

INDEX

INTRODUCTION	
Central America: humanitarian dilemmas in the new decade	4
MAP	
6	
EL SALVADOR	
9	
The missing: a debt still owed	11
Communities affected by violence	13
Migration and displacement	17
The missing	19
People deprived of their liberty	22
Promoting an environment of respect for human life and dignity	25
Working with the Salvadorean Red Cross Society to increase our humanitarian impact	27
Timeline	28
ICRC Activities in El Salvador map	30
GUATEMALA	
33	
Debts, challenges and opportunities in Guatemala	35
Communities affected by violence	37
Migration	40
The missing	42
People deprived of their liberty	45
Promoting international law and its integration in the armed forces and police	47
Coordination with the Guatemalan Red Cross for volunteer and staff capacity development	48
Timeline	49
ICRC Activities in Guatemala map	50
HONDURAS	
52	
The humanitarian consequences of the exodus beyond the caravans	55
Communities affected by violence	57
Migration and displacement	60
Health care	61
The missing	64
People deprived of their liberty	67
Promoting an environment of respect for human life and dignity	71
Working with the Honduran Red Cross to increase our humanitarian impact	72
Timeline	73
ICRC Activities in Honduras map	74
NICARAGUA	
77	
Consolidating our presence in Nicaragua	79
People deprived of their liberty	80
Promoting an environment of respect for human life and dignity	81
Working with the Nicaraguan Red Cross to increase our humanitarian impact	82
Timeline	83
COSTA RICA	
85	
BELIZE	
89	



CENTRAL AMERICA: HUMANITARIAN DILEMMAS IN THE NEW DECADE

Jordi Raich, head of the ICRC's regional delegation for Mexico and Central America

Central America is large – nearly 13 times the size of Switzerland – and its geography varies widely, just like the economic, social and political circumstances. These differences from country to country mean it's difficult to make comparisons or generalizations about the region as a whole or create one-size-fits-all humanitarian solutions.

For a number of years, the ICRC has had offices in Honduras, Guatemala and El Salvador, and in 2018 we re-opened our office in Nicaragua. Costa Rica and Belize are handled out of our regional office in Mexico City.

This report gives an overview of our work in Central America, carried out hand-in-hand with the National Red Cross Societies and in cooperation with civil society and government departments. In 2019, these joint efforts reached more than 117,200 people. It also addresses the challenges we faced in carrying out our humanitarian work. But above all this report gives a voice to the people who are at the greatest disadvantage,

to talk about what they need, about wanting a better life for their children, about the dangers they face in seeking that better life, about fighting to carry on with dignity and courage, about their rights while in detention and in general, and about their search for missing loved ones. In short, this report is about life in Central America as it is lived by millions of people less fortunate than ourselves, in circumstances many people would prefer not to see.

The combined homicide rate in Honduras, Guatemala and El Salvador is 33 people murdered for every 100,000 inhabitants. These countries are also some of the poorest in Latin America: nearly 60% of the population in Guatemala lives in poverty and more than half in Honduras. In El Salvador, where much progress has been made in recent years, the official figure is 29%. Unsurprisingly, the rates of migration and internal displacement are high in all three countries, with Honduras topping the list, followed by Guatemala and El Salvador.

Violence leaves people wounded and leads to displacement, threats and lack of access to basic human rights such as education, work and health. It is also linked to more fundamental problems such as breakdowns in the justice system, corruption, inequality and impunity. And at every turn, poverty makes people more likely to suffer the effects of violence and less likely to have the means and ability to overcome these traumatic and potentially victimizing situations.

In addition, the armed conflicts that ended in El Salvador and Guatemala in the 1990s have taken their toll on the thousands of families who are still waiting for news of their missing loved ones. Unfortunately disappearances are not just a thing of the past, there or elsewhere, which makes it even harder to get answers and prevent the same things from happening again.

Nevertheless, recent political changes in El Salvador and Guatemala and next year's elections in Honduras and Nicaragua are raising people's expectations and hopes. New and better policies for social welfare, remediation and justice could no doubt alleviate many situations which have required humanitarian aid. But other policies increase uncertainty about the future of many programmes and the direction society is taking in the longer term.

The common denominator in the region's public policies is the emphasis on security and an increasingly active role played by the armed forces, which has raised many concerns, not least because using armed forces for security operations requires specific training and a well defined legal framework on the use of force.

This mosaic of circumstances and the sheer size of the region represent challenges for us in developing humanitarian operations that are timely, appropriate and suited to people's actual needs. To make what we do more relevant and increase its impact, we work through and together with the National Red Cross Societies.

More generally, we continued to promote and protect people's physical integrity, security, dignity and rights. We acted to alleviate the suffering caused by violence, disappearances, migration and internal displacement, visited people deprived of their liberty, and promoted fundamental human rights, international humanitarian law and international rules governing the use of force by law enforcement officers. We also maintained a dialogue with the authorities and others with influence on the importance of having a proper legislative framework to address these issues.

Our teams in the field constantly sought out innovative ways to better address the needs of the most disadvantaged people, whether in emergencies or faced with chronic issues, in ways that respect the traditions and culture of this rich and diverse region.

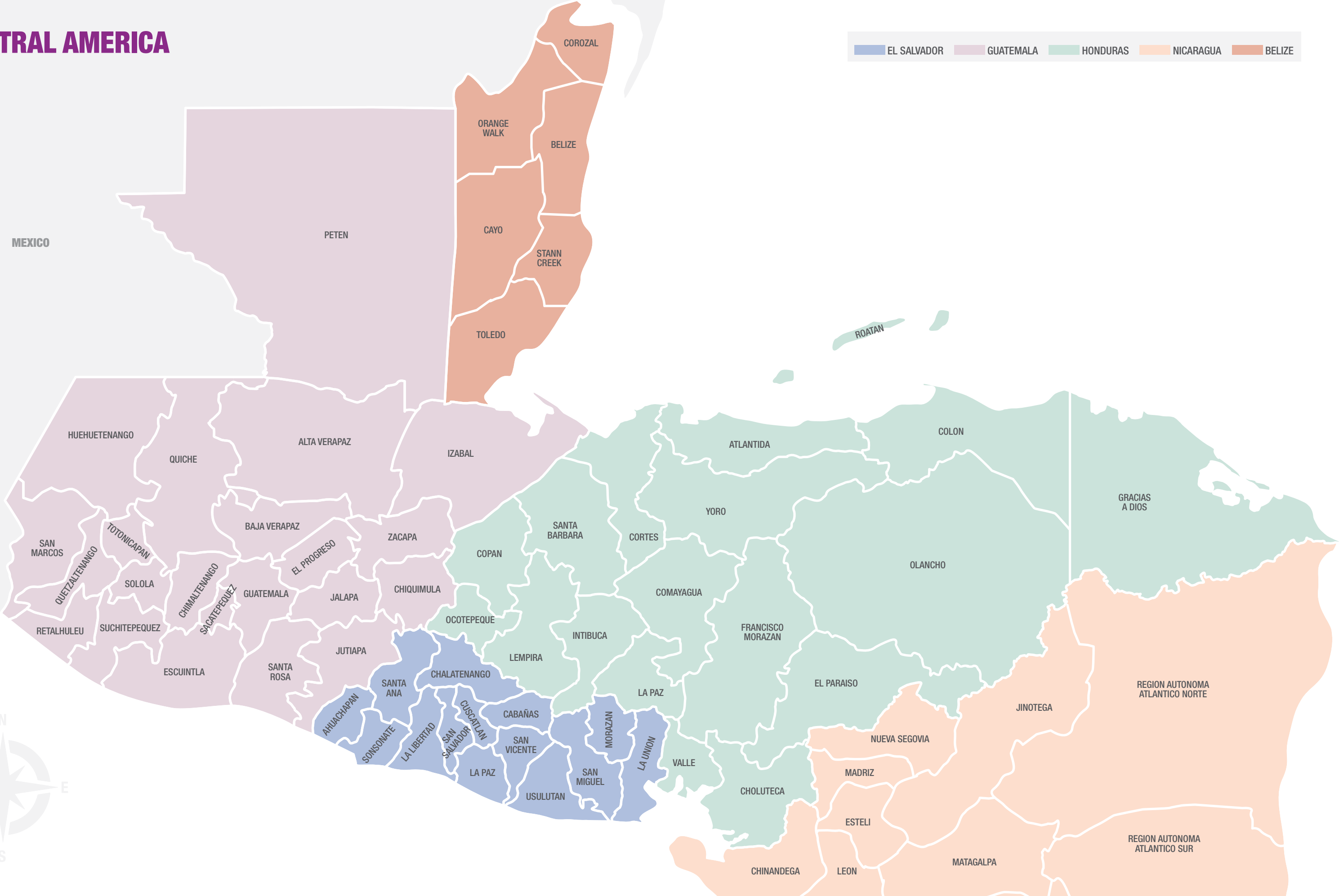
People's needs are and always will be infinitely greater than what we can provide. We know that we will never manage to do everything we should, and we are doomed to do merely what we can. Our humanitarian activities are and always will be limited, but at the same time, we can do a lot: the work of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement has a large impact on the lives of millions of people. And together we can do even more. Only by working continually with the authorities, institutions and the people themselves over the long term will we be able to have a wide-reaching impact and create lasting solutions to help break the cycle of violence and suffering in Central America.

CENTRAL AMERICA

- EL SALVADOR
- GUATEMALA
- HONDURAS
- NICARAGUA
- BELIZE



MEXICO





EL SALVADOR

Annual report 2020



THE MISSING: A DEBT STILL OWED

By Olivier Gilles Martin, ICRC head of mission in El Salvador

The missing is an issue that has long troubled El Salvador and remains one of the major humanitarian challenges facing the country.

In 2019, the Office of the Attorney General received nine missing person reports a day on average, and somewhere in the region of a thousand people went missing on migration routes. These disappearances add to the figures, which include the 8,000 to 10,000 Salvadorans who went missing during the armed conflict, according to the estimates of State authorities and civil society organizations. Although there are still no consolidated figures, it can be safely concluded that more Salvadorans have gone missing during the tide of violence that has engulfed the country over the past decade than during the twelve years that the armed conflict lasted. Almost three decades on from the signing of the peace accords, the task of putting a stop to disappearances remains a daunting challenge.

Although some progress has been made in addressing the question of the missing, there is still much to be done. The relatives of missing persons are not legally recognized as victims and receive no financial aid from the government in spite of the needs created by the disappearance of a loved one. No steps have yet been taken to gather information on missing persons and unidentified remains into a single register to facilitate search and identification processes. Furthermore, the government institutions responsible for the identification process and mental health support are often too overstretched and under-resourced in terms of budget, staff and facilities to meet demand.

The missing persons themselves are not the only victims. The uncertainty that such a situation creates has far-reaching consequences and affects thousands of families. With no news of their loved ones, they live with the constant anxiety of not knowing where they are, what has happened to them, whether they are still alive or if they are suffering.

One of the biggest challenges is ensuring that this suffering is acknowledged, that relatives are legally recognized as victims and that their needs and rights are addressed. First, they have the right to know what has happened to their loved ones and, if they have died, to have their remains returned to them for a dignified burial. Second, their needs in terms of mental health support and economic and administrative assistance must be met. It is therefore necessary to develop and implement economic assistance and psychological and psychosocial support programmes and to enact legislation that enables families to obtain a declaration of absence so that they can manage the affairs of their missing loved one.

It is also crucially important to ensure that the Urgent Action Protocol on finding missing persons is systematically implemented nationwide by all the institutions involved and that families are duly informed of the outcome of the searches undertaken. The establishment of a single register containing data on both missing persons and unidentified remains and the effective use of all available human identification techniques, including the comparison of fingerprints taken from unidentified bodies with fingerprint data stored in the National Missing Persons Register, would be a major step in improving search and identification processes.

In El Salvador, the ICRC maintains a constant dialogue with the authorities to achieve a more comprehensive response to the needs of the families of the missing, who must be at the centre of any initiative addressing this issue. In this regard, we welcome the efforts of the Legislative Assembly to prepare a bill addressing these needs and the interest of the authorities in ensuring that this legislation complies with the relevant international standards.

El Salvador still owes an ever-growing debt to the families of the missing; it is time to settle that debt.



The activities undertaken by the ICRC to assist missing persons and their families are described in a section of this report. Other sections detail the main results of the humanitarian work that we have carried out in El Salvador to help communities affected by violence, to address the humanitarian consequences of migration and displacement, to meet the needs of people who are sick or have been wounded as a result of violence and to guarantee the rights of people deprived of their liberty.

The humanitarian work that we carried out in El Salvador in 2019 benefited 22.844 people.



COMMUNITIES AFFECTED BY VIOLENCE



Violence in its different forms, including murder, rape and displacement, affects not only the direct victims, but also entire communities where residents, often trapped by fear and worry, see their movements, activities and access to services curtailed.

The work carried out by the ICRC in El Salvador aims to reduce the humanitarian impact of this violence and make communities more resilient and less vulnerable. We also endeavour to improve access to basic services, such as health and education, and to support efforts to deliver good quality assistance and care for people affected by different forms of violence.

We work directly in Tikal Norte (municipality of Apopa) and El Huerto (Cojutepeque) to strengthen the resilience of their communities and reduce their vulnerability to the fallout from the violence.

The aim of the projects we have carried out in close collaboration with the communities concerned and the authorities is to improve community amenities and recreational facilities, with a view to mitigating risk. For example, street lighting has been improved and roads have been built, making journeys between communities safer. These measures have a positive effect on the social fabric of communities as they encourage the use of public areas and provide spaces where people can come together.

We know that young people are especially vulnerable to violence and therefore support communities through projects that help young people find employment. This is a way to break the stigma attached to people from violence-ridden communities, such as Ciudad Delgado and Cojutepeque.

We seek to ensure that victims of violence have access to good quality health care and assistance. To this end, we deliver equipment and supplies to health facilities and organize training for health service providers, in collaboration with the Salvadorean Red Cross Society and the Ministry of Health, to equip them with better self-care tools and enable them to provide basic psychological care to victims.

We also contribute to setting up community committees, associated with the health authorities, to further the implementation of activities, in coordination with the Ministry of Health and the Salvadorean Red Cross Society, aimed at promoting respect for health care and preventing attacks on personnel and facilities in communities isolated by violence.

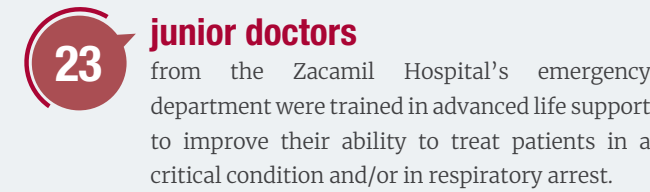
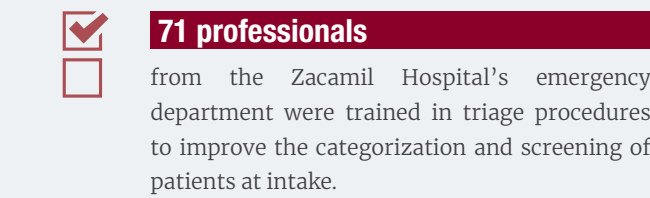
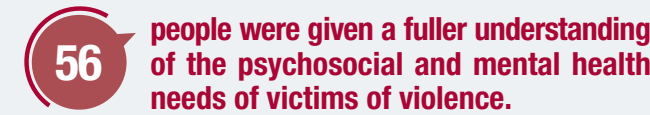
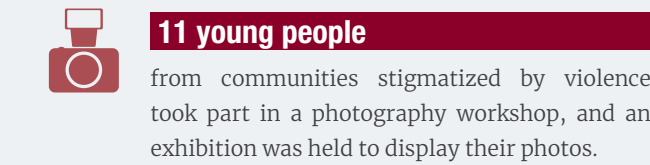
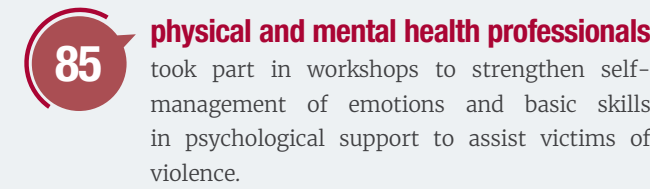
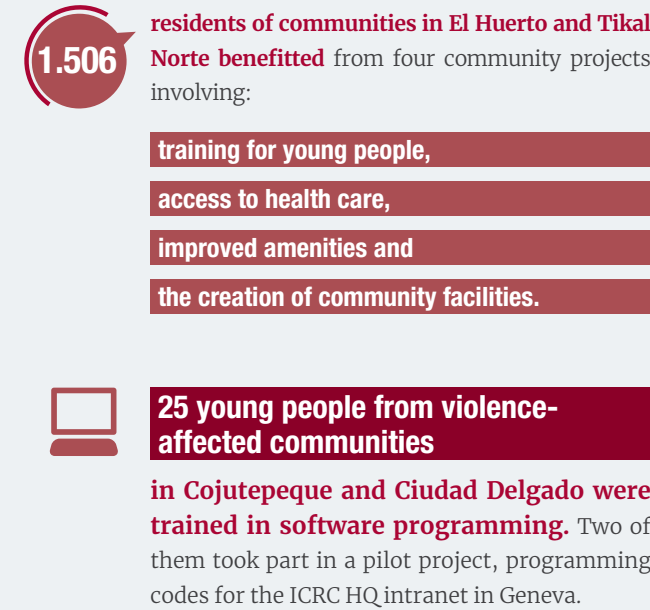


PROJECTS TO HELP YOUNG PEOPLE FIND EMPLOYMENT
MY FAMILY DEPENDS ON THIS JOB

“I want to see if I can study graphic design next year. I didn’t study before because I couldn’t afford to. This is my first proper job, and I feel very happy and motivated. I am grateful to the Red Cross and to the company too because they have opened doors for me. This is the best thing that could have happened to me. It is a good job ... I have a wife and two children, and we live on my wages ... I still live in Ciudad Delgado. It’s a nice place although the violence means it can be unsafe.”

Alex is 26 and lives in Ciudad Delgado. He became a computer programmer after taking part in a training and employment programme led by the company Central American Software Services (CASS) and aimed at establishing software development centres for young people who are stigmatized because they live in high-risk areas. The ICRC and the Salvadorean Red Cross Society, along with other partners, work to provide young people in El Salvador with job opportunities.

FIGURES

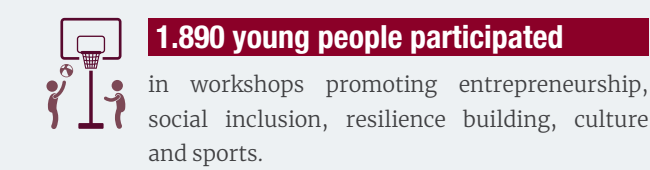
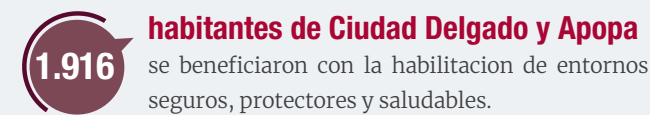
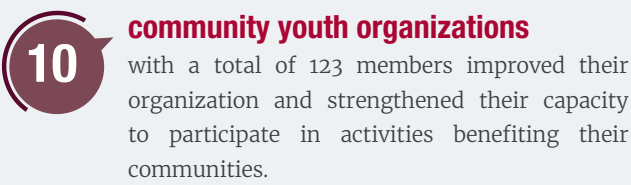
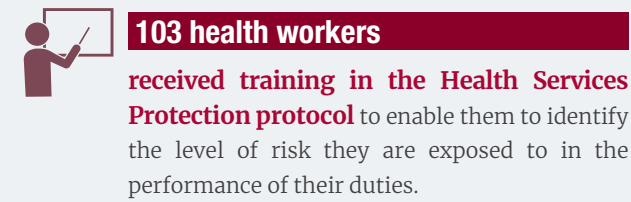
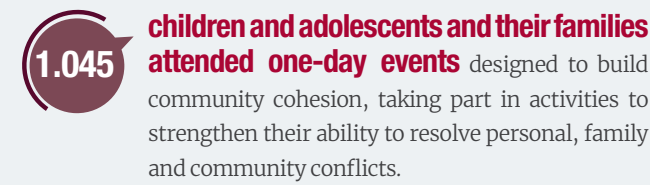


OPPORTUNITIES FOR SOCIAL INCLUSION PROJECT: STRENGTHENING COMMUNITIES AFFECTED BY VIOLENCE



In 2019, we continued to support the Opportunities for Social Inclusion (OIS) project implemented by the Salvadorean Red Cross Society and funded by the consortium formed by the National Societies of Italy, Norway and Switzerland and the

ICRC. The aim of the project is to strengthen local capacities by developing community resilience, with a focus on young people in urban communities in the municipalities of Ciudad Delgado and Apopa.





IT'S ABOUT US ALL GETTING ON WELL TOGETHER

“I first got involved in Red Cross activities two years ago. I started on the art and craft project, and now I am doing the dance workshop.

We have learnt a lot of different things. They don't just show us how to dance; they teach us how to treat each other, how to interact and how to care for each other. It's not just about going to dance; it's about all the participants interacting and getting on well together.”

Katerin Vanessa is a beneficiary of the Opportunities for Social Inclusion project. She has taken part in several of the workshops organized by the Salvadorean Red Cross Society, the ICRC and their partners. She is currently attending a dance workshop. She lives in Ciudad Delgado, a community where violence is rife.



MIGRATION AND DISPLACEMENT



Internal displacement and migration are, in many cases, a direct result of violence. Significant numbers of people are forced to leave their lives behind and look for new opportunities either in their own country or further abroad. Both these issues – displaced people looking for a safe place to live elsewhere in the country and migrants undertaking perilous journeys to new destinations, often only to be deported – pose challenges in El Salvador and need to be addressed.

In a 2018 judgement, the Supreme Court ordered the executive branch to issue a national policy on internal displacement and the legislative branch to adopt a special law protecting displaced people. The ICRC provided technical support for this initiative and was part of the steering group that defined the minimum standards that needed to be observed.

Internal displacement poses two major challenges for the country: ensuring that displaced families are able to resettle in a safe place and providing lasting solutions for the people affected, whether they have been internally displaced or are migrants returning to El Salvador following deportation. In order to meet these challenges, it will be essential to ensure that the required financial resources are available to implement the recently enacted Special act on comprehensive assistance and protection for internally displaced persons.

We endeavoured to tackle the challenges arising from displacement and migration through our work to promote the protection, resettlement and economic security of displaced people and deported migrants. We carried out this work in coordination with the Salvadorean Red Cross Society, which also implemented mental health programmes for victims and Restoring Family Links activities to help prevent migrants from going missing. With the support of Red Cross volunteers, we continued to spread self-care messages for migrants, especially during the wave of migrant caravans.


Over the year, we held migration and displacement awareness and information workshops in coordination with partner organizations. More than 700 people took part in these activities in different parts of the country.

Thanks to a good working relationship built on trust and openness, the ICRC and the National Directorate for Victims Assistance of the Ministry of Justice and Public Safety work effectively together, with the frequent referral of cases and close collaboration for monitoring and follow-up.

FIGURES

25


internally displaced people
assisted by the ICRC took part in a workshop held to ascertain their opinion on the support provided and what needs they had, with a view to improving assistance in the future.




14 people
received technical training to improve their employability.

13


displaced people
were referred to the Psychosocial Care Unit of the Salvadorean Red Cross Society for emotional support.



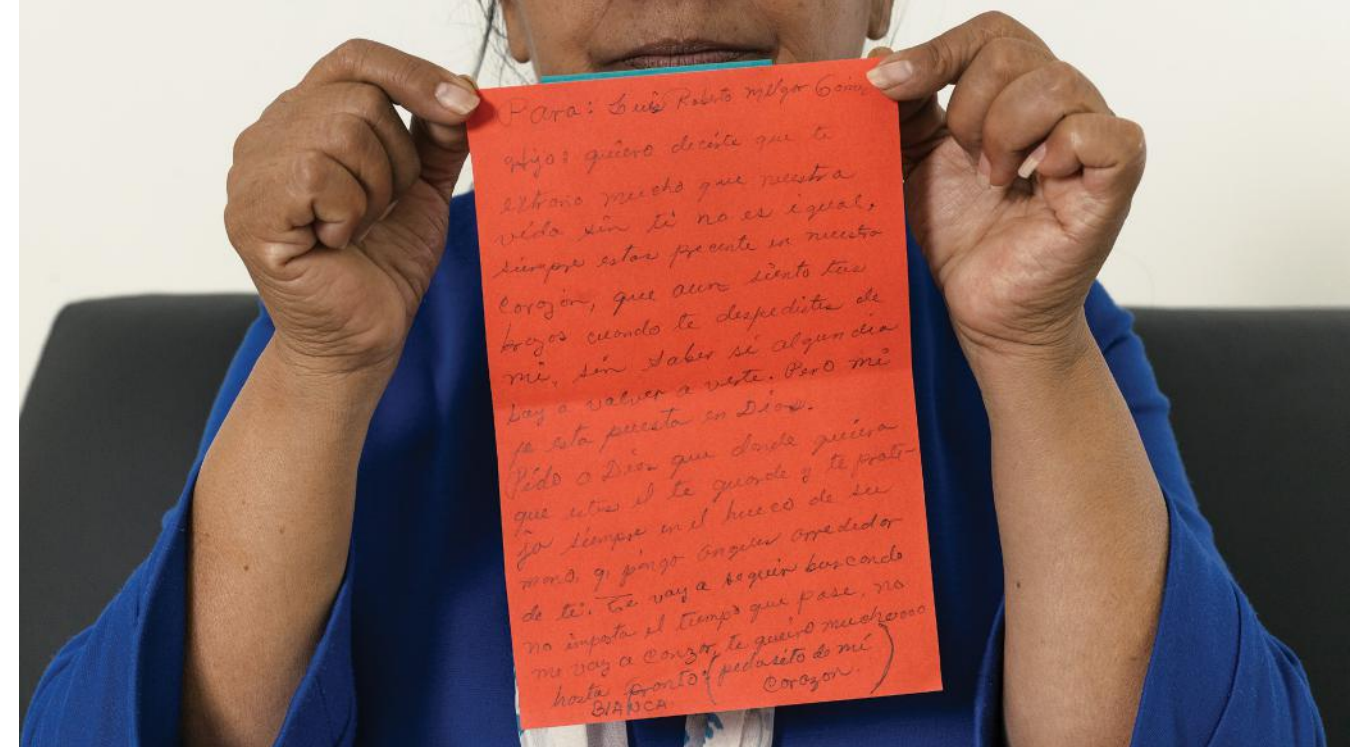
348 people (75 families)
who had been internally displaced received assistance.



123 people (34 families)
received support for income-generating activities.



129 migrants
were able to contact their families from three assistance points set up as part of the Restoring Family Links programme which we run with the Salvadorean Red Cross Society.



THE MISSING



As mentioned in the editorial, the issue of missing persons remains a major challenge for the country. Steps required to address the problem include preventing disappearances, implementing coordinated response and search mechanisms and ensuring that the relatives of missing persons are recognized as victims and that their rights are fulfilled.

In 2019, were therefore focused efforts on taking comprehensive action to address the emotional and financial needs of families and to help them find out what had happened to their missing loved ones. We also contributed to improving the response of government institutions in terms of search and identification processes and assistance for families.

WE HAD TO LEAVE OUR HOME AND LOOK FOR SOMEWHERE ELSE TO LIVE



“I am a victim of violence. They tried to force me to join a gang, and when I refused, they kidnapped and tortured me, doing me physical harm. Fear drove me and my family to leave our home and look for somewhere else to live.”

Melvin was forced to flee from the place where he lived and lost his tongue at the hands of a gang that wanted to recruit him. The ICRC supported Melvin so that he could study and start up a business that would allow him to earn a decent living for him and his family.

I HAVE NEVER LOST HOPE



“Before he left, he was living here with us. We really miss him. I have never lost hope and often dream about him ... People say that I am mad and ask me why I am still looking for my son when he has been gone for so long.”

Juliana’s son, Orlando, went missing when he migrated 19 years ago. On several occasions, she has gone travelling with her daughter with caravans organized to search for missing relatives, and she also belongs to COFAMIDE, a committee of families searching for missing migrants.

We carried out training activities for staff from government institutions and mental health professionals (psychologists and psychiatrists) to give them a fuller understanding of the needs of the families of missing persons and to increase their ability to assist them. We also provided training in search methods used in other contexts for CONABUSQUEDA, the national commission responsible for the search for people who disappeared during the armed conflict. Our work with family associations involved providing them with financial support and teaching them about search and human identification processes.

We provided training in forensic science to strengthen the government’s search and identification response. We also carried out activities to improve infrastructure, renovating and fitting out a morgue located in Santa Tecla in the metropolitan

area of San Salvador, which had been out of use since March 2017, and building a victims’ reception area at the Institute of Legal Medicine in Usulután to provide a dignified setting in which to receive relatives and return the remains of their loved ones to them.

With a view to ensuring that new legislation concerning missing persons incorporates international standards on the search for missing persons and assistance for their families, we conducted and published a study examining the extent to which El Salvador’s current legal framework is consistent with relevant international standards and discussed it with parliamentarians. In 2020, we intend to support legislators in this area, particularly in formulating legislative responses to address the issue of missing persons from a humanitarian perspective.

FIGURES

- 273

people from different government institutions were given a fuller understanding of the psychological and psychosocial needs of the families of missing persons.
- 50

relatives of missing persons, belonging to 2 associations, received support consisting of material and financial resources and technical training in search and human identification processes.
- 3

public forums were held on the search for missing persons and assistance for their families, with a view to raising the awareness of politicians, national institutions and public opinion leaders about the needs of families and improving the government response.
- 14

people from the Institute of Legal Medicine were trained in procedures for the systematic recording of ante-mortem information and the exchange of data among the Institute’s regional offices.

- 

48 mental health professionals, mainly from national health facilities, who dealt with **3,672 relatives of missing persons,** took part in training aimed at giving them a better insight into the needs of families following the disappearance of a loved one and improving their ability to provide them with psychological support, based on the therapeutic approach for coping with ambiguous loss.
- 

Steps were taken to promote the use of lines of evidence with a high level of uniqueness for human identification, such as fingerprints (through dialogue with the national civil police and discussions between the Institute of Legal Medicine and the Civil Registry) and forensic genetics (guidance provided by an international expert on the certification process for the Institute of Legal Medicine’s genetics laboratory).
- 

6 people from the forensic police and the Institute of Legal Medicine received training in forensic archaeology and anthropology.



YOU JUST HAVE TO CONTINUE SEARCHING AND CARRY ON LIVING

“ It is very hard to cope with; at the time, you don’t want to accept what has happened ... I felt dazed and did not have the strength to search for them. At the time of the disappearance, you feel so bewildered that you don’t know what to do. You need the support of your family and friends. As time passes, you have to find a way to cope with the situation because you have to carry on ... You just have to continue searching and carry on living. I am lucky because I have my daughter.”

Juliana suffered the disappearance of a loved one twice. Her brother went missing during the armed conflict 35 years ago, and then her seventeen-year-old son Nelson disappeared as a result of the violence in their community.



PEOPLE DEPRIVED OF THEIR LIBERTY



People deprived of their liberty have the right to humane treatment, decent conditions of detention and contact with their families.

In 2019, we maintained a regular confidential dialogue with the prison authorities (outgoing and incoming) and worked with the Directorate General for Prisons to provide a fuller understanding of internationally recognized standards on detention and promote their implementation. We were not denied access to places of detention at any time in spite of the state of emergency declared in the prison system.

We endeavoured to ensure that the restrictive measures imposed in medium- and maximum-security prisons were implemented in compliance with international standards and were able to observe that some of our recommendations were followed. The ICRC carried out visits to the Ilopango, Ciudad Barrios,

Quezaltepeque, Zacatecoluca and Izalco Phase III prisons, where we met with detainees and technical and security personnel. We subsequently communicated our findings confidentially to the prison authorities.

In our dialogue with the authorities, we highlighted the specific needs of women, LGBTI (lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and intersex) people and foreign detainees. Although these groups only account for a small proportion of the total prison population, they require specific assistance that provides for their social reintegration and takes into account their needs from a gender perspective.

We conducted a study on the socio-economic and criminological characteristics of women deprived of their liberty in order to gain a fuller understanding of their situation and needs and to formulate recommendations on how to assist them. El Salvador was the regional venue for the second workshop on the management of women's prisons based on a gender-specific approach, which provided an opportunity for representatives from the prison systems of Central American countries and Mexico to share best practices.

We provided training for prison staff on prison management and on the Nelson Mandela Rules and the Bangkok Rules, which are international standards on the treatment of people deprived of their liberty and on the treatment of women detainees respectively. We also promoted e-learning for prison staff with the donation of IT equipment to the Prison Service College.

We provided materials and technical support to carry out renovation work in places of detention and improve access to water and basic sanitation. We also donated hygiene kits, food supplements, medicines, medical equipment and prostheses and orthoses for detainees.

We held meetings with judges and public defenders at which we analysed the application of alternatives to pre-trial detention, the granting of prison privileges, release on humanitarian grounds and prison monitoring. We also facilitated exchanges of experience with judges and public defenders in Costa Rica to identify best practices for a technical defence that ensures that a detainee's fair trial rights are respected.

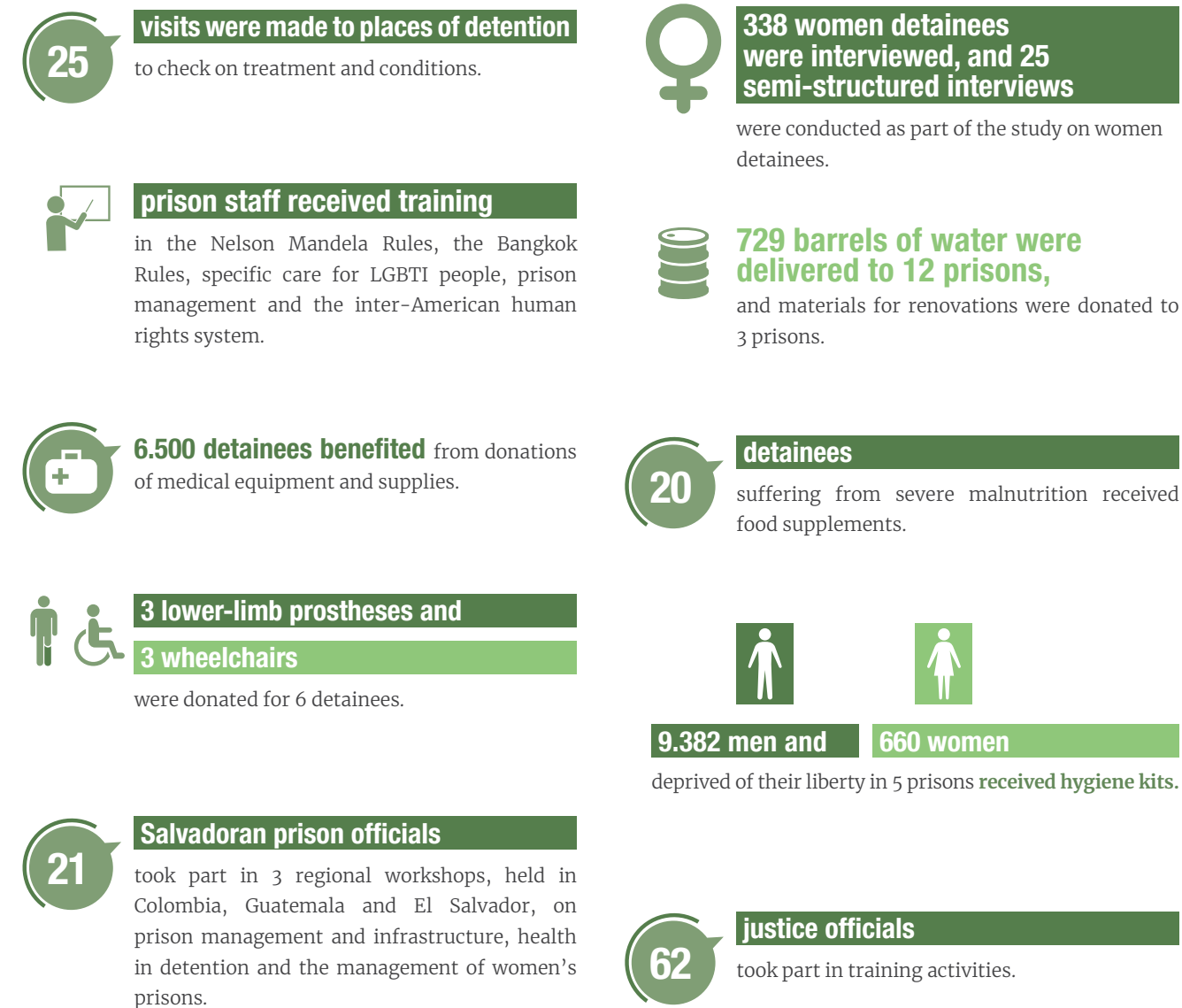


**IT IS HEART-BREAKING
WHEN YOUR CHILD SAYS:
“MUMMY, WHY CAN’T
WE GO OUT?”**

“The most difficult part [of being in prison] has been caring for my son and bringing him up. It is heart-breaking when your child says: ‘Mummy, why can’t we go out? Why don’t we go outside?’. There are so many questions that are difficult to answer ... There are different programmes here to support us and help us reintegrate into society ... I think that they will be good for me because they help us to fill in our knowledge gaps.”

Rocio has been deprived of her liberty since 2014. She lives in prison with one of her children. During the time she has been in detention, she has been pregnant twice. She had her daughter while she was in prison, and she was taken from her a short time after she was born. Her second child was, however, allowed to stay with her at the farm prison.

FIGURES



PROMOTING AN ENVIRONMENT OF RESPECT FOR HUMAN LIFE AND DIGNITY

The ICRC works with key partners who are able, through their role or position, to influence government decision making on issues that could have humanitarian implications.

We seek to develop, promote and disseminate laws that are favourable to victims, ensuring that they are understood and accepted by weapon bearers, civil servants, academics, civil society organizations, the media and the general public.

Through direct dialogue with organizations and communities, we endeavour to spread knowledge of our work and the humanitarian principles that guide it, with a view to building broader acceptance and respect for our humanitarian action.

In fulfilment of its commitment to preventing and addressing the humanitarian consequences of violence, the ICRC organizes training aimed at legal advisers in the armed forces and members of the police force to ensure that they have a good understanding of human rights frameworks and the principles governing the use of force, as they apply to the performance of their functions.

Drawing on our global experience and knowledge, we bring our technical expertise to the discussion of legislation relating to international humanitarian law (IHL) and human rights, such as the drafts of the bill and recently enacted special act on comprehensive assistance and protection for internally displaced persons. We worked, in particular, with a group of young parliamentarians and the Legislative Assembly's Justice and Human Rights Commission to promote legal frameworks that comprehensively address the needs of missing persons and their families.

As part of our work to draw attention to the humanitarian consequences of violence in El Salvador and create environments in which they can be addressed, the ICRC carries out information and awareness activities for journalists and social communicators, with the aim of promoting a broader understanding of the humanitarian issues arising from violence among the public at large and encouraging the development of media content that helps create an environment conducive to respect for human life and dignity.

FIGURES



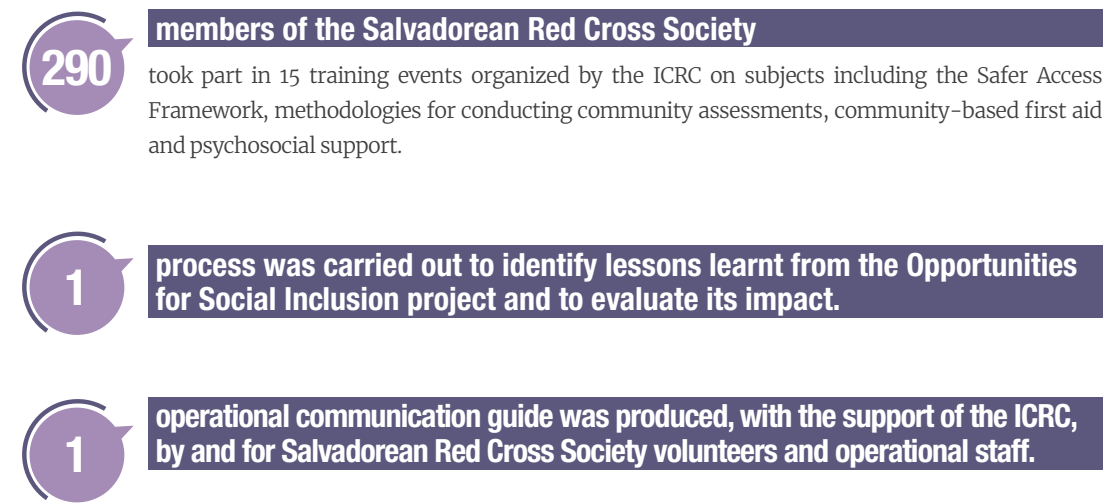
WORKING WITH THE SALVADOREAN RED CROSS SOCIETY
TO INCREASE OUR HUMANITARIAN IMPACT

In all the countries where it carries out activities, the ICRC works with the National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies to increase the humanitarian impact of its action.

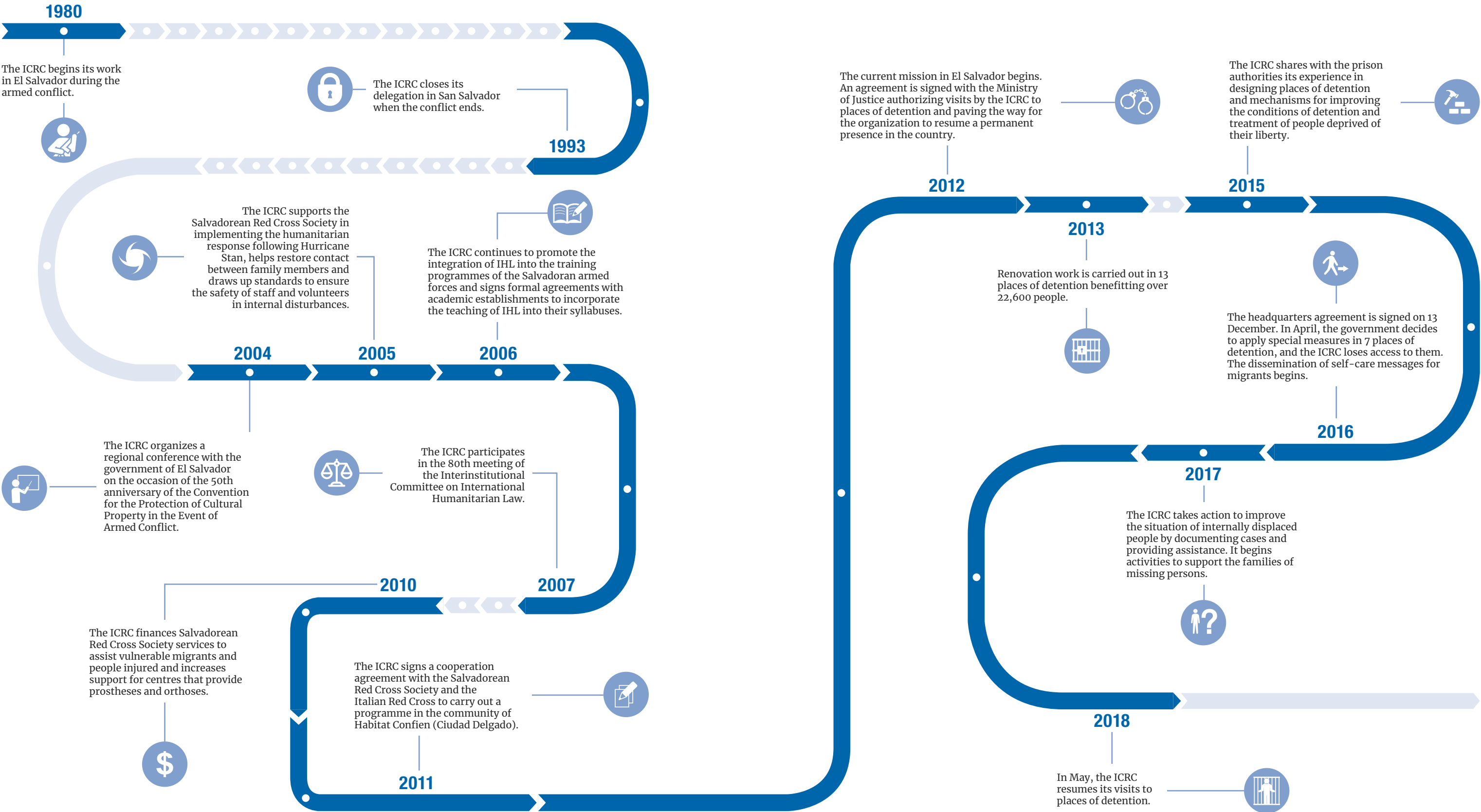
In 2019, our work with the Salvadorean Red Cross Society focused on capacity development, including training on the Safer Access Framework, operational communication, community-based first aid, basic life support and the use of community assessment tools.

We supported the Opportunities for Social Inclusion project, which is implemented by the Salvadorean Red Cross Society (see the section on communities affected by violence above) and funded an initiative aimed at analysing the humanitarian experience gained over the seven years the project has been running and identifying lessons learnt in order to build a response model for future community projects that can be used both nationally and internationally.

FIGURES

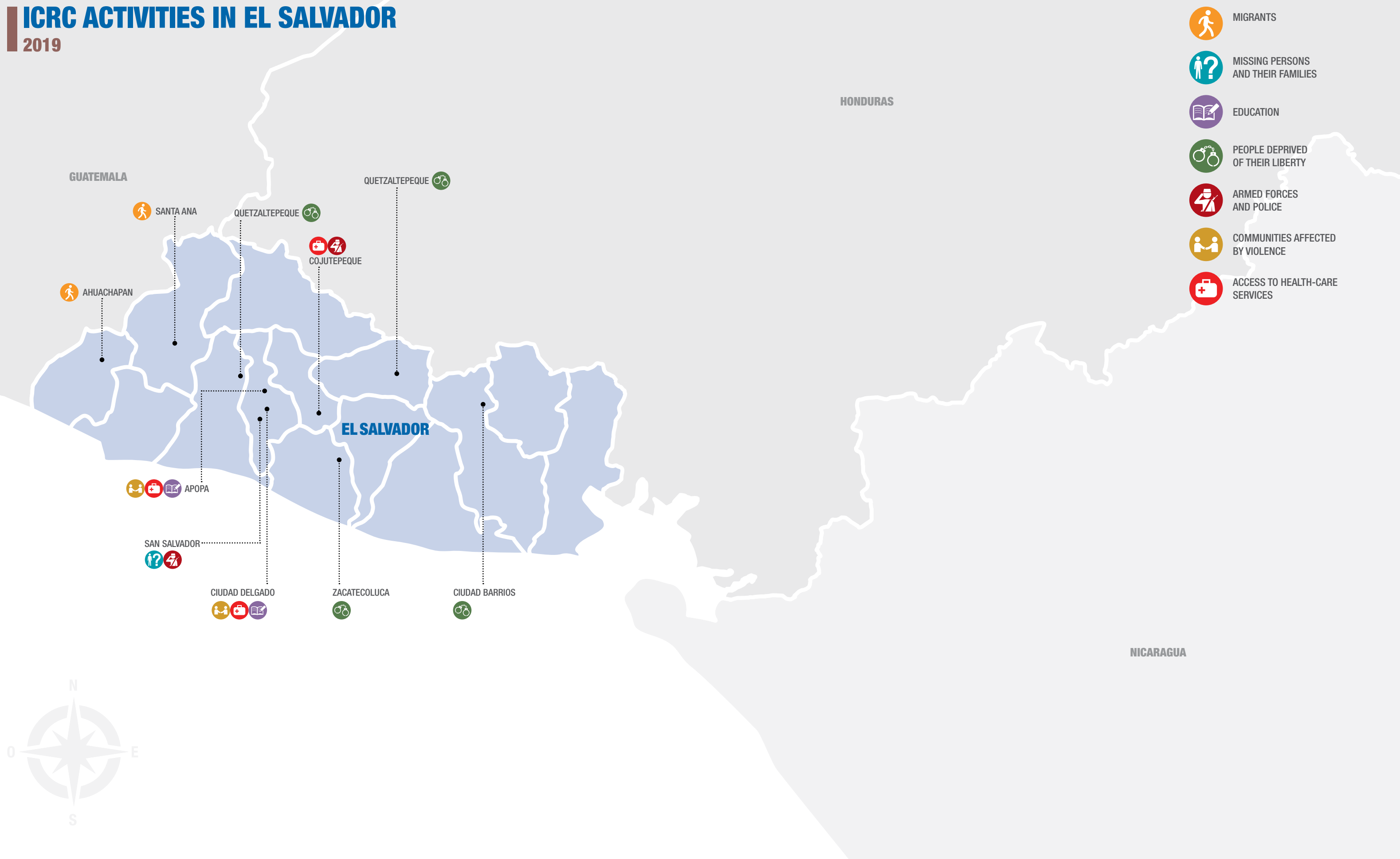


TIMELINE



ICRC ACTIVITIES IN EL SALVADOR

2019





F. Panetta / ICRC

GUATEMALA

Annual report 2020



DEBTS, CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES IN GUATEMALA

By Kian Abbassian, ICRC head of mission in Guatemala

Guatemala faces major humanitarian challenges arising from various factors: the high levels of violence, the needs of migrants and the risks they face in transit or on their return and problems left over from the non-international armed conflict (1960–1996).

Vulnerable people are disproportionately affected by armed violence, sexual violence, displacement and disappearances. Those who are discriminated against and stigmatized because of their gender, where they come from or their socio-economic situation often end up migrating or moving to another part of the country. There is an urgent need to ensure that all affected people receive assistance and that their needs are addressed.

Over the next four years, the new government will have ample opportunity to take action to help affected people. Its approach to tackling these challenges and its interaction with the humanitarian actors working in the country will be decisive in the delivery of an effective response.

People who emigrate from Guatemala because of the violence and for other reasons face great difficulties during their journey, when seeking asylum and on their return. In addition, there are migrants in transit from neighbouring countries and returnees who stay in Guatemala awaiting resolution of their asylum application.

The ICRC endeavours to mitigate some of the dangers faced by migrants on migration routes: death, injury, separation from their families, disappearance and crippling debts. However, these issues require more action and the mobilization of human and financial resources by national authorities and international actors.

Another area requiring attention is the task of searching for and identifying missing persons and supporting their families, which is a crucial part of the ICRC’s work in the country. In spite of advances in the development of search systems, there are still thousands of families suffering because a loved one is missing. We applaud the efforts of the Working Group on Enforced Disappearance and the legislative branch in drafting a new law establishing a framework for the search for missing persons and assistance for their families. The challenge now is to ensure that the necessary resources are available and that the political will is in place to make progress in enacting, implementing and enforcing this legislation.

All missing persons searches are urgent and relevant. It is important to remember that the search for people who went missing during the armed conflict on both sides, including thousands of civilians and children, remains a topical issue, even though the disappearances occurred several decades ago, because families live with the pain caused by their absence every day. This is a debt still owed by the Guatemalan State whose settlement will require effective interinstitutional coordination and political will.

All these humanitarian problems pose a challenge for the new government in its efforts to tackle and mitigate violence. As a humanitarian organization with a mandate to protect and assist people affected by violence, the ICRC highlighted the importance of ensuring that the armed forces and the police only use force as a last resort and in compliance with international law and internationally recognized standards. We welcomed the initiatives promoting dialogue between civil society and the armed forces which we were invited to take part in as an observer.

We work hand in hand with the Guatemalan Red Cross to address many of these challenges, acknowledging the limited impact of isolated measures and the vital importance of working with the authorities, the affected communities and all the actors involved in organized civil society responses.

The sheer scale of the humanitarian challenges to be addressed makes it vital for Guatemala, with the collaboration of all relevant actors, to move these issues to the top of the public agenda and ensure that they receive the social recognition they deserve.



This report describes the most important activities carried out by the ICRC in Guatemala in 2019 to assist communities affected by violence and the sick and wounded, to address the humanitarian consequences of migration and displacement and to guarantee the rights of people deprived of their liberty.

Our humanitarian work in Guatemala in 2019 benefited over 30,000 people in different parts of the country. It was carried out with more than 40 partners and in coordination with the Guatemalan Red Cross.



COMMUNITIES AFFECTED BY VIOLENCE



In various parts of Guatemala, there are people who live day to day with the devastating effects of armed violence, including physical and psychological trauma and other humanitarian consequences, such as disappearances, displacement, threats and extortion.

The ICRC carries out several programmes, with the support of different partners, to address the physical, psychological and social consequences of armed violence.

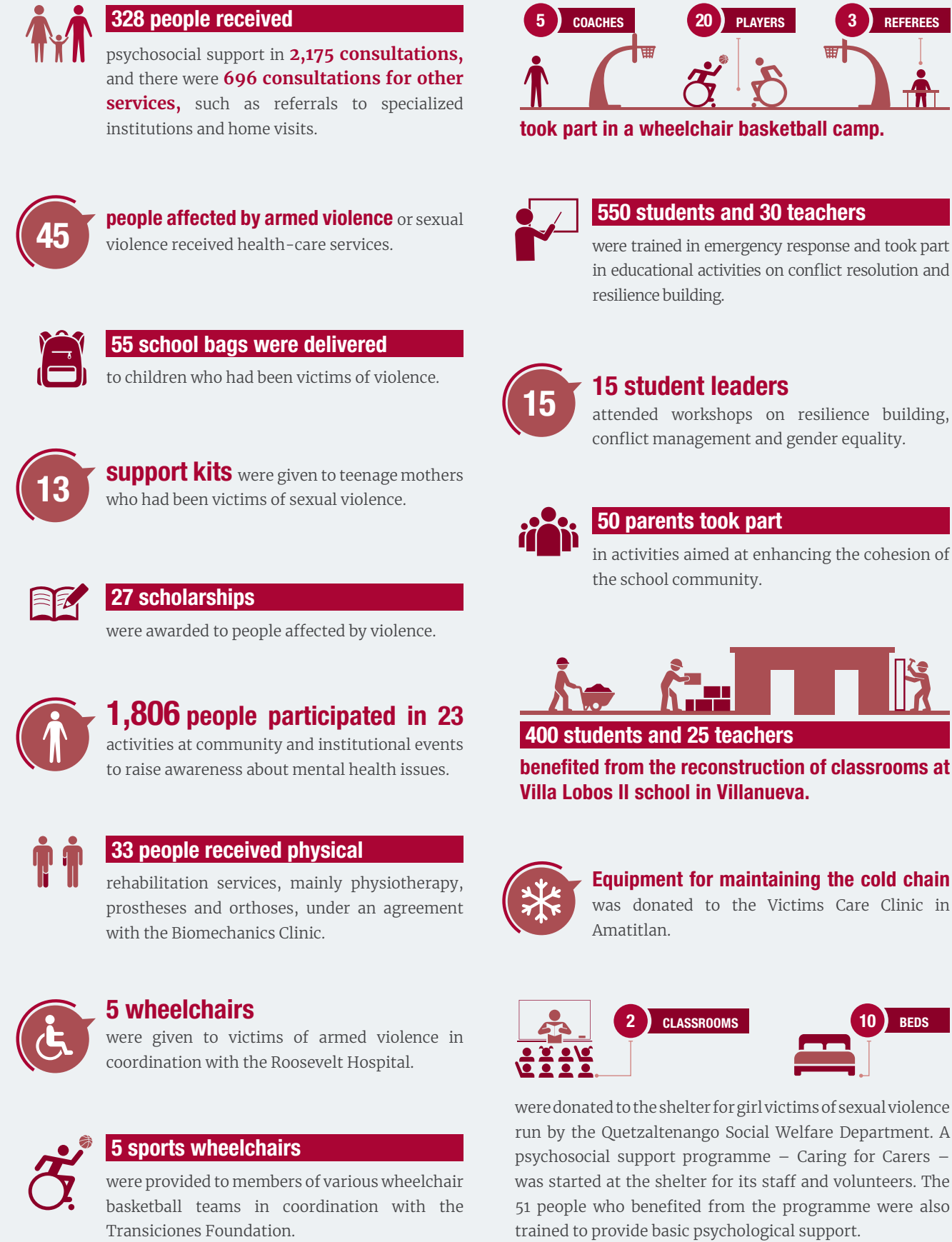
Through the Guatemalan Red Cross’s Comprehensive Assistance Centre, we provide psychological assistance to victims of sexual violence and armed violence to help them cope and become more resilient.

Injuries sustained by people as a result of violence can impair their mobility permanently. We work with the Biomechanics Clinic to provide physical rehabilitation services and prostheses and orthoses, free of charge, for people who have been left with physical disabilities so that they can recover their mobility and get their lives back on track.

Working with the Transiciones Foundation, we help people who have lost the use of their legs as a result of the armed violence to improve their mobility, through disabled sports, providing them with wheelchairs for everyday use and for sports activities.

We also carry out activities to ensure that schools and other places of learning are safe spaces where respect for human life and dignity is guaranteed. To this end, we work with teachers, parents and students to promote safe environments in schools.

OUR WORK TO ADDRESS THE CONSEQUENCES OF VIOLENCE ACHIEVED THE FOLLOWING RESULTS:



“ I started playing wheelchair basketball two years ago. During my rehabilitation, someone mentioned it and I got interested. I attended a practice, and that very day I started training.”

THAT VERY DAY I STARTED TRAINING

Andres lost the use of his legs when a bullet fractured his spine. Through the Comprehensive Assistance Centre, the ICRC has supported him and monitored his case.

To cope with his disability, Andres started playing wheelchair basketball. He took part in the first wheelchair basketball camp held in Guatemala and organized by the ICRC, where he learnt skills to professionalize the way his team plays.



MIGRATION



Every day, hundreds of people are forced to leave their country and travel hazardous migration routes. Many of them experience violent incidents, lose their lives or go missing in the course of their journey. The ICRC, the Guatemalan Red Cross and various non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have joined forces to assist migrants along migration routes and when they return to Guatemala.

Through our dialogue with the Guatemalan government and in cooperation with our partners in the region, we promote respect for migrants' rights, including access to health care, dignified treatment, non-discrimination, family unity and asylum.

I WAS PURSUING THE AMERICAN DREAM

I was pursuing the American dream when I had the accident. When I got back, I thought I would never walk again ... I was upset for my family because there was no one to put food on the table ... Then they gave me my prosthesis, and I feel good with this foot, even if it isn't my own. I am very happy and determined to make the most of this opportunity.

Jaime left Guatemala in search of better opportunities for himself and his family. Several days into his gruelling journey, he dozed off and fell from the train he was travelling on in Mexico, near Sonora. He lost a leg in the accident and, after having emergency treatment and an operation, he was deported to Guatemala. He was assisted by the Guatemalan Red Cross and taken to the Biomechanics Clinic where, with the support of the ICRC, he was fitted with a prosthesis and began his physical rehabilitation.



MAIN ACTIVITIES IN 2019



31.012 free calls

were made by migrants in transit and returnees to get in touch with their families.



2,143 returnees and migrants in transit

received basic medical assistance in coordination with the Guatemalan Red Cross (380 unaccompanied children and their families).



180 vulnerable families

received support to enable them to return to their country.



19 returnees

who had suffered amputations or accidents affecting their mobility received physical rehabilitation services, mainly physiotherapy and prostheses.



29 migrants were able

to contact their families thanks to the Restoring Family Links programme carried out jointly by the ICRC and the Guatemalan Red Cross.



7 migrants with physical disabilities

impairing their mobility were transported home by land in coordination with the National Red Cross Societies of their respective countries.



25 officials

received training on procedures for receiving unaccompanied and returned children.



2,000 leaflets with self-care messages

for migrants were distributed by the Guatemalan Red Cross and civil society organizations along migration routes.



Improvements were made

to facilities and health-care services at a shelter for migrants in the capital.



3 public events were organized

to promote social recognition of the humanitarian needs of migrants.

THEY ARE WHAT DRIVE ME ON



I took the decision to leave my home in search of a better life for the children. They had not been able to go to school in Honduras for three months ... They are what drive me on. I have lived my life. I want them to study, to appreciate the value of hard work and to learn ... I am not afraid for myself, but I don't want anything to happen to them.

Carmen decided to leave Honduras with her four grandchildren because she feared they were in danger. At a shelter for migrants in Tecun Uman, she debated between the uncertainty of the journey and the hope of a better life.



THE MISSING



For every missing person, there is a family that suffers the pain of their absence every day, burdened by the emotional turmoil of not knowing where they are. In many cases, the families face financial hardship, lacking the means to live a decent life. In Guatemala, around 45,000 people disappeared during the armed conflict, and 40,000 families are still waiting for answers about the fate and whereabouts of their loved ones. In the time since the armed conflict ended, disappearances have continued to occur, with thousands of people going missing as a result of other situations of violence.

The ICRC supports and promotes processes established to search for people who went missing during the armed conflict and since the signing of the peace accords. We also support institutions that assist the families of missing persons and promote social recognition of their humanitarian needs.

MANY YEARS HAVE PASSED, BUT I HAVE NEVER LOST HOPE OF FINDING THEM



“Many years have passed, but I have never lost hope of finding them ... We lived happily here and had everything we needed; there was a lot of arable land. We all lived here together – my nieces and nephews, my brothers and sisters, their wives and husbands and my parents.”

During the most violent period of the armed conflict in Guatemala, Lucia lost 32 relatives – 19 disappeared, 15 of them children. In 2019, she was finally able to bury her parents in the municipality of Ixcán.

MAIN ACTIVITIES IN 2019

130

victims of the armed conflict

were exhumed and **196 buried**, with the support of the ICRC.



35 reunions took place between children

who went missing during the war and their families, with the support of the ICRC.



relatives of missing persons

received assistance with the management of affairs and administrative and legal formalities.



71 relatives of missing migrants

received psychosocial support.



70 scholarships were awarded

to children and adolescents with a family member who had gone missing after migrating.



42 civil society organizations

and government institutions received support to improve missing persons search processes.



relatives of missing migrants

received psychosocial support and comprehensive assistance through home visits and individual, family and group sessions.



70 experts from more than 20 countries took part

in the **first meeting of the global Missing Persons** Project on information management for humanitarian purposes on migration routes globally.



A mental health and psychosocial needs assessment was conducted with the families of people

who went missing during the conflict and the organizations that provide assistance in 5 of the country's regions, with a view to developing a strategy for support and psychosocial care for relatives.

411

cases were processed to put the

information on file for search and documentation purposes, with the support of the ICRC.



25 mental health professionals from various organizations received training

in the delivery of psychological and psychosocial care for the families of missing persons.



The Forensic Human Identification Unit of the National Institute of Forensic Science (INACIF) was created, with the support of the ICRC.



245 INACIF staff were trained

in collecting and recording data for missing persons searches using the ante-mortem/post-mortem database.

1,841

cases of missing persons and



772

cases of unidentified bodies were



systematically recorded, with the support of the ICRC.



Technical support was provided on the management of dead bodies after disasters for Guatemalan Red Cross volunteers and relevant institutions, including the National Coordinating Agency for Disaster Reduction (CONRED), the Guatemalan army and the fire service.



19 community radio stations

broadcast messages nationwide on a daily basis in 8 languages to inform the general public about activities and services relating to the search for people who went missing during the armed conflict.



50 artistic events were dedicated

to the memory of people who went missing as a result of the armed conflict or migration as a means of promoting social recognition of this issue and the needs of their families.



public events were held at which relatives of the missing shared their stories.



F. Panetta / ICRC

IT IS IMPORTANT TO PROVIDE THE FAMILIES OF THE MISSING WITH A SPACE FOR ARTISTIC EVENTS THAT BRING PEOPLE TOGETHER AND RAISE AWARENESS THROUGH MUSIC

“For the National Symphony Orchestra of Guatemala, an artistic institution of the Ministry of Culture and Sport which is recognized as part of the nation’s cultural heritage, the support of the ICRC was vitally important in this initiative involving a series of concerts in which music served as a vehicle to raise awareness, convey humanitarian messages and cultivate society’s sense of solidarity through the arts. It is important to provide the families of the missing and society in general with a space for artistic events that bring people together and raise awareness through music.”

Luis Recinos, president of the Board of Trustees of the National Symphony Orchestra

“I have been to see concerts before – my son is a music teacher and violinist and sometimes plays with the Symphony Orchestra – but I have never felt like I did yesterday. It was an event dedicated especially to the families of the missing, and the messages conveyed in the videos, what Fabiola said and what was written in the programme brought a tear to our eyes. Many thanks to the ICRC for the valuable work it does here and around the world for the missing and their families.”

Luis Ovalle, member of the association of families of missing persons listed in the Military Diary

Since 2017, the National Symphony Orchestra of Guatemala, in coordination with the ICRC, has been holding concerts to raise public awareness about humanitarian issues. In 2019, the orchestra gave six concerts during which messages of solidarity were sent out to the thousands of families in Guatemala with missing loved ones. Many relatives attended the events, with the concert featuring Guatemalan singer Fabiola Roudha and the National Symphony Orchestra drawing a particularly large crowd.



J. Cornejo / ICRC

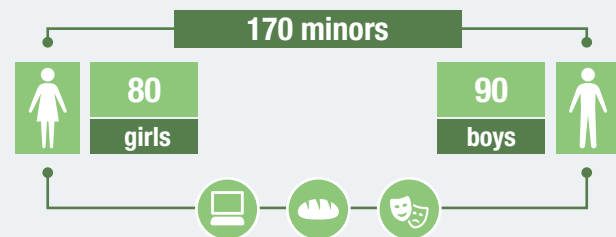
PEOPLE DEPRIVED OF THEIR LIBERTY



The ICRC carries out regular visits to places of detention to monitor the treatment of detainees and the conditions of detention, with a view to submitting recommendations and working with the authorities responsible for the reintegration process. We also enable young detainees to keep in touch with their families, whether they are in Guatemala or another country. With a view to ensuring better conditions for adult detainees, the ICRC provides prison staff with training on best practices and donates medical supplies to improve health care in the prison system.

MAIN ACTIVITIES IN 2019

10 visits were made to 5 juvenile detention facilities to assess the needs of minors deprived of their liberty.



150 families received financial support to travel to visit adolescent detainees.

5 centres received materials for fumigation and waste management.



1 working group was formed with the Directorate General for Prisons

to develop a set of standard health procedures. **24 heads of prison medical units and health ministry** representatives from Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Panama and the Dominican Republic took part in the regional forum Health Care in Detention.



I ENJOY GOING TO VISIT HER, BUT I'M ONLY ALLOWED TO STAY FOR TWO HOURS

“We get up at two in the morning to catch the bus that leaves at three. We arrive at the station at around six and get on the Transmetro bus. After that, we have to catch another bus or two to get to the prison. They give us two hours ... I enjoy going to visit her, but I'm only allowed to stay for two hours.”

Nora's teenage daughter is in Gorriones prison in Guatemala City. Nora lives a long way from the capital, and the ICRC provided financial support so that she could visit her daughter.



PROMOTING INTERNATIONAL LAW AND ITS INTEGRATION IN THE ARMED FORCES AND POLICE

The ICRC endeavours to increase knowledge of and respect for IHL and IHRL. To this end, we maintain a dialogue on humanitarian issues with the region's armed forces and police to promote the protection of people affected by armed conflict and other violence and respect for their rights.

MAIN ACTIVITIES IN 2019

30 officers from Central American law enforcement agencies took part in the training of trainers course on human rights and humanitarian principles.

20 operational legal advisers from the Ministry of Defence received training in IHL and IHRL, as they apply to the performance of their role.

50 civil servants from ministries represented on the Guatemalan Committee for the Implementation of International Humanitarian Law (COGUADIH) received training in IHL.

12 Latin American countries were represented by **26 high-ranking police officers and academics** at the 4th International Conference on Best Practices in Law Enforcement: Migration as a humanitarian challenge for law enforcement operations, held in Antigua, Guatemala.

281 officers from the armed forces of Central American countries and the Dominican Republic received training in IHL and IHRL in peacekeeping operations.

99 post-graduate students (human rights, criminal law and international relations) received training in IHL.



COORDINATION WITH THE GUATEMALAN RED CROSS FOR VOLUNTEER AND STAFF CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT

Working with other components of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement (the Movement) is an essential part of the ICRC's activities. We therefore hold regular meetings and exchanges with our Guatemalan Red Cross colleagues, with a view to improving the response to humanitarian needs in the country.

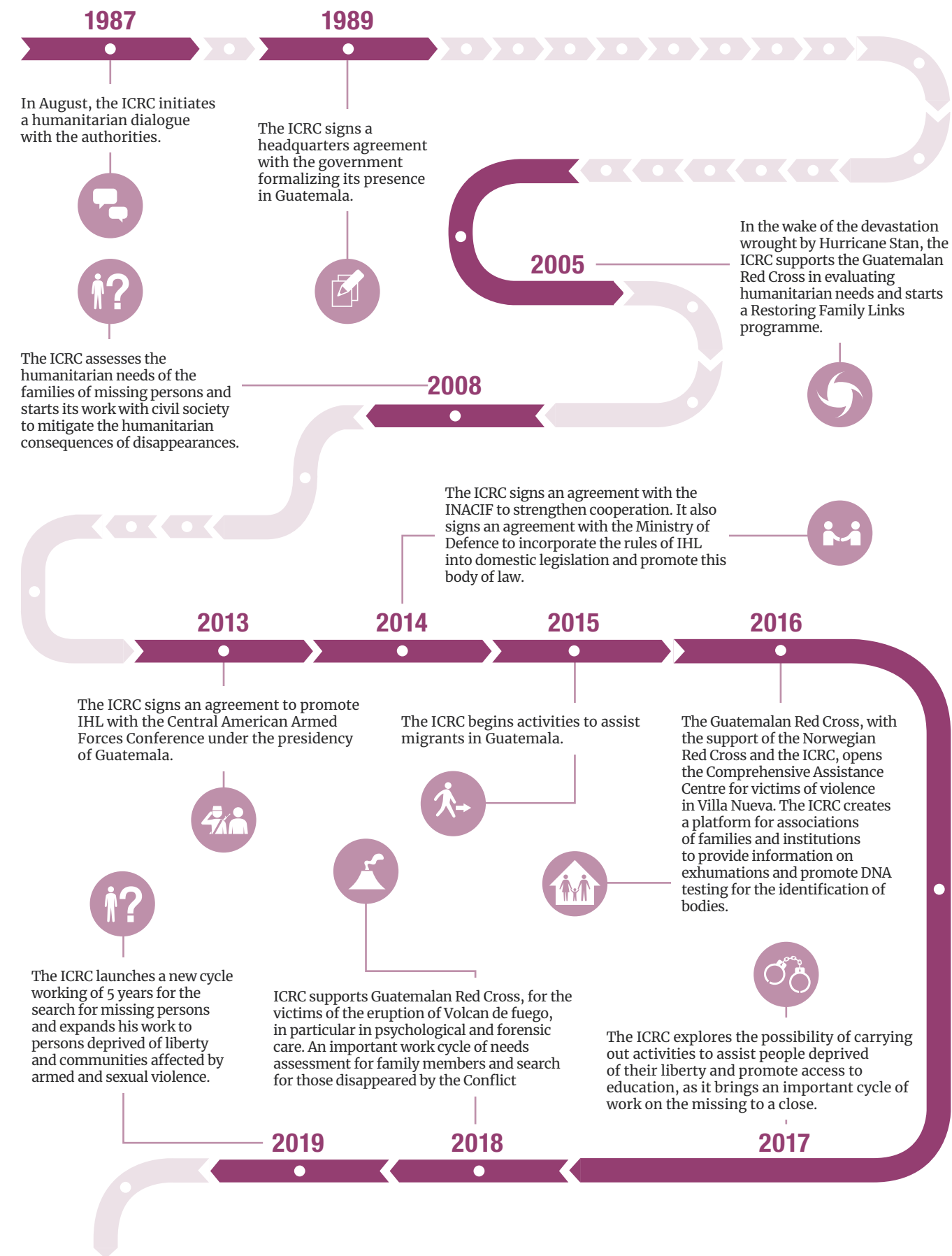
MAIN ACTIVITIES IN 2019

284

Guatemalan Red Cross volunteers

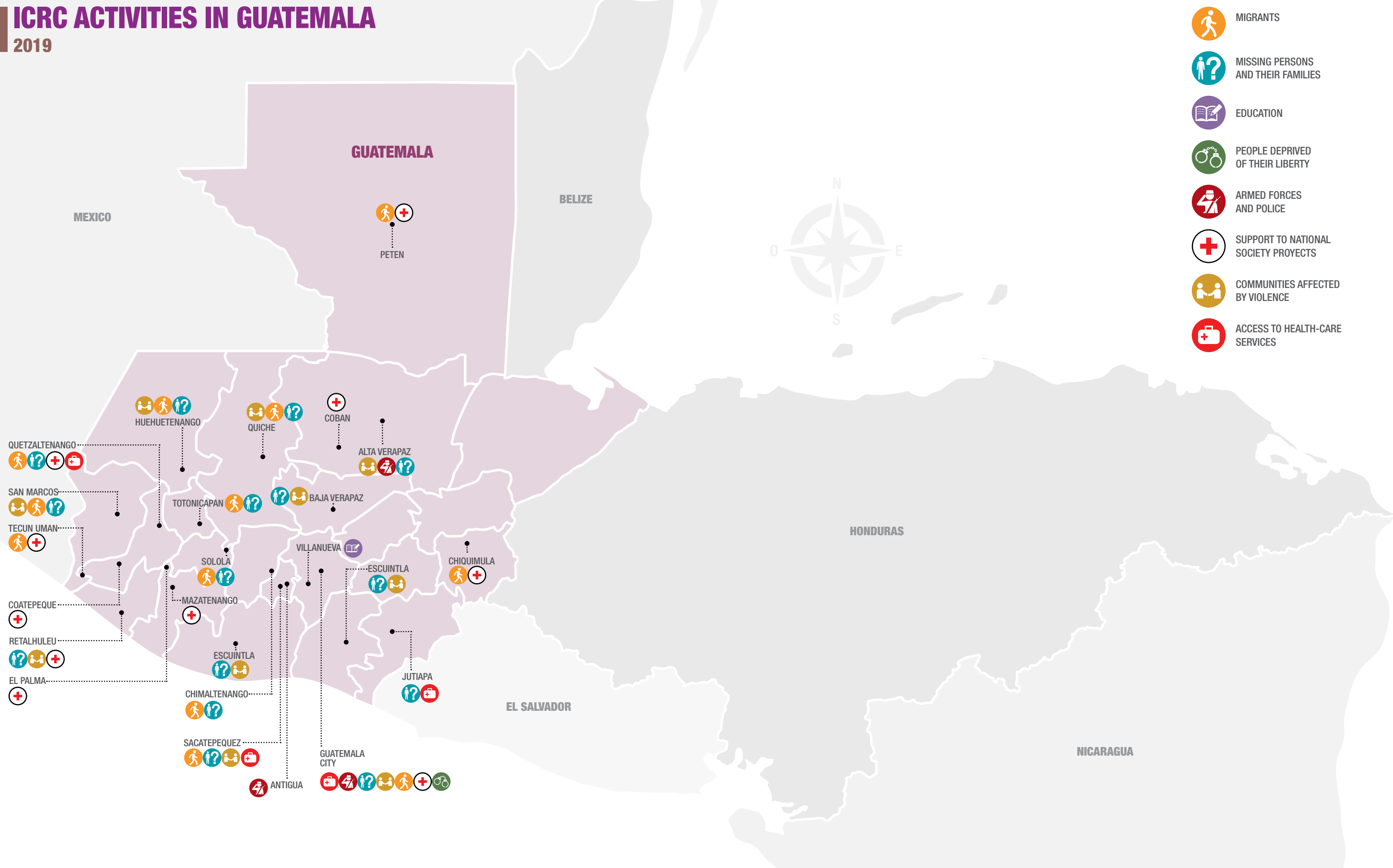
received training in various subjects, including assistance for migrants, Restoring Family Links, the Safer Access Framework, first aid, the management of dead bodies, health and migration.

TIMELINE



ICRC ACTIVITIES IN GUATEMALA

2019





HONDURAS

Annual report 2020



THE HUMANITARIAN CONSEQUENCES OF THE EXODUS BEYOND THE CARAVANS

By Karim Khallaayoun, ICRC head of mission in Honduras

Honduras is facing the humanitarian consequences of a constant exodus internally and across the border, with internal displacement and migration as two sides of the same issue, one which sees thousands of Hondurans leaving their homes in search of a new place to live.

The recent wave of migrant caravans brought the enormous challenges that migration and displacement pose for Honduras into the regional and global spotlight. The image of hundreds of people forming a great human mass advancing northwards highlighted the complexities of migration processes and the limited capacity of the authorities of the countries involved to deal with this new reality.

The challenges created by this exodus of people leaving their homes, whether in a flood or a trickle, were a permanent focus of our work in 2019 and showed no sign of abating as 2020 got underway. Although the context has changed, with the establishment of new migration policies prompted by the first Honduran exodus in October 2018, the humanitarian challenges these people face are the same: they set out on a journey fraught with dangers that put their lives and safety at risk, only to be returned, in many cases, to Honduras, where the structural problems that caused them to leave remain unresolved.

Returnees are a group of particular concern to the ICRC, and we endeavour to ensure respect for their rights and provide assistance to help them cope with the physical and psychological problems they are left with, which can include an amputated limb, impaired mobility, anxiety and fear.

There is a connection and continuum between internal displacement and migration. Many of the migrants who joined the caravans were first displaced by violence and then decided to migrate in a last-resort effort to survive.

In December 2019, the Interinstitutional Commission for the Protection of People Displaced by Violence (CIPPDV) presented the updated study characterizing internal displacement by violence in Honduras. The figures paint a daunting picture: at least 247,000 people were displaced by violence in Honduras between 2004 and 2018.

UNHCR, the United Nations Refugee Agency, reported that around 387,000 refugees and asylum seekers are from the northern part of Central America and that over 62,000 asylum seekers have been in Mexico since January 2019, the majority of them Hondurans. Direct threats, killings and restrictions on movement are the main causes of displacement and migration.

The ICRC, working with the Honduran Red Cross, has developed a response to help people displaced by violence through an assistance pathway that removes them from the dangers that put their safety and lives at risk. This response is, however, only temporary. Both displaced people and returnees with protection needs require a lasting solution, which can only be achieved through coordinated action by the different branches of government.

In March 2019, the ICRC supported the CIPPDV in introducing into Congress a bill on the prevention of internal displacement and assistance and protection for forcibly displaced persons. However, the bill has not yet been placed on the legislative agenda for discussion.

The new law will be an important tool for preventing the exodus from continuing and providing better solutions for displaced people and migrants fleeing from violence. The recent report on internal displacement gives more than 247,000 reasons for enacting this legislation, and the figures for migrants provide many more.



This report describes the most important activities carried out by the ICRC in Honduras in 2019 to assist communities affected by violence, including the sick and wounded, to address the humanitarian consequences of migration and displacement and to guarantee the rights of people deprived of their liberty.

The humanitarian work that we carried out in communities in Honduras in 2019 benefited 45.900 people.



COMMUNITIES AFFECTED BY VIOLENCE

The direct consequences of violence, including deaths, injuries and displacement, take a toll on people’s mental health and disrupt the day-to-day life of affected communities. Violence has serious effects on people’s freedom of movement and access to public amenities and basic services, such as health and education.

The ICRC, together with the Honduran Red Cross and the Norwegian Red Cross, implements activities to support the community project Building resilience in health and education in the Los Pinos community in Tegucigalpa, where armed groups operate.

The aim of the project is to improve coping mechanisms and strengthen the social fabric of the community, by increasing access to alternative education for people who are behind in their schooling and building the resilience of health and community service providers, including teachers and local leaders.

In collaboration with the Honduran Red Cross team and local partners, the ICRC identifies victims of violence, delivers assistance to address mental health and psychosocial needs and provides protection in the most critical cases.

The ICRC promotes the creation of safe spaces for young people, with a view to mitigating the risks they face, such as the danger of being recruited by a gang.

We also provide technical and financial support to the Alternative Education Programme implemented by the Honduran Red Cross, awarding scholarships to young people to enable them to complete vocational training. In 2019, as part of the programme, we strengthened safety and security through infrastructure improvements, with the construction of a classroom and a unit providing five health services at a school in Los Pinos.

FIGURES



HEALTH CARE

The impact that violence has on communities is all too visible in the emergency room at Tegucigalpa University Hospital, the country's principal public health facility. It sees a steady stream of victims of violence (people with gunshot and other weapon wounds and victims of sexual violence) arriving at the hospital on a daily basis for emergency medical attention.

In order to prevent overcrowding in the adults' emergency department, we implemented a triage system in the accident and emergency unit built by the ICRC, giving priority to the most urgent cases, which resulted in a 40% reduction in the number of people admitted to the unit.

We also provided training in stabilizing and moving patients for first aid personnel, ambulance personnel and paramedics, with a view to improving emergency services.

In order to increase respect for health services, the ICRC collaborated with the Honduran Red Cross and the authorities to develop national guidelines on the protection of health-care personnel in situations of violence.

Through its Physical Rehabilitation Programme, the ICRC seeks to improve, increase and facilitate access to health care, including mental health and psychosocial support, for victims of violence and returnees with disabilities. We provided support to open and equip mental health and psychosocial support clinics at health facilities in Los Pinos and Villanueva, and we endeavoured to improve the response of the authorities in terms of health care and human rights.

FIGURES





G. Amador / ICRC

MIGRATION AND DISPLACEMENT



Migration and displacement caused by various factors, including economic conditions and violence, are among the biggest challenges facing the country. According to the Honduran Consular and Migration Observatory (CONMIGHO), 109,185 migrants returned to Honduras in 2019, mainly from the United States and Mexico, 45% up on the figure for 2018. The updated study characterizing internal displacement by violence revealed that, in the period from 2004 to 2018, at least 247,000 people were displaced as a result of violence in Honduras.

New rules on migration and bilateral agreements under which Honduras agreed to receive asylum seekers have brought considerable humanitarian challenges with regard to meeting the needs of increasingly large numbers of people and ensuring that their rights are respected.

The ICRC works with the Honduran Red Cross and local authorities to promote migrants' rights and ensure that their basic needs are met, regardless of whether they are in transit or were returned or deported. We help returning migrants through the Omoa assistance centre for returnees, delivering pre-hospital care, providing free telephone calls, distributing water and hygiene kits and identifying and dealing with cases with protection needs.

We work closely with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, its Directorate for the Protection of Honduran Migrants and the National Institute for Migration (INM) to ensure that the rights of both Honduran returnees and migrants in transit from other countries and even other continents are fully understood and respected and also to promote public policies that address the needs of these groups.

Our work to assist internally displaced people is focused on keeping them safe from the risks threatening them and providing lasting solutions that will enable them to get their lives back on track.

In 2019, we worked with the authorities to establish a legal framework for displacement and migration. We provided guidance on a pilot project to assist returnees with protection needs, implemented by the Ministry of Human Rights. We also provided advice and assistance for the drafting of the CIPPDV's draft bill on assistance and protection for people displaced by violence, which was introduced into Congress in March.

ACCESS TO HEALTH CARE



We facilitated access to health care by migrants returning to Honduras. In collaboration with the Ministry of Health, clinics were set up at the assistance centres for returnees in Omoa and San Pedro Sula.

We collaborated with the Ministry of Health to prepare guidelines on health care and migration, which will be implemented at centres where medical attention is provided for migrants.

We supported the Omoa assistance centre for returnees by engaging a psychologist to identify the mental health needs of migrants, provide initial psychological care and make referrals to relevant health services, paying particular attention to people with protection needs. We also strengthened the response to assist internally displaced people through the National Psychosocial and Mental Health Care Network (Renaps).

Returnees with disabilities often need both physical and psychological support and help with finding a way to earn a living. The ICRC's Physical Rehabilitation Programme, under an agreement with the Teleton rehabilitation centres in San Pedro Sula and the Vida Nueva Foundation in Choluteca, gives migrants access to comprehensive treatment, including physiotherapy, prostheses, orthoses and psychological care, to help them recover their mobility and facilitate their return to work.

I WANT TO GIVE MY CHILDREN A BETTER LIFE



J. Cornejo / ICRC

"I am 33 and travelling on my own ... It is very hard for me because it has been more than a month since I last saw my children, but I have to do what it takes. I want to give them a better life."

Maria was able to make a decent life for her children with the help of her parents. She decided to leave her home in Honduras and migrate in search of better opportunities for them in spite of the dangers she would face on the journey.

Through the Restoring Family Links programme, which we implement in collaboration with National Red Cross Societies, Maria was able to contact her family, talk to her children and reassure them that she was well.

DATOS

**30,372 deported migrants**

received water, hygiene kits and guidance at the Omoa assistance centre for returnees.

**35,280 migrants**

in transit and returnees were able to contact their families thanks to free telephone calls, internet and tracing requests at 4 assistance points run by the Honduran Red Cross and located at the assistance centres for returnees in Omoa, San Pedro Sula and Belen and at the centre for migrants in transit in Choluteca.

**10,145 returnees received health care**

at clinics set up at the assistance centres for returnees in Omoa and San Pedro Sula.

**116 returnees with disabilities received**

physical rehabilitation services, prostheses and health care.

**67 families (235 people)**

received assistance consisting of microeconomic initiatives and vocational training.

**350 migrants**

received primary mental health care.

**104 families (436 people)**

displaced by violence received assistance, including temporary accommodation, food and personal hygiene items, help with returning to school and documentation, travel, physical and mental health care, income-generating activities and supplementary assistance (provided by other actors). The beneficiaries included 178 children (aged 0 to 12), 34 adolescents (aged 12 to 17) and 224 adults (aged 18 and over).

**25 people received assistance after**

being displaced in the form of food, shelter, psychological care and income-generating activities.

**107 internally displaced people received**

mental health and psychosocial care provided by psychologists and psychosocial care workers from the National Psychosocial and Mental Health Care Network, which is supported by the ICRC.



WE RECEIVED ASSISTANCE TO MAKE A LIFE FOR OURSELVES

“We set out without any idea what we would do. We arrived in Tegucigalpa and found the ICRC, and for us it was like a beacon showing us the way, a safe haven after everything we’d gone through. We began to realize that there were organizations that could help us and that we wouldn’t have to go back to a place where we were in danger. We could make a life for ourselves somewhere else.”

Ivan’s family received assistance from the ICRC after being forced to leave the community where they lived because they were the target of threats.



“I was forced to leave my home where I had been living for ten years with my two children. My husband was killed by a gang because he refused to continue paying extortion money. I set out on the migration route but was sent back from Mexico. First I was displaced and then I migrated; now I am back in Honduras but cannot go back to the community where I used to live.”

I HAD TO FLEE MY HOME BECAUSE OF THE THREATS I RECEIVED

Karen had to flee her home with her two children after her husband was murdered. In spite of the threats and the fear, they tried to rebuild their lives in Honduras. Finally, she decided to migrate but was returned to Honduras. Now, she is a beneficiary of the ICRC programme for displaced people.



THE MISSING



There are a variety of reasons why people go missing in Honduras, including violence, natural disasters, migration and unresolved issues from the past. There is no comprehensive register of missing persons, but according to the 2019 report of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights on the human rights situation in Honduras, the government reported that it had recorded 499 cases of missing Hondurans between

2012 and 2019 and that it had found and identified 36 people who had died and traced 46 who were still alive. According to data provided by committees of families of missing migrants, there were 741 cases at the end of 2019.

We carried out various activities to strengthen the response capacity of a number of actors, including the authorities that

play a key role in search processes. The activities aimed to provide training, raise awareness, document missing persons cases, deliver assistance and promote a fuller understanding of search processes.

The ICRC supported committees of families of the missing, providing them with guidance and assistance during the search process. We prepared a guide containing useful information for families, including descriptions of 17 assistance pathways and the details of relevant national and regional institutions.

We trained psychologists and relatives to accompany families through mental health and psychosocial care processes and provided psychological care and group support for families through various specialists. We carried out home visits and accompanied relatives at particularly difficult points in the process, such as the notification of findings, the repatriation of the bodies of migrants and the taking of DNA samples.

Through the Missing Persons Search Committee, a mechanism for coordination between Honduras and Mexico, national and

regional civil society organizations and families, we established four clear pathways for searching for the remains of missing persons and for tracing those still alive, which provided a better understanding of the challenges involved.

A template computer file for storing information on people who have gone missing on migration routes was supplied to four family committees, who began to compile and digitize the information collected using the standardized ante-mortem information form agreed between civil society and government institutions.

We strengthened the capacities and technical expertise of the staff of the Directorate General for Forensic Medicine in the collection and analysis of skeletal remains.

The recent creation of the Search Unit at the Criminal Investigation Directorate (DPI), which is involved in implementing the AMBER Alert initiative that aims to facilitate the search for missing children, is an important step in establishing a national mechanism to search for people who have gone missing as a result of violence.

FIGURES

356 **relatives were accompanied** during the taking of DNA samples, the notification of matches, the repatriation of remains and home visits. They were provided with financial support for travel and food and received mental health and psychosocial care.

5 **committees of families of missing migrants,** formed by a total of 741 families, were supported and represented in various coordination and search mechanisms.

106 **families belonging to 5 family** committees attended preparatory workshops on the taking of DNA samples at the Forensic Databank, the management of affairs and administrative formalities.

22 **relatives received training** in a continuous training and monitoring process to accompany other families and provide them with psychosocial support.

7 **psychologists** from the National Psychosocial and Mental Health Care Network were trained to provide mental health care and psychosocial support to families.

356 **relatives benefited** from mental health care and psychosocial support provided at particularly difficult points in the search process and through home visits and group and individual sessions by professionals and relatives of missing persons trained for this purpose.

4 **missing migrants search meetings** were organized and attended by representatives from 19 institutions and organizations (Honduras and Mexico, national and regional civil society organizations and families).

A module with 96 vaults was constructed to help the Directorate General for Forensic Medicine improve human identification practices.

I HAVE HAD NO NEWS OF MY MOTHER SINCE I WAS TWO YEARS OLD




"I haven't seen my mother since I was two years old. It has been difficult all this time without her. It makes me sad because I would like to spend Mother's Day with her, but she's not here. I would have liked her to be there when I graduated from school."


Keyla is 16 and is from El Porvenir in Honduras. Her mother disappeared on the migration route in 2005.

61

forensic medicine and armed forces personnel attended 3 one-day awareness sessions.



A multi-purpose hall was constructed and donated to the Faustino Boado project in El Progreso (Yoro) which helps children who have been victims of violence or go missing as a result of violence.



2 performances were given of the play Hope never dies about how the disappearance of migrants affects their families.

44

Honduran forensic medical examiners took part in two workshops on the collection and analysis of skeletal remains.



PEOPLE DEPRIVED OF THEIR LIBERTY



Following a spate of security incidents in which a number of detainees died, the Honduran government declared a state of emergency in the national prison system at the end of 2019, which involved a coordinated intervention by the Interinstitutional Security Force (Fusina) in the country’s prisons, including juvenile detention facilities.

There are concerns for the safety of detainees and prison staff, and we are continuing to strengthen our dialogue with the prison authorities, the emergency board and justice officials to contribute to protecting people deprived of their liberty.

We continued our work to improve the treatment of detainees and the conditions of detention, providing support and advice to the prison authorities and other relevant actors. We visited maximum security prisons, the country’s only women’s prison and secure training centres for juvenile offenders. Although we prioritized these visits, we also supported the prison population as a whole by organizing meetings for dialogue on prison management, judicial safeguards and access to health care.

We provided capacity development for the Prison Service College with training for its staff and for those intending to apply to join the National Penitentiary Institute (INP).

Adopting an interdisciplinary approach and focusing in particular on the most vulnerable groups (young people, women, the LGBTI community, etc.), we facilitated dialogue and cooperation among relevant institutions, with a view to ensuring respect for the rights of people deprived of their liberty in compliance with international standards.

With the Digital Prison Records System (SIDIEXP) project, the ICRC supported the prison authorities in establishing a national prison register to ensure the proper administration of prison records and to facilitate the performance of certain tasks, including classification, access to health care and prison privileges. We also provided training on legislation and standards applicable to detainees for members of the interdisciplinary technical councils in the different prisons and developed standard operating procedures.

The INP, the Ministry of Health and the ICRC coordinated efforts, through prison health committees, to strengthen the health system in places of detention and improve access to health care and the quality of health services for detainees.



THE DOCTOR ASKED ME WHO WOULD BE HERE TO WELCOME MY SON BACK IF I WERE TO DIE

“I was severely depressed and didn’t want to go on living. I took some tablets because I wanted to die ... The doctor who saw me said just the right thing ... He asked me who would look for my son if I were to die and who would be there to welcome him if he came back.”

Hector was 19 when he decided to migrate in 2012. His mother, Corina, belongs to a committee of families and has never stopped looking for her son since she lost contact with him.

FIGURES



4,448 people deprived of their liberty
were visited by the ICRC at 3 maximum security prisons (3,308 people), the women’s prison (846 people) and 3 juvenile detention facilities (294 people).



More than 30 young people received diplomas in painting techniques following **two art workshops held** at Renaciendo and El Carmen juvenile detention facilities.



The directors and deputy directors of 28 prisons around the country took part in workshops on the Nelson Mandela Rules, the Bangkok Rules and restrictive measures.



The staff of 4 prisons with maximum security facilities, including the women’s prison, received training on internationally recognized standards, such as the Nelson Mandela Rules and the Bangkok Rules, and on restrictive measures.



The first study on the socio-economic and criminological characteristics of women deprived of their liberty in Honduras was conducted using a gender- and human rights-based approach.




The Digital Prison Records System was put into operation at Moroceli prison; 6 other prisons are in the process of introducing the system.



86 hygiene kits were delivered to the Cobra Special Forces educational psychology centre.

11 prison health committees were set up,

with the active participation of representatives from relevant sectors, including LGBTI associations, directors of psychiatric hospitals, forensic medical examiners, the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO), the National Mechanism for the Prevention of Torture (MNP-CONAPREV), the Office of the Attorney General, the Ministry of Health and the INP.




28 prisons benefited from training for doctors and pharmacy managers, with support from the ICRC, in medication administration and management.

28

prisons received standard clinical template forms to be used for initial medical examinations.

71

participants, including doctors, enforcement judges, public defenders, members of the national police force, members of local torture prevention boards and members of the armed forces, attended training on the medical approach in the first hours of detention.



The Nelson Mandela library was built at the Prison Service College, and books and other publications were donated to it.

102

minors benefited from the renovation of 3 toilet blocks at the El Carmen secure training centre for juvenile offenders in San Pedro Sula.

151

people deprived of their liberty received support for visits from their relatives through an agreement with the Paz de Superacion por Honduras Association (ASOPAZH).



“Knowing that your child needs something and that you can’t give it to them is very tough. People suffer a lot in these places. It is very difficult ... I have learnt to value myself and to love the people I didn’t love when I was outside.”

BEING AWAY FROM YOUR CHILDREN IS VERY PAINFUL

Indira has been in the nursery section of the prison for five years. She gave birth to her daughter in prison, and her family is looking after her while she serves her sentence.



A. Lopez / ICRC

PROMOTING AN ENVIRONMENT OF RESPECT FOR HUMAN LIFE AND DIGNITY



The ICRC worked in coordination with the Honduran Congress to define an approach that would ensure that various bills are enacted into law, including one on assistance and protection for people displaced by violence and another on the use of force in law enforcement.

Congress incorporated a whole chapter on war crimes into the new Penal Code. The ICRC provided input on amendments or additions that needed to be made to some of the articles before it comes into force in May 2020. We also completed the study examining the extent to which the current Honduran legal framework for missing persons is consistent with relevant international standards.

A professional diploma course was established on the use of force at the Honduran University of Defence (UDH) to meet the academic needs of justice officials.

On the occasion of the 70th anniversary of the Geneva Conventions of 1949, the ICRC, together with the Honduran Red Cross, carried out activities to highlight the importance and relevance of IHL, aimed at government institutions, members of the diplomatic corps, the media and other components of the Movement operating in the country.

Public communication was used effectively as a tool for bringing humanitarian issues of concern to the ICRC into the public spotlight. We organized a variety of workshops and discussions with journalists from different parts of the country, with a view to raising public awareness and disseminating information about our humanitarian action.

FIGURES

55

members of Congress

were made aware of issues relating to internal displacement by violence.



27 instructors were trained in the use of force at the first training of trainers workshop for the armed forces.

17

high-ranking officials

from the Military Police for Public Order (PMOP) took part in the first lessons learnt exercise, in which the need for the armed forces to have a legal framework to serve as a basis for its actions was highlighted.



773 military police officers received training in internationally recognized standards on the use of force through the PMOP Training College.

30

high-ranking officers

from the national police force received training in the use of force in San Pedro Sula.

20

20 officers from military academies in Honduras, Guatemala, El Salvador and the Dominican Republic

took part in the 1st regional IHL competition, which was held in Honduras.



16 high-ranking officers from the armed forces received training in the use of force.

7,710

members of the armed forces

were trained in the use of force by ICRC-trained instructors, producing a multiplier effect.



1,908 military officers from the drug trafficking land shield forces were trained in the use of force by ICRC-trained instructors.



WORKING WITH THE HONDURAN RED CROSS TO INCREASE OUR HUMANITARIAN IMPACT

The Honduran Red Cross is an important partner that supports the ICRC in the implementation of its operational activities in different parts of the country.

The ICRC focuses efforts on capacity development for Honduran Red Cross volunteers and staff and on the implementation of mechanisms for coordination with other components of the Movement operating in the country.

We signed a Movement coordination agreement with the Honduran Red Cross and the International Federation of

Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies. We also established specific coordination agreements on migration and internal displacement with the Spanish Red Cross.

We concluded an agreement with the Norwegian Red Cross on work in communities affected by violence, and another with the Canadian Red Cross Society on work with the sick and injured.

We also provided support to formulate regional security plans for Tegucigalpa, San Pedro Sula and Siguatepeque.

FIGURES

73

Honduran Red Cross volunteers

and staff took part in 3 training courses on the Safer Access Framework.



29 Honduran Red Cross volunteers received training in Restoring Family Links.

21

volunteers took part

in a regional Restoring Family Links meeting.



19 volunteers completed internships

at assistance centres for returnees.

20

people who provide mental health

and psychosocial support services at the Honduran Red Cross received training and now form part of the National Psychosocial and Mental Health Care Network.



25 people working on different projects

implemented by the Honduran Red Cross received training in operational communication.

TIMELINE

1987

The ICRC starts its work in Honduras following the return of 4,300 Salvadoran refugees. It provides health services and clean water and builds latrines at a resettlement facility.

The ICRC provides physical rehabilitation services and gives prostheses to returned and deported migrants who have suffered amputations.

2008

The ICRC begins operations to respond to the humanitarian needs of migrants in Corinto.

2010

In the wake of a fire in a prison in Comayagua, an agreement is signed with the government and the ICRC steps up efforts in the areas of detention, forensic practices and missing persons. The operation to assist migrants in Corinto is wound up.

An assessment of the prison system is conducted, and activities are carried out to support the families of migrants.

2012

2011

The ICRC establishes a mission in Honduras to mitigate the consequences of disputes over access to land in the Lower Aguan area. It also establishes a partnership with the Honduran Red Cross to assist people affected by violence.

2013

The ICRC supports the creation of the Honduran Committee on International Humanitarian Law (CHDIH), extends the assistance provided to migrants who have been injured or suffered amputations and starts to provide training for the armed forces and police on the rules and standards governing the use of force in law enforcement.

2014

The ICRC signs an agreement with the Ministry of Security and the armed forces to promote the integration of the rules of international law into training programmes on the use of force.

2015

The ICRC reaches an agreement with the government on arrangements for working together to improve the treatment of people deprived of their liberty and conditions of detention.



The ICRC and the National Autonomous University Hospital of Honduras (UNAH) sign a memorandum of understanding to improve accident and emergency services and pre-hospital care.



2018

2017

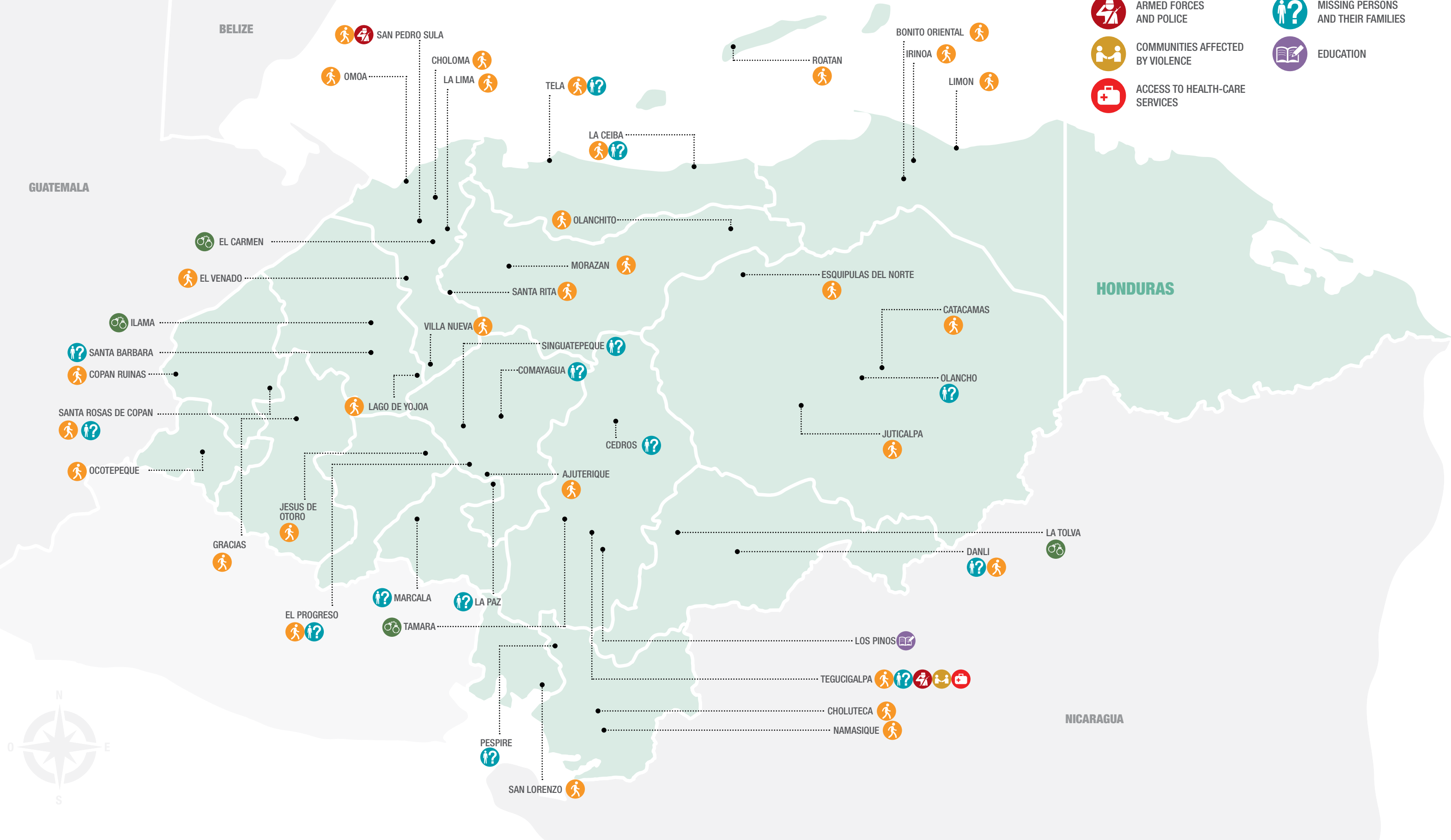
The agreement on action to promote the rights of people deprived of their liberty is updated, with the inclusion of the Judiciary. The ICRC begins visits to juvenile detention facilities.

The ICRC defines an assistance pathway for people internally displaced by violence; it advises the CIPPDV on establishing a legal framework for assistance and protection for internally displaced people.

ICRC ACTIVITIES IN HONDURAS

2019

-  PEOPLE DEPRIVED OF THEIR LIBERTY
-  ARMED FORCES AND POLICE
-  COMMUNITIES AFFECTED BY VIOLENCE
-  ACCESS TO HEALTH-CARE SERVICES
-  MIGRANTS
-  MISSING PERSONS AND THEIR FAMILIES
-  EDUCATION





NICARAGUA

Annual report 2020

CONSOLIDATING OUR PRESENCE IN NICARAGUA

By Laure Schneeberger, ICRC head of mission in Nicaragua

The work of the ICRC in Nicaragua was consolidated in 2019 with the renewal of its headquarters agreement with the Nicaraguan authorities, which had not been updated since it was first signed in 1981.

While the ICRC had continued to carry out various activities in Nicaragua, the renewal of this agreement marked a new phase in our operations in the country, enabling us to carry out our humanitarian work effectively in accordance with our principles.

After the internal armed conflict ended, we provided training for the Nicaraguan army in IHL and supported the Nicaraguan Red Cross in order to strengthen its response. Following the creation of the National Committee for the Implementation of International Humanitarian Law (CONADIH) in 1999, Nicaragua has worked intensively on ensuring the ratification and implementation of IHL treaties. The ICRC has supported these processes, providing legal advice on the development of legislation concerning issues of crucial importance in ensuring respect for IHL, such as protection of the red cross emblem and violations of IHL. We also continued supporting physical rehabilitation services for people with disabilities through the MoveAbility Foundation, focusing mainly on training for technicians in the production of prostheses.

The challenges Nicaragua faces today are different from those of the past, but the ICRC's humanitarian commitment remains unchanged: to act as a neutral, impartial and independent organization helping to alleviate the suffering caused by violence in people's lives in Nicaragua.

The ICRC is an organization with a strictly humanitarian mandate to protect human lives and dignity and provide assistance. In Nicaragua, we visit people deprived of their liberty and endeavour to help people who have lost contact with their loved ones. Another important part of our work in the country is to promote respect for health care and for Nicaraguan Red Cross volunteers and other humanitarian workers.

The new agreements signed with the authorities, together with public trust and the support and professionalism of the Nicaraguan Red Cross, have enabled us to consolidate our presence in Nicaragua so that we can continue working together to help those most in need.

PEOPLE DEPRIVED OF THEIR LIBERTY



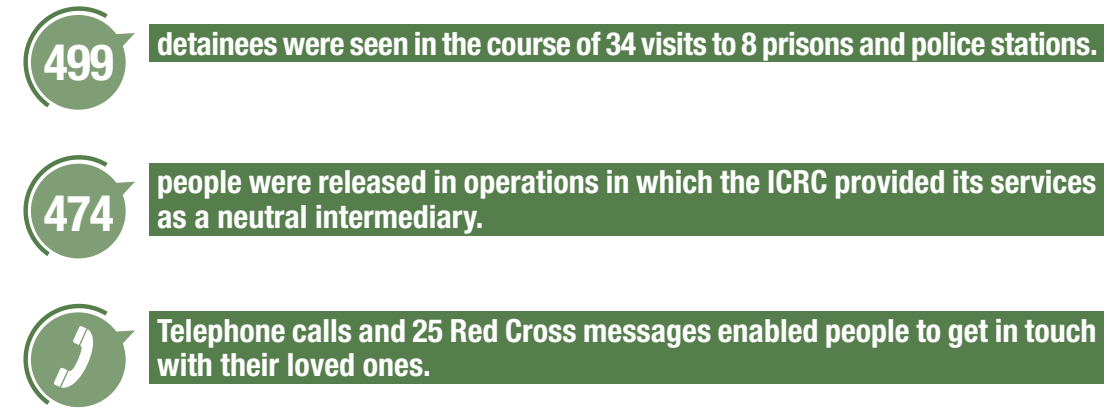
The ICRC resumed its visits to places of detention in Nicaragua at the beginning of January 2019. As in the more than 80 other countries where we visit detainees, the visits carried out in Nicaragua are for strictly humanitarian purposes and seek to ensure that the treatment of detainees and the conditions of detention, including contact with their families, are in compliance with international law and internationally recognized standards.

The places of detention visited were La Modelo, the maximum security prison, La Esperanza, Chinandega, Granada, El Chipote (Judicial Support Directorate) and the police stations in Masaya and Chinandega.

Acting as a neutral intermediary, we assisted in the negotiation of an agreement between the government and the opposition for the release of people detained in connection with the events of April 2018. In the first half of 2019, we took steps to support the release of detainees under an amnesty law.

The ICRC, together with the Nicaraguan Red Cross, brought together providers of psychosocial care and mental health services for the coordination and creation of a patient referral and counter-referral system for the recently released and relatives with mental health-care needs.

FIGURES



PROMOTING AN ENVIRONMENT OF RESPECT FOR HUMAN LIFE AND DIGNITY



In Nicaragua, we maintain an ongoing dialogue with the authorities, civil society, the armed forces and the police to help prevent suffering caused by violence.

In our work with the armed forces and law enforcement, we initiated an active dialogue with the national police force through meetings and training activities.

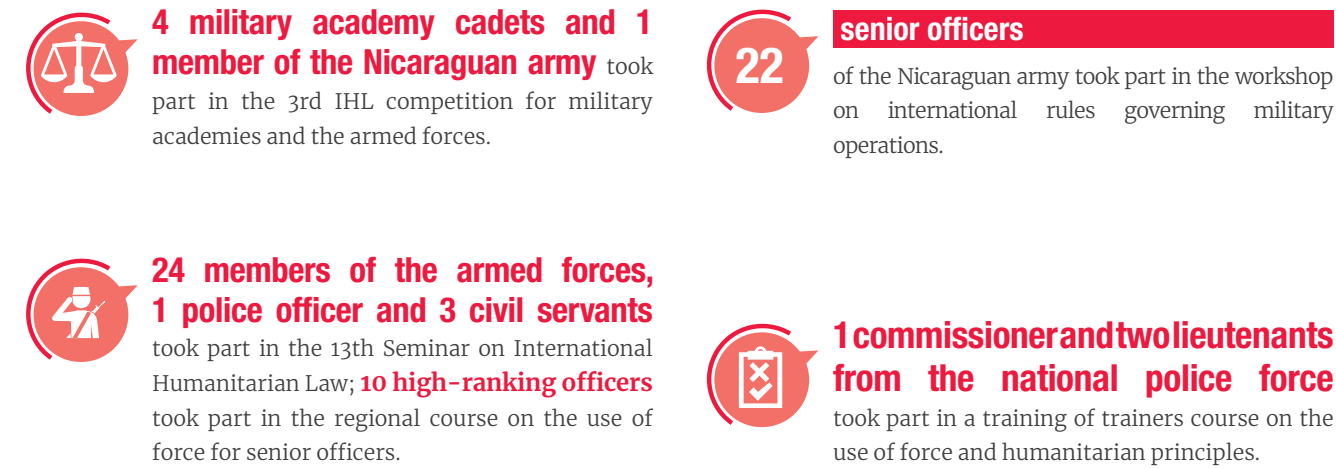
A course was held for senior police officers for the first time in Nicaragua, attended by those second in command of national police units. It provided an important opportunity to strengthen the knowledge of police officers from Nicaragua and the other Central American countries taking part on international standards relating to the use of force in law enforcement and on the ICRC’s work with the armed forces and police in the region.

Members of Nicaragua’s national police force also took part in training activities held abroad, which addressed issues relating to the role of the police and law enforcement operations.

The ICRC, along with the Nicaraguan army, provided training at the 13th Seminar on International Humanitarian Law, attended by more than 20 officers from the armed forces and other officials. Additionally, a representative of the Nicaraguan army took part in the 13th edition of the Senior Workshop on International Rules Governing Military Operations (SWIRMO) held in Moscow, Russia.

Two important events took place in relation to the Central American Armed Forces Conference (CFAC): the signing of a cooperation agreement between the CFAC and the ICRC renewing the legal framework for the work they carry out together; and the hosting of the workshop on international rules governing military operations, which was attended by 33 senior officers from the armed forces of El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, the Dominican Republic and Nicaragua.

FIGURES





WORKING WITH THE NICARAGUAN RED CROSS TO INCREASE OUR HUMANITARIAN IMPACT

We signed a memorandum of understanding with the Nicaraguan Red Cross to strengthen our operational partnership, which has enabled us to increase our presence and broaden the scope of our action in Nicaragua.

Our work in this area focused on capacity development for the Nicaraguan Red Cross in order to ensure the dissemination of its principles, guarantee safer access in internal disturbances and increase its capacity to respond to emergency and disaster situations.

The ICRC also supported the Restoring Family Links activities carried out by the Nicaraguan Red Cross, providing training for volunteers throughout the country.

We contributed to the National Society's participation in the 33rd International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent held in Geneva, Switzerland.

FIGURES



33 people, including 23 members of the Network of Communicators

from 21 Red Cross branches, attended workshops on operational communication to improve acceptance of the work of the Nicaraguan Red Cross and raise its public profile.



Members of the Nicaraguan Red Cross

took part in the regional Movement Induction Course organized by the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and the ICRC.



275 National Society volunteers and staff took part in 17 training workshops held throughout the country on the Safer Access Framework.



11 volunteers took a refresher course in Restoring Family Links

to improve their performance in internal disturbances and disasters.

TIMELINE

1981

The ICRC signs the first headquarters agreement with the Nicaraguan government.

1993

The MoveAbility Foundation takes charge of ICRC activities to support the National Centre for the Production of Assistive Devices, Prostheses and Orthoses.

1999

The National Committee for the Implementation of International Humanitarian Law is created.

2000

The MoveAbility Foundation sets up a regional office in Managua to support physical rehabilitation services with funding from the Ministry of Health and other organizations.

2018

The ICRC re-establishes a permanent presence in the country. A workshop on international rules governing military operations is held as part of activities carried out with the CFAC.

2019

The headquarters agreement is renewed.



COSTA RICA

Annual report 2020

We work closely with the Costa Rican government, and particularly the national committee on IHL, on adopting and implementing IHL and raising awareness of it.

In 2019, we met with the committee’s various member entities to help Costa Rica prepare for the 33rd International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent, which was held in Geneva in December 2019. We also kept up a dialogue with the Inter-American Court of Human Rights, which is based in San Jose. We held a working session with the court’s legal advisers in which we exchanged ideas on topics of mutual interest. We also produced a booklet on the interplay between IHL and international human rights law in the court’s decisions, and a report on IHL and the challenges of contemporary armed conflicts, which was published ahead of the 33rd International Conference, and a report on the international expert meeting on the principle of proportionality in the rules governing the conduct of hostilities under IHL.

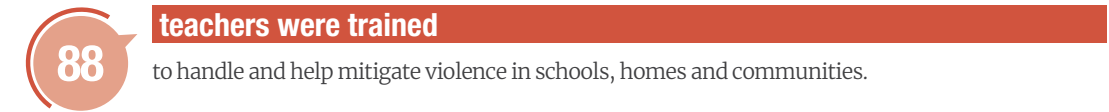
BELIZE

Annual report 2020

Since 2017, we, along with other organizations, have been supporting the programmes of the Belize Red Cross Society, such as its street mediation programme and involvement in an apprenticeship programme for at-risk young people. The programme is sponsored by the ministry of education, but the Belize Red Cross helps recruit the participants, along with the police, teachers and others.

The financial support we provide to National Societies helps bolster their efforts and the work they carry out as auxiliaries to the public authorities in humanitarian matters.

FACTS AND FIGURES



MISSION

We help people around the world affected by armed conflict and other violence, doing everything we can to protect their lives and dignity and to relieve their suffering, often with our Red Cross and Red Crescent partners. We also seek to prevent hardship by promoting and strengthening humanitarian law and championing universal humanitarian principles.

People know they can count on us to carry out a range of life-saving activities in conflict zones and to work closely with the communities there to understand and meet their needs. Our experience and expertise enable us to respond quickly and effectively, without taking sides.

 facebook.com/CICRDRMX
 twitter.com/CICR_DRMX
 [instagram: cicr_mx](https://instagram.com/cicr_mx)
 linkedin.com/in/cicrmx/

ICRC Regional Delegation for Mexico and Central America

Calzada General Mariano Escobedo #526
Anzures
Miguel Hidalgo
Mexico City, 11590
T + 52 55 2581 2110
mex_mexico@icrc.org



ICRC