

ICRC REGIONAL DELEGATION FOR VENEZUELA AND CARICOM STATES

JANUARY - APRIL 2018



TRAINING OF TRAINERS ON THE PROGRESSIVE USE OF FORCE IN LAW ENFORCEMENT OPERATIONS

The first Training of Trainers course on the Progressive Use of Force in Law Enforcement Operations was held between 5 and 16 March in Forte Tiuna, Caracas. It was organized, with the support of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), by the National Directorate for Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law, which comes under the Office of the Inspector-General of the National Bolivarian Armed Force. The course was a joint initiative designed to inform all members of the four components of the armed forces – the navy, air force, army and national guard – about the rules of international human rights law applicable to policing, with an emphasis on international standards on the progressive use of force and the code of conduct.

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On April 10th Laetitia Courtois, head of the ICRC's regional delegation covering Venezuela and the countries of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), took part in a follow-up visit to the Western Integral Defence Strategic Region. There she accompanied a delegation from the office of the inspector-general, which had organized the visit, in supervising the teaching activities carried out by the instructors trained during the course in March.

EXCHANGE ON FIRST AID IN EL TIGRE

What makes first-aid training crucial is the vital importance of knowing and being able to decide what action to take when someone has been in an accident, or suddenly falls ill. When applied correctly, first aid can mean the difference between life and death for the person who needs it.

To this end, Venezuelan Red Cross (VRC) emergency teams and rescue workers from the states of Táchira, Bolívar, Barcelona, Apure, Sucre, Monagas, Guárico, Portuguesa and Anzoátegui took part in a three-day emergency simulation exercise in the city of El Tigre in April. The exchange on first aid set the parameters enabling the volunteers to unify their response to emergencies and to exchange experiences, so that they will work effectively together and will be prepared should a real emergency occur.



Since you do not have to be a health professional to administer first aid, members of communities can be trained in the basic skills needed for responding to emergencies. In February and March 2018, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) therefore ran first-aid workshops in schools and communities in San Agustín and La Vega in Caracas.

The trainings took place both in the communities and in the schools belonging to the Fe y Alegría system – in particular, the Don Pedro school in San Agustín and Luis María Olaso in La Vega – with 142 participants: students, teachers and members of the community. In parallel, the ICRC held a workshop on risk reduction tools for the Venezuelan Red Cross branches of Mérida, Táchira and Zulia, to prepare volunteers to respond better in emergency situations during their work in the field.

EMERGENCY ROOM TRAUMA COURSE

From 12 to 14 March 2018 the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) gave a train-the-trainers emergency room trauma course on the comprehensive treatment of wounds. It was held in the Dr Carlos Arvelo Military Hospital in Caracas.

Dr Rudy Lukamba, head of health care for the ICRC delegation in Venezuela, explained that the training was designed to prepare a team of facilitators who would replicate these courses for health professionals throughout Venezuela, to review procedures together and to share the ICRC's extensive experience of trauma care.



The course was attended by 18 health professionals working in the emergency units in military hospitals such as the Vicente Salias Sanoja Military Hospital, the San Martín de Caracas Military Academy of Medicine, and the Col. Elbano Paredes Vivas Military Hospital in Maracay, together with civilian hospitals such as Caracas University Hospital and the Ana Francisca Pérez de León Hospital in the public health system.

ASSOCIATION BETWEEN THE VENEZUELAN RED CROSS AND THE ICRC

The Venezuelan Red Cross (VRC) and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) have decided to strengthen their association in 2018, through the signing of agreements for joint programmes on first aid and health, relief, restoring family links, communication and activities in areas affected by a range of situations in urban communities and on the border with Colombia.

The association provides for capacity building and the training of VRC volunteers, in addition to technical, financial and logistical support from the ICRC.

In this context, an emergency simulation exercise was held in early April. Participants included representatives of the Venezuelan Red Cross – from the Capital District, Carabobo, Lara, Zulia, Mérida, Barinas and El Tigre – and of the ICRC regional delegation in Caracas.

Through this exercise the two organizations sought to assess the VRC's coordination and communication mechanisms for responding to different types of emergencies, whether natural or human in origin, and to consider the technical and financial support provided by the ICRC's regional delegation. Those taking part in the exercise were the decision makers, specialists and volunteers active in the work of the VRC. They put forward recommendations for implementing the action plans for emergency situations and identified training needs for volunteers and material resources necessary for carrying out the VRC's activities.

THE FOLLOWING ARE SOME NEW ACTIVITIES UNDERTAKEN THANKS TO THIS ASSOCIATION:

- Systematic support of the VRC for the ICRC's first-aid programme in the community of San Agustín (Caracas).
- Reactivating the restoring family links service, which the VRC provides in the event of natural disasters and migration, among other situations. At present, the VRC has a network of focal points in 18 states in Venezuela; the proposal is to have contacts at the national level who can accept and handle tracing requests. In the early months of 2018, 24 requests to restore family links were opened and 10 requests to trace people forced to separate from their families. Two cases of separated family members were resolved successfully. In addition, a total of nine Red Cross messages were written by detainees and sent to relatives, while six detainees received messages via the Red Cross. Finally, four oral messages were sent to the relatives of detainees through the intermediary of the Red Cross.

The ICRC regional delegation continues to strengthen the Venezuelan Red Cross emergency response programme, through providing telecommunications teams and identification equipment and giving logistical support to the volunteers taking part in these activities in seven states in the country.

In the same vein, the ICRC's team in Venezuela works with the VRC in nine states to develop action protocols with the aim of mitigating the risks volunteers are exposed to in their work.

RESTORING FAMILY LINKS IN THE CARICOM COUNTRIES

There is a direct link between being together as a family and human dignity. Any time people are separated from their loved ones, or have no news of them as a result of armed conflict, situations of violence, natural disasters or migration, the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement is there to restore contact between family members. Together with the National Red Cross Societies of the Caribbean, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) works on behalf of separated family members, for example by exchanging messages between them and finding out what happened to people reported missing. In the first few months of 2018, four messages from loved ones were delivered to relatives separated from them, four messages were received and one tracing request was accepted.

SEMINAR ON THE TREATMENT OF WOUNDS FROM FIREARMS AND EXPLOSIVE WEAPONS

Unless they are treated in good time, many patients wounded by bullets or explosive devices can die or can be left with permanent after-effects that prevent them from working or carrying out everyday activities. With this in mind, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) organized a seminar on the treatment of wounds from firearms and explosive weapons, which was attended by 52 military health professionals. It was held in the Dr José Ángel Álamo de Barquisimeto Military Hospital from 19 to 21 March 2018.

DIALOGUE AND COOPERATION WITH CARICOM INSTITUTIONS

The ICRC maintains a good dialogue with the authorities, the police, the military and other interested parties in the region. In the CARICOM States, it promotes the integration of international humanitarian law, international rules on the use of force in police operations, and respect for the lives and dignity both of people displaced by armed violence and of vulnerable migrants. From this perspective, for the authorities and institutions, such as the CARICOM Implementation Agency for Crime and Security, the ICRC provides technical support in areas such as international humanitarian law, the fight against terrorism, crime and security, and migration. The ICRC also took part in the 33rd annual meeting of Caribbean police commissioners, which took place in Montego Bay, Jamaica, at the end of April.

BELIZE: WORKSHOP ON INTEGRATING INTERNATIONAL RULES ON THE USE OF FORCE

The ICRC provides technical support for authorities and security forces on integrating international rules on the use of force into their legal framework and into their law enforcement operations. In this context, between February and March the authorities responsible for law enforcement in Belize took part in a four-day workshop with the aim of deepening their knowledge of international rules and translating them into law enforcement measures. The participants also studied real scenarios and analysed the actions possible in accordance with international law.

REDUCING THE IMPACT OF ARMED VIOLENCE IN BELIZE

Since 2016 the ICRC has been financing and supporting a Belize Red Cross project to address the needs of vulnerable communities affected by violence. The project aims to reduce the impact of the violence and to increase the resilience of individuals and communities and their ability to cope with the repercussions of violence. In line with this objective, the Belize Red Cross offers training on conflict management and first aid, aimed at young people at risk in communities prone to violence. The project has already had many successful cases of young people showing positive changes in their overall attitude towards situations of violence, in both their understanding and their behaviour.

The ICRC has been working in Venezuela since 1966. In 2000, it signed a headquarters agreement with the government of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, which was approved by law on 6 November 2001. Since then the organization's activities have also included the English-speaking States belonging to the Caribbean Community (CARICOM).



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