



ICRC

International Committee of the Red Cross

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ICRC



Santander). The sun is beating down and in Benito Ovalle Hospital the medical team and ICRC delegates are sorting out the last details before setting off for Honduras, a small community six hours away down unmade roads. The fighting has deprived the village of basic health care.

The constant attacks on medical personnel in Colombia have been a source of great concern to the ICRC, which is striving to promote compliance with international humanitarian law. At the same time, the ICRC has developed various strategies aimed at ensuring access to basic health care for people living in rural areas affected by the conflict. These include running mobile health units, informing displaced persons and residents of rural areas about the health care to which they are entitled and accompanying local health teams on their rounds.

In its capacity as a neutral intermediary, the ICRC accompanies medical teams moving around the rural areas

affected by the armed conflict. This makes it possible for the teams to obtain the security guarantees they need to provide basic health care in these remote areas of the country.

As with the mobile health units and efforts to make displaced persons aware of their entitlement to health care, this programme plays a key role in extending access to treatment for people in areas affected by the fighting.

Mobile health units



Mobile health unit

Atrato river

The ICRC's mobile health units in Colombia are working with city and community health services to provide primary health care for people affected by the conflict. This includes general medicine, dental care, health education, preventative health care, immunization and water/sanitation activities.

The trip out ...



Turbo



Opogadó



The canoe



Baquiaza



Mesopotamia



Riosucio

... Home again



Where do the mobile health units operate?

The ICRC mobile health units are providing primary health care in Urabá (Atrato river), Caguán, Putumayo and Sur de Bolívar.

Who is financing them?

The ICRC has delegated these projects to four National Red Cross Societies, and it is they who are providing the necessary funds and personnel.

- Urabá (Atrato river): delegated to the Norwegian Red Cross.
- Caguán: financed by the German Red Cross.
- Putumayo: financed by the Swedish Red Cross.
- Sur de Bolívar: delegated to the Canadian Red Cross Society.

5 August 2002

ICRC provides humanitarian assistance in Puerto Alvira area

Bogotá – Following incidents in the area of Puerto Alvira (Meta), an ICRC team travelled there on 2 and 3 August 2002 to assess the situation and identify the humanitarian needs of the people who had fled to Ceiba (700 persons), Mocuare (150), El Olvido (300) and Rompida (200).

On the basis of this information, a team of three ICRC staff and two volunteers from the Colombian Red Cross (CRC) set off on 4 August to distribute food aid for 15 days (1,000 parcels), together with 500 hygiene kits and two stoves for community kitchens. The ICRC will continue to provide humanitarian assistance as required.

The ICRC is in regular contact with the health authorities, and both ICRC and CRC personnel are standing by to give primary care if needed.

ICRC delegates have contacted the parties to the conflict, both to remind them of their obligation to respect the civilian population and to obtain security guarantees enabling the organization to provide humanitarian assistance in the area. The delegates have also facilitated contact between displaced persons and their families in various parts of the country.

On 6 August, the ICRC is planning to provide humanitarian assistance to people who have fled to San José del Guaviare.

1 April 2002

Visits to detainees

The ICRC visits persons detained in connection with the armed conflict in order to assess the treatment they are receiving and the physical conditions under which they are being held. We make confidential approaches to the authorities, to ensure that treatment and conditions are in accordance with international humanitarian law.

In addition to visiting places of detention, the ICRC runs an assistance programme for detainees, supplying them with items such as toiletries and recreational materials. The ICRC finances visits by families to places of detention, helping to maintain links between the detainees and their relatives.

Currently, the ICRC does not have access to persons held by guerrilla organizations in connection with the conflict. However, we are facilitating the exchange of Red Cross messages between them and their families.

In June 2001 the ICRC participated in the release of 359 members of the security forces held by the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC).

ICRC/Boris Heger



Cúcuta prison (Norte de Santander).
Sierra de la Macarena.

	2001	January - March 2002	April - June 2002
Detainee cases being monitored by the ICRC	3,793	3,772	3,847
Permanent and temporary places of detention visited	158	48	75
Security detainees registered and visited	2,248	475	780
Members of the security forces released by guerrillas and handed over to the ICRC	370		5
Red Cross messages exchanged between members of the security forces and their families	104		11
Persons who received financial assistance to visit members of their families in detention	2,848	729	608
Security detainees who received assistance to return to their homes on release	91	20	28
Medical care financed for detainees in prison	51	34	120
Detainees visited for health reasons	1,005		
Detainees assisted by community programmes in prisons	2,391	1,642	2,207

ICRC delegation in Colombia

1 April 2002

Protecting the civilian population



The ICRC documents such violations of international humanitarian law as selective executions, the disappearance of civilians, hostage-taking, threats and the displacement of the population. We present our findings to those believed to be responsible, in an effort to change the behaviour of the armed groups involved.

This protection work is carried out by delegates, mainly in the field, who maintain regular contact with the parties to the conflict and those who are suffering as a result of it.

When an armed group takes hostages, the ICRC fulfils its role as a neutral intermediary, acting purely on humanitarian grounds, to restore contact between the hostages and their families via Red Cross messages. We can also provide medical assistance and be present when hostages are released.

ICRC/Boris Heger



A released hostage is reunited with his family (Antioquia).

		2001	January - March 2002	April - June 2002
Documented cases of violations of international humanitarian law received/processed orally or in writing	Received:	705	228	276
	Processed:	1,068*	313*	556*
Hostages handed over to the ICRC by guerrillas and self-defence groups		148	8	31
Hostages reported to the ICRC by armed groups		62	11	30
Red Cross messages exchanged between hostages and their families		45	15	15

* Including cases opened previously

1 April 2002

Health programmes

The ICRC provides medical assistance for victims of the armed conflict who are unable to access basic State health services or who require additional treatment.

We provide six months' assistance for displaced persons and up to two years' assistance for injured civilians.

For the residents of areas affected by the conflict, we facilitate access to primary health care through mobile health units, in Atrato, Urabá, Caguán, Caquetá, Occidente de Putumayo and Sur de Bolívar.

Revista Semana



Health team and mobile health unit, Atrato river, Chocó.

	2001	January- March 2002	April - June 2002
Injured civilians who received medical assistance	222	58	70
Displaced persons suffering from illness who received medical assistance	475	102	99
Total number of persons assisted	697	160	169
Medical consultations	14,649	2,809	6,373
Dental treatment sessions	3,571	563	1,176
Persons vaccinated	15,733	968	4,427
Total number of people assisted by community health programmes	33,953		11,976

Under this programme the ICRC also accompanies local health teams, facilitating wider access to medical care, and vaccinations in particular.

	January- March 2002	April - June 2002
Medical consultations	599	773
Dental treatment sessions	75	136
Persons vaccinated	1,626	769
Total number of people assisted	2,300	1,678

1 April 2002

Promoting international humanitarian law

ICRC/William Torres



Teaching international humanitarian law to a guerrilla group (Nariño).

The ICRC works with such groups as the parties to the conflict, the authorities, the media and the civilian population to promote knowledge of and compliance with international humanitarian law. The ICRC advises the Colombian authorities on the incorporation of international humanitarian law into national legislation.

The organization also promotes the inclusion of international humanitarian law in the instruction programmes and operating procedures of the armed forces and the police and trains military and police instructors to teach the rules of war to the armed forces and the police.

ICRC delegates use their contacts with armed groups operating on the edge of the law to promote the rules and principles of international humanitarian law via talks and workshops.

The ICRC trains university lecturers in international humanitarian law, so that they can include the

subject in their academic activities. We also participate in postgraduate courses, seminars and conferences.

Working in conjunction with the Colombian Red Cross, the ICRC runs international humanitarian law projects aimed at the security forces, young people and the civilian population in areas affected by the armed conflict.

Lastly, the ICRC organizes international humanitarian law workshops and talks for journalists and students of journalism and supplies them with information on the subject.

ICRC/Boris Heger



Teaching international humanitarian law to a guerrilla group (Norte de Santander).

	2001	January - March 2002	April - June 2002
Workshops, courses and seminars for the police and armed forces	205	24	53
Number of participants	9,276	1,111	2,047
Lectures on international humanitarian law for guerrillas and self-defence groups	109	7	18
Number of participants	2,419	424	490

Seminars and workshops for professors and students	63	5	17
Number of participants	3,796	73	494
Workshops for journalists and students of journalism	12	5	5
Number of participants	205	93	93
Talks for students of journalism	7		4
Number of participants	500		515
Workshops for State-run supervisory organizations		12	
Number of participants		398	