



OSCAR SUSANTO/ICRC

## NEWSLETTER

OCTOBER, 2015

# ICRC'S ACTIVITIES IN MYANMAR

## FOREWORD BY THE HEAD OF DELEGATION

The floods that have affected a large part of Myanmar have called for much of our attention in the recent weeks. I would like first to extend my heartfelt sympathies to the families of victims and to all communities affected by the floods. With our partner, the Myanmar Red Cross Society (MRCS) and in coordination with the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, we have concentrated our support to people from all affected communities in Rakhine State where we have a strong presence. We have provided essential items such as blankets, sleeping mats and lamps to people who took refuge in evacuation centres, distributed rice and essential items to over 12,000 people, and worked hard to clean contaminated ponds, and supported the provision of health care. In the aftermath of the crisis, our teams along with the volunteers of the Myanmar Red Cross are implementing cash-for-work programmes and unconditional grants to help people recover their livelihoods. Many thanks to all the Red Cross volunteers who dedicate their energy and joined forces to help during this disaster.

This flood response came in addition to the ongoing efforts to address the needs of people affected by armed conflict or inter-communal tension mainly in Kachin, Shan and Rakhine states. Our main objective is to prevent and alleviate human suffering. We do this in a comprehensive manner, integrating the full range of health, emergency assistance, livelihood support/recovery, physical rehabilitation, water and sanitation, prevention and protection programmes under one management, to achieve the best possible outcome for the beneficiaries and communities. The ICRC implements its activities directly and independently, wherever possible in close partnership with the Myanmar Red Cross Society, and in coordination with other humanitarian actors, Union and State/Region governments, local authorities and communities. Today, thanks to a transparent and constructive engagement, the ICRC enjoys a high level of acceptance and trust from government, security forces (Tatmadaw and police), non-state armed groups and communities, allowing it to reach people affected by conflict and violence on all sides. For Rakhine

State in particular, the consequences of the 2015 floods are and will be an important criteria in the selection of the beneficiaries of recovery programmes.

If we are encouraged by the efforts to achieve peace, we remain concerned about continued fighting in parts of Shan and Kachin states. In the first semester of 2015, the ICRC considerably strengthened its operational capacity in the north-east. In Rakhine state, we provided assistance to families who were displaced as a result of the clashes in Kyauktaw Township, while continuing our assistance to other vulnerable communities, extending our reach to northern Rakhine. Proximity is necessary to understand people's needs and to have a dialogue with weapon bearers and those who have an influence on the conduct of hostilities to reduce and prevent further suffering.

Our work does not stop once the hostilities are over as the consequences of conflict often last beyond the fighting. We support programmes to provide prostheses and rehabilitation to people disabled by landmines or unexploded ordnance throughout the north-east. We continue to provide support to the authorities to improve conditions in places of detention and the treatment of detainees. In February, with ICRC's support, the Prisons Department hosted the Asian Conference of Correctional Facilities Planners and Architects. We also maintain our work with the Myanmar Police Force on international policing standards.

Visiting Myanmar, the ICRC Director of Operations for Asia and the Pacific reiterated ICRC's long term commitment to Myanmar when he met the authorities in Nay Pyi Taw.

**Juerg Montani**  
Head of Delegation



**ICRC**

# HIGHLIGHTS

<p><b>24,000</b> inmates in 28 places of detention around the country visited.</p>	<p><b>12,000</b> people received food and essential items in Rakhine after the floods.</p>	<p><b>12,000</b> people resumed livelihood activities in Rakhine, Kachin and Shan States.</p>	<p><b>1,250</b> disabled people improved their mobility.</p>
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## IN RAKHINE STATE

The ICRC continued to support vulnerable members from all communities from its offices in Sittwe and Mrauk-U. Its staff worked in cooperation with the Myanmar Red Cross to provide better access to health, to safe drinking water and improve livelihood of communities.

- To help communities affected by floods, the ICRC with the Myanmar Red Cross distributed essential items, such as blankets, mats and lamps to 3500 people in 14 evacuation centres. Rice rations were also distributed to over 10,000 people in villages in and around Mrauk-U. The ICRC re-oriented and scaled up its existing programmes, with priority given to the rehabilitation of water sources, such as wells and ponds; and wherever possible, livelihood activities made use of cash grants or cash-for-work projects.
- Almost two hundred health facilities of the State Health Department in five townships had their monthly expenditures covered by the ICRC.
- Over six hundred people needing emergency or specialized care promptly accessed the main hospital in Sittwe thanks to a Health Ministry transport scheme and a newly launched outpatient referral system, both supported by the ICRC.
- Eighteen health facilities directly received equipment, such as beds and solar lamps, to enhance their services.
- More than 2000 people resumed livelihood activities with the help of conditional cash grants to start a business (for instance to raise pigs or to rent canoes), enabling some of them to use their savings to buy food for their families or repay debts.
- 3,600 internally displaced people, sourced half of the cooking fuel they needed from fuel sticks made of rice husks regularly distributed by the ICRC. In addition to helping families minimize their daily expenditures, these fuel sticks mitigate the degradation of the environment.
- Thirty-nine auxiliary midwives participated in training courses that focused on mother and child care.
- Three detention visits were conducted in three places of detention.



ICRC teams distributed rice rations to victims of flood-affected areas in Mrauk-U Township.



Conditional cash grants, a means to support livelihood activities, were provided to beneficiaries in Rakhine State.



Three-wheeled cycles were handed over to MRCS's township branches to better carry out their activities.



ICRC's rehabilitation work of water sources benefited the local communities.

## IN KACHIN STATE

The ICRC opened a sub-delegation in Myitkyina in March 2014 to better follow the humanitarian situation in Kachin state. It focused its work on providing better access to health care, improvement of livelihood of displaced people and visits to people deprived of freedom.

- In Laiza hospital, 100 surgeries including cesarean sections, have been performed, and more than 6,800 patients benefited from various services of the hospital supported by the ICRC through training of staff, rehabilitation and improvement of its water and sanitation facilities, and the provision of medical/surgical equipment and supplies.
- With the MRCS, provision of essential items helped displaced people living in camps meet their needs for cooking fuel and/or cope with the winter season. Around 2,500 people in four camps, produced food and/or generated income for their families with the help of conditional cash grants and seeds, fertilizer and tools provided by the ICRC.
- The construction of a water tower for the MRCS branch in Myitkyina enabled the organization's volunteers to bolster their water-trucking activities in camps.
- People held in six places of detention received ICRC visits.
- Building of a new physical rehabilitation centre started in Myitkyina.
- Ten auxiliary midwives participated in a training course that focused on mother and child care and 67 participants were trained in first aid.
- Trainings on mine risk education were organized in July in cooperation with the MRCS. 40 Red Cross volunteers as well as 6 police officers participated. As a result, 130 people received safety messages on how to reduce risk of landmines and unexploded ordnance (UXO) in their everyday life. Volunteers of the MRCS will continue to share safety messages on danger of landmines and UXO's with people living in affected communities.



**Vegetable seeds and agrotools were distributed for backyard gardening in an IDP camp in Laiza.**



**Mine-risk education training was held in Myitkyina to raise awareness of landmines and unexploded ordnance.**



**ICRC team distributed chemical fertilizers at Pan Say IDP camp, Kutkai Township, Northern Shan State.**



**Mother-and-child-health-care trainings were organized for auxiliary midwives.**

## IN SHAN STATE

The ICRC supports people affected by the conflict from its office in Mandalay and its new office in Kyaing Tong reopened in October 2014. Its main areas of focus are visits to people deprived of freedom, improvement of access to quality health care and assistance (water, livelihood) to communities displaced by fighting.

- People held in five places of detention received ICRC visits.
- Over 3,500 displaced people affected by inter-communal violence in 2013 benefited from ICRC-supported Myanmar Red Cross activities until March. Shelter repairs helped 125 people who fled the fighting in northern Shan state live in more comfortable conditions. Relief, water and sanitation activities were provided in camps in Kutkai and Hseni townships.
- Distribution of medicine and medical equipment to five hospitals in Mong Hsat, Mong Tong, Wan Hoong, Mong Kwut, Hway Aww and improvement of access to water in Pon Par Kyin and Mong Tong hospital in eastern Shan.
- In three eastern Shan townships: Kyaing Tong, Mong Yang and Mong Hsat in eastern Shan, the ICRC and the Myanmar Red Cross developed water and sanitation projects. Essential items were given to 500 people displaced by fighting in northern Shan.
- The design phase of a new physical rehabilitation centre in Kyaing Tong is under way.
- Twenty-nine auxiliary midwives participated in a training course in Mong Hsat Township.

## PROGRAMMES BASED IN YANGON

From the Yangon delegation, the ICRC coordinates and supports its field activities, with a strong focus on detention, physical rehabilitation and promotion of humanitarian values and international humanitarian law (IHL).

- Some 24,000 inmates in 28 places of detention around the country accessed improved water, sanitation, kitchen and medical facilities upgraded by the ICRC and the officials using construction materials provided by the ICRC. Discussions and recommendations between the ICRC and the authorities also contributed to strengthen the management of the prisons. Prison health staff better served ailing detainees using ICRC-provided drugs and medical consumables. Inmates established and maintained contact with their relatives. They sent and received over 2,000 Red Cross messages (family news messages) and over 200 detainees met with their relatives during ICRC-sponsored family visits. ICRC coverage of their transport costs allowed over 500 released detainees to return home.
- The MRCS continues to benefit from financial and technical support provided by the ICRC to enhance its capacity to re-establish family links lost during the conflict and/or natural disasters. Dozens of MRCS volunteers throughout the country distributed the 2,000 Red Cross messages (mentioned above) to families.
- At seminars organized by the Health Ministry and MRCS, more than 300 health professionals from various governmental and civilian institutions convened to discuss issues and experiences related to the safe provision of health services during conflict and other situation of violence.
- The ICRC continued to support two physical rehabilitation centres, the Myanmar Red Cross centre in Hpa An and the Yenanthar Leprosy Hospital near Mandalay. Around 1,250 disabled people improved their mobility at the two centres: mine victims received 90% of the prosthetic feet produced there. Some 440 persons living far from the Myanmar Red Cross Centre received foot and strap repair services from a mobile repair workshop or from trained technicians stationed near their communities, thereby reducing the time and money spent on travelling.
- Some 2,100 people, including members of parliament, community leaders, teachers, students and Red Cross volunteers, attended dissemination sessions on IHL, the Red Cross Movement and its emblems, and the Fundamental principles. ICRC-facilitated workshops and reading material in Myanmar language enabled 180 senior police officers and police trainers, amongst them 21 female staff, to deepen their understanding of internationally recognized policing standards, including in relation to arrest and detention. The Police and Security Forces Regional Delegate accompanied the Chief of Myanmar Police Force and other three Senior Police Officers to Denmark for study visit in June, 2015. Two naval officers from the Myanmar Army discussed best practices related to IHL at sea with their counterparts at a regional event in Bangkok. During training sessions, representatives of armed groups, including the Kachin Independence Army, and, for the first time, groups from Chin and Shan states, deepened their understanding of practical application of IHL in their training and operations.



The Ministry of Health, the Prisons Department and the ICRC successfully held a health in detention seminar.



Health professionals participated in a seminar on safe delivery of health care, Nay Pyi Taw.



A trainers workshop on international standards of the exercise of police power was held at Zee Pin Gyi Police Officers Training Institute.



IHL related materials were donated at Sagaing Region Parliament, where a dissemination session on IHL and Red Cross Movement was conducted.

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