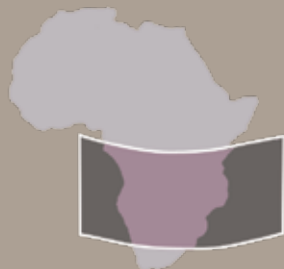




ICRC



Newsletter of the ICRC
Pretoria Regional
Delegation

LOOK OUT FOR...

Democratic Republic of Congo: The lost children of Goma. ICRC briefing to the Pan African Parliament. In the chaos of conflict, adults and children often get separated and lost. In the eastern region of the Democratic Republic of Congo, which has been ravaged by decades of war, hundreds of children are missing or separated. 17-year-old Shukuru hasn't seen his parents for 8 months, but with help from the ICRC tracing team, he's found at least part of his family, and he can't wait to see them. This DVD can be ordered from the website: <http://icrc.org/web/eng/siteeng0.nsf/html/p01031-v>

Weapon Contamination: The brochure summarizes the problem of weapon contamination, presents the ICRC's Weapon Contamination Unit, and describes how the ICRC acts to protect civilians from the effects of weapon contamination. Topics include clearance, risk education and risk reduction.

<http://icrc.org/web/eng/siteeng0.nsf/html/p4022?opendocument>

MISSION Statement

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 war and internal violence and to provide them with assistance. It directs and coordinates the international relief activities conducted by the Movement in situations of conflict. It 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 International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement.

Themba

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FIRST QUARTER



ICRC brings loved ones closer

"It has been almost ten years since Rashaad* was arrested"...These were the words of Jerusha* whose relative is detained at the Guantanamo Bay facility.

The ICRC has been able to forge contact between Rashaad and his family. Initially with the help of the Russian Red Cross Society, Rashaad's mother was able to receive Red Cross Messages with news from her son, who she thought had died. These written messages are limited to family and personal news and are a way to restore contact with family members who are separated due to armed conflicts, other situations of violence and natural disasters.

Jerusha*, who lives in South Africa, knew nothing about the Red Cross until she visited his mother in Russia. It was on her return to South Africa, that she received a call from the ICRC Delegation in Pretoria telling her that she could write to Rashaad. "It's wonderful to know that we are now able to exchange news with him. Not being able to communicate with him and not knowing how he was doing was very painful for us..." The ICRC works with National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies all over the world to reunite families and to bring news through Red Cross

Messages. In keeping with technological advances, the ICRC also makes use of satellite phones in specific circumstances.

Jerusha's husband, Ishmael* says he is grateful to the Red Cross for bringing his wife's family closer. Ishmael said he hopes "the Red Cross will continue with the work it does". "From not knowing where Rashaad was, how he was doing, to being able to see him on a screen and speak to him means a lot to us".

With modern technology, the ICRC has been able to bring loved ones even closer to each other. Most recently, the internet has been playing a very important role in helping in the restoration of family links (RFL). Taking advantage of a programme initiated last September by the ICRC delegation in Washington and the United States military, a video link was established for the first time between Rashaad in Guantanamo and his family at the premises of the ICRC in Pretoria. "It was a very emotional experience for us. Being able to see him and his facial expressions was amazing. It is also reassuring to see that he is in good health, that he still has two eyes, ten fingers and everything else. This was the happiest day of our lives", said Jerusha.

(continued on page 2)



Picture depicting a family benefiting from the Restoration of Family Links.

The end of 2009 and the beginning of 2010 have presented many challenges to the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). In 2009, the ICRC was faced with a range of serious incidents: three of its national staff members were killed in Sri Lanka, one national staff member was killed in a car-bomb attack in Afghanistan and another was killed in the Central African Republic.

Despite the challenges, the ICRC has had occasion to celebrate positive events. In February 2010, the ICRC Regional Delegation, Pretoria, joined colleagues in celebrating the release of Laurent Maurice, an ICRC staff member who was abducted in eastern Chad on 9 November 2009. In March, it again joined colleagues and friends in celebrating the release of Gauthier Lefèvre, an ICRC staff member who was abducted in West Darfur on 22 October 2009. He was finally released, in good health, on 18 March, after 147 days in captivity.

In 2010, the ICRC will continue to support the continued ratification of the Cluster Munitions Convention. On 16 February 2010, the ICRC welcomed the 29th and 30th ratification (by Burkina Faso and Republic of Moldova) as the Convention draws closer to its enforcement date on 1 August 2010. To mark this date, in March 2010, an African Regional Conference on the Universalisation and Implementation of the Convention on Cluster Munitions was held in Pretoria, South Africa. The Conference was hosted by the Department of International Relations and Cooperation of the Government of the Republic of South Africa, with support from the Government of the Kingdom of Norway, the United Nations Development Programme and the Institute for Security Studies. The purpose of the Conference was to inform African States about the Convention and its upcoming entry into force, as well as to encourage those States that have not yet signed or ratified the Convention to do so. The Conference also paved the way for the first Meeting of States Parties to the Cluster Munitions Convention, to be held in Laos towards the end of 2010.

As the ICRC Regional Delegation, Pretoria, continues with its work, we take this opportunity to welcome Annick Bouvier and her family to the Delegation and the country, as well as Connie Khoza. We also have said goodbye and send our best wishes to Kedir Awol and his family, who have left South Africa for their next mission.

Janine Mosetlhi

(continued from page 1)

According to Martial Challandes, Information Technology Coordinator at ICRC Regional Delegation, Pretoria, “the ICRC is trying to keep up with changing times, and it has been using Webcams when possible to help families communicate with loved ones”.

The Tracing Officer at the ICRC Regional Delegation, Pretoria, Henrietta Nthate, who deals with tracing requests everyday, says her job is a very emotional one. “We receive requests, on a daily basis, to try to find family members who have been separated because of conflict and other reasons. It is an emotional journey for me. Listening to the different stories and seeing pictures of relatives sometimes brings tears to my eyes but it also brings joy to my heart to be able to bring news to families who had even given up hope of ever communicating to their loved one”, she said.

It is interesting to note that in 2009, the ICRC visited detention places with a total population of 479,669 detainees. Over 28,000 detainees benefited from ICRC family visit programmes. During that period, the ICRC: collected and distributed over 253,000 Red Cross messages; published more than 83,000 names on its Family Links Website; facilitated over 12,000 telephone calls, which enabled people separated from their families to restore contact with them; carried out 1,063 family reunifications; and worked on 45,605 tracing requests, including those made in 2009.

2010 marks the 50th anniversary of the ICRC Central Tracing Agency, you can read more about its activities at: <http://www.icrc.org/web/eng/siteeng0.nsf/htmlall/centra-tracing-agency-interview-070410?opendocument>

* not their real names

National Societies in action

Once upon a time it was a given that, in times of disaster, developed countries would be the ones contributing to the victims – and, with rare exception, this was as true within the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement as outside. Today, however, while the developed world continues to be generous in funding disaster relief, a new trend is very clear – nations and National Societies from north and south, east and west, are increasingly raising funds for international appeals.

Indeed, one of the functions of any national society is to provide a means for their particular constituency – their domestic public- to contribute to relieving suffering. Typically this has been on behalf of vulnerable people locally, but increasingly these same publics want to make their contributions to emergency relief overseas.

The Haiti earthquake response is surely one of the clearest examples of this phenomenon. More than 60 Red Cross and Red Crescent societies, from Albania to Zambia and from Morocco to New Zealand, mobilised to contribute funds to the Movement’s international response, which was led by the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies. Many National Societies also contributed to the logistics pipeline.

In the Southern Africa region, the Mozambican, South African and Swazi national societies are among those who contributed with money sourced from public appeals or private donations.

Certainly, it is an interesting trend for the Movement and is doubtless a result of increasing globalisation and rapid formal and informal news transmission, particularly via the internet. But it is hard to avoid feeling that there is something more profound at work – perhaps an increasing sense of our common humanity and the ever stronger conviction that as human beings we stand or fall together.

Update on Haiti

Facts & Figures

Since the 12 January 2010 earthquake, the ICRC has:

- enabled 29,000 names to be registered on www.familylinks.icrc.org/haiti (the ICRC’s site for restoring links between family members) including the names of 6,100 people who wanted to tell their families that they were alive;
- worked with the Haitian Red Cross and the Haitian government to reunite four children aged between two and twelve with their families, while continuing to handle the cases of 70 other unaccompanied children with a view to reuniting them with their families as well;
- visited some 700 detainees in the main police stations of Port-au-Prince and in Cap-Haïtien Prison;
- supplied 20 tonnes of food, to feed 4,000 detainees for three weeks;
- carried out emergency repairs to the sanitation system, plumbing and kitchen of Port-au-Prince Prison, with other work still in progress;
- supported 10 Haitian Red Cross first-aid posts in Port-au-Prince and two in Petit-Goâve, at which first-aiders have so far treated over 17,300 people;
- regularly supplied medicines to the Rosalie Rendu maternity/paediatriac centre in Cité Soleil, to which over 500 children under five come for consultations every day;
- supported a major vaccination campaign carried out by the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and the authorities in Martissant, Bel-Air and Canapé-Vert, as a result of which over 137,000 adults and children are now protected against German measles, whooping cough, tetanus and diphtheria;
- provided training in the management of corpses to 21 staff from the State university hospital mortuary and four volunteers from the Haitian Red Cross, and supplied over 2,000 body bags to the mortuary and other relief organizations;
- distributed drinking water to 18,000 people in Port-au-Prince every day and helped the authorities to repair the water network that serves the 207,000 inhabitants of Cité Soleil;
- distributed essential items to over 20,000 people in Port-au-Prince, Léogane, Jacmel and Cayes, and distributed 50 tonnes of food to over 4,000 people in Delmas 60 and Primature (Port-au-Prince);
- financed refuse collection at seven sites housing some 45,000 displaced persons and installed 60 latrines in the camps in Delmas.



Camp in the compound of the Asile municipal nursing home, Port-au-Prince. Water storage tanks were installed in the Asile camp by the Spanish and Haitian Red Cross Societies.

Graduation Ceremony for Military Health Personnel



Graduation Ceremony at the South African Military Health School.

The SMHT presented a Health Emergencies in Large Populations (H.E.L.P) Course from 1 to 19 March 2010. Col. Bux and the Deputy Head of Regional Delegation, Mrs. Annick Bouvier handed over certificates to participants at a graduation ceremony held at the Military Health Training Formation Centre, Thaba Tshwane. The H.E.L.P Course is designed for medical professionals. It comprises two modules, the first serves to provide the public health tools necessary for making appropriate decisions during emergency situations involving large populations. The second module examines the health-related ethical issues that arise in humanitarian activities. The ICRC, Regional Delegation, Pretoria, has collaborated with the SMHT over the last few years to ensure that its personnel, who may be deployed in situations of conflict, are trained and kept abreast of the work of the ICRC, and are better prepared to respond during emergencies that may result in humanitarian consequences.

During the course, a presentation was given by Mrs. Janine Mosetlhi: Head of Communications, ICRC Regional Delegation, Pretoria. The presentation focused on the work of the ICRC during situations of conflict or other situations of violence, as well as the ICRC’s role as part of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement when there is a humanitarian crisis brought on by a natural disaster such as the earthquakes that occurred thus far in 2010.



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*THEMBA is the Zulu & Xhosa word for "Hope"



ICRC briefing to the Pan African Parliament

Janine Mosetlhi: Head of Communications, and Annick Bouvier: Deputy Head of Delegation for the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) Regional Delegation, Pretoria, gave a presentation to the Pan African Parliament's (PAP) Committee on Gender, Youth, Family and People with Disabilities. The presentation gave a general overview of the ICRC's mandate and action, International Humanitarian Law (IHL) and the work of the ICRC with respect to the specific needs of women facing war. Members of the Committee were advised of the protection offered to civilians, Prisoners of War and detainees during armed conflict. The presentation also dealt with the protection of women in detention and a discussion ensued on the issue of sexual violence during

conflict. The part of the presentation dealing with IHL also included a brief discussion on the African Charter on Human and Peoples Rights.

The members raised a series of questions and interesting comments. The questions ranged from those relating to the relationship between the ICRC and Peacekeeping Operations, how ICRC actions seek to prevent conflicts from occurring, and on issues concerning the Red Cross/Red Crescent/ Red Crystal Emblem protection. The interaction between the ICRC and the PAP follows the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between the Pan African Parliament (PAP) and the ICRC in September 2009.

Zambian National Committee on International Humanitarian Law

On 15 – 18 February, Chris Black, Regional Legal Advisor at the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), Regional Delegation, Pretoria, joined Tendayi Sengwe, Communications Officer at the ICRC Regional Delegation, Harare, in travelling to Lusaka, Zambia. The purpose of the trip was to meet with the members of the Zambian National Committee on International Humanitarian Law, which was established in December 2008. Through its Legal Advisory Service on International Humanitarian Law (IHL), the ICRC works with and supports National Committees to further the implementation of IHL.

The Zambian National Committee is chaired by Mrs Gaudentia Salasini, Director of International Law and Agreements at the Ministry of Justice. The Regional Legal Advisor took the opportunity to address the members of the National Committee on the current status of the implementation of IHL in Zambia, as well as to advise them on how the work of the National Committees can be accomplished. The Regional Legal Advisor also met with other representatives of the Zambian government who have attended ICRC seminars in the past, including Colonel Moses Phiri of the Zambian Air Force, and Ms Petronella Mwaite-Ngulube of the Ministry of Justice.



Chris Black: Regional Legal Advisor: ICRC Regional Delegation, Pretoria (far right), Tendayi Sengwe: Communications Officer: ICRC Regional Delegation, Harare (second from left) at the Zambian Air Force HQ with (L-R) Col.Maison Maanga: Zambian Army, Petronella Mwaite-Ngulube: Director of Legal Services, Gaudentia Salasini: Ministry of Justice and Col Moses Phiri: Zambian Air Force