

# BANGLADESH



ICRC / HR, 2011  
+ ICRC delegation

## EXPENDITURE (IN KCHF)

Protection	513
Assistance	200
Prevention	1,005
Cooperation with National Societies	251
General	-

► **1,969**

of which: Overheads 120

## IMPLEMENTATION RATE

Expenditure/yearly budget	69%
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## PERSONNEL

Expatriates	6
National staff (daily workers not included)	22

## KEY POINTS

### In 2011, the ICRC:

- made a formal offer of services to the authorities to visit detainees in all places of detention, according to standard ICRC procedures, following up the offer with various officials
- with the National Society, provided Bangladeshi economic migrants returning from unrest/conflict in Libya with telephone and medical services at Dhaka's airport
- with the National Society, distributed relief goods to 738 people (123 families) affected by violent clashes in the Chittagong Hill Tracts
- enabled 385 financially vulnerable disabled patients to access physical rehabilitation services at the Centre for the Rehabilitation of Paraplegics by providing it with training, technical and material assistance
- assisted the Bangladesh Military Academy in incorporating IHL into its curriculum for trainees and briefed police officers across the country on IHL and international human rights law relevant to their duties
- supported the National Society in carrying out a series of campaigns to stop misuse of the red crescent emblem and in lobbying for a Ministry of Health directive in support of these efforts

Present in Bangladesh since 2006, the ICRC opened a delegation there in 2011. It protects and assists people affected by tensions and violence, promotes IHL and its implementation among the authorities, armed and security forces and academic circles, and supports the Bangladesh Red Crescent Society in building its capacities. It also seeks to visit people deprived of their freedom in the country.

## CONTEXT

Following the outbreak of armed conflict in Libya (see *Libya*), tens of thousands of Bangladeshi migrant workers living there sought assistance and repatriation. A large number of those who fled the situation ended up in camps in Egypt and Tunisia. An estimated 36,500 were repatriated to Dhaka on special flights organized by the IOM and the Bangladeshi authorities.

Bangladesh experienced some social unrest in 2011, including a few politically motivated hartals/strikes and sporadic armed violence. Clashes over land in the Chittagong Hill Tracts between Bengali settlers and ethnic minorities resulted in a limited number of casualties, the destruction of some houses and the displacement of families.

Meanwhile, Bangladesh continued investigating crimes related to the 1971 liberation war as its International Crimes Tribunal got under way.

## ICRC ACTION AND RESULTS

Having upgraded its mission in Bangladesh to a delegation, in January the ICRC made a formal offer of services to the authorities to visit detainees in all places of detention according to its standard procedures. It subsequently followed up its offer with the relevant officials. With the Bangladesh Red Crescent Society, and in close cooperation with the authorities, the ICRC distributed clothes and hygiene items to more than 800 foreign detainees held in Bangladeshi detention facilities. In coordination with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the organization also helped migrants detained abroad re-establish and maintain contact with their families, facilitated the return of those released, and provided ad hoc assistance to the most vulnerable following their repatriation.

With the National Society, the ICRC continued responding to the needs of violence-affected people. Following clashes in the Chittagong Hill Tracts (see *Context*), for example, the two organizations distributed relief items to some 120 affected families. Furthermore, when unrest/conflict erupted in Libya, the National Society established a presence at Dhaka's Shahjalal International Airport, funded by the ICRC, in order to meet the needs of returning Bangladeshi migrant workers. An ICRC-developed database was used to manage tracing requests, a telephone system enabled those returning to re-establish contact with concerned relatives, and medical assistance was made available to those requiring it. An ambulance service transported people in need of secondary care to appropriate facilities. The ICRC also offered technical, material and financial support to boost the National Society's capacities at the institutional level, including by drafting a new constitution. This was subsequently adopted by the National Society's General

Main figures and indicators	PROTECTION	Total		
<b>CIVILIANS (residents, IDPs, returnees, etc.)</b>				
<b>Red Cross messages (RCMs)</b>				
RCMs collected		19	UAMs/SCs*	
RCMs distributed		16		
Phone calls facilitated between family members		12,615		
<b>Tracing requests, including cases of missing persons</b>				
People for whom a tracing request was newly registered		83	Women	Minors
People located (tracing cases closed positively)		74		
Tracing cases still being handled at 31 December 2011 (people)		37	1	
<b>Documents</b>				
Official documents relayed between family members across borders/front lines		3		

\* Unaccompanied minors/separated children

Main figures and indicators	ASSISTANCE	Total	Women	Children
<b>CIVILIANS (residents, IDPs, returnees, etc.)</b>				
<b>Economic security, water and habitat</b>				
Food	Beneficiaries	738	16%	16%
Essential household items	Beneficiaries	738	16%	16%
<b>PEOPLE DEPRIVED OF THEIR FREEDOM (All categories/all statuses)</b>				
<b>Economic security, water and habitat</b>				
Essential household items	Beneficiaries	1,851		
<b>Physical rehabilitation</b>				
Centres supported	Structures	1		
Patients receiving services	Patients	385	8	342
New patients fitted with prostheses	Patients	16		1
Prostheses delivered	Units	17		1
New patients fitted with orthoses	Patients	369	8	341
Orthoses delivered	Units	704	9	669

Assembly and will be submitted to parliament for review in 2012. The ICRC and the Bangladeshi Red Crescent formalized their cooperation by signing a partnership framework agreement. ICRC advice and training helped improve the National Society's emergency preparedness and family-links capacities.

Between 2000 and 2010, the ICRC had, through its Special Fund for the Disabled, successfully funded two physical rehabilitation projects for Bangladesh's disabled. Following an impact assessment of this decade-long support, and as there were relatively few service providers in the country, the organization signed a cooperation agreement with Bangladesh's well-reputed Centre for the Rehabilitation of Paraplegics, pledging it further training, technical and financial support. As a result, 385 financially vulnerable patients accessed physical rehabilitation services and follow-up care at the centre, which began implementing enhanced quality control mechanisms.

ICRC operations in both Bangladesh and Libya, along with the needs of affected civilians, featured in ICRC briefings and press releases, which were used by the media to produce articles on humanitarian themes. They were also discussed during ICRC seminars held for academics, journalists and students, thus promoting greater understanding of IHL among key members of civil society.

Meanwhile, the ICRC pursued efforts at government level to promote the ratification of IHL treaties and encouraged the integration of IHL and international human rights law into the doctrine, training and operations of the armed and police forces. As a result, the Bangladesh Military Academy included IHL in its curriculum for trainees. Technical support, presentations and ICRC-organized events for police forces, such as briefings and first-aid training, provided opportunities not only to enhance their response capacities but also to increase their knowledge of and interest in the provisions of IHL and international human rights law applicable to their jobs.

## CIVILIANS

Tensions, political or otherwise, sometimes erupted into armed violence. During meetings on various humanitarian and ICRC activity-related matters, the authorities were reminded of their responsibility to protect and assist civilians affected by such situations.

Following clashes in the Chittagong Hill Tracts between Bengali settlers and ethnic minorities over land, 123 families used food staples, such as rice and oil, to help meet their emergency nutritional needs (738 beneficiaries). Essential household items, such as blankets, tarpaulins and jerry cans, allowed them to better cope with their circumstances. These items were funded by the ICRC and distributed by the National Society.

Unrest, as well as natural disasters, led to deaths. In order to prevent people from becoming unaccounted for, a manual on the management of human remains was translated into Bengali ahead of its planned distribution to the National Society, the armed forces, the police and local NGOs. During meetings, senior army and police officials discussed with the ICRC training opportunities for officers in human remains management. Meanwhile, the armed forces and a local NGO were better equipped to handle such remains, and so facilitate any future identification process, following the donation of 800 body bags. Similarly, participants in a disaster management workshop, co-organized by the US and Bangladeshi armed forces in Dhaka, learnt how to prevent people from becoming unaccounted for during an emergency while attending an ICRC presentation on human remains management.

Meanwhile, the National Society continued to strengthen its capacities to respond to emergencies and restore contact between separated family members, with ICRC financial support and training. Following the outbreak of conflict in Libya (see *Context*), for example, more than 12,600 repatriated migrant Bangladeshi workers informed family members of their safe return on arrival

at Shahjalal International Airport using National Society telephone services funded by the ICRC. Other concerned relatives in Bangladesh requested help in locating 75 relatives unaccounted for in Libya, of whom 72 were subsequently found and put in touch with their families after a database was established to manage such requests. More than 1,600 people received medical assistance from the National Society/ICRC at the airport, while an ambulance stood ready to transport patients requiring secondary care to hospital. Three injured migrants were taken to their home districts by ICRC transport, and one underwent emergency surgery with ICRC funding.

Relatives of Bangladeshis, including economic migrants, detained abroad (e.g. in Azerbaijan, India, Israel, Pakistan and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland), restored and maintained contact with them using National Society/ICRC-facilitated telephone calls or RCMs. The family members of 32 Bangladeshis detained in Jammu and Kashmir, India, 5 people held in Lebanon and 1 in Israel were notified of their relatives' status by ICRC delegates. Four Bangladeshis released from detention in Iraq, Israel and Malaysia returned home after their repatriation was facilitated by the ICRC in cooperation with the relevant National Societies and authorities. Another four particularly vulnerable Bangladeshis returning from detention overseas were provided with temporary shelter and food, and when necessary directed to specific care providers, by the National Society/ICRC.

### PEOPLE DEPRIVED OF THEIR FREEDOM

According to official information, some 73,800 people were detained in 67 detention facilities in Bangladesh, including people held in connection with violence and unrest or for reasons of State security. After submitting an official offer to the government in January, delegates regularly met with officials from the Ministries of Home Affairs and Foreign Affairs, the police and the prisons department to follow up the possibility of visiting detainees according to the ICRC's standard procedures. They also discussed the situation of the 6–7,000 Bangladeshi economic migrants detained overseas, including those wishing to return home (see *Civilians*).

Meanwhile, 1,851 foreign detainees in Bangladesh continued their sentences with more dignity using clothing, including national dress, and soap donated by the National Society/ICRC, in cooperation with the local authorities.

### WOUNDED AND SICK

While the number of people with disabilities in Bangladesh was unknown, WHO estimates suggested that 0.5% of the population – some 780,000 people – required prostheses/orthoses. The government had declared the country free of mined/suspected mined areas, although isolated incidents involving unexploded ordnance occasionally caused casualties.

Between 2000 and 2010, the ICRC had, through its Special Fund for the Disabled, funded two physical rehabilitation projects for Bangladesh's disabled. An impact assessment of this decade-long support was conducted by an ICRC specialist in 2011, who confirmed it had been successful and had led to one of the two projects becoming self-sustainable. As there were relatively few service providers in the country, in September the ICRC signed an agreement pledging financial and technical support to the well-reputed Centre for the Rehabilitation of Paraplegics. Subsequently, some 385 financially vulnerable disabled patients

accessed prosthetic/orthotic services before year-end. To ensure the centre continued providing high-quality services, two staff members gained a better understanding of quality control mechanisms and patient follow-up through ICRC training.

### AUTHORITIES

Following its accession to the Rome Statute in 2010, Bangladesh's authorities discussed further IHL implementation with the ICRC, focusing on the 1949 Geneva Conventions and their Additional Protocols, the Hague Convention on Cultural Property and the Mine Ban Convention.

To help regain momentum for the creation of a national IHL committee, the foreign secretary participated in the Third South Asian Regional IHL Conference in Male, Maldives (see *New Delhi*), with ICRC sponsorship. Representatives of the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Law, as well as the armed forces and the police service shared experiences of IHL implementation with regional counterparts at the 18th and 19th South Asian Teaching Sessions on IHL held in Kathmandu, Nepal, and Bangalore, India respectively (see *Nepal* and *New Delhi*).

Meanwhile, ICRC delegates continued to monitor the progress of the International Crimes Tribunal (see *Context*).

### ARMED FORCES AND OTHER BEARERS OF WEAPONS

Encouraged by the ICRC, the armed forces integrated IHL into the curriculum for trainees at the Bangladesh Military Academy. Officers tasked with teaching IHL honed their skills at two courses, while senior officers attended IHL training sessions at the Defence Services Command and Staff College, two officers attended regional courses (see *Authorities*) and selected personnel studied for an IHL diploma, with ICRC sponsorship (see *Civil society*). Regular dialogue with armed forces' representatives enabled them to revisit their obligations to protect civilians and learn about the National Society's/ICRC's mandates and neutral, impartial and independent humanitarian action.

Bangladeshi police and Rapid Action Battalion personnel reviewed basic IHL and the links between international human rights law and domestic law during regular National Society/ICRC briefings, backed up by a manual in Bengali covering both bodies of law and their relevance to professional policing standards. They boosted their emergency-response capacities at first-aid and/or water-rescue training sessions, which also enhanced their relations with the ICRC and their understanding of its activities, thus helping ensure safe access to victims of armed conflict or violence in the future.

Commanders departing on peacekeeping missions attended briefings on the ICRC's mandate and activities in their country of deployment. The Bangladesh Institute of Peace Support Operation Training continued to benefit from ICRC technical support, including in hosting train-the-trainer courses.

### CIVIL SOCIETY

Familiarizing the public with the National Society's/ICRC's specific mandates and activities remained important to ensure safe access to victims of any future violence. Journalists drew on ICRC briefings and press releases to produce articles on humanitarian themes, including the plight of Bangladeshi migrant workers returning from Libya (see *Context*) and the repatriation of a Bangladeshi from Israel to his home country (see *Civilians*). Reporters in the Chittagong Hill Tracts reviewed IHL, the ICRC's

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mandate and reporting on disaster/internal violence at a workshop. Influential academics and religious leaders discussed the protection of civilians during unrest at meetings with the ICRC, while Islamic organizations hosted briefings on the ICRC's mandate and activities worldwide. Such efforts were backed up with information materials in Bengali.

Law lecturers enhanced their IHL knowledge through ICRC training programmes, thus facilitating their own research and teaching. Students from universities countrywide tested their IHL knowledge at national and regional moot court competitions. At an annual ICRC-supported human rights summer school, students discussed IHL application, as did some 100 students from the International Islamic University of Chittagong at an ICRC-organized information session. Three universities received IHL reference books, and selected academics, armed forces personnel, journalists and members of the judiciary began researching and studying IHL rules applicable to their functions as part of an online postgraduate diploma from NALSAR University, India.

### **RED CROSS AND RED CRESCENT MOVEMENT**

The Bangladeshi Red Crescent worked with the ICRC to meet the needs of violence-affected people (see *Civilians*). Having signed a partnership agreement with the ICRC, it built its emergency response capacity with ICRC training and financial, technical and material support, focusing on the Safer Access approach, first aid, restoring family links and the management of human remains.

ICRC-trained volunteers provided first-aid training to police units, for example, while volunteers from various districts bolstered their ability to restore links between separated family members at National Society/ICRC-organized workshops. A documentary on National Society migration-related tracing activities, made with ICRC support, raised public awareness of the services. Meanwhile, an ICRC-prepared manual on human remains management was translated in Bengali thus enabling volunteers to strengthen their emergency-response capacities (see *Civilians*).

To help prevent misuse of the red crescent emblem, the National Society carried out nine ICRC-supported campaigns, including two in the Chittagong Hill Tracts. The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare issued a directive on the matter, following a National Society request supported by the ICRC.

The National Society drafted a new constitution, with International Federation/ICRC financial and technical support, which was approved by the National Society's General Assembly and was awaiting submission to parliament. The ICRC continued to meet regularly with all Movement partners to coordinate activities.