



ICRC

Afghanistan: Facts and figures – January to December 2017

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It's been a difficult year for the humanitarian community in Afghanistan. Besides the fragmented conflict landscape in some parts of the country, there is growing insecurity and an increase in attacks on health facilities and humanitarian aid workers. All these pose serious security concerns and limit our access to people affected by conflict at a concerning rate.

While 2017 gave a reason to celebrate 30 years of continuous presence of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) in Afghanistan, it was also a devastating year in which seven of our colleagues were killed and two were abducted while carrying out their humanitarian work. For the first nine months of the year, we were forced to partially suspend our activities and, at a later stage, scale them down, particularly in the north of the country. However, despite all the challenges, the ICRC remained committed to the Afghan population in 2017, as it has been for the past 30 years.

The ICRC's work in Afghanistan focuses on visiting detainees to monitor their living conditions and treatment as well as on assisting people affected by the ongoing conflict. We provide basic aid and medical care, improve their access to water and sanitation, reconnect families separated by conflict, and work in cooperation with the Afghan Red Crescent Society (ARCS).

Visiting detainees and maintaining family contact

- Carried out 61 visits in 20 detention centres (housing over 26,293 detainees).
- Visited 707 people in detention, arrested in relation to the conflict, of whom 405 were visited for the first time.
- Exchanged over 6,688 Red Cross messages between detainees and their families, with the support of the Afghan Red Crescent Society. Red Cross messages are hand-written messages that may be described as “brief messages containing family news”, “brief personal messages to relatives made otherwise unreachable by armed conflict [or by events]”, etc.
- Helped families of detainees in the Prison and Detention Facility in Parwan (PDF-P) to re-establish and maintain contact with relatives through 12,270 phone calls, of which 594 video teleconference calls and 6,693 family visits.
- Supported 299 families to visit their family members held in Pul-i-Charkhi prison.
- Received 215 queries from families looking for people alleged to be arrested, out of which 59% of the cases were successfully solved and received 330 requests from families that have lost contact with 1,162 family members.
- Facilitated the transfer of 233 mortal remains of fighters and civilians to their families.

Supporting health care

- Transported 419 war-wounded patients to the nearest medical centre for further treatment and care.
- Organized first aid training for persons in direct contact with war-wounded people. A total of 77 first aid courses conducted with 1,047 participants trained to help the wounded. Additionally, donated 874 first aid bags to attendees of first aid training courses.
- Provided first aid and stabilization material (821 war-wounded packages for 30 major to 300 minor wounded) to first aid workers and health staff in direct contact with the wounded.
- Provided drugs and medical materials to support 12 major Ministry of Public Health hospitals to respond to mass casualties.

- Supported Mirwais Regional Hospital, which admitted 62,371 patients to their surgical, medical, obstetrics and gynaecology wards. Carried out surgical operations on 17,401 patients and provided 438,203 outpatient consultations.
- Supported Mirwais Regional Hospital with a team of four clinical specialists (one midwife, one obstetrics/gynaecology professional, one paediatrician and one paediatric nurse) in order to strengthen the obstetrics/gynaecology and paediatric departments.
- Supported Mirwais Regional Hospital with a biomedical engineer and laboratory specialist to support ongoing training for technicians.
- Supported capacity-building of Mirwais Regional Hospital management. Provided support for over 700 staff salary incentives in Mirwais Regional Hospital.
- Provided drugs and medical consumables/equipment to 47 Afghan Red Crescent Society (ARCS) Primary Health Care clinics. In those clinics, over 887,352 outpatient consultations were carried out and 482,684 doses of vaccine for childhood diseases administered.
- Provided support to two Provincial Prisons (Kandahar and Herat) not included in the Ministry of Public Health System Enhancement for Health Action in Transition Project, including financial support for prison health staff, drugs and medical consumables/equipment, technical support and clinical training.
- Carried out 9,028 consultations for detainees in the above-mentioned provincial prisons, and 71 visits were carried out in five detention centres.
- Supported a large scale scabies and vector control campaign in one detention centre to treat 2,983 detainees and provided technical support/advice to five prisons.

Providing limb-fitting and physical rehabilitation services

- Registered 11,642 new patients, of whom 1,310 were amputees.
- Assisted a total of 139,221 patients in the seven ICRC Physical Rehabilitation Programme Centres.
- Made 21,464 prostheses and orthoses.
- Provided 285,047 physiotherapy treatments to patients.
- Granted microcredit loans to 353 patients to start their own small business ventures.
- Facilitated the ongoing vocational training of 176 patients; 174 of those graduated between January to December 2017.
- Made 6,459 home visits through the Home Care programme, which is assisting 1,912 patients with spinal cord injuries, and train their families.

Providing assistance

- In coordination with the ARCS, assisted about 57,000 people (8,097 households) displaced by conflict, to help them meet their food needs for one month, with 47,523 of them (6,789 households) also receiving essential household items.
- Supported 22 veterinary workers by facilitating deworming and treatment programmes, which enabled 818 pastoral farmers (5,726 people) benefit from healthier and more productive livestock.
- 544 pastoral livestock owners or some 3,808 people also received fodder to help them feed their herds during harsh winter conditions. Such assistance, however, was halted following the ICRC's suspension of some of its activities.
- Some 106 vulnerable female headed households received poultry kits and increased their income by selling poultry products.
- Victims of International Humanitarian Law (IHL) violations and/or their families (171 families/1,197 people) received cash assistance, which helped offset the financial consequences of these violations and enabled them to cover their needs, including food, medical treatment and funeral costs.
- Over 28,000 detainees in 13 places of detention improved their living conditions with ICRC supplied materials like blankets, patous and shawls to help them cope with the harsh winter.

Improving water and sanitation services

- Eight Water Management Committees were trained in the basic operation and maintenance of the systems, and 859 hand pumps (theoretically serving 120,260 people living in six districts of five provinces) were repaired. Additionally, over 4,500 people living in two districts of one province benefited from the improvement of four gravity flow water systems.
- Over 28,000 detainees – including children – received cleaning and hygiene materials, and around 10,000 detainees had their living conditions improved following the ICRC engineering activities in prison facilities. For example, the construction of a decentralized wastewater treatment system in Herat prison was completed with a capacity for over 4,000 detainees and 110 prison staff, while in the same prison, 800 detainees benefited from improved water supply and over 3,000 from a scabies campaign. In addition, over 3,000 detainees in Balkh, Farah, Faryab and Jawzjan prison benefited from renovation works and infrastructure upgrades. The ICRC continued to dispose wastewater in Kandahar prison helping over 2,500 people, and continued to support Maintenance and Hygiene Committees in prisons, with repair works helping to improve the living conditions of over 4,000 detainees in Herat and Khost provincial prisons.
- Continued several engineering activities to improve conditions for patients and staff of the ICRC-supported Mirwais Regional Hospital (MRH) with 560 beds and Sheberghan Provincial Hospital (SPH) with 150 beds. In MRH, the renovation of a centralized dispensary was completed as well as the refurbishment of the female wards, former paediatric department), with approx. 850 m² of hospital floor area. In Sheberghan Provincial Hospital, the construction of a new emergency ward continued after a long suspension. Completed the works to improve the water supply systems in Jalalabad Regional Hospital with 600 beds and in Ghazni Provincial Hospital with 120 beds.

Working in partnership with the ARCS

- The ARCS, with ICRC support, trained 17 ARCS staff and volunteers on the Safer Access Framework (SAF) to disseminate the SAF approach and mitigate security risks for staff and volunteers in the field. Further on, the ARCS SAF trainers conducted 10 SAF awareness sessions for 240 ARCS staff and volunteers.
- The ARCS with the support of the ICRC conducted six workshops on safety and security for 112 ARCS and International Federation staff including heads of regional offices, heads of operations, security guards and drivers.
- The ARCS and the Chinese Red Cross Foundation signed a memorandum of understanding to regulate the cooperation between these two organizations to provide health care for children suffering from congenital health defect.
- The ARCS focal point for the Health Care in Danger (HCiD) project participated in the HCiD annual meeting in Geneva. The meeting focused on the opportunities for the International Movement of the Red Cross and the Red Crescent Societies components (National Societies, the Federation and the ICRC) to work with external stakeholders such as health care organizations, authorities and civil society at a national level to develop and implement relevant responses for each context.

Promoting compliance with IHL

As part of its humanitarian mission, the ICRC regularly reminded weapon bearers on all sides of the conflict that under IHL persons not or no longer taking part in the conflict must be protected and kept safe from harm. Particular attention was paid by the ICRC to the problems related to the protection of the medical assignment.

The ICRC confidentially presented its recommendations to and discussed its observations bilaterally with those allegedly responsible to ensure that all parties to the conflict respect their obligations, enshrined in IHL, to preserve the safety, integrity and dignity of those under their control.

We conducted briefing sessions on IHL for more than 16,183 people, including:

- Members of civil society;
- Community elders;
- People benefiting from our work;
- Religious scholars;

- Political authorities;
- Afghan army personnel;
- National police personnel;
- Personnel of local police;
- Personnel of the National Directorate of Security;
- Members of the armed opposition;

For further information, please contact:

Andrea Catta Preta, (English, Spanish and Portuguese), ICRC Kabul, tel.: +93 729 140 510

Roya Musawi, (Dari and Pashto), ICRC Kabul, tel.: +93 794 618 908

(English), ICRC Geneva, tel.: +41 79 574 0636

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