

BUILDING SOLUTIONS WITH COMMUNITIES AFFECTED BY ARMED VIOLENCE





There are hundreds of stories from 2022 that illustrate the impact that our humanitarian action has had on the lives of thousands of people directly and indirectly affected by armed violence in Venezuela.

Ronald succeeded in setting up a sports academy in very challenging circumstances in La Cota 905 to provide young people in his community with an alternative to violence, and Dr Jeniré works tirelessly to ensure that 1,600 people can receive quality health care at the rural health centre in El Cruce in Zulia. Stories like these keep us motivated to continue leveraging the expertise of our teams in different fields to deliver responses aimed at improving the standard of living of people affected by armed violence, which limits their access to essential services, such as health care, water, sanitation and education, and the possibility of a secure livelihood.

We set great store by the opinions, needs and suggestions of the people we work with, and in 2022 we consulted over 16,000 beneficiaries of our programmes and services to find out what they thought about the solutions we have built with them to mitigate the consequences of armed violence that have been disrupting their lives for years. We are proud to report that more than 90% of the people consulted said that our humanitarian work had had a positive impact on them.

Their stories, experiences, feelings and expectations will continue to guide us daily in 2023 as we work with them to build solutions tailored to their needs, valuing their diversity and their capacities and with our sights always set on one goal: to put people at the centre of all our work to alleviate their suffering and help them strengthen their resilience.



The mental health of people living in this community has been seriously affected because they have lost a loved one, live in fear or have trouble sleeping. Many people might think violence doesn't affect the mind, but it does and it's good to talk about it.

Hellen is taking part in the ICRC's Mental Health and Psychosocial Support Programme in the La Cota 905 district of Caracas.



Félix Ramírez is one of the inhabitants of Puerto Paloma, a small village on the banks of the Tarra River in the state of Zulia. He started learning to fish and make cast nets when he was just 11 years old. He was so good at making nets that he began selling them as a way to make a living and provide for his family.

We supported Félix and another 22 fishers in Puerto Paloma, supplying them with materials to make cast nets as a way of helping them make fishing a secure livelihood that provides them with a decent income.



The training we received to work in the triage area was fantastic because it means we can treat patients better now, and that saves lives.

Milagros has been a nurse at the Ruiz y Páez Hospital in the state of Bolívar for 24 years and works in the triage area, which was renovated by the ICRC.

In 2022, our humanitarian action in Venezuela benefited:





including hospitals, primary health-care centres, schools, community kitchens, forensic institutions and prisons, which received support to improve their infrastructure and restore essential services in Caracas and the states of Aragua, Miranda, Táchira, Apure, Zulia and Bolívar.

These figures are the result of the efforts of our teams, often working with the Venezuelan Red Cross, to alleviate the suffering of the most vulnerable.

Advancing surely and steadily to deliver an effective response with people at the centre of all we do

Now is the time of year when we look back and take stock of our humanitarian action in the challenging contexts around the world where the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) operates. In the case of the ICRC regional delegation in Venezuela, 2022 was a year in which we had to navigate difficult waters and battle a seemingly endless storm. In spite of this, we did make advances in Venezuela, and we can now see the world getting back to normal after the devastating COVID-19 pandemic which, although now causing less havoc, is still affecting all our lives. Thanks to the joint efforts of all the members of our team, working with the Venezuelan Red Cross and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), we were able to shine a light of hope for those most in need in Venezuela.

We have not yet reached a safe harbour, but we are at least in calmer waters. We are more determined than ever to overcome the difficulties the country faces. If there is one thing that all of us who belong to the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement (the Movement) are sure of, it is that we will always be there to help alleviate the suffering of the most vulnerable, even in the most challenging circumstances. Our response in 2022 focused on three aims: putting people at the centre of our activities, delivering a comprehensive and multidisciplinary response and strengthening joint action by Movement components in the country.

Why are people the key focus of our response in areas affected by armed violence?

The answer to this question may seem very simple, but something that is often overlooked and that we must remind ourselves of, a million times if necessary, is that only the affected people themselves have first-hand experience of the suffering caused by armed violence and they tend to find ways to cope with the situation and become more resilient in the face of violence. The ICRC teams work to alleviate people's suffering, but without imposing solutions or adopting a rigid approach. We work hand in hand with communities to build responses that are sustainable over time and tailored to the specific circumstances of each context. Our teams are often thanked for their work in the field with a smile or a handshake or even a guayoyo coffee offered as a heartfelt gesture of gratitude. A. Van Schermbeek//CRC 2022

C. Ravelo/UCAB 2022

What is a comprehensive and multidisciplinary response?

This question has a simple and straightforward answer – it involves our teams working together, always giving their best and coming up with innovative solutions. A multidisciplinary approach is the best way to expand our strengths, experience and resources. For example, an operation in a community will require the presence of a team formed by specialists in different fields, such as protection, water and sanitation, economic security, infrastructure, and health, who will work with community members to provide the support they need.

What is joint action by Movement components?

This can be easily explained. The Movement has ramped up its joint action to reach more people in difficult situations. Our resources are limited, but by joining forces we can expand our footprint in the country. Being part of a family, with complementary roles and mandates, means that we can implement our activities more effectively.

How will our work continue in 2023?

Although we have all seen some improvements in the country, there are still many areas where violence persists and people remain vulnerable, for example, the area on the border with Colombia, the central states and the mining area in Bolívar. In these places, we will continue our endeavour to build trust and develop a constructive relationship with affected communities.

Our work is based on acceptance of our neutrality, impartiality and independence, which we achieve by engaging in confidential bilateral dialogue with the Venezuelan authorities, organizations and civil society groups that are essential in ensuring that we can carry out our work effectively.

In my three years as head of the ICRC delegation in Venezuela, I have had the opportunity to observe the great resourcefulness and virtues of the Venezuelan people, who always find ways to adapt and overcome the challenges they face. The common Venezuelan expression echarle pichón, which is Spanish for "give it everything you've got", has become a motto for our teams at regional delegation and at the three sub-delegations in Táchira, Bolívar and Caracas. In the face of a daunting challenge, the best approach is to think outside the box, talk to people as much as you can and give it everything you've got. Nothing more, nothing less.

A de Baerque

Arnaud de Baecque Head of delegation

Delivering a comprehensive response to protect and assist the communities most affected by armed violence

In 2022, the ICRC continued its efforts to protect and assist people affected by armed violence in Venezuela, particularly those who suffered the consequences of fighting in the states of Apure, Aragua, Miranda and Bolívar. Always guided by the principles of humanity, impartiality, neutrality and independence, we delivered a timely and appropriate response to address people's most urgent needs in the areas of health care, water and sanitation, protection, restoring family links, forensics, detention and economic security.

Our multidisciplinary response addressed not only the material needs of people directly or indirectly affected by armed violence, but also their need for tools and knowledge to strengthen their resilience so that they are able to better cope with the situation they face. Working with communities and having their insights and support was crucial to the success of these activities.



Ensuring the continued delivery of health care for all

Armed violence, coupled with structural problems, shortages of health-care staff and medical supplies and the lack of essential services, such as water and electricity, leads to risks that prevent health-care facilities from operating properly. To ensure that all those who go to health facilities can get the care they need, we must work with the authorities and communities to provide a comprehensive response that can guarantee proper health care for all from the time a health problem is detected through to recovery and a return to normal life. The ICRC contributes its expertise in health programmes and in other areas such as infrastructure, water and sanitation, economic security and protection.

Proximity is also a crucial factor in delivering health care. Our efforts to ensure that there are well-trained health-care workers available have enabled us to build trust and establish close connections with individuals and communities. This allows us to get feedback on needs and the quality of health care in order to understand the challenges faced and identify ways of ensuring that patients receive the care they need.

People in areas affected by armed violence and economic hardship will almost certainly also suffer emotional problems, such as depression, anxiety and stress, and will require appropriate care to overcome them. The ICRC therefore focused efforts on mental health and psychosocial support to help people reduce their level of suffering, providing them with strategies to cope better with their situation and build their resilience.

The ICRC is currently helping communities in San Félix and El Callao in the state of Bolívar and in La Cota 905 and Petare in Caracas by providing training, awareness-raising and mentoring for community leaders in mental health and psychosocial support and giving them tools to build community support networks. In the state of Falcón, the ICRC works with the Venezuelan Red Cross to support and assist the families of missing persons.

215,915 PEOPLE

received medical attention provided by ICRCsupported emergency rooms, primary health-care centres and pre-hospital services.

976 HEALTH-CARE

workers were trained in advanced trauma care, basic life support and other areas.



of medical supplies were distributed to 30 health facilities.



in Bolívar, Miranda and Caracas received financial training to help them improve their incomegenerating enterprises.



in Bolívar, Miranda and Caracas received training in business skills, and 185 of them received financial support to develop their business.



in Miranda received employability training and support in finding a job.



activities in Caracas received assistance, including financial support, to enable small businesses to be set up in various communities.

Supporting people seeking to improve their standard of living

Poor access to essential services is not the only obstacle faced by people in remote communities; livelihood insecurity and the growing informal sector have exacerbated the vulnerability of people whose standard of living has already fallen as a result of armed violence in the area where they live.

In 2022, the ICRC implemented a comprehensive and targeted nutrition strategy consisting in serving over 400,000 hot meals to 2,200 people at seven school canteens and community kitchens. It also involved improving the capacity and infrastructure of all the kitchens and regularly monitoring the nutritional status of the benefited population.

Helping people to resume or strengthen income-generating activities and gain access to viable markets was another of the ICRC's main goals in 2022. The aim was to enable them to improve their food security and regain their economic security. The capacities they develop will also enable them to improve their resilience to shocks and stresses caused by cyclical violence and climate hazards. As part of these efforts, the ICRC provided over 2,400 people in five states with training in sowing techniques and good agricultural practices and supplied tools, fertilizer and seed for home vegetable gardens. The aim of these activities is to ensure a more diversified diet for these people and greater economic security.

Additionally, in response to various emergencies caused by heavy rains in areas where the ICRC operates, we worked with the Venezuelan Red Cross to provide over 4,000 people in eight states with personal hygiene items, sheets, hammocks, kitchen kits and other non-food items to cover their basic needs.



Water, electricity and sanitation: essential resources for the well-being of the population

Access to water and other essential services, such as electricity and sanitation, is vital to ensuring people's well-being in terms of food, work and education, among other things. With a view to improving access to services that are crucial for households and livelihoods, in 2022 the ICRC renovated and improved supply systems and infrastructure at 35 establishments, including hospitals, primary health-care centres, schools, community kitchens, forensic institutions and prisons, and in vulnerable communities in the states of Aragua, Miranda, Táchira, Apure, Zulia and Bolívar and in Caracas. To ensure the sustainability of these projects, the ICRC helped technical personnel at local water authorities to learn the skills required to operate and maintain the renovated water supply systems.

Ensuring fast and effective action with a people-centric protection approach

The constant dialogue we maintained with communities, authorities and other actors, including weapon bearers, throughout the year, enabled us to respond to the immediate needs of the most vulnerable, such as the sick and injured, and separated families.

In 2022, the ICRC focused efforts on strengthening its community-based protection approach to increase the involvement of affected people and ensure that they are at the centre of our humanitarian response. We held 11 consultations with vulnerable communities and health-care personnel in Apure, Zulia, Bolívar, Aragua, Miranda and Caracas and worked with them to design multidisciplinary responses, taking into account the specific risks they face and the coping mechanisms they have developed.

In 2022, individual assistance was provided in 124 cases to cover immediate needs arising from the consequences of armed violence.

Six training sessions were held on safe behaviour at schools in Petare, El Callao and Tumeremo, with a view to developing contingency plans and strengthening self-protection mechanisms. We help save lives by teaching people safe practices they can follow when fighting occurs in their community.





Hearing her daughter's **voice again lifted her heart**

Just two weeks after she left for Colombia, Daniela* lost contact with her family and went for months without being able to speak to her mother or siblings. On the other side of the border, in Venezuela, Susana* was overcome by uncertainty, with no news of her daughter, until one day the ICRC knocked on her door with a very important message: a letter from Daniela* assuring her family that she was safe and well.

That letter changed Susana's* life, and now they have all learned to 'feel' Daniela's* virtual hugs. The anxiety that gripped Susana's heart has lifted. Every once in a while, her daughter calls to wish happy birthday to one of the family members, or just to catch up.

"The bond you have with your children lasts forever and, whatever the circumstances, you always know you'll see them again. My family is whole again now; we may be physically apart, but we are together at heart." The ICRC works with the Venezuelan Red Cross under the Restoring Family Links programme to prevent families from being separated, help relatives locate and clarify the fate of missing loved ones and put people separated from their families by armed violence, natural disasters, migration or detention back in touch with them. In 2022, we provided **13,243 connectivity-related services** (calls, Wi-Fi connections and battery charging) at **14** points in different parts of Venezuela. Additionally, **44 Red Cross messages** with family news were delivered to relatives, helping people to restore and maintain contact and be reunited with their families.

Support was provided to the families of missing people in the state of Falcón to address different needs arising from the disappearance of a loved one, including their need to know where they are and what happened to them, mental health needs, economic security and advice on legal and administrative matters.

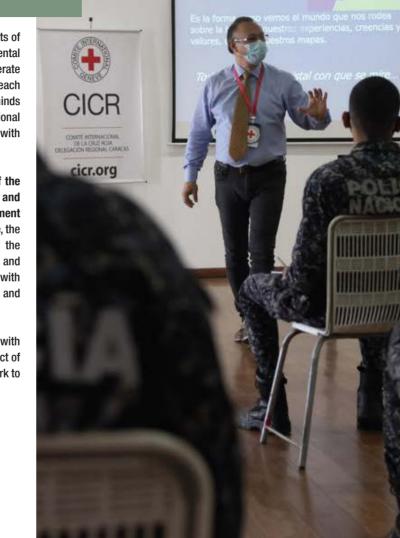
In 2023, our teams will focus on continuing to carry out these activities and strengthening cooperation with key institutions. They will also seek to improve access to services for people separated from their families and the relatives of missing people, assisting them in their search.

Promoting respect for international humanitarian **law among all weapon bearers**

The ICRC engages in confidential bilateral dialogue to promote respect for the rights of people affected by armed violence and ensure their physical safety and mental well-being. The confidential dialogue built with the authorities has enabled it to operate in the country's most remote and inaccessible places that no other organizations reach to carry out its work to protect and assist victims of armed violence. The ICRC reminds the authorities and the other parties concerned of their obligations under international human rights law and domestic legislation on the use of force, providing them with support, if needed, to incorporate them into their rules and practices.

As part of our efforts to achieve this goal, in 2022 more than 1,100 members of the police and armed forces took part in seminars on International Humanitarian Law and National and International Rules Governing the Use of Force by Law Enforcement Officers, along with officials from the Ombudsman's Office, the Ministry of Defence, the Public Prosecutor's Office and the Judiciary. The Venezuelan national police, the Scientific, Criminal and Forensic Investigation Unit (CICPC) and other state and municipal police units took part in these activities, which were jointly organized with the human rights departments of the Ministry of Defence, Ministry of the Interior and Ministry of Justice and Peace.

In 2023, we will continue our efforts to maintain an ongoing confidential dialogue with Venezuela's armed and security forces, with a view to reducing the potential impact of their public order operations on civilians and highlighting the importance of our work to serve and protect all people.



(4)



and subcommittees received support to strengthen their humanitarian activities and improve the well-being of their volunteers.



received training in Safer Access, operational risk management and safe driving.



The Red Cross Movement: an unstoppable force for people in need

All those serving the Movement – especially our volunteers – work tirelessly day after day to alleviate the suffering of those enduring difficult times as a result of crises, violence, natural disasters or other situations. The ICRC cooperates with the Venezuelan Red Cross for the delivery of a safe, rapid, and effective humanitarian response to help people affected by violence and emergencies of different kinds. We also support the Venezuelan Red Cross and its volunteers in implementing activities in areas relating to first aid, pre-hospital care, economic security, water and sanitation, psychosocial support, promotion of humanitarian principles and restoring family links, leveraging our complementary strengths and optimizing the use of available capacities and resources in our efforts to help vulnerable communities.

After another year working by their side, we can only reiterate our admiration for the unwavering determination that keeps them going when they have to work long hours in difficult conditions and on weekends, when they could be at home relaxing. The work of these volunteers to help those most in need has a multiplier effect. They are the heart of the Movement.

Cooperation with the Trinidad and Tobago Red Cross Society and **The Netherlands Red Cross overseas branches in Aruba**, **Bonaire and Curaçao**

On the islands of Trinidad and Tobago, Aruba, Bonaire and Curaçao, the ICRC carries out work relating to its mandate and operations to meet immediate needs. This mainly involves activities associated with immigration detention and restoring family links. In 2022, the organization worked with the National Societies on the islands to strengthen their capacities by providing training in different areas relating to restoring family links.

Ensuring decent conditions for people deprived of their liberty

Being deprived of one's liberty entails fear, anxiety and separation from loved ones, but the rights of detainees should not be restricted. Key factors in providing decent conditions for people deprived of their liberty include ensuring their dignity is respected, they have sufficient and appropriate access to essential services (drinking water, health care, food, etc.) without discrimination, they are guaranteed due process rights and they are allowed contact with their families. The ICRC visits people deprived of their liberty all over the world and works with the authorities to prevent ill-treatment, ensure decent living conditions, improve the conditions of detention and promote observance of due process guarantees.

In 2022, the ICRC visited 10,490 people deprived of their liberty in ten civilian and military places of detention in Venezuela. We worked with the prison authorities and implemented a range of activities based on a multidisciplinary approach to help detainees maintain contact with their families, speed up legal proceedings and improve access to food, drinking water, sanitation and health care. During its visits, the ICRC meets privately with people deprived of their liberty and talks to prison staff. It engages in a bilateral dialogue with the authorities and shares its observations, always with the aim of promoting compliance with applicable national and international standards for detention. Fostering a systemic approach, the ICRC also worked with the Judiciary to identify challenges and come up with practical solutions to the problem of long waits for cases to reach trial. Regular training activities were organized during the year on the Nelson Mandela Rules for the staff of civilian and military prisons.



were distributed to 8,387 people deprived of their liberty.



deprived of their liberty at 5 prisons received micronutrients and food supplements.



messages were collected, and 135 were distributed to people deprived of their liberty in 9 prisons.



were made to support the provision of essential services (medicines, medical supplies and equipment and cleaning materials) and efforts to speed up legal proceedings (office and computer equipment and supplies).



received support to maintain essential services and install rainwater harvesting systems to improve access to water.

Ensuring the dignified treatment of the dead and their families

Ensuring the dignified treatment of the dead requires professionals in a variety of fields, including pathologists, autopsy technicians, odontologists, anthropologists and psychologists, who all play a crucial role in this area, helping provide answers to families who have lost a loved one. It is important to ensure that these professionals receive the respect and recognition they deserve and have decent working conditions so that they can perform their duties properly.

Yesenia Delgado is one of these professionals. For the past three years, she has been working as a pathologist at the San Fernando's Morgue in the state of Apure. She explains how the activities carried out by the ICRC in 2022 have improved conditions at the forensic facility.

"The situation here made it difficult for us to work properly. The cold chambers were broken, which meant that keeping bodies here for any longer than four days was very complicated. There are now decent working conditions at the facility, and the staff are happy," says Yesenia. In 2022, the ICRC renovated the infrastructure at seven morgues in Ocumare del Tuy, Los Teques, Caracas, Maracay and Apure.

The bodies of people who die as a result of armed violence, disasters or migration must be treated with respect and dignity, and their relatives must be informed. Efforts must therefore be undertaken to search for, recover and identify remains to prevent the tragedy of people not knowing what has happened to their missing loved ones. In 2023, the ICRC will continue to work with the forensic authorities and personnel to strengthen their technical expertise, provide them with the supplies and equipment they need so that they can perform their day-to-day work effectively in well-equipped facilities and ensure closer support for those working in inaccessible areas.

22 FORENSIC

facilities received regular support in 2022 in the form of supplies, personal protective equipment and other equipment required for their work.

166 WORKERS

of the National Forensic Medicine and Science Service (SENAMECF), the Public Prosecutor's Office, CICPC and the Central University of Venezuela (UCV) received training on good practices for forensic identification and victim services and new techniques in forensic anthropology and forensic odontology.

Good news!

The ICRC's Forensic Unit to be honoured by the American Academy of Forensic Sciences (AAFS) in 2023

The ICRC's Forensic Unit, which was created 20 years ago, is to be distinguished with the Clyde Snow Award presented by the AAFS Humanitarian and Human Rights Resource Center.

We are very honoured to receive this award, which recognizes the work of more than 150 forensic experts and humanitarian workers who came together in 2003 to create what is now the ICRC's Forensic Unit. For us, this is an award that not only confers international recognition, but also a responsibility to continue our humanitarian forensic work and improve our services for the dead and their families. To contact the ICRC in Venezuela, the following numbers can now be used for calls or SMSs





And the following address for emails CentrocontactoVE@icrc.org



The ICRC's Community Contact Centre in Venezuela operates Monday to Friday from 8:00 to 12:00 and from 13:00 to 17:00 Listening to the communities **we work with**

COMMUNITY CONTACT CENTRE

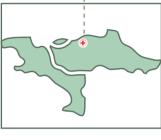
In order to improve our humanitarian services and provide new alternative channels for people to get in touch with the ICRC, at the end of 2022 we launched the Community Contact Centre. People affected by armed violence can now call us to ask us questions about the ICRC's activities in Venezuela, share their comments with us or make a confidential complaint about our personnel or services.





The Caracas Regional Delegation also carries out activities in the islands of Aruba, Bonaire, Curaçao, and Trinidad and Tobago, in line with the ICRC's mandate.

ICRC PRESENCE IN VENEZUELA AND PRIORITY AREAS

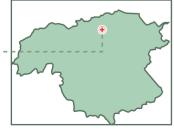




Venezuela Centro Subdelegation

Distrito Capital and the states of Miranda and Aragua.

San Cristobal Subdelegation States of Tachira, Zulia and Apure.



Puerto Ordaz Subdelegation Bolivar state.





we travelled 1,200,000 km



in our vehicles,

with over **200 workers** carrying out humanitarian





work in different **parts** of Venezuela.

Making dreams come true in violence-affected communities

The ICRC adopts a multidisciplinary approach in areas of Venezuela such as La Cota 905 in Caracas where, in even the most challenging circumstances, we continue to carry out activities to assist and protect communities affected by armed violence.

This work involves constantly engaging in confidential dialogue with all weapon bearers on the appropriate use of force and the prevention of armed violence that puts people at risk, restoring family links, supporting economic security, renovating essential community facilities and always listening to the concerns of affected people, making their needs a priority in all we do.

Ronald is one of these people. He grew up in a family that did everything it could to keep him away from the violence. He finished school and played basketball in a semi-professional league but, like anyone who lives in a place like La Cota 905, he knows all too well what it means to lose a loved one to violence.

In 2021, Ronald revived the dream he had cherished since he was 14, which was to give children and young people in the area an alternative, to show them that there are other paths that do not lead to violence. He continued his endeavours in 2022, even when fierce armed clashes put La Cota 905 in the headlines.

This is how the La Cota 905 sports academy came to be set up. Ronald started giving free classes on a court in the area which was in a bad state of repair. The ICRC set about renovating it with the help of the community.

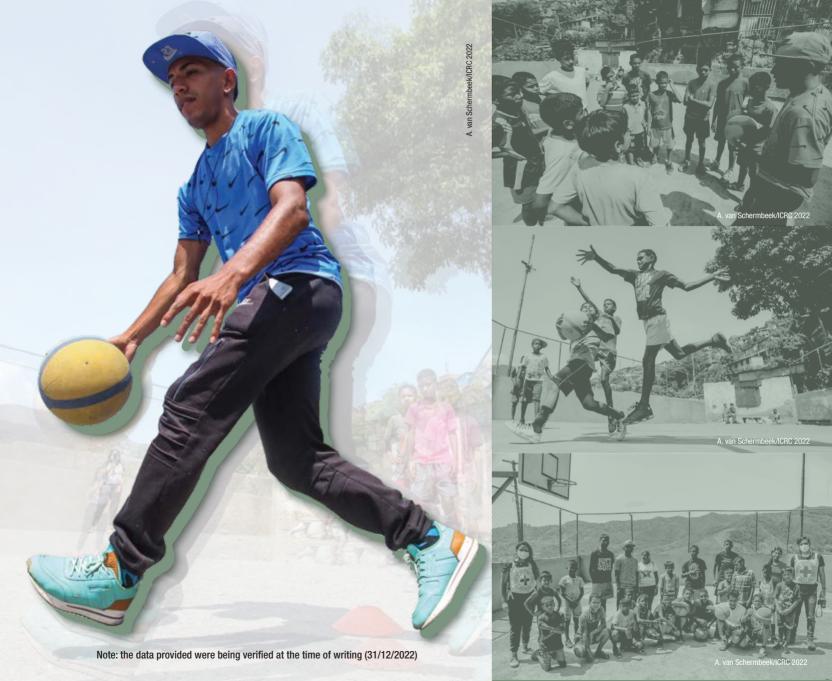
At the same time, we worked with communities in La Cota 905 to find solutions to help them get what they needed and strengthen their resilience to cope with armed violence. These solutions focused on providing training for young people to help them set up small businesses, such as bakeries and hair salons, and learn other trades. Support was also provided to create community gardens and restore people's livelihoods.

We provided support to renovate health facilities to ensure decent conditions for health-care workers and quality treatment for people who are wounded or seriously injured. In 2022, we started a pilot project to train community leaders to provide basic psychosocial support in the community.

Every day, we hear stories like Ronald's about resilience, about people who put their everything into creating opportunities to improve their situation and conditions in their community.



Scan the QR code to read Ronald's story



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.

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