

ARMENIA

# OPERATIONAL HIGHLIGHTS

JANUARY-DECEMBER 2023



The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) is an impartial, neutral, and independent organization ensuring humanitarian protection and assistance for victims of armed conflict and other situations of violence. Since 1992, the ICRC has been carrying out humanitarian work in the region to assist people affected by the conflict, promote the dissemination and implementation of the international humanitarian law (IHL) and act as a neutral intermediary between the conflict sides.

Through our delegation in Yerevan and sub-delegation in Goris we continued to support those affected by the conflict escalations in 2020–2023. We continued facilitating resilience-building programs in communities situated along the border between Armenia and Azerbaijan. We cooperated closely and worked in complementarity with the Armenian Red Cross Society (ARCS) supporting their activities as well as joining efforts in the response to the civilians affected by the escalations.

Following the military escalation on 19 September in Karabakh, the ICRC scaled up its response including with the deployment of staff specialized in the fields of protection, health, forensics, movement cooperation, and weapon contamination to respond to the evolving humanitarian needs. We provided hospitals with supplies to treat trauma injuries, including the war-wounded and burn victims from the fuel depot explosion on 25 September. We facilitated the medical evacuations to Armenia of those in need of urgent medical treatment. We also supported the evacuation of the bodies of the deceased and worked with morgues and hospitals to help identify and ensure the respectful and dignified treatment of the dead. In Armenia, we provided cash assistance and material support to those moved from Karabakh, in cooperation with the ARCS.

We continued interacting with the families of people unaccounted for following the conflict escalations, and since November 2022, have launched the Accompaniment program, which is carried out in collaboration with the ARCS based on the prior assessment of needs of those families. In addition, we kept providing technical and material support, including forensic expertise, for the preparedness and response for the prevention of disappearances and maximizing identification of the dead in emergency situations.

We kept visiting those detained in connection with the conflict escalations, whose detention had been confirmed by the respective authorities. During our visits, we assessed the treatment of the detainees and the conditions of their detention as well as facilitated the exchange of news with their families. With the consent of the authorities, the family contact was maintained by means of Red Cross messages, phone calls, oral greetings and/or pre-recorded video messages.

## MISSING, DETAINED AND THE DEAD

More than **8,800 calls** and individual **visits** were received at the ICRC delegation in Yerevan and subdelegation in Goris.

**62 families** requested ICRC support to clarify the fate and whereabouts of their missing relatives by opening tracing requests.

**12 families** learned about the fate and whereabouts of their relatives with the ICRC support.

**303 persons** from Armenia are still missing in relation to the escalations in 2020-2022, as per the tracing requests received by the ICRC from affected families. The ICRC maintains the cases and continues to work with the concerned authorities to help provide answers to the respective families.

**5 Right to Know sessions** for the families of the missing were held in Armavir, Lori, and Tavush regions.

**4 information sessions** were held in Armavir and Lori regions for the representatives of the Scientific-Practical Center of Forensic Medicine (SPCFM) DNA laboratory and the State Commission for the Prisoners of War, Hostages and Missing Persons.

**1600 oral, video, and written Red Cross messages** were shared with the families of those detained in relation to the conflict escalations. The ICRC visited the detained individuals on a regular basis and helped them restore or maintain contact with their relatives.

**2 genetic specialists** from the SPCFM DNA Laboratory took part in a study visit to an ISO 17025-accredited DNA Laboratory in Tbilisi, Georgia.

**18 digital thermometers and one photo camera** were donated to the SPCFM DNA Laboratory in Yerevan to bolster capacity building and enhance testing methodologies.

**2 genetic experts** from the SPCFM DNA Laboratory were supported to participate in the International Forensic DNA

Database Policy Symposium and the Regional Forensic DNA Training.

**30 participants** representing Armenia's Investigative Committee, National Security Service (NSS), ministries of Health, Defense, Emergency Situations Service, Police, and the ARCS attended a three-day ICRC-led workshop on the Emergency Preparedness and Response for the Prevention of Disappearances and Maximizing Identification of the Dead.

**1,970 body bags** were provided to the SPCFM (1,840) and the Ministry of Interior's (MoIA) Rescue Service (RS) (130).

**25 participants** from the RS and the ARCS attended refresher sessions on traceability and chain of custody in the management of the dead in emergencies.

**4 genetic experts** from the SPCFM DNA laboratory received specialized training on the use of state-of-the-art genetic testing equipment.

**11 representatives** of the Investigative Committee participated in a DNA Training Session.

**6 cold chambers** were installed at the SPCFM morgue in Yerevan.

**25,400 examination gloves, 10,000 scalpel blades, 1750 sample collection kits, 30 DNA extraction kits, five sets of IT equipment, six cold chamber lifting trolleys, 20 body trolleys, two freezers, 3400 masks, two genetic analyzers,** laboratory furniture, consumables, and reagents were donated to the SPCFM laboratory.

**3 refrigerated containers** were installed in Abovyan, Armavir, and Yeghegnadzor mortuaries.

**A new heavy-duty truck** with a specially adapted refrigerated cargo compartment was donated to the SPCFM.

**2 trucks** of the RS were upgraded into refrigerated vehicles.



A photo exhibition to commemorate the International Day of the Disappeared, organized on 30 August in Armavir town, Armenia.



## MENTAL HEALTH AND PSYCHOSOCIAL SUPPORT

**1,022 persons** benefited from direct mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS).

**245 people** attended sensitization sessions organized by the ICRC and the ARCS on the psychological consequences of armed conflict on various layers of the civilian population.

**102 family members of missing persons** received psychological support during home visits or through support groups.

**354 MHPSS group sessions** were organized in various regions in Armenia, including 34 for the families of missing persons.

**880 people**, including **285 persons** recently moved to Armenia from Karabakh and living in communities of Gegharkunik, Tavush, Vayots Dzor, and Syunik regions, were provided with mental health and psychosocial support conducted by the ARCS counsellors in close cooperation with the ICRC.

**20 persons** previously detained in relation to the conflict, attended MHPSS sessions.

**133 individual sessions** were carried out by ARCS counsellors and the ICRC MHPSS team.

**54 health workers** from Syunik and Gegharkunik participated in workshops jointly organized by the ARCS on

stress management, self-care, and interacting with people affected by violence.

**96 persons** including 35 mental health practitioners and health professionals from partner NGOs and Armenia's Ministry of Defense (MoD), who attended a three-day training on MHPSS Response to persons previously detained, organized jointly by the ICRC and the Swedish Red Cross in Yerevan, were trained to be able to provide MHPSS and to enhance their interaction skills with the families of missing persons, people previously detained and those affected by violence.



An MHPSS group session for the families of the missing in Armavir region, Armenia.



## HEALTH CARE

**974 persons** in 66 communities of Syunik, Vayots Dzor, Gegharkunik, Tavush, and Ararat regions, including health professionals and firefighters, were trained in basic/advanced first aid by the ARCS First Aid Department, with ICRC support.

**19 managers** from four hospitals in Tavush region and one hospital in Gegharkunik region participated in the ICRC's Mass Casualty Management Course.

**3 health facilities** in Syunik and Vayots Dzor regions hosted the Mass Casualty Management simulation exercises for their staff members.

**20 basic**, five drugs and five renewable units of the Interagency Emergency Health Kit were donated to the Ministry of Health of Armenia (MoH) for distribution in the primary health care services of regions with a high number of displaced people to cover basic medical care needs of 50,000 persons for three months.

**192 staff members** of the ambulance and emergency services from Syunik, Vayots Dzor, Gegharkunik, and Tavush regions were trained in the ICRC-WHO Basic Emergency Care course.

**4 hospitals** in Chambarak, Sisian, Goris, and Kapan towns were equipped with generators to enhance energy resilience during times of crisis.

**1 cold chamber** was installed in the Central Pharmacy of the MoH.

**Armenian International Emergency and Disaster Medical Center (AIE&DMTS)** was launched with joint efforts of the ICRC, Erebuni Medical Center, and the Harvard Medical

Faculty Physicians at Beth Israel Deaconess MC in Massachusetts, USA.

**20 nurses and physicians** from 12 health facilities near the border with Azerbaijan participated in a two-week training in four key EMC courses at AIE&DMTC with the ICRC support.

**146 emergency service staff members** in Syunik and Vayots Dzor hospitals attended the AIE&DMTC-organized Basic Life Support (BLS) and PHTLS outreach courses with support from the ICRC, WHO and other partners.

**12 hospitals** and one health center in Tavush, Gegharkunik, Vayots Dzor, Ararat, and Syunik regions received contingency materials to strengthen Emergency Medical Care services.

**Over 40 protocols** on emergency care and services were drafted by the working group established with the ICRC support by the Armenian Society of Anesthesiologists and Intensive Care Specialists and presented to the MoH for endorsement.



Basic Emergency Care training for health professionals at the Jermuk Health Center.



## PROMOTION OF INTERNATIONAL HUMANITARIAN LAW

**3 high-ranking military officers** from the NSS Border Guard Troops discussed the challenges of international humanitarian law (IHL) in contemporary armed conflicts during an expert-led workshop in Yerevan.

**8 military officers and lecturers** from the Border Guard Troops of the NSS updated their knowledge of IHL during a two-day advanced workshop organized by the ICRC.

**24 officers and non-commission** officers of the Border Guard Troops of the NSS learned about the ICRC mandate and activities, and IHL basics during an ICRC workshop in Gyumri, Shirak region, and in Kapan, Syunik region.

**4 high-ranking military officers** of the Ministry of Defense of Armenia discussed the perspectives of the IHL integration into the armed forces with ICRC support.

**16 officers, non-commission officers, and sergeants** of the Armenian Peacekeeping Brigade learned about the ICRC and IHL basics.

**86 military cadets** participated in the IHL Basic Dissemination session at the Military University after Vazgen Sargsyan.

**75 military officers, non-commissioned officers, and contract soldiers** from the tactical/field level participated in the IHL Basic Dissemination session in the Military University after Vazgen Sargsyan.

**30 high-ranking military officers** from the MoD and the General Staff participated in the thematic dissemination session, where the topic was the IHL in the decision-making process of military planning and operations.

**35 onsite** and **16 online** participants attended the 7th Regional Summer School on IHL organized in cooperation with the American University of Armenia.

**250 IHL-themed factsheets** in Armenian were printed and distributed among academic institutions and key national authorities.

The **IHL and IHRL research hub** was established to serve as a platform for IHL experts, young practitioners, and students interested in IHL and relevant legal frameworks.

**13 editors-in-chief** of the key media in Armenia participated in the closed briefing chaired by the delegation's management to promote the understanding of the ICRC mandate, role and key conflict-related humanitarian issues in the region.

**11 local media professionals** participated in the workshop for journalists and a press tour to border communities of Syunik and Vayots Dzor regions, with a focus on the topics of Missing and Right to Know, Management of the Dead, Detention work and Restoring Family Links.



Media workshop for the local journalists at the ICRC office in Yerevan.



## WATER AND HABITAT



Water tanks donated to the families from Karabakh, resettled in Chinary village, Tavush region.

**1 school** in Chambarak town, Gegharkunik region improved access to clean water and sanitary hygiene conditions as the ICRC rehabilitated its two sanitary facilities.

**2 morgues** in Syunik and Vayots Dzor regions were rehabilitated, including improvement of the lighting, ventilation, and sewage systems.

**2 emergency departments** in Goris and Kapan Medical Centers, Syunik region were rehabilitated, improving the functionality in everyday operations, and in emergencies.

**1 elderly care center** in Artsvanik village, Syunik region improved living conditions and prevented further structural damage to the building allowing the interior to be repaired over time by the rehabilitation of the roof.

**3 primary health centers** in Bardzravan, Nerkin Khndoresk, and Khnatsakh villages, Syunik region improved clean water access, sanitary-hygiene conditions, as well as the roofs drainage systems.

**1 cold storage** was installed in the National Center for the Provision of Medicines and Medical Supplies SNCO to improve the conditions of medicines storage.

**3 communities** (Nrnadzor and Alvank villages in Meghri, Syunik region, and Chinari village in Berd, Tavush region) improved access to water due to the donation of valves, a borehole pump, and water tanks.



## ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE

**42 small-scale productive grants** were provided in Sznak and Ditsmayri, Nrnadzor, Kaghnut, and Shurnukh villages, Syunik region, and **15 grants** in Tretuk village, Gegharkunik region.

**33 beneficiaries** from border communities attended business skills training courses organized by the ICRC.

**20 households** with special protection considerations, including vulnerable families of the missing, detainees, and released detainees, were assisted with small-scale productive grants and vocational trainings to enable them to start income-generation activities.

**12 households** with special protection considerations, including vulnerable families of the missing and detained, and the released detainees, were provided with cash assistance to meet the most pressing needs.

**27 permanent resident households** of Kutakan village, Gegharkunik region, benefited from the ICRC's Cash for Livelihood support program implemented jointly with the ARCS.

**37 house rehabilitation projects** for people with special protection considerations were launched in collaboration with the Fuller Center for Housing Armenia.

**2,325 raspberry seedlings** were distributed to 14 selected households in Bardzravan village, Syunik region, which benefited from technical training sessions on raspberry growing, compost, and vermicompost production, processing, and commercialization of raspberries, and were additionally provided with **14 packs of Californian worms, 112 wooden pallets, 14 sets of tools** to assemble the compost bins, **2,000-liter water tanks** and complete drip irrigation systems.

**26 fruit producers** from Tavush region attended capacity-building training on compost and vermicompost production, followed by the provision of 16 compost bins and 13 Californian worm packages.

**52 resident households** of Aygepar village, Tavush region, benefited from the full reconstruction of the irrigation channel ensuring irrigation of their land plots.

**4 targeted fruit collectors** from Chinari village, Tavush region, were provided with solar panels to handle their production volume independently of the general electricity supply, training in agribusiness skills focused on marketing and commercialization and a pre-audit on organic certification.

**2 high-power water pumps** with the capacity to supply irrigation water to 80 hectares of orchards were donated to the Nrnadzor village, Syunik region.

**32,969 kg of wheat seeds** were distributed in the Togh enlarged community (Khntsakh, Vaghatur, and Khoznavar villages) in Syunik region, covering 103 households.

**181,800 kg of wheat seeds** were distributed in Sotk, Tretuk and Kutakan villages, Gegharkunik region covering 252 households.

**6,395 individual food parcels, 16,117 hygiene kits, 10,005 blankets, 400 solar lamps, 160 electric heaters, 110 tons of wheat flour** were distributed through the ARCS to people who moved from Karabakh to Armenia in September, 2023.

**440 kg of yeast and 2700 kg of salt** were distributed to the border bakeries of Vorotan, Davit Bek, Tsav, and Bardzravan communities.

**7,337 individuals** were targeted by two different cash programs implemented during November and December in partnership with the ARCS. The first program consisted of two rounds (November and December), with a transfer value of 50,000 AMD (40,000 AMD rent and 10,000 AMD utilities), while the second one provided 50,000 AMD per individual in November to cover the most pressing needs of the people who moved to Armenia from Karabakh.



Raspberry seedlings distributed among 14 selected households in Bardzravan village, Syunik region.



## WEAPON CONTAMINATION

**600 copies** of the educational handbook on mine risk awareness and safer behavior (RASB) and **100 copies of posters** were printed for distribution in communities, in the scope of the project implemented by the ARCS in partnership with the ICRC.

**266 official warning signs** for humanitarian marking activities, **nine puppets** and stage equipment for the Explosive Ordnance Risk Education (EORE) puppet show, and **300 copies** of the Educational handbook were donated to the Center for Humanitarian Demining and Expertise (CHDE).

**10 staff members** of CHDE participated in the three-day train-the-trainer course on explosive ordnance risk education.

**10 employees** of the MoIA Rescue Service attended the RASB workshop in Kapan, Syunik region co-organized by the ICRC, CHDE, and ARCS.

**10 deminers** from the CHDE and **10 deminers & rescuers** of MoD and MoIA learned about Blast Trauma Care in a two-day course held by the ICRC. The ICRC distributed **20 Blast Trauma Care manuals** and **20 First Aid kits** to all the participants of the BTC course. Also, the ICRC donated **two First Aid Basic Backpacks** to the CHDE.

**8 CHDE staff members** specialized in EORE, participated in the ICRC-facilitated workshop on RASB methodology while staging EORE puppet performances at schools.



## COOPERATION WITH THE ARMENIAN RED CROSS\*

**1,358 beneficiaries** benefited from the **22 projects** designed and implemented by the ARCS's **56 volunteers and seven volunteer leaders** in five border regions (Tavush, Gegharkunik, Vayots Dzor, Syunik, and Ararat).

**659 children** who moved to Armenia from Karabakh in September, 2023, and **local residents** were involved in the activities of **eight Smiley Clubs** run by the ARCS in Syunik province (Tegh, Geghanush, Syunik), Gegharkunik (Vardenis, Mets Masrik), Ararat (Masis), Kotayk (Hrazdan) and Yerevan with the ICRC support.

**12 selected schools** in the communities of Syunik and Gegharkunik regions were assessed for emergency preparedness by the ARCS in cooperation with the ICRC. Accordingly, the ARCS provided the 12 schools with **96 fire extinguishers** and **36 fire stands** to enhance the fire protection measures.

**1 simulation exercise** with the participation of the **ARCS three Disaster Response Teams (DRTs)** from Yerevan, Gegharkunik, and Tavush regions conducted by the ARCS in collaboration with the Lore rescue service in Stepanavan, Lori region.

**16 five-day refresher trainings** were conducted by the ARCS for its **seven DRT volunteers** from Vayots Dzor, Gegharkunik, Tavush, Ararat, Syunik (Kapan and Goris) border regions and Yerevan, followed by simulation exercises conducted in cooperation with the MoIA Rescue Service.

**157 staff** of the ARCS headquarters in Yerevan and 12 regional branches took part in **73 briefing sessions** conducted by the ARCS to discuss the safety and security of its staff and volunteers, particularly those engaged in the recent emergency response in Syunik and Vayots Dzor regions.

**80 volunteers of the seven DRTs** worked in shifts to provide services at three summer posts stationed during high season at Sevan Lake public beaches, upon the request of and in collaboration with the MoIA Rescue Service.

**\*For operational activities carried out in partnership with the ARCS please refer to other parts of this document.**

**11,472 staff and pupils** from 12 schools of Gegharkunik and Syunik regions were involved in the evacuation drills, following training courses on emergency evacuation, safe behavior in time of earthquake, shelling and shooting, and use of safe rooms, conducted by the ARCS.

**2,771 teachers, schoolchildren parents, and residents** from four border regions learned about the risks caused by mines and explosive remnants of war and safe behavior through RASB awareness sessions, meetings with community members and door-to-door visits carried out by the ARCS in collaboration with the ICRC.

**1,999 schoolchildren** from 20 schools in four border regions participated in the puppet theatre performances and thematic competitions organized by the ARCS in cooperation with the ICRC.

**2 security safe boxes, 20 fire extinguishers, and one security system** have been provided by the ARCS with the support of the ICRC for improving passive security measures of the two regional branches in Vayots Dzor and Tavush border regions.



Little Milena is happy to receive food and hygiene packages, intended for the people who have fled to Armenia from

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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