



eritrea

The ICRC opened a delegation in Eritrea in 1998 in the context of the international armed conflict between Ethiopia and Eritrea and is responding to the needs remaining from the two-year war. Its priority is to protect and assist the population displaced, detained or otherwise affected by the conflict, ensuring compliance with IHL in respect of any persons still protected by the Third and Fourth Geneva Conventions. The ICRC also supports the development of the Red Cross Society of Eritrea.

EXPENDITURE (IN KCHF)

Protection	2,121
Assistance	5,035
Prevention	417
Cooperation with National Societies	645
General	-

► **8,218**

of which: Overheads 501

IMPLEMENTATION RATE

Expenditure/yearly budget	91%
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PERSONNEL

15	expatriates
95	national staff (daily workers not included)

KEY POINTS

In 2006, the ICRC:

- ▶ provided essential household items to some 49,000 IDPs and residents in the Temporary Security Zone, including families who had recently returned home or resettled; improved access to water for over 44,000 border residents, returnees and IDPs and helped 285 returnees build or rebuild homes;
- ▶ provided over 12,800 border residents and returnees with tractor-ploughing services and another 51,600 with veterinary treatment for their livestock to boost agricultural production;
- ▶ together with the Red Cross Society of Eritrea, collected some 10,500 RCMs and distributed more than 11,700 RCMs, mainly on behalf of relatives separated by the closed Eritrea-Ethiopia border, and reunited 24 children with family in Ethiopia;
- ▶ assisted in the voluntary repatriation of just over 1,000 people to Ethiopia or Eritrea and provided financial support enabling over 1,000 people of Ethiopian origin to complete repatriation procedures or obtain or renew Eritrean residence permits;
- ▶ monitored the treatment and living conditions of detainees of Ethiopian origin, including former POWs who had declined repatriation, in 52 detention facilities;
- ▶ conducted surgical training for Eritrean medical personnel, who performed 260 operations in 3 district hospitals in the border region.

CONTEXT

Despite increased international efforts to resolve the border issues between Eritrea and Ethiopia, the process to physically peg out the new border remained on hold for the fourth consecutive year. On 29 September, the UN Security Council extended the mandate of the UN Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea (UNMEE) until 31 January 2007, the fifth such extension in 2006. From April, UNMEE had been reduced by a third, leaving some 2,300 peacekeepers monitoring the Temporary Security Zone (TSZ) between the two countries.

As part of a government programme, most of the people displaced by the 1998–2000 international armed conflict with Ethiopia left camps in the TSZ between April and June and returned to their home villages or were resettled in border regions. Not all resettled families had yet been granted access to land. At year-end, around 14,000 IDPs were still living in camps.

Following average rainy seasons in 2005 and 2006, harvests were back to normal. In the TSZ, however, a combination of isolation, the border stalemate, the effects of past conflicts and a scarcity of basic commodities continued to hamper chances of economic recovery.

In late 2005, Eritrea announced that it no longer needed food aid to meet its requirements. Over 2006, the government introduced a new policy of cash for work, saying this was to prevent the population becoming dependent on outside aid. It also declared its intention to sell some 90,000 tonnes of international food aid at local markets. Several more aid agencies stopped their activities in Eritrea, leaving only a handful of international organizations working in the country.

MAIN FIGURES AND INDICATORS

PEOPLE DEPRIVED OF THEIR FREEDOM (All categories/all statuses)		CIVILIANS		
Detainees visited and monitored individually	300	<i>Economic security, water and habitat</i>		
Number of visits carried out	85	Essential household items	Beneficiaries	49,160
Number of places of detention visited	52	Agricultural inputs and micro-economic initiatives	Beneficiaries	65,667
RESTORING FAMILY LINKS		Water supply schemes and sanitation systems (completed projects)	Beneficiaries	44,065
<i>Red Cross messages (RCMs) and reunifications</i>		Habitat structures	Beneficiaries	285
RCMs collected	10,507	WOUNDED AND SICK		
RCMs distributed	11,795	Hospitals supported	Structures	3
People reunited with their families	38			
<i>Tracing requests, including cases of missing persons</i>				
People for whom a tracing request was newly registered	66			
Tracing requests closed positively (persons located)	55			
Tracing requests still being handled at 31 December 2006	344			
<i>Unaccompanied minors (UAMs) and separated children (SCs), including unaccompanied demobilized child soldiers</i>				
UAMs/SCs newly registered by the ICRC	40			
UAMs/SCs reunited with their families by the ICRC	24			
UAMs/SCs cases still being handled at 31 December 2006	32			
DOCUMENTS ISSUED				
People to whom a detention attestation was issued	25			

ICRC ACTION

In accordance with its accepted role in Eritrea, the ICRC focused on meeting the needs of people still affected by the international armed conflict with Ethiopia. The delegation carried out most of its scheduled activities, although a few programmes had to be cancelled, discontinued or scaled back because of a change in needs or the introduction of new government procedures.

Delegates followed the situation in the TSZ closely. They stood ready to document any alleged incidents of violence and make any necessary representations to the parties concerned, and to provide emergency aid if needed.

The ICRC continued to visit detainees of Ethiopian origin and the few remaining former POWs who had declined repatriation in 2002. It also monitored the situation of the Ethiopian community in Eritrea. The aim was to ensure that the rights of those people, regarding their living conditions and repatriation, were respected in accordance with international humanitarian standards and, where applicable, the Third and Fourth Geneva Conventions. The ICRC had to discontinue financial assistance in March 2006 to help people of Ethiopian origin to obtain or renew residence permits, owing to a change in government administrative procedures. It continued, however, in its role as a neutral intermediary, to provide members of the Ethiopian community with any information they needed to make an informed decision about repatriation. It

helped complete clearance procedures for those who decided to return home and assisted in their voluntary repatriation, providing transport and basic supplies for the trip. It also maintained the tracing and RCM services so that relatives could communicate across the closed border. At their request, children and other vulnerable people were reunited with their families across the border.

The ICRC was the main international provider of water, shelter and essential household items to IDPs living in camps in the TSZ. As the majority of IDPs left the camps in 2006, the ICRC cancelled plans to improve their shelter. From April, the bulk of assistance activities focused on border regions with returnee and resettled families. In coordination with the government, the ICRC ensured that those families had any essential household items they lacked and helped the worst-off build or rebuild homes. It also upgraded community water facilities both to cope with the increased demand and to improve general access. Solar-powered water supply systems were favoured, with the aim of reducing fuel dependency and cutting overall running and maintenance costs. To boost agricultural production in the TSZ, the delegation expanded its schemes, begun in 2005, to pay for tractors to plough fields and treat livestock against parasites.

To increase Eritrea's surgical capacity, the ICRC, in cooperation with the Health Ministry, initiated a training programme on general surgery for medical staff and

students in the Gash Barka border region and at the medical and nursing schools in Asmara.

Some 30 Eritrean armed forces trainers attended IHL instructor's courses. Other small-scale programmes to spread knowledge of IHL progressed as planned, targeting local authorities in the border regions, UNMEE, personnel in detention facilities, students and the general public.

With ICRC support, the Red Cross Society of Eritrea continued to develop its tracing and RCM, relief, dissemination and mine-risk education programmes.

CIVILIANS

Providing water for residents

Many water facilities in the border region had been damaged or destroyed by conflict. In cooperation with the Water Resource Department, 26 communities in the TSZ requested and took part in ICRC projects to improve their water supply. To reduce running and maintenance costs, solar-powered water supply systems were favoured and community committees formed and trained in their maintenance. Water storage facilities such as dams or ponds were built alongside the new systems. They were used to water livestock and irrigate crops, but also to replenish boreholes, thus ensuring a continuous supply of water. Around 1,200 people in villages far from a water source transported water with 237 special bags provided by the ICRC. The worst-off

families also received a total of 57 donkeys, which allowed them to collect more water and thus gain time for other productive activities, such as tending crops. Donkeys could also carry fodder, harvested crops or other goods, or serve as personal transport, for example to ride to market.

- 56,065 residents benefited from completed (32,175 people) and ongoing projects (23,890 people) to construct 16 solar-powered water supply systems, 6 water storage facilities and 7 hand-pump or motorized water supply systems

Boosting crop and livestock production

To complement the water programme, projects to improve the economic situation of the largely rural farming population in the TSZ were carried out. The projects included areas with returnee and resettled families.

Many families lacked the manpower or means to pay for ploughing. This meant that they had to leave their land fallow or share it with other families, which reduced their already meagre incomes. To increase the amount of cultivated land and reduce sharecropping, 26 villages had their fields ploughed by tractors, with the ICRC paying for the service. The timely ploughing, together with fair-to-good rainy seasons in 2006, contributed to all the villages reaping a good harvest.

Farmers in the TSZ traditionally kept livestock to cover large one-off expenses such as tractor ploughing. To ensure livestock were healthy, 273,000 animals in two border regions were inoculated against parasites, in cooperation with the Agriculture Ministry. Residents who had shared scant resources with nearby IDP camps over the years were provided with a small number of animals.

- 12,840 (2,568 households) people benefited from the paid services of tractors that ploughed 1,826 hectares
- 51,680 (10,336 households) residents benefited from veterinary assistance
- 190 residents (50 households) provided with 202 goats

Assisting IDPs and returning families

IDPs still in camps in the TSZ continued to receive any shelter materials and essential household items they lacked (tarpaulins, tents, blankets, kitchenware, jerrycans and soap), and the ICRC maintained their water facilities. The bulk of assistance, however, focused on the some 33,000 IDPs who

returned home or were resettled between April and June 2006. They also received any shelter and household items they needed, and community water facilities were upgraded to meet the increased demand. The worst-off families, the majority headed by women, were able to reconstruct or build homes, with the help of ICRC materials, supervision and, in some cases, cash to hire skilled labour. In a project carried out with the Eritrean Red Cross and other local partners, villages with returnee or resettled families also received training and materials to build energy-saving ovens. The ovens reduced the amount of time and energy women had to spend collecting firewood and slowed down deforestation. In a cash-for-work project, the inhabitants of a village with 672 returnees repaired a 1.3 km access road that linked them to other communities and markets.

- 48,375 IDPs (12,837 households), including returnees, and 785 residents (157 households) received essential household items
- 17,990 IDPs and returnees benefited from completed (11,890 people) and ongoing projects (6,100 people) in 5 camps and 5 villages to build 14 water supply systems (13 solar-powered and 1 motor-driven)
- 5,535 returnees benefited from completed (285 people) and ongoing projects (5,250) to reconstruct/build homes
- 10,845 returnees and residents benefited from ongoing projects to build energy-efficient ovens

Protecting civilians

While working in and near the TSZ, ICRC delegates raised awareness of IHL during discussions with the authorities and UNMEE. In the event of a change in the situation along the border, they were ready to document any alleged incidents of violence against civilians and make representations to the parties concerned.

The ICRC also monitored the living conditions of civilians of Ethiopian origin living in Eritrea and made any necessary representations on their behalf to the authorities. Just over 1,000 members of the Ethiopian community who had little or no income or support received financial assistance to obtain or renew their residence permits. This programme was discontinued in March 2006, owing to a change in government procedures.

Restoring family links

As the border was closed and there were no telecommunication and postal services

between Ethiopia and Eritrea, thousands of people relied on the tracing and RCM network to locate and exchange news with relatives across the border. At their request, children, the elderly and the infirm were reunited with family members across the border.

In accordance with the 1949 Geneva Conventions, the ICRC continued to advocate that the Eritrean and Ethiopian authorities establish mechanisms to provide families with information about relatives still unaccounted for in relation to the 1998–2000 international armed conflict. By year-end, no feedback had been received concerning 211 such people of Ethiopian origin and 153 of Eritrean origin whose names the ICRC had submitted to the Eritrean and Ethiopian authorities respectively in March 2005.

- 10,283 RCMs collected from and 11,613 RCMs distributed to civilians
- new tracing requests registered for 66 people (26 females, 14 minors at the time of disappearance); 55 people located; 344 people (124 females, 97 minors at the time of disappearance) still being sought
- 38 people, including 24 children, in Eritrea reunited with family in Ethiopia, and 40 children in Ethiopia reunited with family in Eritrea
- 40 unaccompanied/separated children newly registered; 24 reunited with their families; 32 cases of such children still being handled

Repatriations

People of Ethiopian or Eritrean origin who wished to be repatriated could do so, with the ICRC acting as a neutral intermediary. They were provided with basic supplies for the trip and short stay in a transit camp. They could also have their official documents, mainly education certificates, retrieved and forwarded to them so that they could apply for a job or continue their studies. For the first time in several years, the authorities authorized the repatriation to Ethiopia in October of three families of mixed origin (wives of Eritrean origin and husbands and children of Ethiopian origin). During 2006, 83 needy people of Ethiopian origin received financial support to cover clearance procedures prior to voluntary repatriation.

- 934 people voluntarily repatriated from Eritrea to Ethiopia and 70 from Ethiopia to Eritrea
- 116 documents forwarded from Eritrea and 9 from Ethiopia

PEOPLE DEPRIVED OF THEIR FREEDOM

Visiting former POWs and other detainees of Ethiopian origin

The ICRC continued to visit detainees of Ethiopian origin held in Eritrea and the few remaining former POWs who had declined repatriation in 2002, and followed up with the authorities other individual cases of former POWs still pending. Delegates monitored their treatment, living conditions and respect for their rights in accordance with international humanitarian norms and the Third and Fourth Geneva Conventions. The authorities were informed, in confidence, of the ICRC's findings and recommendations. The former POWs and detainees could stay in contact with their families through RCMs and received any essential items (blankets, clothing, shoes and hygiene items) they lacked. During the visits, detention personnel were briefed on IHL and ICRC activities.

- ▶ 300 detainees (21 females, 23 minors) followed up individually, including 207 newly registered (19 females, 21 minors), in 52 places of detention during 85 visits
- ▶ 224 RCMs collected from and 182 RCMs distributed to detainees
- ▶ 25 detention certificates issued to former detainees or their families

WOUNDED AND SICK

Decades of armed conflict had disrupted professional training in Eritrea, leaving the country short of surgeons.

In a new initiative, Eritrean medical personnel took part in training courses and lectures conducted by an ICRC surgeon and anaesthetist, in cooperation with the Health Ministry. The programme primarily targeted Agordat, Barentu and Tessenay hospitals in the Gash Barka border region (population 800,000) and Asmara's medical and nursing schools. Three general practitioners in Gash Barka benefited from year-long ICRC training and supervision in general surgery, performing 260 operations and carrying out pre- and post-operative assessments and follow-up. In parallel, nurses and student nurses in Gash Barka and from other regions participated in lectures and refresher courses on general surgery, anaesthetics and pre- and post-operative care. To further boost surgical capacity, the Health Ministry and Eritrea's medical school received input to set up a postgraduate curriculum. Gash Barka

hospitals were also provided with supplies, equipment and logistics back-up. The assistance helped Agordat hospital set up a blood bank and allowed children whose parents could not afford to travel to Asmara's paediatric referral hospital to be treated in Gash Barka.

AUTHORITIES

During 2006, local authority representatives in various parts of the country, including ministry officials and administrators, immigration officers, detention personnel, police and the military, took part in introductory presentations on IHL and the ICRC's mandate and activities. Two ICRC films and an IHL leaflet were translated into Tigrinya to enhance the programme. The talks had a favourable influence on the ICRC's level of acceptability and working relations with the authorities, and thus on its ability to protect and assist people still affected by the 1998–2000 conflict with Ethiopia.

Government officials in Asmara and the ICRC also met regularly. Discussions focused on ICRC field operations and the importance of the ratification and implementation of IHL treaties. The authorities were offered technical support for the latter, in particular to integrate into domestic law the provisions of the 1949 Geneva Conventions, which Eritrea had ratified in 2000.

- ▶ 607 local authorities participated in 7 presentations on IHL and the ICRC

ARMED FORCES AND OTHER BEARERS OF WEAPONS

The Eritrean Defence Forces agreed on a small-scale IHL training programme for 2006 aimed at building on the introductory and advanced IHL courses held in 2004 and 2005. For the first time, an experienced Eritrean military instructor helped facilitate the courses. His positive contribution represented a step forward in the integration of IHL into all armed forces training programmes.

- ▶ 22 armed forces instructors trained as IHL instructors
- ▶ 9 ICRC-trained military IHL instructors participated in a refresher course
- ▶ with ICRC sponsorship, 1 officer attended an IHL course in San Remo, and the head of Eritrea's police training centre participated in a regional IHL workshop in South Africa (see *Pretoria*)

- ▶ the Eritrean Defence Forces provided with 15,000 copies in Tigrinya of *Behaviour in combat* and 1,200 copies of *Essentials of the law of war*
- ▶ UNMEE field personnel briefed on IHL and the ICRC and provided with dissemination materials

CIVIL SOCIETY

As past efforts to generate Eritrean media interest in IHL had not been successful, communication initiatives in 2006 focused on academics and the general public. The University of Asmara, Eritrea's sole university, was closed down in September and the lecturers transferred to newly opened regional colleges. Initial contact was made with some of the colleges, and they received IHL publications.

- ▶ IHL and the Movement promoted, together with the Eritrean Red Cross, through a World Red Cross and Red Crescent Day marathon in Asmara broadcast on national television, and a Red Cross pavilion at the annual week-long festival in Asmara, attended by over half a million people
- ▶ Asmara public library provided with standard IHL reference materials
- ▶ higher-education institutions and individual students provided with information and materials on IHL and the ICRC

RED CROSS AND RED CRESCENT MOVEMENT

Over 2006, the Red Cross Society of Eritrea made further progress in boosting its management skills, building up its tracing, RCM and first-aid services and reinforcing the promotion of IHL and the Fundamental Principles. The headquarters and branches carried out a range of activities with the help of ICRC funds, materials, equipment and technical advice.

Responding to emergencies

- ▶ some 24,000 people transported to medical facilities countrywide by the Red Cross ambulance service, with some municipalities contributing to running costs
- ▶ 140 volunteers trained in first aid and disaster management and 32 personnel in the Safer Access approach
- ▶ branches provided with 1,065 first-aid manuals for distribution to the general public

- ▶ some 1,300 police officers, industrial workers, transport drivers and students participated in first-aid courses
- ▶ first-aid services provided and demonstrations conducted in the main towns of 5 regions

Reducing mine risk

- ▶ 54,663 people in 4 affected regions attended mine-risk education sessions conducted by 26 trained volunteers, who also collected data on mine incidents for the authorities
- ▶ 7 new volunteers trained in mine-risk education

Restoring family links

- ▶ the tracing and RCM network evaluated and being adapted in line with the recommendations
- ▶ Red Cross personnel in all 6 regions participated in a total of 11 tracing courses
- ▶ a promotional leaflet on the tracing and RCM services produced in Tigrinya and English

Promoting IHL and the Movement

- ▶ over 35,000 people, including government officials, police officers, business leaders, teachers and students, attended dissemination sessions
- ▶ 40 volunteers trained as disseminators
- ▶ newsletters, brochures and other promotional items produced and distributed
- ▶ drama and sporting events staged at festivals in Asmara and Massawa
- ▶ 108 volunteers from all 6 branches benefited from a three-day exchange programme to share ideas and experiences