



INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE OF THE RED CROSS (ICRC) ACTION & RESULTS: January 2014 – August 2014

The ICRC's operational priorities in North and Central America focus on the protection of and assistance to communities and individuals most vulnerable to and affected by armed violence; in particular migrants, missing persons and their families.

ACTIVITIES IN FAVOUR OF MIGRANTS

Responding to their protection and assistance needs

An internal study on the humanitarian consequences of armed violence in Mexico undertaken in 2011 by the ICRC indicated that migrants are amongst the most vulnerable populations and in greatest need for protection. To help address the situation, the ICRC launched a humanitarian programme aiming to meet the basic needs (health, clean water, and contact with their families) of migrants and to work towards reducing their vulnerability. The ICRC works in close collaboration with the Red Cross National Societies of Mexico, Guatemala and Honduras to respond to some of the needs of migrants along the migration route from Central to North America.

The programme provides migrants with drinking water and orientation, facilitates their contact with relatives through the Restoring

Family Links (RFL) programme's services and network and assists those with serious injuries or amputations. The RFL efforts include the services provided by the American Red Cross, which has set up phone services in shelters on the United States of America's (U.S.) side of the border with Mexico, offering free international phone calls to migrants seeking to contact their relatives.

Basic health care is provided in mobile or permanent facilities and through mobile brigades run by the Mexican Red Cross, and located at strategic points along the migration route in Mexico, as well as at deportation points along the U.S.-Mexico border. In cooperation with the ICRC, similar services are provided by the Guatemalan Red Cross Society located in El Carmen (at the border with Mexico) as well as by the Honduran Red Cross Society in Corinto (at the border with Guatemala), where migrants repatriated from Mexico are assisted.

Results

Basic medical care

From January to August of 2014, over 18,700 migrants received aid at Mexican Red Cross Society/ICRC assistance points; 17,042 of whom received basic medical care. This aid includes assistance provided at the new project in Tijuana, Baja California, inaugurated in March 2014. Another 3,749 repatriated migrants benefitted from similar services in El Carmen, Guatemala (including 89 first aid services and 433 referrals and transportation to the Tecún Umán migrant shelter), as well as 17,900 migrants who received assistance in Corinto, Honduras (including first aid assistance for 610 migrants, the distribution of 17,011 hygiene kits, food for unaccompanied child migrants, and assistance and transportation to housing for particularly vulnerable migrants).



ICRC



Delivery of a RFL message in the mountain region of Guerrero

Restoring Family Links (RFL)

In Mexico, more than 1,700 migrants were able to contact their family members thanks to ICRC-funded telephone services, either at Mexican Red Cross Society/ICRC assistance points or through new projects in shelters in the states of Chiapas and Coahuila, in southern and northeast Mexico. In addition, nine calling-card dispensers were installed in various shelters in Mexico.

In Corinto, Honduras, 4,899 migrants were able to contact their family members through the free telephone services. Beginning in July, a group of Honduran Red Cross volunteers managed the free phone call services for migrants deported in the shelter El Edén, in San Pedro Sula.

In El Carmen, Guatemala, 3,555 migrants re-established contact with their families thanks to RFL services. Support was also provided to 71 families of repatriated unaccompanied migrant minors at the Nuestras Raíces migrant shelters in Quetzaltenango and Guatemala City, providing families with fare to pick-up their children and return together to their places of residence.

RFL services were provided in some detention centres in order to re-establish contact between detainees and their families.

Starting in the summer of 2013, the American Red Cross Society, in partnership with local migrant service organisations, has been able to provide more than 1,436 phone calls home for vulnerable migrants seeking to reconnect with their loved ones from seven areas along the Texas, Arizona and California border.

The American Red Cross Society also provided first aid and water purification supplies to an Arizona desert camp, close to the border with Mexico.

In order to address the need of thousands of unaccompanied migrant minors to contact their families while under the custody of the U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP), the American Red Cross with the support of the ICRC implemented a phone call project in a mass CBP processing centre located in Nogales, Arizona. The project lasted five weeks and facilitated 14,000 phone calls during this period.

Assistance in sanitation, water and habitat

In cooperation with the Red Cross National Societies of Honduras, Guatemala and Mexico, drinking water was distributed to 50,000 migrants over the last eight months. The ICRC supported the Mexican Red Cross Society in rehabilitating its water purification equipment and improved its capacity for both drinking water production and distribution.



Nine migrant shelters run by Mexican non-governmental organisations were assisted in 2014, either through improvements to access to drinking water or by rehabilitating infrastructure, ensuring that migrants were accommodated in dignified conditions. Overall, 2,700 migrants benefitted daily from the improved conditions in these shelters.

Furthermore, donations of water filters and solar heaters allow for a more sustainable use of resources and a reduction in operational costs for shelters. In October, a hygiene promotion campaign was launched to reduce preventable diseases.

In Honduras, improvements were also made in the conditions of reception of deported migrants through the rehabilitation of the toilet facilities in two centres managed by authorities, as well as through the donation of humanitarian assistance to the El Edén shelter, in San Pedro Sula, which welcomes repatriated migrants minors and migrant families that were deported by land.

Assistance to individuals injured, with amputations or seriously ill.

The ICRC provided migrants with serious injuries or amputations (often a consequence of falling from the La Bestia cargo train) with crutches, walking sticks, wheelchairs, surgical material and transportation to facilities in Mexico or their country of origin. Twenty-two individuals with serious injuries benefitted from these services, while 20 individuals with amputations received or will receive physical rehabilitation and prosthetics from institutions supported by the ICRC in Mexico, El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras. Furthermore, physiotherapists from the region benefitted from ICRC training in lower limb amputation management sponsored by the ICRC in Colombia.

In Guatemala, eight cases of migrants who were repatriated while ill were channelled through the humanitarian aid chain in coordination with the Guatemalan Red Cross.

In Honduras, the ICRC coordinates a network aimed at providing better support to amputees and injured migrants and their families. This network gathers key partners such as the National Commission of Support for Disabled Returnee Migrants (CONAMIREDIS, an NGO funded by the Catholic Church) and the Centre for Returned Migrants (CAMR).

In September 2013, to complement the physical rehabilitation component of its humanitarian response, the ICRC launched a micro economic initiative pilot programme to socially reintegrate repatriated migrants with disabilities.



Amputated migrant persons receive physical rehabilitation

Monitoring the humanitarian consequences of deportation processes

ICRC teams working in the northern states of Mexico bordering the U.S. also monitored the humanitarian consequences of the deportation process along the U.S.-Mexico border. In coordination with the ICRC Delegation in Washington D.C., the ICRC presented in a confidential manner observations to U.S. migration authorities (Department of Homeland Security). The ICRC also monitors conditions of repatriation by Mexican authorities to Honduras and Guatemala, with a view to presenting its observations to the Mexican authorities.

The ICRC staff conducts regular multidisciplinary visits to migrant retention centres in Mexico, during which it inspects the premises and conducts private interviews with migrant individuals. After analysing the information gathered and its own observations, the ICRC provides written and oral confidential feedback and recommendations to the National Institute for Migration (Instituto Nacional de Migración) on the treatment of migrants and their physical and psychological conditions of retention.

Self-care messages

Through a competition titled, "Supporting those who support migrants," sponsored by the Ibero-American University in Mexico City and the ICRC, two student contests were launched to generate prototype radio spots on self-care for migrants, as well as student proposals on how to improve conditions in a migrant shelter located in Coatzacoalcos, Veracruz.

ACTIVITIES IN FAVOUR OF MISSING PERSONS AND THEIR FAMILIES

The ICRC continues to promote the creation of mechanisms that respond to the different needs of the families of persons missing due to migration, past conflicts or current violence in the region.



Meeting with relatives of missing persons

In mid-2014, the ICRC initiated a one-year accompaniment project in Mexico, Honduras, Guatemala and El Salvador, with some 60 families of missing migrants. The project emphasizes a psychosocial approach that seeks to strengthen the abilities of individuals and families to overcome a wide array of difficulties related to the disappearance of a loved one, providing pertinent information and resources, as well as to put them in contact with authorities responsible for providing a response to these needs.

The ICRC also supported several Mexican institutions by training 135 officials on a psychosocial approach to interacting with families of missing persons.

In the case of deceased individuals where family members have no information, the ICRC advises, facilitates and trains authorities responsible for the identification process. The ICRC encourages coordination among forensic authorities at a national and regional level, and offers technical advice in order to improve the ability to identify human remains and strengthen forensic services. The ICRC supports authorities in the implementation of a data management system for the missing and the deceased who are unidentified, as well as the



Exercise during national meeting of forensic medical services

The ICRC is working with the Mexican Attorney General's Office (PGR) authorities in Mexico, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the National Institute of Forensic Science and the Public Prosecutor's Office of Guatemala, as well as the Institute of Legal Medicine of El Salvador and of Honduras. This collaboration has allowed for the creation of protocols, improvement in the quality of standardization in the data collection of missing persons (using the AMPM database), always in view of a regionally integrated process.

The ICRC addresses the issue of missing persons and migrants in regional fora such as the Organization of American States (OEA) and the Regional Conference on Migration (RCM).

development and implementation of forensic protocols, policy analysis, standardized data collection and the use of the Ante-mortem/Post-mortem (AMPM) data management software.

Support is also being provided to strengthen the authorities' capacity to support and accompany the families of missing persons (amongst whom, those of missing migrants).



MISSION

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) is an impartial, neutral and independent organization whose exclusively humanitarian mission is to protect the lives and dignity of victims of armed conflict and other situations of violence and to provide them with assistance. The ICRC also endeavours to prevent suffering by promoting and strengthening humanitarian law and universal humanitarian principles. Established in 1863, the ICRC is at the origin of the Geneva Conventions and the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement. It directs and coordinates the international activities conducted by the Movement in armed conflicts and other situations of violence.

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