



ICRC

FACTS & FIGURES

2009 – Plans for 2010

ERITREA

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) is a neutral and independent, strictly humanitarian international organisation. Its mandate, recognised by the Geneva Conventions of 1949 on the protection of war victims, is to work for the respect of international humanitarian law in times of armed conflicts and to alleviate the suffering of the victims of such conflicts.

The ICRC opened its delegation in Eritrea in 1998 and worked throughout the 1998 – 2000 conflict with Ethiopia, protecting and assisting persons affected by the conflict. Nowadays, the ICRC remains active in the country to contribute to the problems and alleviate the sufferings arising from this war and the continuing border stalemate.

OVERVIEW OF THE MAIN ICRC ACTIVITIES IN 2009

The ICRC, in accordance with its mandate, continued to focus on meeting the needs of people still affected by the 1998–2000 conflict with Ethiopia.

The delegation faced significant constraints in carrying out its planned activities. The restrictions on diesel fuel imposed in April 2008 continued. During the reporting period, the government introduced limitations on the movements of ICRC expatriate staff. The authorities decided that the ICRC had to stop visiting detainees of Ethiopian origin and terminate its longstanding programme to repatriate people who wished to return home to Ethiopia. Despite intense efforts to persuade Eritrean authorities to allow for the resumption of its scheduled activities, the ICRC was not able to take up again its previous level of operation.



Fuel and movement constraints slowed the implementation of the assistance programme, especially because no new project sites could be identified, as planned and discussed with local authorities. The delegation was, however, able to carry out some projects. As in past years, these targeted the south (Debub, Gash Barka and Southern Red Sea), the area of Eritrea worst affected by the past conflict and ongoing border tensions, and aimed to help rural communities, especially those including former IDPs, improve their economic situation and reduce health risks. Livelihood-support projects included hiring tractors to plough fields, treating livestock against parasites and providing livestock, vegetable seed and irrigation pumps to generate food and income. Most beneficiaries were households headed by women, as many men were serving in the armed forces or had been killed or disabled during the war. Water projects involved installing solar-powered systems, which needed no fuel. Recent returnees and resettled families also received, as needed, shelter materials, essential household items and materials and funds to build permanent homes.

Given the fuel and movement restrictions, the ICRC was also unable to resume its surgical training programme in three hospitals in Gash Barka. The project, which began in 2006, had been suspended since August 2008 because of insufficient fuel. The ICRC's programme to support Eritrea's physical rehabilitation services also wound down as the government failed to agree on the proposed plan of action.

The ICRC continued to monitor the situation of the Ethiopian community in Eritrea. It was, however, unable to visit detainees of Ethiopian origin, including POWs captured during a late-2007 border skirmish.

More than 1000 needy people of Ethiopian origin received ICRC financial aid for food, lodging and/or to renew their Eritrean residence permit. Most were stranded in Asmara after the scheduled repatriation operation, under ICRC auspices, had to be cancelled for administrative reasons. People who were to have been reunited with family across the border were informed. Meanwhile, relatives separated by the closed border could still communicate through RCMs.

With ICRC support, the Red Cross Society of Eritrea was rebuilding its first aid, tracing and communication programmes following the government's suspension of the Society's activities between February 2007 and April 2008.

Population in the border areas

Providing potable water in adequate quantity

Communities living along the border with Ethiopia kept on facing serious health risks because of water shortages. Women and children often walked long distances to fetch water from sources that were either contaminated or dried up due to short and insufficient rainfall.

The local authorities, communities and the ICRC worked together to install solar-powered watersupply systems that provided villages with an adequate amount of clean drinking water (20 litres of safe water per day per inhabitant) at a reasonable distance. Given communities' limited resources and the fuel shortages, the use of solar power helped to ensure sustainable water supply. Every village also established a water committee, which was trained by the local authorities together with the ICRC in maintenance, financial management and hygiene promotion.

Restrictions on fuel and expatriate staff movements limited the completion of existing projects and identification of new project sites. Therefore, only 16 projects have been completed instead of 20 originally planned projects.

In 2009,

- 33'527 persons benefited from improved access to safe drinking water through the construction of 16 solar-powered water supply systems
- 70 technical staff from central and regional water authorities received a five-day technical training on solar technology.



Solar powered water supply system built by the ICRC, Debub Region

Support to Eritrean Water Authorities

Technical staff from the central and the regional water resources authorities have been trained on basics of hydrology, hydraulics and solar technology in order to allow them to repair and ensure the functioning of the solar water supply systems.

In 2010 the ICRC plans to,

- maintain and rehabilitate 20 Solar Water Supply Systems
- train 80 sub-Zoba and Zoba technicians on maintenance and repair of Solar Water Supply Systems
- donate technical materials and tools to 10 Sub Zones and 3 Zones infrastructure departments
- study the Solar Water Supply System for better operation

Helping former IDPs set up home

Displaced families who returned home or were resettled in Southern border regions were able to set up makeshift homes and maintain a minimum level of hygiene using ICRC shelter materials, blankets, jerrycans and soap.

With the provision of materials, expertise and funds to hire workers by the ICRC, families in Gash Barka, who had been resettled in areas with insufficient housing, built their own homes. Because of fuel and movement restrictions and because of administrative delays in the first part of the year, not all families managed to start or complete the construction of their houses. 2'215 people (443 households) benefited from the housing project compared with the 3,000 (600 households) planned for 2009.



Housing Project in Ghirme and Elala, Gash Barka Region

In 2009,

- 2'215 people (443 households) received construction material and financial support to build their houses.
- 35,100 people (6,905 households) received shelter materials, including tents, and essential household items.

Wood-efficient ovens

Local authorities along the Southern border also received materials from the ICRC to provide some 4,750 people (950 needy households) with fuel-efficient ovens. These burnt less firewood, so slowed deforestation, and produced less smoke, which reduced health risks. The project had been scheduled for 2008, but was delayed by administrative problems.

Economic security to resident population

Tractor Ploughing

Struggling families in the Debub Region, most of them headed by women, had their fields ploughed ahead of the planting season with tractors hired by the ICRC, in coordination with the Ministry of Agriculture. The families would have been short of food otherwise, because they lacked the equipment, fuel, manpower and/or oxen to cultivate their assigned land. Evaluations of previous ICRC tractor-ploughing projects showed that, one year on, households had, weather permitting, increased their food production, and many could afford to rent a tractor themselves because they had not had to sell assets to pay for the previous ploughing.



Tractor Ploughing in Debub Region

Animal Restocking

Low-income families in southern border villages far from a water point were given donkeys and jerrycans. Households were able to use the time and energy saved fetching water for other productive activities. They also earned income by using the donkeys to collect and transport goods. Fewer families than planned received donkeys because the drought had weakened animals, so the number for sale locally was reduced.

Livestock Treatment

To improve livestock productivity, households in the Gash Barka region had their animals treated for parasites by the ICRC, in cooperation with Ministry of Agriculture. Treated animals generally produced more milk and meat and were more likely to survive drought.



Anti-parasite treatment of livestock, Debub Region

Distribution of pedal-operated irrigation pumps

Needy families with land, a nearby water source and gardening skills began growing vegetables using ICRC seeds, tools and pedal-operated irrigation pumps, thereby production was not dependent on fuel availability. Families both ate and sold the produce, thus earning income and varying their own and the region's nutritional intake.



Distribution of foot pump to gardeners in border areas, Debub Region

In 2009, 154,645 people (30,929 households) benefited from agricultural, veterinary and micro-economic initiatives, including,

- 117,775 people (23,555 households) from the treatment of 642,992 animals against parasites.
- 30,000 people (6,000 households) from the ploughing by tractors of 6000 hectares out of which 3750 hectares were ploughed twice.
- 3,550 people (710 households) benefited from the provision of 1995 goats and 310 donkeys
- 3,320 people (664 households) benefited from the provision of 166 foot pumps, vegetable seeds and hoes.

In 2010, the ICRC plans to provide,

- Tractor ploughing for 3000 families in Gash Barka
- Livestock Anti-parasite Control for 500,000 animals (15,000 families) in Debub, Gash Barka, and Southern Red Sea Regions
- 200 foot-pumps, seeds, and tools for 800 families in Debub, Gash Barka and Southern Red Sea Regions

Restoring/ Maintaining Family Links

Exchange of family news and documents

Relatives separated by the Eritrea-Ethiopia border, which remained closed, were able to exchange news through the tracing and RCM services run by the Red Cross Society of Eritrea and the ICRC. People could also have their official documents, usually education certificates, sent across the border so that they could apply for further studies or jobs.

Since the 1998–2000 war, thousands of people in Eritrea who wished to return home to Ethiopia – and vice versa – had been repatriated under ICRC auspices. The repatriation operations under ICRC auspices were cancelled by Eritrean authorities, leaving just over 400 people scheduled to be repatriated in February 2009 stranded in Eritrea. They were provided with food and lodgings for three months and their identity papers and food coupons were reinstated thanks to ICRC financial aid and representations to the authorities.

The ICRC provided support to vulnerable Ethiopian nationals for the renewal of their residence permits and covered the medical bills of the most vulnerable civilians. It also advised and accompanied some of them in their administrative procedures in order to retrieve their ID-card.

ICRC Activities in Photos



Gardners using foot pumps distributed by the ICRC to cultivate their garden



Dissemination to Youth Association in Assab, Southern Red Sea Region



ICRC Livestock treatment in Gash Barka Region



ICRC Solar water supply system in Debub Region



ICRC takes part in Book Fair 2009, Asmara



Tractor ploughing in Gash Barka Region

In 2009,

- 1'263 identified vulnerable Ethiopian civilians were financially assisted for the renewal of their residence permit
- ICRC delegates visited 22 Ethiopians living in Eritrea at home in an effort to understand their humanitarian situation and address most pressing needs.

Following the decision of the Eritrean government to ban all protection activities in one region (Zoba Debub), the ICRC handed over the RFL services to the Red Cross Society of Eritrea. The service is particularly important to allow Eritrean children that crossed the border to Ethiopia to re-establish contact with their family members in Eritrea.

Some families still had no news about relatives missing in relation to the 1998–2000 war. To provide answers, additional information was being collected from the families and elsewhere in order to draw up a revised list of missing people to submit to the Eritrean and Ethiopian authorities.

In 2009,

- 6'100 RCMs collected from and 6'627 distributed to civilians
- 70 new tracing requests opened (5 women; 36 minors); 40 people located, 239 people (79 women; 72 minors at the time of disappearance) still being sought
- 60 official documents (e.g. university transcripts) forwarded from Eritrea and 23 from Ethiopia

Detention Visit

In the first months of the year, detainees of Ethiopian origin held in Eritrea, including two POWs captured during a border skirmish in late 2007, were visited by the ICRC. Inmates could contact their families through RCMs and, when necessary, received hygiene products and other basic items. After the visits, the authorities were informed of the ICRC's findings and recommendations in line with the 1949 Geneva Conventions and internationally recognized standards. To reinforce this dialogue, 27 police officers were briefed on IHL and ICRC detention-related activities. At the end of February 2009 Eritrean authorities denied access to all civilian detainees of Ethiopian origin to the ICRC. Despite intense efforts, the ICRC has not been able to resume the visits to detainees.

The ICRC delegates have not been allowed to visit the remaining POW nor the former POW since January 2009. The ICRC continued submitting requests to the authorities to be granted access to them, to no avail.

In 2009,

- 118 detainees visited, of whom 89 monitored individually (4 women; 3 minors) and 29 newly registered (2 women; 3 minors), during 9 visits to 9 places of detention
- 69 RCMs collected from and 38 RCMs distributed to detainees
- 2 detainees were visited by their relatives with ICRC support
- 7 detention certificates were issued to former detainees or their families
- 1,793 detainees received hygiene and/or other essential items

Physical Rehabilitation and physiotherapy trainings

Agordat, Barentu and Tesseney hospitals in the Gash Barka border region had all improved their emergency services since the launch of an ICRC surgical training programme in 2006. Fuel restrictions forced the suspension of the programme in August 2008. Given the ongoing fuel problems and the new constraints on ICRC staff movements, the delegation had to inform the Health Ministry in May 2009 that the programme would not resume.

To help boost physical rehabilitation services, 10 staff from Eritrea's three prosthetic/orthotic centres in Asmara, Assab and Keren refreshed their skills in lower-limb orthotics during a 13-week ICRC course held in the capital. The government rejected ICRC's offer to cooperate in the establishment of internationally recognized training curricula for associate physiotherapists and orthopaedic technologists, so the support to the physical rehabilitation services ended.

Promotion of International Humanitarian Law

Local Authorities

The national and local authorities were the ICRC's key contacts in its efforts to promote IHL and generate support for the organization's activities.

Government officials were offered expertise to ratify or implement IHL treaties and, together with members of the international community, were regularly updated on ICRC activities and humanitarian concerns. The Justice Ministry was provided with a document on ratifying Additional Protocol III, while a ministry expert received financial assistance to publish a study to help law-makers revise legislation on gender equality.



Information session to Local Authorities in Asseb, Southern Red Sea

Regional authorities in and around Asmara, including 25 Agriculture Ministry officials, also participated in briefings on the ICRC's mandate and principles of neutrality and independence, and how this was reflected in its activities in Eritrea.

In Gash Barka and Southern Red Sea regions, 78 local authorities were briefed on ICRC activities in the country and on IHL in two information sessions with the view of enhancing knowledge of, as well as respect and support for the work of the ICRC.

Training to Eritrean Defence Forces

Given the border tensions, the Eritrean Defence Forces (EDF) are deployed on a large scale throughout the country.

The EDF had been working with the ICRC for eight years on a small-scale IHL training programme for its troops. At the start of 2009, the EDF informed the ICRC that it was now ready to teach IHL autonomously. The ICRC offered its support should the need arise. With the approval of the commander of Eritrea's Maritime Training Institute, the graduation bulletin for 100 new soldiers contained a page on the ICRC's mandate and activities.

Some 27 members of the Naval Force in the southern Red Sea region and 25 police officers of the southern region of the country familiarized themselves with basic IHL rules, the Movement, the ICRC's mandate and its activities in Eritrea.

Civil Society

Public support for IHL and the ICRC is essential for the delegation to carry out its activities.

In 2009, under the banner of the "Our world. Your move." communication campaign, the national authorities, the international community and the general public learned more about IHL and the Movement during special events

in Asmara to mark World Red Cross and Red Crescent Day (8 May). These included a run with 600 participants sporting Movement t-shirts, a two-day photo exhibition and a reception attended by some 200 people from government, diplomatic, UN and NGO circles.

In another initiative, young people were able to read an article on IHL, the first published by the ICRC in Eritrea, in a popular youth magazine. Hundreds of students, teachers and military personnel picked up IHL material at the ICRC stand at Eritrea's annual 10-day Book Fair in Asmara. The visitors were also encouraged to drop by the ICRC delegation for more in-depth publications.



Dissemination to Girmé and Elala, Gash Barka Region

27 lecturers and students of a private college and 41 students from the Eritrean Institute of Technology were familiarized with IHL through two lectures given by the ICRC. The participants, in return, expressed their readiness to promote IHL in their respective colleges.

In border areas, over 2000 beneficiaries of the ICRC assistance projects (housing project, tractor ploughing, donkey distribution and livestock treatment) attended 10 information sessions on the mandate and work of the ICRC to enhance acceptance and support for the ICRC.

To promote IHL and the ICRC, 150 teachers, students, members of the Youth Association from the Central, Southern and Southern Red Sea regions participated in 4 ICRC information sessions.

74 representatives from the Eritrean Water Resource Department, UN agencies and NGO's were briefed on the ICRC's mandate and activities in order to ensure effective coordination and to foster their support for the organisation's work.

In a ten-day National Festival that took place in the capital, various ICRC publications in Tigrinya, Arabic and English were distributed in coordination with the Red Cross Society of Eritrea, thereby enhancing knowledge of the ICRC and IHL to the general public.

In 2010,

- The ICRC will continue carrying out activities aimed at promoting IHL and generating support for ICRC's operations.

Cooperation with the Red Cross Society of Eritrea

The Red Cross Society of Eritrea, supported by ICRC funds, materials and expertise, was rebuilding its tracing, first-aid and communication programmes. By December 2009, the National Society runs the RCM service. Another priority was to give talks, sometimes with the ICRC, on IHL and the Movement to diverse audiences. This helped both to recruit volunteers and gain support for official recognition of the Society's status within the Movement.

With ICRC support in 2009,

- 133 Society personnel refreshed their tracing skills during 7 trainings
- some 14'338 people, mainly community members and students, attended presentations on the Movement, its Fundamental Principles and activities
- 9'096 people in weapon-contaminated regions participated in mine-risk education sessions
- 150 police officers, 173 industrial workers, 71 transport drivers, 200 teachers and 1'850 students were trained in administering first aid
- 177 teachers attended six 4-day courses on relief management
- 46 Red Cross Action Team (volunteers) participated in an ICRC information session on IHL, the Movement, the Fundamental Principles and the emblem. The volunteers were then able to carry out similar information sessions across the country.

In 2010,

The coordinators of Disaster Management, Communication and Tracing programme supported by the ICRC will carry out an assessment aimed at evaluating the impact of their activities. The assessment will lead to a series of recommendations aimed at enhancing the quality and impact of those activities.



+ ICRC delegation



May 8 celebration—Red Cross Run in Asmara



ICRC

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