



ICRC

NEWSLETTER

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Dr. Abdul Halim, one of two Community-based First Aid Trainers in Kapisa Province, trains volunteers to treat broken limbs.

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The ICRC Cooperation Programme

With an estimated 100 million active volunteers worldwide, and a National Red Cross or Red Crescent Society in almost every country, there are few organisations with a "family" the size of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement.

National Red Cross or Red Crescent Societies in the world's more developed or more wealthy countries have greater access to resources, leaving them better able to respond to the needs of beneficiaries. In less developed countries, where coincidentally conflict and natural disasters often compound already difficult living conditions, the reverse is often the case. Many less well supported national societies are labouring under huge demand from beneficiaries who are affected by conflict, natural disasters or a combination of both.

Few national societies face the burden that confronts the Afghan Red Crescent Society, where almost 30 years of conflict, plus a recurrent cycle of natural disasters have destroyed physical and social infrastructure and left many people destitute. In such circumstances, where the ARCS seeks to meet the many demands of the population, the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement provides valuable assistance to help the national society to cope.

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) is the Movement's lead agency in countries at war. The ICRC works in partnership with the ARCS to help develop

the capacity to meet the needs of beneficiaries in Afghanistan. Since 1994, the ICRC delegation has included a Cooperation Department to build capacity and thereby enable the ARCS to meet the growing challenges of the conflict in Afghanistan. In parts of the country where access to expatriates is denied, it is the ARCS that "goes-it-alone" to meet the needs of the population.

ICRC assistance to the ARCS since 1994 has included "capacity building" with a range of functions which have largely been taken over by a now more capable ARCS, including:

- communicating the Movement message in Afghanistan,
- tracing persons missing as a result of the conflict,
- preparing staff and volunteers to take over Mine Action in Afghanistan - particularly the functions of mine victim data collection and mine risk education to vulnerable communities,
- establishing a "food for work" and a "vocational training program" to provide the means for vulnerable Afghans to help themselves, and
- establishing a comprehensive community-based first aid program to bring medical assistance to all Afghans, including those in remote communities.

In addition, the ICRC has:

- assisted with the refurbishment of the ARCS premises and, in conjunction with the

International Federation, constructed new premises for the ARCS,

- funded ARCS office running costs and paid monthly incentives to ARCS staff,
- provided transportation and met fuel and maintenance expenses,
- provided communication equipment, and
- provided technical advice and training for permanent staff and volunteers.

The ICRC Cooperation Department provides a bridge between the ARCS and other Movement members who provide assistance to enable the ARCS to perform its important functions. The ARCS has responded positively to the high demands of the Afghan people. In all 34 Provinces the ARCS is active, meeting the needs of victims of the on-going conflict and recurrent natural disasters. With one of the best networks of dedicated volunteers in the Movement, the ARCS, along with the ICRC and International Federation, are busy making a difference in the lives of needy Afghans.

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Bringing Medical Assistance to Afghanistan's Remote Populations

The ICRC, as part of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, assists the ARCS technically and financially to increase its ability to deliver various programmes and services to the community. The ICRC is providing support for vocational training and food for work programmes, as well as undertaking capacity building with ARCS staff and volunteers at all levels.



Community-based First Aid Training Session

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The steady deterioration of Afghanistan's medical infrastructure has created a vast dependency, especially in the more remote parts of the country. While major hospitals in the larger cities have been supported by organisations such as the International Committee of the Red Cross, various national Red Cross Societies and other donors, the availability of medical facilities in the more remote regions of Afghanistan continues to decline.

In the recent past, as the insurgency has intensified, access to health facilities has become even more of a problem for remote villages. At a time when international institutions are not able to deploy staff due to security concerns, it is

the Afghan Red Crescent Society (ARCS) that is working to meet the medical concerns of needy Afghans.

The ARCS Community-based First Aid Program (CBFA) seeks to establish comprehensive first aid support, by trained first aid volunteers, in all of Afghanistan including its remote communities.

The idea for CBFA was introduced in June 1997 with the multiple aims of attracting volunteers to the ARCS; introducing the Fundamental Principles which guide the behaviour of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement; and meeting beneficiaries medical needs. A pilot study was conducted in Nangahar

Province in 1998 and the program has subsequently spread to all provinces. Each Province has two first aid trainers, and each region one CBFA supervisor. One volunteer is then trained in first aid procedures for every 50 families, based upon demographic data provided by Heads of District. Volunteers are selected by Village Elders, based on their honesty, respect for the Fundamental Principles, and their ability to teach.

Each volunteer must complete a ten day course including sessions on First Aid, Health Education, Mine Awareness, HIV and knowledge of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement. On completion they are issued with a certificate, a first aid manual and first aid kits-the latter provided by the ICRC and International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent.

The CBFA provincial trainers supervise selected team leaders, who are appointed, in turn, to assist volunteers to complete their duties.

"In the absence of medical structures in more remote areas of the south and south-east, the CBFA volunteers are working long hours to meet the demands of victims," says Dr Abdullah, the ARCS director of the CBFA. He goes on to explain that "demand for assistance to war wounded currently is beyond the capability of the ARCS in the conflict areas, especially in the South. With the right resources the CBFA staff could meet the requirement." He concludes with some pride "the more that you do, the more people want you to do."

As a statement, that recognises the huge amount of medical assistance required by beneficiaries in remote areas untouched by the reach of medical structures; and it also demonstrates a massive vote of confidence in the critically important, if sometimes dangerous, work of the ARCS CBFA volunteers. The ARCS plans to expand its activities in the south and south-east, in order to meet the demands of communities in need.

This is a fine example of Afghans helping Afghans in need.

Portrait of an ICRC employee

Mohammad Asef Sobhi Gardezi is 59 and started his career with the ICRC as a field medical officer in 1993 while Afghanistan was plunged into intense civil war. Today, as a health assistant coordinator Mr. Gardezi assists the health coordinator in health related issues and liaises between ICRC health department and all other health departments, governmental and non-governmental (mainly ministry of public health).

"When I joined ICRC health department in Kabul, it was a period of intense internal conflict where assistance to the war victims was an essential need," Mr. Gardezi says. "Kabul city was a battlefield between the

rival groups. All of Kabul hospitals experienced some type of loss and damage and were devoid of medical supplies. Hospitals used to receive large numbers of war wounded every day".

Gardezi added that the ICRC was supplying all of the health centres in Kabul, civilian and military, with medicine, dressing material and medical equipment on a regular weekly interval. Movement was not easy under storms of rockets and shelling and high risk was a part of life. Only ICRC vehicles were visible on the Kabul streets serving the war victims.

Mr. Gardezi also had missions of medical support to Badakhshan, Bamyan, Kandahar,

Ghazni, Shibergan, Kunduz and Taloqan provinces. He says, to work with ICRC, one has to be aware that stress is a part of the mission and ready to invade at any time, and we have to combat it.

Mr. Gardezi speaks of his memories of being held by armed men, and being threatened with death, on the road from Bamyan to Kabul in the summer of 1999. "I call it Bamyan Adventure. It reminds me of a severely stressful situation where we resisted peacefully and succeeded to overcome. Our team was proud to be in the service of the vulnerable population in this area and we never regret," Gardezi concluded.



Mr. M. Asef Gerdezi

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Why Cooperation?

The purpose of ICRC cooperation activities is to enhance the capacity of National Societies to fulfil their own responsibilities as Red Cross and Red Crescent institutions in providing humanitarian services in their own countries. In particular, the ICRC assists and supports the National Societies in their activities to:

- provide assistance to victims of armed conflict and internal strife (preparedness and response);
- promote international humanitarian law and spread knowledge of the Fundamental Principles, ideals and activities of the Movement; and
- restore contact between dispersed family members as part of the worldwide Red Cross and Red Crescent tracing network.

The ICRC operation in Afghanistan

The ICRC started working with Afghan communities in 1979 in Pakistan, providing surgical assistance to the war-wounded in Peshawar and Quetta. The organization has been present in Afghanistan since 1987. Today, the ICRC has a staff of over **60** expatriates and **1,000** national staff based in Kabul, Jalalabad, Kandahar, Herat and Mazar-i-Sharif, as well as in offices in Faizabad, Gulbahar and Bamiyan.

Between January and March 2007, the ICRC carried out the following activities in Afghanistan:

People Deprived of their Freedom

According to its international mandate, the ICRC visits detainees held as a result of conflict by the Afghan authorities and the NATO-led ISAF, to regularly assess their conditions of detention, their treatment and respect of their fundamental judicial guarantees. In the reported period the ICRC visited **34** places of detention, which were holding a total of **6,955** detainees. They followed up individually **810** persons arrested in relation with the conflict or the security situation.

The ICRC also facilitates contacts with their families through the exchange of Red Cross Messages (RCMs). ICRC protection teams, with the Afghan Red Crescent Society (ARCS), collected and distributed more than **6,000** Red Cross Messages.

Orthopedic Services

Since 1988, the ICRC has been involved in orthopedic and rehabilitation assistance to disabled people, from landmine victims to those with motor impairment due to any cause. Opportunities for their social reintegration have been provided as well, once the physical rehabilitation is completed. During that time, almost **76,700** patients (including more than **32,000** amputees) have been registered and assisted. Currently, the ICRC runs six orthopedic centres in Kabul,

Mazar, Herat, Gulbahar, Faizabad and Jalalabad, where it registered about **1,100** new patients and made over **3,000** prostheses and orthoses since January.

Mine data collection and mine awareness programmes

The ICRC, supports the ARCS, with the aim of preventing accidents caused by mines and other explosive remnants of war (ERW) by gathering information on the causes and location of accidents and by promoting safe behaviour through mine risk education (MRE) sessions. In the mentioned period, about **2,600** MRE sessions were conducted for more than **24,600** individuals in over **750** locations.

Health Care

The ICRC supports with supplies, training and with capacity building the national health authorities at three hospitals-the JPHH1 in Jalalabad, Mirwais in Kandahar and Sheberghan Hospital in Jawzjan. The objective of the ICRC support is to maintain the capacity to provide essential and quality surgical services to victims affected by the conflict or other emergencies. In Kandahar, the ICRC commenced a special collaboration with MOPH to implement the Essential Package of Hospital Services covering the entire hospital. In first three months health facilities assisted by the ICRC provided services to **8,700** in-patients and **40,700** outpatients, and performed more than **4,000** operations. The capacity to provide surgical supplies and medications to meet the health needs of wounded victims and populations affected by disasters in any health establishment in Afghanistan are maintained.

Water and Habitat.

One of the ICRC's core tasks is to maintain access to drinking water for populations affected by conflict. In Afghanistan, the ICRC's work includes re-establishing urban and rural water networks, sanitation projects and rehabilitation work in hospitals and detention places. Hygiene promotion and environmental health training are part of this programme.

Promotion of international humanitarian law (IHL)

The ICRC's humanitarian mission is to protect the lives and dignity of victims of war and prevent suffering by promoting and strengthening compliance with IHL. The dissemination teams conduct seminars and training with officers and soldiers of the Afghan National Army, the police, and information sessions with non-military audiences such as journalists, students and teachers, government authorities, religious and community leaders.

ICRC Cooperation with Afghan Red Crescent Society (ARCS)

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MISSION

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 war and internal violence and to provide them with assistance. It directs and coordinates the international relief activities conducted by the Movement in situations of conflict. It 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 International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement

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