

At an evacuation center in Shariff Aguak, Maguindanao, the ICRC set up a connection to supply water, providing better access to drinking water and enhancing sanitation facilities.



NEWSLETTER

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RESPONDING TO FLOODS AND TO FIGHTING: ICRC ASSISTS IN LUZON AND MINDANAO

SUPPORTING FARMING COMMUNITIES IN CONFLICT AREAS

The remote farming barangay of Perez appears like a sea of mostly green and brown—a panorama of the plants that people harvest and the thick soil. The nearest town proper is a couple of hours away and getting there means walking for hours—or hitching a motorcycle ride, if lucky—on unpaved roads. Come rainy season, it becomes even more challenging having to trek through knee-deep mud.

This rural community in the municipality of Las Navas in Northern Samar, however, is still haunted by the grim specter of the conflict between the military and the New People's Army. Nowadays, there are few clashes but fearful memories sometimes prevent residents from working in the fields. Gone are the days when farmers could start ploughing the land in the wee hours of the morning; work is now limited to broad daylight.

continued on page 2

Separate emergencies—both resulting in serious humanitarian consequences—struck the Philippines in August. While monsoon rains submerged many parts of Metro Manila and Central Luzon, armed clashes in Central Mindanao forced hundreds of families to flee their homes.

In jails that were the worst affected by flooding, the ICRC provided assistance to nine places of detention housing a total of 8,364 inmates located in the National Capital Region as well as Rizal, Pampanga, Bataan and Laguna provinces.

"Detainees are also vulnerable during floods and other disasters, and with all the emergency needs that have to be met, this is not always remembered," said ICRC detention delegate Lynn Graham who organized the emergency response. "These cleaning items and hygiene kits will help them meet a basic standard of hygiene and hopefully prevent further health concerns among the jail population."

Brooms, brushes, cleansers, bleach, jerry cans and buckets were distributed to inmates in Caloocan City Jail, Manila City Jail, Navotas City Jail, Guagua District Jail, Pampanga Provincial Jail, Dinalupihan Municipal Jail, Sta. Cruz District Jail and Laguna Provincial Jail. More than 2,100 inmates also benefited from bath soaps, laundry soaps, toothbrushes and toothpaste while 160 female inmates received sanitary napkins. At San Mateo Municipal Jail in Rizal province, which experienced waist-deep water levels, inmates had to be evacuated to a nearby

college. The ICRC provided them with 198 sleeping mats.

In Central Mindanao, families displaced by the recent hostilities left behind most of their possessions to seek refuge. The ICRC distributed cooking, hygiene and shelter items to nearly 2,200 people in four evacuation centers in Ampatuan municipality, Maguindanao.

Together with the Philippine Red Cross, its operational partner in the country, the ICRC assisted these 468 families who each received a kit containing a cooking pot, soaps, mosquito nets, sleeping mat, tarpaulins and jerry cans. The Maguindanao provincial health office also received medicine to treat cases of diarrhea in the evacuation centers. At one evacuation centre hosting 400 families, the ICRC set up a connection to supply water, providing better access to drinking water and enhancing sanitation facilities.

In addition, to help people injured by the armed violence, wound-dressing materials, antibiotics and analgesics covering the needs of about 50 patients were delivered by the ICRC to the provincial health office in Shariff Aguak. The humanitarian organization also supported medical treatment provided to a number of people who were wounded during the hostilities.



ICRC



Residents of Matilac in Pagawayan, North Cotabato, received 70 paddle boats and one motorboat from the ICRC as part of the organization's support to enhance livelihoods for conflict-affected populations. The ICRC paid skilled residents to build the boats according to their needs and specifications.

OPERATIONAL UPDATE

TAKING STEPS TOWARD SELF-SUFFICIENCY

In places all over the world where there is conflict, it is common to find families braving unpaved, muddy roads to sell or buy goods at a market many kilometers away. Or they try to survive by producing their own food in their communities. The water they drink may also not necessarily be safe.

Conflict stunts development in many ways. Education, labor and investment are often hampered by fear and insecurity in the area. And in communities that are already affected by poverty, nothing is more unfortunate than to experience cycles of violence.

"We have been here since 2008. It's hard to take risks, and it's difficult to be displaced. Who knows? You might be hit by a bomb," said 31-year-old fisherman Rasul Alamansa, explaining in Filipino why his family did not return home and instead resettled in a Libungan Torreta, North Cotabato community that hosted displaced

persons. "That's why we just chose to stay here. Because here we don't have those problems."

Families adversely affected by conflict can benefit from support that helps put food on the table in the longer term. In the Philippines, the ICRC helps enhance the livelihoods of the most vulnerable families mainly through agricultural and fishing programs.

MORE FOOD, CLEANER WATER FOR FAMILIES IN CONFLICT-PRONE AREAS

In remote Las Navas municipality in Northern Samar, where hostilities between government troops and the New People's Army have resulted in the lack of access to basic services, farmers have harvested rice seeds distributed by ICRC last October (see story on page 1). In the coming months, another batch of these high-quality seeds and agricultural tools will be given to 53 barangays.

In Surigao del Sur, 653 farming families in barangays San Isidro, Diatagon and Mahaba received high-quality corn seeds in April. Through a food-for-work program, farmers from the same barangays were encouraged to clear at least one hectare of land for farming. They further benefited from a specialized training organized by the ICRC in partnership with the University of Southern Mindanao. These initiatives will be followed up in some barangays with additional post-harvest support.

In Central Mindanao, where cycles of displacement caused by hostilities have affected thousands of families, the ICRC donated seeds, tools, hand tractors (*kuligligs*) and carabaos last year. Following this support, corn mills will be installed this year in some conflict-affected communities, which will help reduce the costs for farming families by having their crops ground before being sold in the market.

Fishermen in North Cotabato also benefited from a donation of 276 paddle boats, fishing nets and accessories to help increase fishing productivity. Three motor boats were each given to the beneficiary communities Libungan Torreta, Matilac and Kadingilan, for easier access to markets.

"The boats are a big help to us. We really use them. The timing is also nice because there are a lot of fish. Not only nice but very nice," said Alamansa of the red ICRC boats they received. "Before we just stood and watched the others fish."

In Pikit, North Cotabato, another conflict-affected area, the ICRC is constructing a 35-km new water-network project to bring safe drinking water to 11 barangays.

While the ICRC is providing support for these longer-term needs of families recovering from conflict, it remains ready to assist in emergency situations as well, most recently following clashes in Maguindanao in August (see story on page 1).

ENHANCING HEALTH CARE FOR VICTIMS OF ARMED VIOLENCE

Access to quality health care can also be an issue especially for those who were injured

continued from page 1

"We get our food from the fields so when firefights occur, people go hungry because we can't go near our lands for weeks. We find other means but eventually resort to borrowing (money) to survive," explains Noli Flores, a barangay official. His farm is four kilometers away—or an hour's walk from his house.

Like other areas around the world prone to conflict, stories about the ways armed violence can hinder livelihoods are not uncommon in Las Navas. To enable these communities to recover their livelihoods,



High-quality rice seeds are part of the ICRC's support for the farming communities of Las Navas.

the ICRC provided 160 metric tons of high-quality rice seeds among 1,907 households from all 53 barangays in the municipality. The seeds helped the families ensure food accessibility and availability, as well as increased agricultural production.

HIGH QUALITY SEEDS, BETTER HARVEST

After receiving rice seeds last October timed for the planting season, farmers sowed them in December and by March were enjoying a bountiful harvest. The seeds were specially selected for a certain advantage. "Compared to the usual rice seeds which take five months to mature, these only take three months," observes Antonia Celis who has been a rice farmer for 19 years.

Like majority of the farmers in Las Navas, Antonia practices the *payatak* system — a crude farming method used in places without access to irrigation. In *payatak*, the field is not ploughed but rather a carabao is

by armed violence. The ICRC continues its assistance to weapon-wounded persons by prepositioning medical materials in 18 hospitals in conflict-prone areas in Mindanao; and another two in Visayas. In cases of particularly vulnerable patients, the organization also covers the costs of medical care for their injuries.

In April, the ICRC built a new, fully equipped workshop at Davao Jubilee Foundation, which benefits amputees and patients with physical disabilities resulting from armed violence. The new facility uses advanced polypropylene technology, which produces prosthetic and orthotic devices more quickly, and that are more durable and easier to maintain compared to previously used technology. One of the center's prosthetist-orthotists received specialized training in this technology in Cambodia through ICRC support.

IMPROVING CONDITIONS IN PLACES OF DETENTION

As it has been doing for many years, the ICRC also continues to visit detainees to monitor their proper treatment and to help



A young boy, whose injured legs were amputated after a violent clash in his hometown, is fitted with lighter, more durable prostheses at Davao Jubilee Foundation. The ICRC has been supporting DJF, and in March built a new workshop as the center shifted to the new technology.

authorities improve conditions of detention. Since January, the ICRC has carried out 239 visits to over 73,053 detainees held in 132 places of detention, and monitored 593 individual cases. Through a national program implemented in cooperation with the Philippine Red Cross, it has funded visits from family members of 253 detainees far away from home.

To address the causes and consequences of overcrowding in jails, the ICRC continues to work with various government, legislative and judicial stakeholders on the "Call for Action" process. As part of this initiative, the ICRC serves in the secretariat of Task Force: 'Katarungan at Kalayaan' (meaning "justice and freedom"), which was convened by the Supreme Court to monitor the status and conditions of detainees in Manila City Jail, and to work towards improving the processing and disposal of cases. This is aimed at reducing the over-long preventive detention, one of the causes of overcrowding in jails in the Philippines.

From the start of this year, renovation projects, such as the improvement of safe water supply, construction of septic tanks, ventilation, sleeping facilities, conditions of kitchens and infirmaries, have been completed in 13 jails across the country, benefiting 5,100 inmates. Three similar projects in jails are underway, planned to benefit a further 1,300 detainees. In May, the ICRC expanded and renovated a 60-bed infirmary in overcrowded Quezon City Jail, to help meet conditions corresponding to international standards in tuberculosis infection control.

About 8,000 inmates in 20 jails in different parts of the country benefited from hygiene items and cleaning materials, which were distributed to promote sanitation in the detention facilities. The hygiene items included bath and laundry soaps, toothpaste, toothbrush and sanitary napkins, while the cleaning materials included brooms, toilet brush, cleaning powder and dishwashing liquid. Leisure materials such as chess, Scrabble and assorted books were also given to help inmates pass time.

In response to the recent flooding emergency, the ICRC stepped up with



The ICRC works with Manila City Jail to prioritize cases of inmates who are elderly, mentally ill, or experiencing overlong preventive detention. The cases are submitted for review by the Task Force: Katarungan at Kalayaan, which will then recommend action to the courts.

emergency response to assist inmates in nine of the worst affected jails in Metro Manila and Luzon (see story on page 1).

PROMOTING HUMANITARIAN LAW

Throughout the country and among weapon bearers, the authorities, the academe, media and other members of civil society, the ICRC promotes respect for IHL—rules that seek to limit the human suffering and cost of armed conflict by imposing limits on the way opposing sides wage war.

Enhancing protection to victims of international armed conflicts, Additional Protocol 1 to the Geneva Conventions was ratified by the Philippines in March. The development was welcomed by the ICRC, which provided technical advice during the process that led to its passage in Senate.

This September, 12 university teams will participate in the National Moot Court Competition on IHL, organized jointly by the ICRC, the PRC, and the Supreme Court. Considered the largest moot court competition in the country, students prepare for battle in the courtroom, playing the role of both prosecutor and defense in a fictitious case involving humanitarian law.

Allison Lopez



Set against the green backdrop of Las Navas, Antonia Celis has been a rice farmer for 19 years.

used to trample on the land—turning it into mud—to prepare it for sowing. Crops grown using this system are entirely rain-fed, producing lower yield compared to irrigated fields. And, in remote communities like this one coupled with insecurity from armed conflict, infrastructure such as an irrigation system is often rare or, in the case of Perez, does not yet exist.

A mother of four, Antonia plays the tough role of budgeting limited resources to meet her family's daily needs. Despite this, her resilient spirit shines through the warm smiles she readily shares with everyone.

She fondly narrates how her children love to eat the rice from their harvest. "My youngest son loves it. He said it's not like the usual rice that can be as hard as a hollow block when left a few hours after cooking!"

Her eldest son Leonel, who works as a construction worker, added that the rice can go well with any kind of viand because it is soft to eat. "Even dried fish tastes great with this rice!"

To help these communities to keep putting food on the table and to support their livelihoods, the ICRC will continue to assist families in these remote communities in the coming months.

Sarah Velasco

WHAT'S IN A RELIEF KIT?

Globally, the ICRC distributes millions of relief kits each year to assist victims of armed conflicts and other situations of violence, and in some cases of disasters. In 2011 alone, over **3.1 million** essential household item kits and almost **5 million** food kits have been provided to civilians, internally displaced people, and detainees.

As the name says, these kits provide relief in dire situations like when people have to flee fighting or seek refuge at an evacuation centre, leaving their possessions behind. The kits contain basic items invaluable to their survival and well-being.

The **composition of a relief kit** is determined by the needs assessed or predicted to respond to emergencies. The items selected for a kit depend on different kinds of emergency situations and adjust to local climate, culture, religion and other factors.

To ensure the **quality of the items** distributed, standard control procedures are enforced in the selection and acquisition process. For the food items, an external inspection company performs the testing, while inspection of essential household items is done in-house.

90%
of the items contained
in relief kits are
purchased locally.

Food kit



Contents of an ICRC standard food kit are based on approximately 2,100 calories, which is the average daily human nutritional and livelihood need. The amount in a food kit may be modified, taking into account, for example, the duration of a displacement and availability of other aid being distributed.

Essential household items



Essential household items cover different types of needs such as shelter, cooking and hygiene/sanitation. Each contains items enough for a family with five members.

In the Philippines, the ICRC pre-positions kits in its warehouses—ready for immediate deployment to help cover emergency needs of populations affected by emergencies, such as displacements caused by clashes or sometimes to support the disaster relief operations of its strategic local partner, the Philippine Red Cross. To ensure that the ICRC's humanitarian response is efficient and effective, the organization conducts rapid assessments of needs and coordinates with other agencies to avoid duplicating what others are doing on the ground.

BETTER SANITATION FACILITIES FOR INMATES IN TAGUIG

A project to improve the water and sanitation facilities for over 405 inmates at the Security Intensive Care Area (SICA) at Camp Bagong Diwa, Taguig City, was completed early August. In coordination with the Bureau of Jail Management and Penology, the ICRC repaired all 112 toilets in its 112 cells, which now have new toilet bowls, floor tiles and drains; while old/inefficient drainage, waste and vent pipes were replaced. A covered concrete canal and septic tank were also built to ensure the proper flow of waste; while a new water distribution network was installed. Canopies were made waterproof to prevent recurring leaks of water into the cells.

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