

NAIROBI REGIONAL DELEGATION

REGIONAL NEWSLETTER

DECEMBER 2020



FOREWORD

When we did our planning for 2020, nothing could possibly have prepared us for the disruptive element that came in the way of COVID-19. The ICRC's long history of over 150 years makes us more adapted to respond to armed conflict but the COVID-19 pandemic was unforeseen not only in Kenya, but globally. As such, we had to adapt our programs and response around the country to include COVID-19 measures in our operations.

A key target vulnerable group was prisoners and with the cooperation of the Kenya Prisons Services (KPS) and working together with the Kenya Red Cross, we have supported 75 prisons across the country. We worked on policy recommendations while upgrading existing infrastructure in prisons, provision of protective equipment and offering phone calls to prisoners allowing them to stay in touch with their families when family visits were discontinued as a way of keeping coronavirus out of prisons. To date, more than 120,000 phone calls have been made allowing families to stay in touch. In Western Tanzania, we paused, adapted then resumed family reunifications of 75 unaccompanied minors in Burundi in partnership with Tanzanian and Burundian Red Cross, ensuring safety measures were followed.

For the second half of the year, we picked up operations, continuing with our economic security

support to communities in Lamu and Garissa. It has been heartwarming listening to their stories of resilience and how our program support has allowed them to engage in new sustainable ways.

One thing we were committed to doing in 2020 was breaking ground for our new Delegation premises in Lower Kabete. This office is significant in that it is one of ICRC's largest investments outside of Geneva. Our target is to have more than 300 staff of our Nairobi and Somalia offices in there by 2022. We desire to attain a green certification for this building so everything is being done to align our construction plans with our green ambition.

As the year drew to a close, our logistics center stepped in due to renewed fighting in neighbouring countries, like Ethiopia's Tigray and Mozambique's Cabo Delgado sending medical material, relief and shelter items, vehicles and personnel to reinforce ICRC response in both contexts.



I wish you happy reading and joyful holidays in the hope that the new year brings better things for all of us.

Olivier Dubois.

KEEPING COVID-19 OUT OF KENYA'S PRISONS

The onset of COVID-19 around the globe, and specifically in Kenya meant that we had to reorganize our humanitarian response to incorporate this new priority into our operations. This is because the pandemic disrupted ICRC's work with communities affected by situations of violence along the Kenyan coast, and our dissemination of IHL to various stakeholders in the country. As a result, we took measures to develop targeted support for COVID-19 responses with our partners.

In March, we committed, with the Kenya Red Cross Society (KRCS), to support the Kenya Prisons Service (KPS) response to COVID-19. Following an initial joint assessment tour of 55 prisons, we engaged in a dialogue with prison authorities, supported the establishment of COVID-19 health protocols including screening at entry points, management of quarantine units and isolation centers. Guidelines for handling of food and how to safely make family phone calls were also developed. Due to the containment measures where families were restricted from visiting their loved ones to reduce the risk of spreading the virus from outside, the Kenya Red Cross distributed 183 mobile phones to be used by the inmates to contact their families. Training was provided to prison counsellors to facilitate these calls while observing COVID-19 protocols. The KRCS Mental Health and Psychosocial support (MPHSS) hotline was made available toll free to the inmates and prison staff in various counties. The Red Cross also contributed materials for the mass production of masks for inmates, prison staff and their families.

A joint team of ICRC, KRCS and KPS engineers organized the setting up of screening points in all prisons and the building of quarantine and isolation centers across more than 50 priority prisons with the ICRC providing the construction equipment. This has helped to slow the infection rates from new inmates to those who are already in detention. To help reduce overcrowding, we also provided 1600 mattresses and material to fabricate 800 beds for use by KPS across its quarantine facilities. 500 wind driven ventilators were procured for use in 47 priority prisons across the country to improve ventilation in prisons and reduce the risk of airborne transmissions. In addition, hygiene items and products, handwashing stations, PPEs (surgical masks, gowns, gloves and face shields) for wardens, touchless thermometers for screening



A quarantine block centre in a Nairobi prison refurbished with the support of ICRC /KRCS

and 65 oximeters were also donated to the prisons. Advisory support to the health staff in several prisons is ongoing.

Caroline Rouvroy, ICRC's Protection Coordinator says that the ongoing support towards the KPS would not have been made possible without the trust of the Commissioner General of Prisons, his team and the KRCS team members. "Protecting those most vulnerable among us, in this case, the prisoners, has been our primary concern as the Red Cross. We are happy to have given our support where needed and hope that this partnership will continue in years to come, even after COVID-19 is no longer with us," she concluded.

On a longer-term engagement, the ICRC Water Unit is currently working to improve the water supply at the Nairobi Remand Prison.

EDUCATION IS OFTEN SEVERELY DISRUPTED FOR CHILDREN IN CAMPS

PROFILE: JANUARY SELESTINE – RFL FIELD OFFICER IN KIBONDO

As an officer working to help Restore Family Links (RFL), one thing you get to experience is a whole lot of emotions. I remember a reunification we did in October 2020 and there was this young boy, Twagiramungu Issa 16 years, full of life. He was looking forward to seeing his parents whom he had not had any physical contact with for about 5 years. In his excitement, he engaged us the entire way from the camps to the Burundi border, detailing how he was looking forward to going back home. He had this sadness around him, more from the life he had lived away from love, home and family, but on the other hand, the excitement of going back home – much sooner than he had anticipated.

Processing family reunification requests is a regular activity, and the process often begins with a Red Cross Message. These messages are provided by the Tanzania Red Cross field officers working in the camps and filled by those who want to send a message to their loved ones. We work with our colleagues in our Burundi office to try and trace their family based on information given to us, which is sometimes scanty. For instance, a child may tell you the general location of the area but what they remember about their home is that it had a big avocado tree. It is therefore a great triumph when we can locate the families, relay the messages and when they are accompanied by a request to return home, it gives us great joy.

Before we can facilitate the reunification, we work with several agencies to ensure that it is in

the best interest of the child to go back home to their family. These include other Child Protection agencies working in the camp and the Ministry of Home Affairs in Tanzania. We inform the children when it is all systems set for their return home, do the medical checks and then prepare them for the journey back home. Cross-border reunifications are done in conjunction with our colleagues in Burundi who help the children on their final stretch home until they are safely reunited with their guardians.

As a former teacher, my interaction with many children living in the refugee camps reveals that a big part missing for them is education. While the camps offer some sort of education for the refugees there, not every child is motivated to stay in school. The psychological impact of the camps and a lack of integration all play a role in demotivating children from learning. For instance, the young boy we spoke about earlier had sought to be reunited with his family but when it was finally possible for this to happen, we could not find him. He had left the camp to seek work in the host communities and we found him much later, which delayed the time line that had been set for his return back home. Fortunately, such children eventually come back to the camps to try and look for a way to go back home, through the Red Cross, because there are few options for the minors to get back home. In the end it worked out and he was able to return home. Hopefully he can get settled in a better environment which will allow him a chance at education.



In 2020, the ICRC organized **75** cross border reunifications between Tanzania and Burundi for unaccompanied minors. The reunifications took place between January and October 2020 and were facilitated by our colleagues in the Kibondo camps and Burundi Office.

ICRC and TRCS RFL teams facilitating a reunification for unaccompanied minors in Burundi.



IHL ROUNDUP

DISSEMINATION TO SECURITY FORCES.

Towards the second half of 2020, the ICRC continued with IHL dissemination sessions to various members of the security forces in training schools and in the field. Several senior KDF officers participated in virtual ICRC meetings. The Head of

Regional Delegation had fruitful engagement with the top leadership of KDF and the Kenya Airforce to enhance ICRC acceptance and broaden areas of collaboration in IHL training.



IHL training session for Kenya Defence Force troops in Isiolo.

LAUNCH OF THE DATA PROTECTION HANDBOOK IN HUMANITARIAN ACTION.

The ICRC launched the 2nd edition of the Data Protection Handbook in Humanitarian Action through virtual events across the globe. Nairobi and

Kigali delegations co-hosted a virtual discussion on blockchain technology and its use in humanitarian action.



The Handbook contains principles that can be applied by humanitarian organizations in ensuring data protection for their beneficiaries. Protecting individuals' personal data is an integral part of protecting their life, integrity and dignity. Therefore, personal data protection is of fundamental importance for humanitarian organizations.

Data protection continues to gain importance as technologies which can process large amounts of personal data become more prevalent and ubiquitous. Laws for ensuring data protection continue to develop worldwide. In Kenya, the Data Protection Act, 2019, provides the legal and institutional framework for data protection in the country. The ICRC has developed comprehensive guidelines and principles for data protection and continues to be a leader and champion in this.

AFRICA IHL ACADEMIC PRIZE.

The Africa IHL Prize (2020), now in its third edition, is awarded to an African author with the best published work on IHL. The competition has grown tremendously, attracting scores of IHL

academics, scholars and practitioners from the African continent. We hope the prize will continue stimulating research and publication in IHL by African scholars across the continent.

ESSAY COMPETITION FOR EAST AFRICAN UNIVERSITIES.

The annual essay competition for East African universities took place and attracted more than 42 participants from 19 universities across the region, a remarkable feat given that universities across the region were closed. The winner of the competition was Jemimah Jehopio from Uganda Christian University, followed by Elias Odhiambo of Moi University, Kenya. Fitsum Sitotaw Yimam from Addis Ababa University, College of Law and Governance Studies, Ethiopia emerged the third best essayist.

This year's topic focused on IHL and counterterrorism measures. This is an important topic in the background of a global trend where often, legislation to address terrorism does not provide a space for humanitarian work. Providing for humanitarian exemption in such legislation is vital for preserving the space that allows ICRC and other humanitarian organizations to continue providing lifesaving services across the globe.



Winner of the 2020 Essay competition Jemimah Jehopio (left) receives her cash prize and certificate from ICRC Kampala COM Manager Patricia Bako

ALL AFRICA IHL COMPETITION MOOT COURT COMPETITION SURVEY.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the 20th edition of the All Africa IHL Moot Competition was cancelled. Despite the cancellation, an online survey was conducted to assess the impact of the competition over the last two decades, which has seen the

participation of over 600 students from across Africa. Results of the survey revealed that the competition has created a large, strong alumnus of professionals over 90% of whom indicated that the competition influenced their career choice.

NEWS BRIEFS

MORE THAN 1000 DETAINEES RETURN HOME FOLLOWING YEMEN CONFLICT.

ICRC's Mission in Djibouti, in its support role to the Delegation in Yemen, was part of a two-day operation that facilitated the return of more than 1,000 detainees to their homes. The operation took place between October 15-16th and involved 11 ICRC operated flights in and out of five cities in Yemen and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

This operation was possible thanks to the commitment of the Parties whose role was to agree to the release for all identified detainees. It was exceptional in many ways. Firstly, it was conducted while the active war is still ongoing in Yemen. The ICRC had only 12 days to complete the entire transfer which would normally take several weeks to plan. Finally, it was done in the period of a major global pandemic crisis. *"The operation has shown all the capacity and the ability of the ICRC and the commitment of its staff to work in such a complex*

situation and environment. It also showed the value of having the ICRC as the neutral intermediary accepted by all Parties and with the capacity to move things from the diplomatic table and make them a reality. We are very proud here in Djibouti that we could support the work of our colleagues in Yemen and grateful for all the support provided to us in this aspect from the Republic of Djibouti", said Daliborka Topic, the Head of Mission in Djibouti.

Since the beginning of hostilities in 2015 in Yemen, ordinary life including commercial flights has been disrupted. In order to enable its work, and with agreement and support from the Djibouti authorities, the ICRC has established its Yemen support hub in Djibouti, which provides logistic and aerial support to our teams in Yemen. In this sense, Djibouti is our main entry and exit route for all ICRC staff working in Yemen.

COASTAL COMMUNITIES RECEIVE SUPPORT TO BOOST ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES.

Our activities to support livelihoods and increase economic security of communities along the Kenyan Coast in Lamu and Garissa counties continued, despite the pandemic. Working jointly with KRCS, we continued to support farmers from the Aweer community with pesticides, knap sack sprayers, protective gear, tractor ploughing services, access to training and support from agricultural extension officers. Farmers in Masalani -Garissa county were supported with seeds, farming tools, pesticides and protective equipment like gumboots, masks and overalls and underwent a basic skills course.




We also supported fishermen in Lamu by providing fishing inputs, outboard engines and cooler boxes. To boost their business acumen, the fishermen were trained in entrepreneurship skills to enable them to find their own markets for their produce rather than relying on middle men to sell their catch.

Vulnerable women are a key target group for the ICRC and in both regions, many households are

female headed having lost a spouse to various circumstances. Fisherwomen received fishing traps which require little effort but increases their catch. Many of these women are part of the Village Savings and Loans Associations groups trained and supported by the Red Cross on ways to save communally. The money raised through contributions is given out as loans, social welfare cash (in the case of a bereavement, school fees needs or weddings) and shared out among the women. This has given them great relief as they do not have to rely on relatives for sustenance.

The Red Cross introduced bee keeping to both counties supporting them with hives, protective gears and harvesting implements to increase their livelihood activities in this area. All the communities participating were taken through key Nutrition, hygiene promotion and environment promotion messages. In total, more than 1800 Households (11,226 Individuals) have been supported through these initiatives during 2020.

International Committee of the Red Cross
Nairobi Regional Delegation,
Denis Pritt Road
P. O. Box 73226-00200 Nairobi, Kenya
T +254 20 272 3963
E-mail: nairobi@icrc.org
© ICRC, December 2020
Cover photo: Mike Mina/ICRC
www.icrc.org

 facebook.com/icrc
 twitter.com/ICRC_Nairobi
 instagram.com/icrc