



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. It protects and assists 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 promotes IHL within the government, armed forces and civil society and supports the development of the Red Cross Society of Eritrea.

EXPENDITURE (IN CHF ,000)

Protection	1,902
Assistance	4,864
Prevention	326
Cooperation with National Societies	527
General	4

► **7,624**

of which: Overheads 465

IMPLEMENTATION RATE

Expenditure/yearly budget	94.2%
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PERSONNEL

13 expatriates
79 national staff (daily workers not included)

KEY POINTS

In 2005, the ICRC:

- was the main organization providing water, shelter and essential household items to some 46,500 IDPs in 21 camps;
- provided a water supply and essential household items to some 19,500 IDPs who returned home, and helped another 2,000 returnees rebuild their homes;
- in former war zones, improved access to water for some 35,600 residents and helped over 4,000 households preserve their livelihoods by treating some 77,000 livestock against parasites and paying for tractor-ploughing services;
- together with the Eritrean Red Cross, distributed around 11,700 RCMs on behalf of relatives still separated by the two-year international armed conflict, assisted in the voluntary repatriation of over 800 civilians to Ethiopia and reunited 34 children with family across the closed border;
- visited 51 detention facilities to monitor the treatment and living conditions of detainees of Ethiopian origin, including POWs who had declined repatriation, and provided funds to some 3,000 residents of the Ethiopian community to meet Eritrean administrative requirements;
- together with the Defence Ministry, trained 27 armed forces officers as IHL instructors.

CONTEXT

The physical demarcation of the Eritrea-Ethiopia border remained on hold for the third consecutive year. The UN Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea (UNMEE) continued to monitor the buffer zone between the two countries, known as the Temporary Security Zone or TSZ.

In February 2005, the first significant number of IDPs returned home. As part of a government-assisted programme, more than 19,000 people displaced by the 1998–2000 international armed conflict with Ethiopia left their IDP camp and went back to their villages of origin along the border. Some 46,500 displaced people remained in camps in or near the TSZ. In November, the regional authorities announced that another 21,000 IDPs would return home in early 2006.

As in the past four years, over half of the Eritrean population relied on food aid. After five years of meagre rainfall, 2005 saw a return to normal rainy seasons, and harvests improved. However, the effects of the stalled border process and the suspension of cross-border trade with Ethiopia continued to hamper economic development. In and near the TSZ, farmers also had to contend with the risk of mines in their fields and pastures, dilapidated or war-damaged infrastructure and the presence of thousands of IDPs competing for scant resources.

MAIN FIGURES AND INDICATORS

PEOPLE DEPRIVED OF THEIR FREEDOM (All categories/all statuses)		CIVILIANS AND PEOPLE DEPRIVED OF THEIR FREEDOM		
Detainees visited	259	<i>Economic security, water and habitat</i>		
Detainees visited and monitored individually	259	Essential household items	Beneficiaries	66,845
Number of visits carried out	107	Agricultural inputs and micro-economic initiatives	Beneficiaries	16,447
Number of places of detention visited	51	Water-supply schemes and sanitation systems (completed projects)	Beneficiaries	56,342
RESTORING FAMILY LINKS		Habitat structures	Beneficiaries	2,000
<i>Red Cross messages (RCMs) and reunifications</i>				
RCMs collected	11,468			
RCMs distributed	12,025			
People reunited with their families	41			
<i>Tracing requests, including cases of missing persons</i>				
People for whom a tracing request was newly registered	279			
Tracing requests closed positively (persons located)	94			
Tracing requests still being handled at 31 December 2005	382			
<i>Unaccompanied minors (UAMs) and separated children (SCs), including unaccompanied demobilized child soldiers</i>				
UAMs/SCs newly registered by the ICRC	61			
UAMs/SCs reunited with their families by the ICRC	34			
UAMs/SCs cases still being handled at 31 December 2005	23			
DOCUMENTS ISSUED				
People to whom a detention attestation was issued	61			

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 between Eritrea and Ethiopia.

As in past years, ICRC delegates working in and near the TSZ stood ready to document any alleged incidents of violence against the population and to provide aid in the event that a rise in tensions affected civilians.

The ICRC continued to visit detainees of Ethiopian origin and the few remaining POWs who had declined repatriation in 2002. It also monitored the situation of the Ethiopian civilian community in Eritrea. The aim was to ensure that the rights of these populations regarding their living conditions and repatriation were respected, in accordance with humanitarian norms and, where applicable, the Third and Fourth Geneva Conventions.

There was a significant rise in the number of residents of Ethiopian origin who received ICRC financial support to cover Eritrean administrative requirements. Working with the Eritrean Red Cross, the ICRC assisted in the voluntary repatriation of civilians to Ethiopia and Eritrea, ran the tracing and RCM services so that relatives could communicate across the closed border, and reunited children and other vulnerable people with family across the border. Delegates also followed up with

the authorities requests from families for news of relatives still missing in relation to the war.

The ICRC was the main organization providing water, shelter and essential household items to IDPs in camps. In coordination with the government and UNDP, it also ensured that IDPs who returned home or resettled voluntarily had the same basic assistance to facilitate their return.

To help struggling residents living in and near the TSZ, the ICRC worked with the Eritrean authorities to improve access to water, especially in rural areas. It also introduced agricultural and veterinary projects to help farmers improve their economic situation.

The ICRC held IHL courses for the military as part of a programme initiated in 2004 to integrate the subject into all armed forces training. Delegates also gave presentations on IHL to the local authorities in and near the TSZ, new UNMEE staff, personnel in detention facilities and university students.

With a substantial level of ICRC support, the Red Cross Society of Eritrea continued to reinforce its tracing and RCM network and relief and dissemination programmes. The ambulance service also made progress towards its long-term goal of becoming self-supporting.

CIVILIANS

Protecting civilians

While working in and near the TSZ, ICRC delegates took every opportunity to raise awareness of IHL in discussions with civilians, the authorities, the Eritrean armed forces and UNMEE. The organization was ready to adapt its activities in the event of a change in the situation along the border and to document any alleged incidents of violence against civilians and make representations to the parties concerned.

The ICRC also monitored the situation of civilians of Ethiopian origin still living in Eritrea and made any necessary representations on their behalf to the authorities. During the year, more than 6,000 members of the Ethiopian community sought the ICRC's advice or assistance. A total of 3,302 of them received ICRC financial assistance, a significant rise compared with 2004. The majority needed funds to obtain or renew their residence permits, and the rest to complete clearance procedures prior to voluntary repatriation. Many of the beneficiaries were financially worse off in 2005 because family or friends were no longer in a position to support them.

Repatriation

The ICRC, with local Red Cross support, assisted in the voluntary repatriation of civilians to Ethiopia and Eritrea, providing transport and basic supplies for the trip and short stay in a transit camp. It also retrieved and forwarded official documents so that

these people could continue their studies or apply for work.

- ▶ 848 civilians voluntarily repatriated from Eritrea to Ethiopia and 182 from Ethiopia to Eritrea
- ▶ 16 documents forwarded from Eritrea

Restoring family links

Telecommunication and postal services had not yet been re-established between Eritrea and Ethiopia and the border remained closed. This meant that thousands of people still relied on the tracing and RCM network to send family news to relatives across the border. When requested, the ICRC also reunited children, the elderly and infirm with relatives across the border.

- ▶ 11,777 RCMs delivered in Eritrea and 11,195 collected
- ▶ 41 people, including 34 children, in Eritrea reunited with family in Ethiopia, and 55, including 29 children, in Ethiopia reunited with family in Eritrea
- ▶ 94 people located at their families' request
- ▶ 382 requests to trace relatives, including 119 children, pending

In accordance with the 1949 Geneva Conventions, the ICRC continued to advocate that the Eritrean and Ethiopian authorities establish mechanisms to provide families with news about relatives still unaccounted for in connection with the 1998–2000 war. In the meantime, many families approached the ICRC. In March, the organization presented the Eritrean and Ethiopian authorities respectively with the names of 200 such people of Ethiopian origin and 153 of Eritrean origin whom it could not trace.

Assisting IDPs and returning families

As in past years, the ICRC was the main organization providing shelter, water and essential household items to IDPs living in 21 camps in or near the TSZ; the government and WFP were responsible for food distributions. The majority of IDPs were women and children who had been in the camps for three to six years. Many IDPs could not return home until the border was pegged out and mines cleared.

Based on its assessment of needs in the camps in late 2004, the ICRC began tailoring distributions more closely to the situation in each camp. This led to a decrease in the quantity of goods provided (blankets, kitchenware, jerrycans, mosquito nets and soap). Plans to introduce longer-lasting shelter materials were put on hold when

the government announced in November that some 21,000 IDPs were scheduled to return home in early 2006.

In February, some 5,000 families (around 19,500 people) living in Adi Kesh IDP camp in Gash Barka voluntarily returned to their villages of origin near the border with Ethiopia in a government-organized programme. In coordination with the authorities and UNDP, the ICRC ensured that the returning families had access to water and received soap, kitchenware, jerrycans, tarpaulins and rope. It also made an arrangement with the Eritrean Red Cross to build around 2,000 fuel-saving ovens in the Shilalo resettlement area. The ovens slowed down deforestation and reduced the amount of time and energy women had to spend collecting wood.

The ICRC also constructed water points elsewhere in Gash Barka and Debub that served both IDPs and returning families. In addition, it helped families who had returned to the Senafe and Tserona regions of Debub to build or rebuild their homes, providing materials, on-site supervision and in some cases cash to hire skilled workers.

- ▶ 17,640 IDP families (66,220 people) in camps or returning home received essential household items
- ▶ 2,000 returnees assisted in building/rebuilding homes
- ▶ 20,725 IDPs benefited from the construction of 3 solar-powered water-distribution systems in IDP camps and the installation of 2 temporary water systems and construction of 10 solar-powered permanent water points in villages

Assisting border residents

Much of the infrastructure in the border region, including water services, had been damaged or destroyed by past conflicts. The ICRC, in cooperation with the Eritrean water board, initiated projects to provide an adequate supply of clean water in 25 resident communities in Debub. Each community requested and participated in its project. To ensure that the water supply was sustainable, water-storage facilities were built alongside the new water points and community water committees were set up and trained to maintain the systems. Working with a British and a Swiss university, the ICRC also held a course in Asmara for the Eritrean water board on the use of satellite images to identify new sources of groundwater.

- ▶ 35,617 residents benefited from the construction of 10 water points, 10 water-storage facilities and 12 solar-powered water-distribution systems and the rehabilitation of 4 wells

Prior to the war with Ethiopia, the southern border region of Eritrea was one of the more agriculturally productive areas of the country. Resident and returning families now faced a number of obstacles to making a living from agriculture. Labour was in short supply, so fields often lay fallow, and goods and services to tend fields and livestock were either not available or, for some families, too expensive. To address these problems, the delegation introduced two new initiatives. In Debub, around 2,000 families received vouchers that paid for a tractor to plough their fields ahead of the two planting periods. In Gash Barka, ICRC teams treated 77,676 sheep, goats, cattle, donkeys and camels against parasites. The livestock belonged to just over 2,000 resident and recently returned families in five villages. In a sample survey conducted later, all the animals tested were still parasite free.

- ▶ 16,447 people (4,351 households) benefited from agricultural and veterinary assistance

PEOPLE DEPRIVED OF THEIR FREEDOM

POWs

In 2002, Eritrea released and repatriated the last POWs of Ethiopian origin regularly visited by the ICRC. In accordance with the Third Geneva Convention, the ICRC continued to visit the few remaining POWs who had declined repatriation in order to monitor their situation until a permanent solution was found regarding their status. Delegates also offered the POWs the tracing and RCM services so that they could keep in contact with their families and provided them with blankets. Discussions were ongoing with the authorities concerning other individual POW cases still pending.

Visiting civilian detainees

The ICRC visited detention facilities country-wide, following up the cases of detainees of Ethiopian origin to ensure that their rights were being respected in accordance with international humanitarian norms and, where applicable, the Fourth Geneva Convention. The findings and recommendations were presented, in confidence, to the authorities. Inmates could use the tracing and RCM services and, where necessary, received blankets, clothing, shoes

and hygiene kits to contribute to their health and welfare. During the visits, ICRC delegates briefed 160 police officers on the basic principles of IHL and the organization's rationale and standard procedures for detention visits.

- 259 detainees followed up individually (19 of them women and 14 minors), including 146 newly registered, in 51 places of detention during 107 visits
- 248 RCMs delivered to detainees and 273 collected for delivery to their families
- 625 inmates received essential items

AUTHORITIES

The ICRC continued discussions with the Eritrean authorities on the ratification and implementation of IHL treaties. The organization advocated, in particular, the integration of the provisions of the 1949 Geneva Conventions into Eritrea's domestic law and the ratification of the 1977 Additional Protocols.

The ICRC regularly met senior UNMEE officials and representatives of the diplomatic community and UN agencies to update them on ICRC field operations and discuss humanitarian issues. It also briefed 65 newly deployed UNMEE staff on the basic principles of IHL and the ICRC's mandate and activities.

ARMED FORCES AND OTHER BEARERS OF WEAPONS

In 2004, the Eritrean armed forces agreed in principle to integrate IHL into all their training programmes. At a round-table with the ICRC in February 2005, the Ministry of Defence again acknowledged the importance of IHL training for the military, expressed its appreciation for the ICRC's IHL courses in 2004 and said that the armed forces had subsequently held introductory talks on IHL for recruits. In a new initiative, the ICRC was helping the armed forces to obtain and distribute identification tags to personnel.

- 27 officers trained as IHL instructors
- 25 officers attended an introductory IHL course
- with ICRC sponsorship, 2 colonels took part in an IHL course in San Remo
- the Defence Ministry and Sawa military college received standard sets of IHL reference materials

- 3,000 copies in Tigrinya of the ICRC's *Essentials of the law of war* and 20,000 copies of *Behaviour in combat* produced for use as teaching tools

CIVIL SOCIETY

Past efforts by the ICRC to interest the Eritrean media in IHL and the organization's related activities had been unsuccessful. The ICRC, therefore, distributed IHL promotional material directly to opinion-makers and the general public and provided public libraries with relevant publications.

ICRC efforts to promote the teaching of IHL at the University of Asmara were limited, as the establishment had not accepted any new students since 2003. Delegates gave presentations on IHL to 145 students of journalism, political science and law and responded to requests from students from various institutes of higher education for information and publications on IHL.

RED CROSS AND RED CRESCENT MOVEMENT

The ICRC and the Red Cross Society of Eritrea worked together to distribute RCMs and relief items and organize voluntary repatriations for civilians. The ICRC provided the Red Cross with a variety of support, from funds and supplies to training and expertise, to strengthen its tracing, relief and communication programmes.

Restoring family links

With ICRC support, the Eritrean Red Cross continued to collect and distribute the majority of the RCMs in Eritrea, handling some 20,000 messages in 2005.

To reinforce the RCM and tracing network, the ICRC:

- provided on-the-job coaching for Red Cross staff, 60 volunteers and 120 community members designated as focal points for people wanting information about the network;
- took part in courses to train new volunteers and community focal points;
- helped produce official tracing guidelines and a leaflet for the general public on the services;
- together with Red Cross headquarters and branches, evaluated the tracing network and held a one-day meeting to discuss ways to increase the network's efficiency.

Responding to emergencies

The ICRC helped cover the running costs of the Red Cross ambulance service, which transported around 24,500 people to hospitals and clinics countrywide in 2005. In a positive step towards making the service self-supporting, some regional municipalities began contributing to the costs.

With ICRC support, the Eritrean Red Cross trained 25 volunteers as first-aid instructors and 28 staff and volunteers received training in disaster management. The participants went on to hold first-aid and relief-management training for another 120 volunteers in all branches. The ICRC also provided identification vests for the 300 volunteers of all 20 Red Cross action teams. During 2005, the Eritrean Red Cross held first-aid courses for 125 police personnel and 470 members of the general public, including industrial workers, transport drivers and students.

Promoting IHL and the Movement

During 2005, the Eritrean Red Cross gave talks on IHL and the Movement to more than 27,000 people countrywide, including government officials, business leaders, students and teachers. To assist the Red Cross in developing its communication skills, the ICRC took part in courses for 25 dissemination trainers and helped to produce and distribute a quarterly newsletter and stage various promotional events.