiatives in Sri Lanka. These include the resumption of visits to places of detention, promotion of international humanitarian law and a series of training programmes for law enforcement officials.



ICRC

THE ICRC IN SRI LANKA: ADDING VALUE TO THE COUNTRY'S POST CONFLICT HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE



The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) is present in Sri Lanka since 1989. Its humanitarian activities in support of people who have been affected by the past conflict have been varied and have been adapted to the reality of the country.

In April 2013, Cherine Pollini became the new head of the ICRC delegation in Sri Lanka.

She joined the ICRC in 1994. Before taking over in Sri Lanka, she worked as the Head of Delegation in Azerbaijan. Between 1999-2000, she worked in Vavuniya, as the Head of the ICRC sub delegation.

Here, she explains what the ICRC's role in Sri Lanka is today and the organisation's added value.

1. The conflict ended in 2009. Why is the ICRC still here?

The ICRC is a 150- year old humanitarian organisation. During this time it has been meeting the humanitarian needs of people affected by conflicts the world over. In Sri Lanka, the ICRC is drawing on this expertise to respond to the remaining humanitarian needs of people affected by the conflict of the past and is offering its expertise in the areas of detention and missing.

2. How has the ICRC been addressing these needs?

For example, the ICRC, with the agreement of the Government of Sri Lanka (GoSL), visits persons held under the Prevention of Terrorism Act and those held in places coming under the Ministry of Rehabilitation and Prison Reforms. Like in all countries where we carry out detention visits, the objectives of these visits are to assess the conditions of detention and treatment of detainees and share any findings and recommendations confidentially with the detaining authorities.

The Family Visit Program (FVP) helps families re-establish and/or maintain links with relatives who have been detained in connection with the conflict of the past. The FVP provides families who need financial support with a travel allowance to visit their detained relative. The ICRC supports the Jaffna Jaipur Centre for Disability Rehabilitation (JJCDR) with raw materials and technical expertise to produce prosthesis and other mobility devices. These aids help people with disabilities, including landmine victims, to reintegrate into society and start living a normal life again. The ICRC is also supporting other national orthopaedic centres such as the Navajeewana Centre in Tangalle in the South.

We also work in close co-operation with the authorities, academic institutions, civil society members and students to promote the

understanding and acceptance of the principles of international humanitarian law (IHL), including its relevance to remaining humanitarian priorities following the end of a conflict as well as about the work of the Red Cross Movement generally. We work in close cooperation with the Sri Lanka Army and Sri Lanka Police on IHL and International Human Rights Law and collaborate with the Police to train their officers on public law and order management.



Families receive a travel allowance to visit their relative in detention.

3. Why do you not visit common law detainees?

Worldwide, the ICRC's mandate is to visit persons held in relation to an armed conflict or other situations of violence. In Sri Lanka, the ICRC initially visited those detained in connection with the JVP uprising and eventually, those detained in connection with the conflict of the past with the LTTE. This included soldiers and policemen held by the LTTE as well as persons held by the Government authorities. The ICRC has been visiting places of detention in the country since 1989, pursuant to a Memorandum of Understanding with the Government of Sri Lanka.



Livelihood support to a female headed household: a beneficiary shows off her vegetable cultivation in Mullaithivu

4. Can you elaborate more on the ICRC's work with the Sri Lanka Red Cross Society (SLRCS)?

The ICRC continues its financial, material and technical support to the SLRCS to reach the most vulnerable through assistance programmes (livelihoods). In the aftermath of the conflict, the ICRC, in partnership with the SLRCS supported the early recovery of communities still struggling with the effects of the past conflict. Since that time, households, mostly headed by women and disabled persons, in the Mullaithivu and Vavuniya districts increased their incomes with the help of cash grants while people living in the Batticaloa and Mullaithivu districts accessed clean drinking water through well-disinfection projects and the installation of water tanks.

The ICRC joins hands with other Red Cross Movement partners in providing financial, technical and legal support to the SLRCS for the Restoration of Family Links, migration, first aid and emergency preparedness.

5. One of the recommendations of the Commission of Inquiry on Lessons Learnt and Reconciliation (LLRC) is to trace the whereabouts of missing persons and ensure their reunification with their families. It says all efforts should be made by the law enforcement authorities to do this with relevant agencies, including the ICRC. What gives the ICRC the mandate to do this work?

Thousands of people lose touch with their relatives during a conflict. In Sri Lanka too, many such cases reported to the ICRC remain unresolved. The ICRC is ready to provide its humanitarian expertise in addressing the needs of the families of the missing. For example, in Nepal, we launched a comprehensive programme to support the families of missing after the conflict there ended in 2006. Together with local agencies, the families receive psychosocial, economic, legal, administrative and socio-cultural support.

6. Do you think this could fit with the Sri Lankan reality?

Officials of the Ministry of Defence, the LLRC task force and the ICRC discuss these issues. During these discussions, we also offer our expertise on national mechanisms and centralized systems for data collection on the missing. The aim of the latter two mechanisms is to assist different authorities to address the needs of families in a sustainable and comprehensive manner.

7. How are the ICRC's working relations with the Sri Lankan authorities?

The ICRC has an open dialogue with the authorities on the country's main humanitarian concerns. Our objective is to work transparently with the authorities to respond to these concerns meaningfully.

8. How will the ICRC's role in Sri Lanka evolve in the coming years?

This is something we discuss with our partners and with the authorities. The ICRC has offered its support to the authorities and as long as there are humanitarian needs to respond to, we are ready to continue our support.

9. You were the head of the ICRC sub-delegation in Vavuniya in 1999-2000. You have returned to the country 13 years later as the head of the ICRC in Sri Lanka. How do you see the changes that have taken place in the country?

The physical manifestation of conflict such as security checkpoints have virtually disappeared while reconstruction and development activities are evident. I hope Sri Lanka will find the right way to reach the path of reconciliation after so many years of conflict.



Nepal: families of missing persons come together for support.



IMPROVING THE HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE CAPACITY OF THE SRI LANKA RED CROSS SOCIETY

- between January and March this year, the ICRC carried out an evaluation of the joint Sri Lanka Red Cross Society (SLRCS)-ICRC micro economic initiatives project which concluded last year with over 300 households having established their own businesses. The project commenced in 2012 in Vavuniya.
- between January and September this year, 650 women - headed households received cash grants to restart their livelihood through the joint SLRCS-ICRC Economic Recovery Programme in

- Mullaithivu. During the same period 10,735 beneficiaries in Mullaithivu, Polonnaruwa and Batticaloa gained access to safer drinking water facilities and sanitation through a joint SLRCS-ICRC programme.
- the ICRC trained 80 volunteers in emergency response capacities so far this year.
- National Society volunteers trained by the ICRC helped promote humanitarian principles and the work of the Movement

- through dissemination sessions and community activities.
- the ICRC supported the SLRCS to develop its capacity to assist families separated because of migration, disasters and the past conflict.
- together with the SLRCS, the ICRC visited migrants held in detention and provided clothing and hygiene assistance.

IHL PROMOTION AND DISSEMINATION

- the ICRC sponsored three Sri Lankan participants to the 22nd South Asia Training Session on International Humanitarian Law (SATS) held in Nepal and two participants from the Attorney General's Department to a regional IHL conference on detention of persons in non-international armed conflicts in Malaysia.
- organised a round table discussion on the conduct of hostilities with high level authorities, IHL experts and legal personnel.
- the National IHL Committee translated the

- first, second and third Geneva Conventions of 1949 into Sinhala and Tamil, with the assistance of academics and the ICRC.
- together with the Sri Lanka Army, the ICRC commenced a joint evaluation of the IHL training given to the Army.
- the ICRC conducted an IHL workshop for 25 Army civil and military co-operation officers and for 38 officers in the UN Potential Observers course at the UN Peacekeeping Training School.

- 53 Army battalion commanders and second in command at the Vanni Security Forces Headquarters benefited from two IHL courses.
- three training sessions focussing on the role of the military in law enforcement were conducted for 189 officers.
- conducted a three day seminar on IHL at the Kotelawala Defence University for 32 IHL instructors in the armed forces.



Burduli/ICRC

IMPROVING CONDITIONS OF DETENTION AND TREATMENT OF DETAINEES

- after a series of discussions with the Ministry of Rehabilitation and Prison Reforms (MoRPR), the ICRC has been granted permission to resume visits to persons in rehabilitation centres and prisons. Since the resumption of visits to prisons in March 2013, the ICRC visited more than 450 persons.

across the world, as well as in Sri Lanka, the ICRC supports detaining authorities in their efforts to ensure adequate conditions of detention and treatment for all detainees, and facilitates for them, contacts with their families.

in Sri Lanka, the ICRC visits persons held in places of detention under the responsibility of the MoRPR, the Terrorist Investigation Division (TID), the Criminal Investigation Division (CID) as well as at police stations.

the main purpose of these humanitarian visits is to assess that the conditions of detention and the treatment of detainees comply with domestic laws and international standards, and any findings and recommendations are shared on a bilateral and confidential basis with the detaining authorities.

- between January and September this

year, 707 detainees, including those held in temporary places of detention and special police units, were individually monitored during 33 visits to 17 detention facilities.

- 696 inmates received hygiene packs, clothing, books and recreational items also between January and September this year.

- the ICRC continued to support the TID's efforts to offer workshops (carpentry, motor-mechanism) to detainees.

- the ICRC assisted authorities to improve sanitary conditions in prisons.



Kami/ICRC

RESTORING FAMILY LINKS: HOLDING FAMILIES TOGETHER

- between January and September this year, 892 detained persons benefited from ICRC-facilitated visits from relatives. These visits take place every 6 weeks.

- 31 detainees received a travel allowance to return home after their release.



ICRC

ENHANCING THE MOBILITY OF DISABLED PERSONS AND FACILITATING THEIR SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC INTEGRATION INTO SOCIETY

- between January and August this year, the ICRC supported the Jaffna Jaipur Centre for Disability Rehabilitation to produce 59 prosthesis, 76 orthosis and 44 other mobility aids such as tricycles, wheelchairs and crutches.



Jayawardena/ICRC

Jayawardena/ICRC

SIR JOHN KOTELAWALA DEFENCE UNIVERSITY AND ICRC CONDUCTS AN IHL TRAINING FOR THE MILITARY

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) together with the Faculty of Law of the General Sir John Kotelawala Defence University in Ratmalana conducted a three day Advanced Workshop on international humanitarian law (IHL) for IHL instructors of the three armed forces of Sri Lanka.

The main objectives of the workshop were to give participants an opportunity to update themselves on the latest developments of the law and refresh their basic knowledge on different aspects of international humanitarian law.

“One of the expectations of this workshop is that the IHL trainers in the armed forces will disseminate the knowledge that they gain to their subordinates”, said Brigadier General (rtd) Lloyd Gillett, the ICRC regional delegate for armed and security forces. Brigadier Gillett conducted the workshop, with the support of Channa Jayawardena, communications officer of the ICRC.

“Dissemination of IHL knowledge among military personnel and other relevant parties is an important measure which has to be taken

during peacetime, in that it ensures compliance with IHL during armed conflict”, said Chief of Defence Staff Air Chief Marshal Roshan Goonetilleke who participated at the awards ceremony.

Vice Chancellor of the General Sir John Kotelawala Defence University Major General Milinda Peiris noted the contribution made by the ICRC in educating the members of the Sri Lankan armed forces on the principles of IHL for more than a decade.

Thirty-two participants from the Sri Lanka Army, Navy and the Air Force engaged in active discussions on topics covering means and methods of warfare, command responsibility, direct participation in hostilities and peacekeeping operations.

“The knowledge personally benefited me and it will also benefit my subordinates once I commence lectures in my camp,” said a participant who attended the three-day workshop from 10-12 June, 2013.



HELPING INTEGRATE HUMANITARIAN PRINCIPLES INTO POLICE TRAINING, DOCTRINE AND PRACTICES

In November 2011, the ICRC delegation in Colombo offered to work with the Sri Lanka Police Department (SLPD) to strengthen its training and doctrine in relation to public order management. The training was to focus on the use of justifiable force during situations of public unrest and disorder.

Once the offer was accepted, the ICRC began working with police training colleges in order to develop a pool of trainers. Simultaneously, a SLPD steering committee was set up and assigned the task of reviewing the departmental standing orders on public order management and to propose amendments to the document in line with international law and standards.

“The aim is to provide comprehensive training opportunities to officers in charge of police stations islandwide, as they are the first in line to respond to the public, and this should be seen as a long term investment in the department and in the nation at large” says Inspector General of Police N.K. Illangakoon.

Today, the joint training initiatives have reached over 3,500 police officers of different ranks across the island. Since the beginning of the programme, the ICRC and the SLPD have successfully conducted a series of activities that include or involve round table discussions

with senior police officers, test lecturers, awareness seminars for senior officers, training-of-trainers and, curriculum review workshops on public order management linked to the use of force and firearms.

“To sustain the public order management training programme, we are in the process of reviewing the police standard procedures concerning public order management in consultation with the Ministry of Defence and the honourable Attorney General”, said the Inspector General of Police.

Chérine Pollini, the head of the ICRC delegation in Sri Lanka agrees. “As the ICRC’s experience in other contexts demonstrates, training alone cannot serve to reform practices. To ensure sustainability, there has to be a corresponding revision of these long held practices – that is to say revision of ‘doctrine’ - and considerable advancement in training methodologies and equipment used,” she adds.

Today, Michael Dynes, the ICRC’s regional police and security delegate and Sumedha De Silva, programme manager (police), work closely with senior officers involved in the revision of the departmental standing orders, trainers and officers in charge of the SLPD. The purpose of the cooperation is to strengthen the SLPD’s training and doctrine in relation to public order management.



FACULTY OF LAW AND ICRC CONDUCTS IHL TRAINING FOR ACADEMICS AND AUTHORITIES

The International Committee of the Red Cross and the Faculty of Law, University of Colombo, organized a two day workshop on international humanitarian law (IHL) for academics and government officials. The teacher training session was held on the 16th and 17th of July at the Faculty of Law, Colombo.

The honourable Attorney General in his key note address said, “for thirty years our country was at conflict. It made me realise the importance of IHL, a body of law designed to reduce human suffering. It applies to combatants and people affected by war”.

Commenting on the relevance of IHL in a post conflict context, he said, “there has been an expansion of IHL in the 21st century”. It has evolved to play a role even in times of peace in post-conflict situations. In these scenarios, IHL is important to create a culture of rights and responsibilities based on its principles, to punish offenders who violate it and to provide reparation where injuries are suffered as a result of the conflict.”

“The ICRC has been associated with teaching IHL for a very long time. Even before I assumed the position of Attorney General, we had opportunities to disseminate knowledge to future generations. As a result they were able to disseminate with confidence”, he said.

Twenty five participants, including academics from the Universities of Colombo, Jaffna, Peradeniya and South Eastern University,

Kotelawala Defence University, British Institute for Applied Sciences, officials from the Attorney General’s Department, judiciary, Ministries of Justice, External Affairs and Health and the Legal Draftsman’s Department participated in the event.

According to Charles Sabga, the ICRC’s regional legal adviser, institutional partnerships with universities are vital in its efforts to foster respect for IHL. “ For over 20 years, the ICRC has been promoting the teaching of IHL in universities, which recognise the importance of providing an all-encompassing approach to the study of international law. By encouraging universities to offer courses in IHL and by giving assistance to professors and students who are interested in this subject, the ICRC establishes contact with the next generation of leaders. Today, students learn the rules applicable in times of armed conflict. Tomorrow, they will promote and apply such rules in their respective professions”, he added

Mr Sabga conducted the sessions together with Wasantha Senavirathne, senior lecturer, Faculty of Law, Lakmini Seneviratne, legal advisor, ICRC and Ruwanthika Gunaratne, former head of communications, ICRC. Professor Shariya Scharenguivel, head of Private and Comparative Law, Faculty of Law, and Cherine Pollini, head of delegation, ICRC also addressed the gathering during the opening session.



ICRC

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.