

ICRC REGIONAL DELEGATION FOR VENEZUELA AND THE CARICOM STATES

ANNUAL ACTIVITIES NEWSLETTER 2018



© E. Eidi/ICRC

In recent years, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) has devoted itself, among other activities, to addressing the consequences of violence and its social repercussions in urban areas. The year 2018 posed enormous challenges for the organization's work in Venezuela, and saw the commencement of an implementation process designed to respond to the humanitarian consequences of the difficult economic and social situation that the country is currently experiencing.

During 2018, support for health-care professionals working in hospital emergency rooms was provided, and first-aid training was given to members of communities located far from urban centres. Additionally, in cooperation with the Ministry of People's Power for Health (MPPS) and the Ministry of People's Power for Defence (MPPD), medical supplies were donated to civilian and military hospitals in the country. Furthermore, the ICRC supported the emergency response programme run by the Venezuelan Red Cross (VRC), as it has done since 2014, in particular by providing medical supplies to the VRC's Relief and First Aid programme and its network of health-care centres.

The ICRC launched a series of activities to help the most vulnerable people, especially migrants and those affected by violence. Many of the initiatives were carried out in partnership with the VRC and the National Societies of the CARICOM countries, in a neutral, impartial and independent manner. The ICRC also lent technical support to the VRC and other National Societies in the Caribbean to help separated family members re-establish contact.

The ICRC delegation continued to support efforts to enhance and professionalize the Venezuelan armed forces with the aim of enabling members of the National Bolivarian Armed Forces of Venezuela (FANB) to learn about international human rights standards for law enforcement, with an emphasis on international standards on the progressive use of force and the code of conduct.

HEALTH CARE

PROVISION OF MEDICAL SUPPLIES

- In 2018, besides making improvements to infrastructure, basic materials were provided for the maintenance of emergency services and for the four hospitals prioritized by the MPPS in the central area. The maintenance work is carried out directly by the teams from each hospital in coordination with technical staff from the MPPS and monitored by the ICRC. Work was done to improve conditions in terms of access to water, lighting, electrical installations, maintenance of electricity backup equipment, and air conditioning. Tools and protective equipment were given to staff.
- With the aim of improving health-care services, eleven sets of surgical equipment (each used to treat up to 50 people) were donated to seven hospitals for the treatment of firearm injuries. In 2018, more than 488 patients were treated.
- Medical supplies were provided for the VRC's emergency response programme, which provided care to 1,800 patients nationwide. A further 2,000-plus patients received care during the health days that were organized by the VRC and local health authorities.

FIRST AID



More than **282** people from the communities of La Vega and San Agustín in Caracas, as well as students and teachers from two schools belonging to the Fe y Alegría system in those areas, and two from the state of Apure, participated in first-aid workshops, with the support of VRC volunteers.



In the Capital District, **27** volunteers were trained on the first steps to be taken in the event of injuries caused by firearms or penetrating trauma.



A total of **65** volunteers from **23** of the VRC's offices and subcommittees joined their peers for a meeting on first aid, in which they refreshed their first aid knowledge and strengthened their team spirit.

First-aid training in the community of San Agustín in Caracas.





Practical training sessions held in Caracas by physicians who specialize in wound care in the emergency department.

TRAINING FOR MEDICAL STAFF

Life-support procedures for trauma patients who arrive at a hospital's emergency room require unified action by medical staff and always pose a challenge for health-care professionals. It is for this reason that knowledge of the general principles of care for trauma patients is the first step in giving them proper treatment.

- Medical, military and civilian professionals from the national public health system, including staff from six hospitals run by the Ministry of Health — three from Caracas, one from Aragua and two from Carabobo — received training in ER trauma management and special surgery for people injured by firearms and explosive devices. The Venezuelan Society of Surgeons and the Military Medical Academy are already replicating the course in emergency departments in other hospitals.
- Five public health professionals participated in the Health Emergencies in Large Populations (HELP) course, with the ICRC's support. HELP is a multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary training course on the principles and practice of humanitarian work in disasters, conflicts and other crises that affect a large number of people.



The ICRC supports the work of Venezuelan hospitals through training for over **370** ER medical professionals and by providing medical supplies for treating trauma patients.

SUPPORT FOR THE VENEZUELAN RED CROSS

- At the beginning of 2018, the VRC and the ICRC signed agreements pertaining to their joint programmes in the areas of: first aid and health care, relief work, restoring family links and communication; and to their activities in urban communities and on the border with Colombia.
- The VRC was assisted in strengthening its capacity for emergency preparedness through emergency response simulation exercises, the updating of contingency plans and the development of protocols to mitigate risks.
- Volunteers also received training on raising awareness of the Fundamental Principles of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement.
- The ICRC has donated the following to the VRC's relief work department:
 - emergency telecommunications equipment
 - off-road vehicles and tents for first-aid posts
 - identification items, such as vests and uniforms, for volunteers of the National Society
 - support for the repair of ambulances and other vehicles
 - places to sleep overnight for the relief work programme's first-aid team
 - installation of medical supply stores.

ICRC staff visiting the El Amparo community in the state of Apure.



RESTORING FAMILY LINKS

- A total of 32 volunteers from 18 of the VRC's offices received direct training from the ICRC on how to help reunite family members who have been separated. They subsequently passed on what they had learned to dozens of other volunteers in the country. Six offices received telephones, computers and other materials to facilitate these activities.
- Towards the end of 2018, the VRC, with the ICRC's support, established information points in seven bus stations, making connectivity tools available to migrants and facilitating communication between family members. It was possible, for instance, to charge mobile phones, use wireless internet and make phone calls for free. Over 1,600 people in transit also received guidance and self-care advice that enabled them to migrate more safely, as well as basic first aid. Technical support was provided to the VRC offices, along with basic training.
- In addition to the connectivity services provided for people in transit, the VRC and the ICRC worked together to process tracing requests for family members received from neighbouring countries, including Caribbean countries.
- With the ICRC's help, the remains of a total of 14 people who had died outside of Venezuela as a result of the violence were repatriated, in order to preserve the dignity of the deceased and reunite them with their families.

The Venezuelan Red Cross's connectivity service for people who want to get in touch with their relatives at La Bandera bus station in Caracas. This service is part of the Restoring Family Links programme.



PROMOTION OF INTERNATIONAL STANDARDS ON THE USE OF FORCE AND INTERNATIONAL HUMANITARIAN LAW

- More than 123 participants, mostly officers from the National Bolivarian Armed Forces of Venezuela (FANB), participated in a train-the-trainer course on the use of force in operations to maintain law and order. This course was subsequently replicated for more than 6,300 officers. In those training sessions, the ICRC shared its vast experience in the area of prisons.
- Approximately 70 members of the FANB and municipal police, among others, attended two workshops on the international standards on the use of force and international humanitarian law, held in border states of the country.
- About 400 officials, officers and guards affiliated with the General Directorate of Military Penitentiary Service (DISPEMIL) received training on the ICRC's work in prisons and international prison standards through courses organized in partnership with DISPEMIL. They also received basic first-aid training from the VRC.
- The participation of three FANB representatives in the International Course on International Humanitarian Law in San Remo, Italy, was encouraged and supported, as was the participation of two generals in the Senior Workshop on the International Rules Governing Military Operations (SWIRMO) in Abu Dhabi.
- Lastly, the ICRC continued to work with the MPPD to integrate similar training courses into their curriculum, and support was provided through the revision of manuals and teaching materials.

Officials from the National Bolivarian Armed Forces of Venezuela taking part in the course on international standards on the progressive use of force in operations to maintain law and order.





Round-table on migration issues, which included members of the ICRC, the Bahamas Red Cross and authorities of the Bahamas.

CARICOM

Throughout 2018, the ICRC worked alongside Caribbean National Red Cross Societies, especially those of Trinidad and Tobago, Jamaica, the Bahamas, Belize, Aruba and Curaçao, and supported their activities aimed at assisting migrants and helping reunite family members. At the same time, the ICRC maintained an ongoing dialogue with the authorities on humanitarian issues, including migration.

- In the Bahamas, a working group was formed to analyse migration issues and to identify ways of responding to humanitarian problems. The group also discussed assistance that the ICRC and the Red Cross of the Bahamas could potentially provide to migrants arriving in the country.
- Action was taken to help family members separated due to migration, imprisonment or natural disasters. In Trinidad and Tobago, the ICRC helped put prisoners back in touch with their families. The ICRC also organized two regional workshops on Restoring Family Links and activities to help detained migrants, with the participation of the National Red Cross Societies of Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago, Belize, Curaçao and the Bahamas. The National Societies received telephones, computers, modems and more from the ICRC to help them carry out those activities.
- The ICRC worked alongside the Red Cross of Curaçao to process tracing requests for family members.
- The ICRC also provided support to two Red Cross schools in violence-affected communities in Jamaica and to the Belize Red Cross programme aimed at mitigating violence in vulnerable communities. More than 90 young people benefited from these initiatives, which provided vocational training, tools for conflict resolution and psychosocial support.
- International humanitarian law, international human rights law, and respect for the life and dignity of vulnerable migrants and of those displaced as a result of armed violence were promoted.
- Volunteers from the National Societies of Jamaica, Belize, the Bahamas, Guyana and Trinidad and Tobago were trained in the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement's policies, and plans were presented to mitigate the risks to which teams are exposed during operations.




The ICRC has been active in Venezuela since 1966. In 2000, it signed a headquarters agreement with the government of Venezuela, which was incorporated into law on November 6, 2001.

Since January 1, 2019, the regional delegation's geographical coverage has included Venezuela and four Caribbean States: Trinidad and Tobago, Aruba, Bonaire and Curaçao.



ICRC

INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE OF THE RED CROSS
Caracas Regional Delegation
Av. Mohedano, Edif. EuroSuites Mohedano,
La Castellana, Caracas 1060.
www.icrc.org/ve caa_caracas@icrc.org
© ICRC, March 2019

 <https://www.facebook.com/ICRC>
 <https://twitter.com/ICRC>
 <https://www.instagram.com/icrc/>