

ERITREA



ICRC delegation

EXPENDITURE (IN KCHF)

Protection	820
Assistance	1,050
Prevention	223
Cooperation with National Societies	92
General	-

► **2,185**

of which: Overheads 133

IMPLEMENTATION RATE

Expenditure/yearly budget	44%
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PERSONNEL

Expatriates	3
National staff (daily workers not included)	39

KEY POINTS

In 2012, the ICRC:

- amid travel and import restrictions, worked with local authorities in giving livelihood assistance to communities affected by the 1998–2000 conflict with Ethiopia, including in the Debul region for the first time since end-2009
- monitored the situation of vulnerable Ethiopians, helping them restore family links, renew their Eritrean residence permits or, if they wished to be repatriated, meet administration fees and transport costs
- sought to regain the authorities' acceptance of its mandate and work with a view to having the restrictions on its activities lifted and resuming its work in favour of Ethiopian detainees

The ICRC opened a delegation in Eritrea in 1998 in the context of the international armed conflict between Eritrea and Ethiopia and continues to respond to the needs remaining from that two-year war. Its priorities are to assist the population displaced, detained or otherwise affected by the conflict and to ensure compliance with IHL with regard to any persons still protected by the Third and Fourth Geneva Conventions. The ICRC also supports the development of the “Red Cross Society of Eritrea”.

CONTEXT

Tensions between Eritrea and Ethiopia persisted, with clashes occurring in border regions between the two countries. The physical demarcation of the Eritrea-Ethiopia border remained stalled, with both countries maintaining a large military presence at their common border.

No further progress was made towards the demarcation of the Djibouti-Eritrea border and thus the implementation of the mediation agreement between the two countries signed in 2010. Acting as mediator, Qatar maintained troops in the disputed region.

As requested by the Eritrean government in 2011, international and national NGOs and UN agencies reduced or concluded their activities in the country. In June, however, the authorities officially expressed the wish to resume cooperation with the UN and the European Union, but the necessary framework agreements were still under discussion at year-end.

ICRC ACTION AND RESULTS

As restrictions were imposed on the operations of foreign/international agencies in Eritrea, the ICRC endeavoured to regain the authorities' acceptance of its humanitarian mandate and activities so that it might continue providing assistance to vulnerable civilians, particularly those affected by the 1998–2000 conflict with Ethiopia and those of Ethiopian origin.

There were difficulties in implementing most of the ICRC's planned activities because of the lack of visas and travel permits for ICRC expatriates and constraints in importing materials into the country. These constraints were compounded by the inability to work with the “Eritrean Red Cross” owing to government instructions for it to cease receiving support from international organizations. Nevertheless, the ICRC carried out assistance operations in areas where it had access and focused on aiding people in border regions most affected by past armed conflict and ongoing border tensions, while seeking to persuade the authorities that it was in their interest to recognize the applicability of the 1949 Geneva Conventions to the Eritrean context. Through interaction with the National Union of Eritrean Youth and Students, it also did its best to foster awareness of its work among the public at large.

In cooperation with the authorities, the ICRC helped restore the livelihoods of border communities in Gash Barka, Southern Red Sea and, for the first time since end-2009, Debul. It worked closely with the local authorities and the Ministry of Agriculture in

Main figures and indicators	PROTECTION	Total		
CIVILIANS (residents, IDPs, returnees, etc.)				
Red Cross messages (RCMs)				
RCMs collected		1,523	UAMs/SCs*	
RCMs distributed		1,775		
Reunifications, transfers and repatriations				
People reunited with their families		4		
	<i>including people registered by another delegation</i>	2		
Tracing requests, including cases of missing persons				
People for whom a tracing request was newly registered		34	Women	Minors
People located (tracing cases closed positively)		5		
	<i>including people for whom tracing requests were registered by another delegation</i>	1		
Tracing cases still being handled at the end of the reporting period (people)		91	5	12
UAMs/SCs*, including unaccompanied demobilized child soldiers				
UAMs/SCs reunited with their families by the ICRC/National Society		2	Girls	Demobilized children
UAM/SC cases still being handled by the ICRC/National Society at the end of the reporting period		1		
Documents				
People to whom travel documents were issued		51		
Official documents relayed between family members across borders/front lines		62		
PEOPLE DEPRIVED OF THEIR FREEDOM (All categories/all statuses)				
Restoring family links				
People to whom a detention attestation was issued		12		

* Unaccompanied minors/separated children

carrying out a parasite-control programme for livestock in Dehub and Southern Red Sea. It also distributed seed and tools to farmers in Gash Barka and Southern Red Sea to help them resume or increase production. To enhance access of the population in these regions to water for agricultural or household use, the ICRC worked with local water authorities to install foot-operated irrigation pumps and rehabilitate water supply systems.

As the Eritrean authorities had withdrawn authorization for the ICRC to assist in the voluntary repatriation of civilians in 2009, the ICRC did its best to continue monitoring the situation of the Ethiopian community living in Eritrea to ensure that their rights under the 1949 Geneva Conventions, including voluntary repatriation, were respected. It provided financial aid to people of Ethiopian origin to obtain residence permits if they wished to stay in Eritrea, or to enable them to cover transport and other expenses if they wished to be repatriated. It also helped relatives separated by the closed Eritrea-Ethiopia border restore contact through the RCM service. In cooperation with other organizations, it facilitated the reunification of vulnerable individuals with their respective families abroad.

The ICRC pursued dialogue on the resumption of visits to detainees of Ethiopian origin, including POWs and former POWs. The authorities had withdrawn authorization for such visits in 2009. The ICRC also continued to appeal to the authorities for any information they had about 19 Djiboutian soldiers reported by their government as missing after the Djibouti-Eritrea hostilities in June 2008.

CIVILIANS

Conflict-affected border communities rebuild their livelihoods

With constraints on its operations, the ICRC pursued dialogue with the Eritrean authorities to gain acceptance of its mandate and activities in the country (see *ICRC action and results*). Although several of the ICRC's programmes were delayed or had to be put on hold because of government-imposed limits, civilians in vulnerable areas accessible to the organization benefited from some support.

In Gash Barka and Southern Red Sea, rural communities affected by border tensions worked to rebuild their livelihoods with ICRC support. Over 400 farming households (2,300 people) resumed or increased production thanks to distributions of vegetable seed, hoes and jerrycans. Farmers reported that they were able to irrigate their crops more efficiently after the installation of 49 foot-operated pumps. Following the authorities' approval of the resumption of a livestock parasite-control programme in Dehub and Southern Red Sea, over 16,200 pastoralist households (81,000 people) with limited access to veterinary services benefited from the treatment against parasites of some 374,000 heads of cattle. This was the first time that the ICRC was able to resume activity in Dehub since the end of 2009. In Gash Barka, local agricultural experts and the ICRC jointly planned the construction of livestock ponds.

In the aftermath of the 2011 Nabro volcano eruption, some 6,500 people (1,300 households) coped with their displacement with the help of distributed household items. Some 340 households in nine villages started producing palm mats and ropes to enable some 1,600 households (8,000 people) resettling in the Southern Red Sea to improve their shelters. These artisan households received ICRC financial incentives. The project, planned to last until March 2013, was carried out at the request of the regional authorities and in consultation with the "Eritrean Red Cross".

Projects to further boost the food-production and income-generation capacities of populations in Eritrea could not be implemented owing to the absence of a visa for an ICRC specialist. These projects included the distribution of livestock, such as 200 donkeys in Gash Barka and 3,000 goats in Southern Red Sea, to agro-pastoralist families. The tractor-ploughing programme, which was intended to help farmers, especially women and the elderly, prepare their land (3,000 hectares in total) for the planting season also had to be cancelled as there was no delegate to conduct a proper assessment of the needs in new sites.

To enhance access to sufficient quantities of water for agricultural or domestic use, the local water authorities and the ICRC undertook maintenance work on water supply systems in the villages of Alale, Areta and Deba-Sima in Southern Red Sea. While fuel

Main figures and indicators	ASSISTANCE	Total	Women	Children
CIVILIANS (residents, IDPs, returnees, etc.)¹				
Economic security, water and habitat (in some cases provided within a protection or cooperation programme)				
Essential household items	Beneficiaries	6,533	60%	35%
	<i>of whom IDPs</i>	6,533		
Productive inputs	Beneficiaries	84,522	65%	1%
	<i>of whom IDPs</i>	845		
Water and habitat activities	Beneficiaries	17,941	40%	0%

1. Owing to operational and management constraints, figures presented in this table and in the narrative part of this report may not reflect all activities carried out during the reporting period

remained scarce and expensive in the country, the environment-friendly solar-powered systems kept running costs to a minimum. In Beylul village in the same region, the installation of pipelines brought safe water to patients and staff at the health centre and to pupils of the primary school. The local water authorities in Sheshebit village in Gash Barka replaced a water tank with a new one provided by the ICRC. In total, some 17,900 people benefited from these programmes. However, projects to repair water systems in other areas and to train local technicians in the management of these systems were put on hold because of difficulties, experienced since September 2011, in importing the necessary materials.

Despite the ongoing threat to civilians living in weapon-contaminated border areas, no risk education sessions were carried out owing to the restrictions on cooperation with the “Eritrean Red Cross” (see *Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement*).

Vulnerable groups benefit from financial support and family-links services

People of Ethiopian origin continued to be repatriated through Sudan by the Eritrean authorities. The government had withdrawn authorization for the ICRC to assist in the voluntary repatriation of civilians across the Eritrea-Ethiopia border in March 2009. Within such constraints, the ICRC did its best to continue monitoring the situation of the Ethiopian community living in Eritrea to ensure that their rights under the 1949 Geneva Conventions, including voluntary repatriation in humane conditions, were respected.

Some 540 vulnerable Ethiopians, including children, former detainees, elderly people and single women, received financial assistance to cover administrative and/or transport costs if they chose to be repatriated to Ethiopia, while 1,892 who wished to remain in Eritrea were assisted in the administrative procedures for obtaining residence permits. Thirty-four of them who needed medical treatment had their costs covered by the ICRC.

To enable them to apply for further studies or jobs, Eritrean and Ethiopian nationals received assistance in sending important documents, usually school transcripts, across the sealed border or to elsewhere in the world. With ICRC help, 40 people who had studied in Ethiopia had their documents sent to Eritrea, while 62 people who had studied in Eritrea had their documents sent to Ethiopia or elsewhere.

Two elderly blind Eritrean women who had been living for many years in Ethiopia were reunited with their families in Asmara. Through the ICRC’s coordination with other organizations, 51 Somali nationals from a refugee camp near Massawa who had been approved for resettlement in the United States of America received ICRC travel documents. In addition, 22 Eritreans were able to join their relatives abroad after receiving their flight tickets and other papers sent through the ICRC by the International Organization of Migration.

In areas in Eritrea the ICRC could access, dispersed family members used RCMs to exchange news with their relatives in Ethiopia. However, tracing services, which had been run by the “Eritrean Red Cross” (see *Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement*) had been suspended since January. The ICRC continued to follow up with the authorities requests from families for news of relatives still missing in relation to the 1998–2000 international armed conflict with Ethiopia.

PEOPLE DEPRIVED OF THEIR FREEDOM

Despite requests from the ICRC, the authorities did not give the green light for delegates to resume visits to detainees of Ethiopian origin, including POWs or former POWs. The authorities had withdrawn permission for such visits in 2009.

Requests to the Eritrean government for any information it had about the 19 Djiboutian soldiers reported by their government as missing after the Djibouti-Eritrea hostilities in June 2008, and for a response to a proposal regarding the possible repatriation of a sick Eritrean POW held in Djibouti remained unanswered.

AUTHORITIES

Given the constraints placed on the ICRC by the Eritrean government, dialogue with the authorities continued to focus on rebuilding trust. Meetings with government officials, including the heads of various ministries, the director of the president’s office and, for the first time in years, the political adviser to the president and the defence minister, enabled the review of the ICRC’s operational concerns. The planning and implementation of ICRC assistance activities also provided opportunities for briefing national and local officials on the nature of the organization.

CIVIL SOCIETY

Various dissemination events and publications sought to generate support for IHL and the ICRC’s humanitarian work among youth and other influential members of Eritrean society, especially in border regions. In Southern Red Sea, for example, village administrators and religious leaders learnt more about IHL and the ICRC through operational briefings and articles distributed by field staff.

The National Union of the Eritrean Youth and Students (NUEYS) invited the ICRC to a biannual youth festival at the Sawa Military and Vocational Training Center. The event brought together some 25,000 young Eritreans, 5,000 members of the diaspora and government officials, including the Eritrean president. Some 300 people, including military officers, learnt more about the ICRC during an information session conducted during the event.

Over 1,000 NUEYS members deepened their understanding of IHL during seminars in Gash Barka and Southern Red Sea. The union promoted public awareness of IHL through its magazine by publishing articles on the subject in five local languages. During the Eritrean Book Fair in Asmara, 30 local writers increased their

knowledge of the Movement and its Fundamental Principles, aiming to enhance their capacities and interest in writing about humanitarian issues.

The director of the Asmara University law school and the ICRC held preliminary talks on encouraging the teaching of IHL in higher education institutions by, for instance, making IHL reference texts available to lecturers and students.

RED CROSS AND RED CRESCENT MOVEMENT

Because of restrictions set by the government, the “Eritrean Red Cross” was not able to cooperate with international entities. The ICRC was thus unable to lend the “Eritrean Red Cross” any support in building its capacities or to conduct any joint activities with it.