

MAURITANIA



The ICRC has worked in Mauritania since 1970, opening a delegation there in 2013. It visits detainees and helps improve their living conditions, particularly their access to health care. It offers them and other people in need, including refugees, family-links services. In a subsidiary role, it works to meet the basic needs of refugees who have fled conflict elsewhere in the region. It promotes IHL and humanitarian principles among the armed and security forces, authorities and civil society, and supports the development of the Mauritanian Red Crescent.

YEARLY RESULT

Level of achievement of ICRC yearly objectives/plans of action

MEDIUM

KEY RESULTS/CONSTRAINTS

In 2013:

- ▶ detainees reduced risks to their health and safety following upgrades to prison water, sanitation and electrical systems and support to health care systems undertaken by the authorities and the ICRC
- ▶ detainees benefited from steps taken by the authorities, with ICRC help, to improve their treatment – for example, by increasing awareness of international norms on detention among National Guard units serving as prison guards
- ▶ Malian refugees in the M'bera camp and communities in the Bassikounou area benefited from the expanded capacity of the nearby health centre, as construction/renovation work was completed and installation of equipment began
- ▶ in Bassikounou town, people accessed enough water, including for their livestock, from infrastructure upgraded using ICRC resources meant for Malian refugees in the M'bera camp, as other actors had already covered needs there
- ▶ Mauritania's military/security forces, with technical advice from the ICRC, drafted a four-year action plan for training army, National Guard, *gendarmerie* and police units in IHL and international human rights law

EXPENDITURE (in KCHF)

Protection	1,071
Assistance	2,907
Prevention	598
Cooperation with National Societies	294
General	-

4,871

of which: Overheads 297

IMPLEMENTATION RATE

Expenditure/yearly budget	84%
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PERSONNEL

Mobile staff	9
Resident staff (daily workers not included)	22

PROTECTION	Total
CIVILIANS (residents, IDPs, returnees, etc.)	
Red Cross messages (RCMs)	
RCMs collected	120
RCMs distributed	41
Phone calls facilitated between family members	27
People located (tracing cases closed positively)	32
PEOPLE DEPRIVED OF THEIR FREEDOM (All categories/all statuses)	
ICRC visits	
Detainees visited	1,523
Detainees visited and monitored individually	44
Number of visits carried out	51
Number of places of detention visited	23
Restoring family links	
RCMs collected	11
RCMs distributed	4
Phone calls made to families to inform them of the whereabouts of a detained relative	73

ASSISTANCE	Targets	Achieved
CIVILIANS (residents, IDPs, returnees, etc.)		
Economic security, water and habitat (in some cases provided within a protection or cooperation programme)		
Water and habitat activities	Beneficiaries	20,000
		6,067

CONTEXT

Mauritania felt the effects of regional insecurity, which exacerbated social, political and religious tensions. Mauritanian troops deployed along the country's eastern borders, but not in Mali itself, reportedly arrested people in connection with the armed conflict in northern Mali or armed groups suspected of endangering State security.

Many refugees remained in the Bassikounou area of south-eastern Mauritania, tensions being high in northern Mali. In the M'bera camp, refugees met their food, water and health needs with help from humanitarian actors. However, in the surrounding communities, the presence of refugees who had chosen to live outside the camp to tend to their livestock tripled the population, straining water resources and health services and exacerbating the effects of widespread poverty and the fragile food situation.

Mauritania remained a major hub for migrants travelling north into Europe. The town of Nouadhibou in the north-west was host to reportedly 30,000 migrants and asylum seekers.

Legislative and municipal elections in Mauritania took place in November and December; the ruling party won a majority.

ICRC ACTION AND RESULTS

In 2013, following the authorities' ratification of a headquarters agreement at end-2012, the ICRC upgraded its presence in Mauritania from a mission to a separate delegation; this facilitated its operations, which continued to focus on supporting the authorities' efforts to meet detainees' needs.

ICRC delegates visited detainees according to the organization's standard procedures; dialogue with the authorities on ensuring the ICRC's access to security detainees continued. After visits, delegates provided the authorities with confidential feedback and recommendations, helping them improve detainees' treatment and living conditions and encouraging them to follow up detainees whose judicial status was unclear. In addition, by organizing a workshop and a round-table with the Justice Ministry, the ICRC facilitated discussions among representatives of ministries concerned and penitentiary officials, which yielded concrete recommendations for addressing shortcomings in the penitentiary system.

Meanwhile, detainees benefited from direct steps taken by the authorities, with ICRC help, to improve their treatment. The authorities recruited and trained people to serve exclusively as prison guards, while conducting training and information sessions on professional practices and human rights principles for National Guard units temporarily performing this task. Some inmates also avoided/recovered from illnesses, as prison health staff, supported by the ICRC with training and salary incentives, regularly monitored their health and diet and gave them adequate care. Detainees' exposure to health and safety risks was further reduced by the renovation of water/sanitation infrastructure, the provision of hygiene items and pest-control/health-awareness campaigns.

The ICRC and trained Mauritanian Red Crescent volunteers assessed Malian refugees' needs and coordinated efforts with other actors, which helped ensure that all needs were covered and duplication avoided. Refugees living in one part of the M'bera camp had uninterrupted access to clean water because the ICRC had

replaced a burnt-out water pump at an NGO's request. Otherwise, needs in the camp being covered by others, resources were reallocated to support the authorities in helping refugee herders living outside the camp, and their hosts, access enough water. At year-end, the first phase of planned upgrades was completed, increasing people's access to water in Bassikounou town. Residents and refugees protected their health or eased their recovery with care provided by the Bassikounou health centre, which had enhanced its services following the completion of comprehensive upgrades and the construction of additional wards.

People separated by armed conflict in Mali or elsewhere – or by detention, migration or other circumstances – restored contact through Movement family-links services. Malian refugees accessed these services through trained National Society volunteers, while detainees did so during ICRC visits. The needs of migrants in Nouadhibou were assessed, with a view to improving family-links services already available to them; however, initial findings being inconclusive, further study was required before any action could be taken.

The authorities signed the Arms Trade Treaty and worked to incorporate previously ratified IHL treaties in domestic legislation, for which the officials concerned trained with ICRC help. Mauritania's military/security forces began implementing a four-year plan of action for training army, *gendarmerie*, National Guard and police units in IHL and international human rights law, drawing on ICRC expertise. For example, officers from all four forces developed their capacities to teach both subjects at four train-the-trainer courses. Information sessions for religious leaders, academics, journalists and other civil society actors increased awareness of IHL and support for the Movement, not only among them but also among people in their circles of influence and the general public.

CIVILIANS

Malian refugees restore contact with relatives through family-links services

Family members separated by armed conflict in Mali or elsewhere – or by detention or other circumstances – restored/maintained contact with each other through the Movement's family-links services. Malian refugees accessed these services through ICRC-trained Mauritanian Red Crescent volunteers, who had assessed needs in the M'bera camp. Some families made telephone calls or sent RCMs or parcels to relatives held at the US internment facility at Guantanamo Bay Naval Station in Cuba.

With a view to improving family-links services in Nouadhibou, ICRC delegates assessed the difficulties faced by migrants in contacting relatives in their home countries. However, as initial findings were inconclusive, further study was required before any action could be taken.

People in Bassikounou town benefit from increased water supply

Residents of the Bassikounou area and refugees in the M'bera camp avoided/recovered from health risks, thanks to the Bassikounou health centre's enhanced services and increased capacity. The centre reopened in August, following the completion of comprehensive infrastructural upgrades, the construction of additional wards and the development of a maintenance plan; some 70 staff members enjoyed better working conditions. During these renovations, the centre's services continued uninterrupted in a nearby structure rented by the ICRC for the purpose. The installation of

waste management systems, generators and other equipment was under way and scheduled for completion in 2014.

Malian refugees living in one part of the M'bera camp had uninterrupted access to clean water because the ICRC had replaced a burnt-out water pump at an NGO's request. However, other humanitarian actors took charge of providing clean water to refugees in the camp, and the ICRC's resources – for supplying water to 20,000 refugees – were freed up for other purposes.

An ICRC assessment found that because of limited access to watering holes for livestock, many refugee herders used water points in Bassikounou town or neighbouring villages, overtaxing the water system and increasing exposure to hygiene-related illnesses. The authorities, using reallocated ICRC resources, set out to upgrade water points in the town and surrounding villages by mid-2014. At year-end, some 6,000 people in Bassikounou town could already access up to 20 litres of water daily, up from 7.7 litres, following the completion of the first phase of upgrades.

PEOPLE DEPRIVED OF THEIR FREEDOM

National Guard units serving as prison guards learn more about international norms on detention

Over 1,500 detainees held in correctional facilities across Mauritania, including in the country's remote interior, received visits from the ICRC, conducted in accordance with its standard procedures. The authorities and the ICRC continued to discuss the issue of regular access to people held for security reasons, particularly those held in remote locations or in places of temporary detention. After visits, the ICRC sent the authorities confidential feedback and recommendations, which helped them improve detainees' treatment and living conditions. Feedback also informed the authorities of detainees whose judicial status was unclear, including those newly arrested or under interrogation, which encouraged follow-up and respect for judicial guarantees.

In parallel, at a round-table organized with the Justice Ministry, penitentiary authorities, the National Guard, representatives of the Justice and Health Ministries and other government officials discussed judicial guarantees, detainee treatment and health/hygiene and budgeting; the discussions yielded a number of recommendations. A visit to Algeria for 2014 was also organized for penitentiary officials, to enable them to study another penitentiary system.

During visits, some detainees contacted their families through National Society/ICRC family-links services. In Nouakchott's central prison, some 150 detainees spent time with their relatives in ICRC-renovated family visiting areas and in a room for conjugal visits. Consular representatives were notified of the detention of their nationals, at the request of the detainees in question; in some cases, these detainees then received material assistance. The ICRC stood ready to provide assistance to repatriated Mauritians who had been detained abroad or to released vulnerable detainees; a study was conducted to determine the feasibility of providing livelihood training to 10 of the latter.

The authorities, with technical input from the ICRC, bolstered knowledge of human rights principles and international norms on detention among penitentiary administrators and staff, thereby helping improve detainee treatment. For example, National Guard units temporarily serving as prison guards, notably at Mauritania's five largest prisons, learnt more about such norms and professional practices through a workshop and an information campaign

organized with the National Guard command and the national human rights committee, respectively. The penitentiary authorities also drew on ICRC help to establish a pool of people trained exclusively to guard prisons. The head prison doctor and the president of the medical association tackled the ethical issues of providing health care in detention at a workshop abroad (see *Jordan*).

Detainees obtain preventive and curative care from enhanced prison health services

The penitentiary authorities worked with the ICRC to make sustainable improvements that would allow detainees needing care to access readily available and good-quality health services. In Mauritania's biggest prisons, full-time health staff began checking detainees' body mass indices on a quarterly basis and conducting compulsory medical examinations for new inmates, which helped identify detainees' health/nutritional status and facilitated efforts to provide treatment. In Dar Naïm and Nouadhibou prisons, some 40 malnourished detainees prevented their health from deteriorating through a therapeutic feeding programme carried out by ICRC-supervised health staff.

Detainees could access the improved health services more frequently because health staff were given on-the-job training/supervision and basic medical supplies/equipment by the ICRC, as well as salary incentives for keeping regular working hours and increasing the frequency of consultations. In addition, with ICRC encouragement, penitentiary and health authorities appointed a full-time health worker at Nouadhibou prison; in Aleg prison and again in Nouadhibou prison, penitentiary authorities signed agreements with nearby referral centres, giving detainees access to hospital care.

At eight prisons, including those mentioned above, inmates faced fewer health risks as a result of the fumigation of their cells, distribution of hygiene items and information campaigns on hygiene-related and sexually transmitted illnesses. ICRC delegates conducted post-release follow-ups of inmates suffering from TB or HIV/AIDS after their release, to ensure that they continued to receive care from the health authorities concerned.

Detainees in two prisons face fewer risks in relation to fire and hygiene via infrastructural upgrades

Some 500 detainees in Aleg and Nouadhibou prisons had better access to water and adequate sanitation facilities after the authorities renovated infrastructure with ICRC support. Upgrades included replacing faulty wiring in electrical systems, which helped protect against fire. The authorities had discussions with the ICRC on upgrading the Nouadhibou prison's existing fire-safety system and installing similar systems in Aleg and Dar Naïm prisons. The authorities appointed an official for maintaining prison infrastructure, a first step in establishing a unit within the penitentiary administration for this purpose.

As the authorities deliberated on a suitable site for detaining minors, the ICRC remained ready to proceed with planned upgrades.

AUTHORITIES, ARMED FORCES AND OTHER BEARERS OF WEAPONS, AND CIVIL SOCIETY

Dialogue with the Mauritanian authorities, weapon bearers and influential members of civil society focused on support for IHL and for the ICRC's neutral, impartial and independent humanitarian action. Amidst discussions on the ICRC's work for detainees and, in light of Mauritania's signing of the Arms Trade Treaty, IHL implementation, the authorities, with ICRC support, worked to integrate previously ratified IHL treaties into domestic legislation and increase State officials' knowledge of IHL. However, owing to administrative constraints, planned activities with State officials, magistrates and the national IHL committee did not take place.

Military/security forces draft a four-year plan for IHL training

Mauritania's military and security forces, with ICRC input, jointly drafted a four-year action plan for training army, National Guard, *gendarmerie* and police units in IHL and international human rights law. As a first step, 20 officers from all four forces developed their capacities to teach both subjects, at four train-the-trainer courses. Military officers began drafting an IHL manual for completion in 2014. Over 90 officers and troops who were deploying to Mali were briefed on their obligations under IHL and encouraged to support Movement activities. One senior officer attended an IHL workshop abroad (see *International law and cooperation*).

Religious leaders grow more familiar with humanitarian issues and Movement activities

Representatives of religious organizations and scholars from Islamic universities discussed IHL, humanitarian issues and ICRC activities at meetings and two round-tables organized with the National Society. Journalists reporting on humanitarian affairs learnt about IHL and the challenges faced by health care providers at international workshops (see *Dakar* and *Lebanon*) and elsewhere. At a local workshop, 10 members of human rights groups as well as 14 journalists familiarized themselves with the challenges involved in humanitarian work and the ICRC's mandate and activities. In the M'bera camp, religious and community leaders learnt about the ICRC and the Movement family-links services through briefings. Such efforts helped raise awareness and foster support for Movement action among others in these people's circles of influence and the general public.

Planned IHL activities involving universities, including training abroad and the inclusion of IHL courses in university curricula, were postponed to 2014, pending the selection of qualified candidates and the resolution of administrative constraints at partner institutions.

RED CROSS AND RED CRESCENT MOVEMENT

National Society volunteers train in preparation for spillover effects of the conflict in Mali

The Mauritanian Red Crescent, with ICRC help, developed its emergency response and other capacities to respond to the spillover effects of the conflict in northern Mali; a three-year framework agreement formalized this partnership. Volunteers underwent training in restoring family links (see *Civilians*), conducting economic security activities and managing water resources during crises. Support for first-aid training was limited to one coordinator attending a workshop abroad (see *Algeria*), while the process of identifying qualified volunteers continued. The National Society strengthened its capacity to raise public awareness of and support for Movement activities with the hiring of a communications expert and the provision of communication equipment.

The National Society also strengthened its knowledge of IHL, and its legal base and statutes, by sending representatives to an annual meeting of legal advisers in Switzerland, to an IHL course abroad (see *Lebanon*) and to the Council of Delegates, with support from the ICRC/International Federation.

Representatives from 11 National Societies, the International Federation and the ICRC exchanged views and best practices with regard to security, access and the evolving humanitarian environment in the Sahel region.

MAIN FIGURES AND INDICATORS: PROTECTION		Total		
CIVILIANS (residents, IDPs, returnees, etc.)				
Red Cross messages (RCMs)				
			UAMs/SCs*	
RCMs collected		120	2	
RCMs distributed		41	1	
Phone calls facilitated between family members		27		
Tracing requests, including cases of missing persons				
			Women	Minors
People for whom a tracing request was newly registered		97	8	14
People located (tracing cases closed positively)		32		
	<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)		71	7	12
UAMs/SCs*, including unaccompanied demobilized child soldiers				
			Girls	Demobilized children
UAMs/SCs newly registered by the ICRC/National Society		4	1	
UAM/SC cases still being handled by the ICRC/National Society at the end of the reporting period		6	1	
Documents				
Official documents relayed between family members across border/front lines		3		
PEOPLE DEPRIVED OF THEIR FREEDOM (All categories/all statuses)				
ICRC visits				
			Women	Minors
Detainees visited		1,523	27	84
Detainees visited and monitored individually		44		
Detainees newly registered		16		
Number of visits carried out		51		
Number of places of detention visited		23		
Restoring family links				
RCMs collected		11		
RCMs distributed		4		
Phone calls made to families to inform them of the whereabouts of a detained relative		73		

* Unaccompanied minors/separated children

MAIN FIGURES AND INDICATORS: ASSISTANCE		Total	Women	Children
CIVILIANS (residents, IDPs, returnees, etc.)				
Economic security, water and habitat (in some cases provided within a protection or cooperation programme)				
Water and habitat activities	Beneficiaries	6,067	19%	63%
	<i>of whom IDPs</i>	Beneficiaries		
		6,067		
PEOPLE DEPRIVED OF THEIR FREEDOM (All categories/all statuses)				
Economic security, water and habitat (in some cases provided within a protection programme)				
Water and habitat activities	Beneficiaries	500		
Health				
Number of visits carried out by health staff		70		
Number of places of detention visited by health staff		10		