



haiti

ICRC involvement in Haiti dates back to 1994, when it began monitoring the treatment and conditions of detainees falling within its mandate. Previously covered by the regional delegation in Mexico City, Haiti became a fully fledged ICRC delegation in February 2004, when the internal strife which had been building up during the latter part of 2003 threatened to degenerate into full-scale armed conflict.

The ICRC maintained a presence in Haiti throughout 2004, as the potential for violence persisted. It focused on ensuring that people wounded as a result of violence had access to medical services and on carrying out protection activities for detainees and civilians. It contributed, along with other partners in the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, to the strengthening of the emergency-response capacity of the Haitian Red Cross. With due regard to the prevailing instability, the ICRC has the lead role within the Movement in Haiti.

EXPENDITURE IN CHF

in 2004, the Haiti delegation was financed under the Mexico City regional delegation.

PERSONNEL

- 13 expatriates
- 24 national staff

KEY POINTS IN 2004

- ▶ The ICRC established a fully fledged operational delegation in Haiti on 13 February.
- ▶ The ICRC substantially upgraded a hospital in the capital and another in the most volatile region of the country.
- ▶ After prisons were ransacked in February and March, the ICRC helped repair many of them; it visited detainees in 59 places of detention throughout the year.
- ▶ The ICRC initiated a water and sanitation project in Cité Soleil, a shantytown of half a million inhabitants on the outskirts of Port-au-Prince.
- ▶ Together with other Movement partners, the ICRC undertook an assessment of the Haitian Red Cross's emergency-preparedness and response capacities.
- ▶ The ICRC signed a memorandum of understanding with the International Federation, the Haitian Red Cross and other partner National Societies present in Haiti, establishing the ICRC as the Movement's lead agency for a one-year period.

CONTEXT

During the events leading up to the departure of President Jean-Bertrand Aristide on 29 February, and for several weeks after, Haiti experienced a general breakdown of law and order. The vast majority of prisons were emptied of their occupants, burned and ransacked, leading to a near collapse of the penal system.

The situation in Haiti remained very unstable throughout the year, with localized sporadic outbreaks of violence. Various armed groups, including members of the former armed forces, had yet to be disarmed by the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH). Supporters of the ousted president publicly announced they would not take part in general elections scheduled for the end of 2005. On 30 September, the anniversary of Aristide's first removal from power in 1991, they unleashed so-called "Operation Baghdad" in the poorer neighbourhoods of Port-au-Prince. Violent confrontations with the police left more than 200 people dead between September and November, including 20 policemen, some of whom were decapitated.

In 2004, life expectancy in Haiti fell from 55 to 53 years. Half of the population had no access to safe drinking water and could not read or write; close to 70% were unemployed and received no state subsidies. In May, heavy storms hit the island, causing severe flooding and killing some 2,000 people. In September, Tropical Storm Jeanne caused another 3,000 deaths and left 300,000 people homeless in the north of

the country. By contrast, the same storm resulted in only seven deaths in the neighbouring Dominican Republic, underscoring the fact that Haiti's vulnerability to landslides and flooding was due less to the force of such storms than to deforestation caused by the large number of destitute people in the countryside producing and selling charcoal as their main source of income.

The interim government, confronted with the huge challenge of re-establishing most public institutions in a country prone to armed violence and deeply undermined by poverty and social exclusion, was struggling to increase its legitimacy. It governed by decree in a legislative void following the suspension of parliament in January 2004. A sum of 1.2 billion US dollars pledged over two years by the international donor community in July to finance the government's reconstruction plan had yet to be disbursed.

ICRC ACTION

Following the establishment of a fully fledged delegation in Haiti in mid-February, staffing levels were considerably increased, from 3 delegates in January to 27 in March.

At the height of the crisis, the ICRC's main concern was to ensure that wounded civilians had access to medical services and that humanitarian convoys could reach their destinations. ICRC delegates also monitored the conditions of detention of people deprived of their freedom and endeavoured to prevent abuses against the civilian population.

To ensure that victims of violence received the necessary medical treatment, the ICRC secured, upgraded and staffed two major hospitals, one in Port-au-Prince, and the other in Les Gonaïves in the lawless northern region. The ICRC's assistance in these hospitals saved lives and enabled local doctors and nurses to be trained in triage, war surgery and post-operative techniques.

The ICRC also upgraded or helped repair several prisons damaged or destroyed during the events of February and March.

Faced with recurrent episodes of internal strife and the possibility of armed confrontations, the ICRC delegation focused on building contacts with the various armed groups scattered throughout the country, to ensure they understood basic humanitarian principles, the work of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and the importance of respecting the red cross emblem and medical facilities.

In May, the ICRC delegation in Haiti signed a memorandum of understanding with the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, the Haitian Red Cross and other partner National Societies present in the country, establishing the ICRC as the lead agency for the Movement in Haiti for a one-year period.

When heavy storms hit the island of Hispaniola at the end of May, causing severe flooding in the south of Haiti and killing some 2,000 people, the ICRC, pending the arrival of an International Federation team, temporarily took on the coordination of the Movement's response to the natural disaster. When Tropical Storm Jeanne hit the north and north-west of the country in mid-September, an ICRC team was one of the first to arrive in Les Gonaïves, the hardest-hit municipality, providing the local authorities with first-

aid kits, collecting bodies and setting up a tracing system together with the Haitian Red Cross.

The ICRC laid the groundwork for a water and sanitation project in Cité Soleil, the sprawling shantytown outside Port-au-Prince dominated by rival armed groups, most of whom were supporters of former President Aristide.

The ICRC continued to work closely with the Haitian Red Cross to enhance its ability to cope if faced with large numbers of victims of armed violence or natural disaster. It provided the National Society with first-aid supplies and helped it develop a radio campaign to promote its acceptance among the population. An in-depth assessment of the Haitian Red Cross's disaster-management capacity prepared the groundwork for a systematic, long-term capacity-building effort by the Movement.

CIVILIANS

Stability remained tenuous in spite of efforts by the interim government, UN contingents and the Haitian police to maintain calm. Haitians continued to suffer from all kinds of violence: politically motivated attacks, common criminality, extortion, revenge killings, arbitrary arrests, summary executions and a surge in the number of kidnappings for ransom. From 30 September to end November, clashes between the police and gangs from the poorer neighbourhoods of Port-au-Prince, alleged supporters of former President Aristide, left more than 200 people dead and some 300 wounded.

From the beginning of the crisis in February, the ICRC kept up a dialogue with the interim government, with the UN military contingent and with all the different armed groups operating throughout the country, to ensure that civilians were not targets of politically motivated violence. In the capital, the ICRC dealt with the consequences of armed violence, helping to evacuate the wounded from areas such as Cité Soleil (see *Wounded and sick*).

The ICRC, together with the local branch of the Haitian Red Cross, provided assistance in the form of kitchen utensils, mattresses and food to 113 families in the region of St. Marc (near Les Gonaïves), and to 24 families in the southern town of Petit-Goâve, whose homes had been burned down during the February disturbances.

Missing persons

Since the early 1990s, thousands of people had been unaccounted for in Haiti. With each new episode of violence or natural disaster, bodies were dumped in morgues and often left unclaimed by relatives. Often, they could not afford to pay for a decent funeral; in other instances, the bureaucratic process attached to the identification of bodies was too intimidating. In March, at the height of the crisis, as many as 700 unclaimed bodies were stacked in the capital's main morgue, some of which bore the telltale signs of summary execution. The issue of disappearances received scant attention from the authorities or the general public, and there were only three forensic doctors in the country. In 2004, the ICRC enabled one of them to attend an international conference on forensic medicine in Manila.

Improving water supply and sanitation

In Cité Soleil, gangs rival each other for control of illicit activity, including drug trafficking. The area, controlled by supporters of former President Aristide, was considered off-limits by State authorities, including the police. As a result, it was devoid of public services, hygiene was almost non-existent, there were no functioning latrines and access to drinking water was limited. Moreover, it was often the scene of outbursts of violence.

The ICRC laid the groundwork for a comprehensive water and sanitation project in Cité Soleil in cooperation with the State-run companies responsible for these sectors. In preparation for the upgrading of community latrines and the cleaning of canals and drains, the ICRC and the Haitian Red Cross distributed wheelbarrows, shovels and rakes to community leaders. Implementation of the project was delayed when Tropical Storm Jeanne devastated the northern regions, diverting manpower and resources, and a frenzy of violence gripped Cité Soleil towards the end of the year.

In April, the ICRC encouraged the inhabitants of Jubilé, one of the poorer neighbourhoods of Les Gonaïves, to clean out the town's principal open-air canal used for the evacuation of wastewater, which for years had constituted a public health hazard. The ICRC provided tools and a truck and monitored the work. The initiative enabled the local population to earn a small stipend, enough to feed a family for a day.

Responding to the devastation caused by tropical storms and flooding

When heavy rains hit the south of the country in May, the delegation assumed interim coordination of the response of the Movement, pending the reinforcement of International Federation staff in the country. The ICRC chartered a helicopter to ferry supplies and personnel to the disaster-struck area. Later, a joint ICRC/International Federation/French Red Cross team provided water-purification tablets, body bags, picks and shovels, organized local volunteers, established an emergency health post and began the grim work of recovering and burying bodies. On 1 June, the ICRC handed over the coordination of the Movement's response to the natural disaster to the International Federation.

Tropical Storm Jeanne, which hit the northern part of the country in mid-September, was even more devastating. An ICRC team was among the first to reach the area, concentrating initially on collecting and burying the dead. It later set up a tracing system to enable families in Haiti and abroad to find out what had happened to their loved ones (see *National Society*).

PEOPLE DEPRIVED OF THEIR FREEDOM

In 2004, the ICRC conducted 189 visits to 59 places of detention. The number of security detainees rose from around 30 before the February events to 124 at the end of the year. The detaining authorities were the National Haitian Police, the prison authorities or members of the armed opposition.

During the crisis in February, all detainees were set free in the tumult. By the end of the year the prison population had risen again from zero to some 2,000, and 18 out of 22 prisons were again operational.

Improving living conditions in prisons

When prisons were emptied of their inmates, ransacked and burned at the end of February, the ICRC delegation took it as an opportunity to start with a clean slate, urging the detaining authorities to improve conditions of detention, and substantially upgrading or even rebuilding a few major prisons to alleviate the severe overcrowding in makeshift detention centres (mainly police stations).

The problem of overcrowding in police stations gradually eased as prison facilities became operational again, but following various episodes of violence, scores of new arrests were made, leading once more to congestion. Overcrowding contributed to a mutiny, which broke out on 1 December in the capital's main prison, leaving 8 detainees dead and 43 wounded. The ICRC provided surgical equipment and monitored the condition of those seriously wounded.

Tackling health and other problems in prison

Apart from overcrowding, detention-related problems included lack of adequate food and hygiene and the prevalence of skin diseases, tuberculosis (TB), sexually transmitted diseases and HIV/AIDS. ICRC doctors conducted consultations for detainees, when necessary, and monitored cases of TB. Detainees received personal hygiene products and recreational items on a case-by-case basis. The ICRC supplied prisons with cleaning equipment, such as buckets, jerrycans and containers for water storage, and prison infirmaries with medical equipment such as stethoscopes. The ICRC also distributed educational materials on hygiene in prisons, in the form of comic strips, to detainees and prison guards.

Judicial guarantees for detainees remained a pressing problem. In the civilian prison of Port-au-Prince, the country's largest jail, almost 30% of detainees were still awaiting trial after nine months. The ICRC interceded with the prison authorities on behalf of detainees remanded in custody for excessive periods.

- 124 detainees monitored individually (including 122 newly registered, 5 women and 2 minors in 59 places of detention)
- 9 RCMs delivered to detainees and 42 collected

WOUNDED AND SICK

At the height of the crisis in February and March, the ICRC made representations to the relevant authorities in order to be able to carry out its work in an environment in which patients were arrested or summarily executed on hospital premises.

The ICRC upgraded the Canapé-Vert Hospital in Port-au-Prince by refurbishing a new operating room and doubling the number of beds. It seconded its own surgical team to the hospital for the duration of the crisis, took over some aspects of the

hospital's management and trained an emergency team, made up of a surgeon, an orthopaedist and an anaesthetist. In the first two weeks of March, insecurity had reached such levels that the ICRC had to rely on the UN-mandated Multinational Interim Force to protect the Canapé-Vert Hospital.

The ICRC also sent a team to the Providence Hospital of Les Gonaïves, abandoned by hospital staff during the fighting, to undertake major repairs and refurbishment work and to train the original Cuban medical team in war surgery and post-operative techniques. In so doing, the ICRC restored the hospital's capacity to function as a referral hospital for the city and surrounding areas. Unfortunately, it was severely damaged during the flooding unleashed by Tropical Storm Jeanne in September.

During the crisis, the ICRC also:

- pre-positioned surgical kits in 5 areas of the country, including 2 hospitals in the capital;
- set up blood banks at the Canapé-Vert Hospital in Port-au-Prince and in the offices of the Haitian Red Cross at Cap-Haïtien;
- surveyed 50 medical facilities throughout the country and supplied them with first-aid kits;
- provided 32 tonnes of surgical and medical supplies for the hospitals in Port-au-Prince and Les Gonaïves;
- conducted seminars on trauma surgery in hospitals in Cap-Haïtien, Les Gonaïves, Port-de-Paix and Port-au-Prince.

In the second half of the year, various crises prompted the ICRC to intervene on behalf of wounded civilians. The ICRC sent a doctor to the area struck by Tropical Storm Jeanne in mid-September and distributed gloves, body bags and masks to help with the collection of bodies. After a mutiny in Port-au-Prince's main prison, the ICRC gave surgical equipment to the emergency ward of the University Hospital, where 15 critically wounded detainees had been transported. When violence erupted in the capital's shantytowns at the end of September, resulting in hundreds of people wounded, the ICRC agreed to reimburse the costs of transporting wounded inhabitants of Cité Soleil to hospitals. In the absence of a functioning ambulance service, those who dared go to the hospital were obliged to rely on local taxis, while others accepted to be treated on the spot by ICRC and Haitian Red Cross medical teams.

Blood banks

The blood bank set up by the ICRC in Providence Hospital in Les Gonaïves functioned well until it was destroyed in the flooding. In contrast, efforts to set up a blood bank in the Canapé-Vert Hospital were constantly thwarted, while the blood bank set up in Cap-Haïtien functioned poorly. Blood-bank capacities would thus be grossly inadequate if the ICRC were to face another surgical emergency.

AUTHORITIES

The ICRC maintained an ongoing dialogue with the interim government on matters as diverse as security, the role and training of the new police force, the status of the Haitian Red Cross and the role and mandate of the ICRC. It continued to press for the official publication by the Haitian government of Protocol II additional to the 1949 Geneva Conventions and the signing of a headquarters agreement with the ICRC. After years of paralysis, no progress was made on either of these issues. More encouragingly, the interim government signed a decree recognizing *de jure* the ICRC's status as an international organization and the new statutes of the National Society, although these agreements too needed to be published in the official journal before they could be enforced.

In the framework of its water and sanitation project in Cité Soleil, the ICRC regularly met representatives of the Ministry of Public Works, Transport and Communication, as well as the mayors of Port-au-Prince and Cité Soleil.

The ICRC also held regular meetings with the authorities in the northern region to discuss the mandate and activities of the ICRC. After the September flooding, the ICRC explained to the local authorities in Les Gonaïves and other affected areas the role of the Movement and what action would be undertaken.

ARMED FORCES AND OTHER BEARERS OF WEAPONS

MINUSTAH

By the end of the year, MINUSTAH had some 6,000 soldiers and 1,400 civilian police (CIVPOL) stationed in Haiti, 88% of the planned deployment. One of the major challenges it faced was the disarmament of armed groups, still operating freely throughout the country. The disarmament process,

originally scheduled for September, had not yet started by December.

The ICRC was in regular contact with MINUSTAH (both the military contingent and CIVPOL) explaining at every opportunity the role and activities of the organization.

The Haitian police

The Haitian Police Force was created in 1995, following the demobilization by former President Aristide of the national army. In addition to carrying out traditional policing duties, the police were tasked with duties of a military nature. With only 2,000 to 3,000 men in 2004, the forces were severely overstretched in a country of 8 million people.

In the first half of the year, the ICRC produced 10,000 copies of a comic strip in Créole depicting the role of the Red Cross and spelling out basic humanitarian principles. The material was widely disseminated to police units throughout the country. At the end of November, the delegation gave a talk on the ICRC's mandate and activities to 32 heads of police stations and officers working for the criminal investigation department in the south of the country.

Prison guards

In December, the ICRC held half-day information sessions on its working methods and activities and the protection of vulnerable detainees, such as women, children and security detainees, for staff from the prison authorities in Cap-Haïtien and Fort Liberté.

Other weapon bearers

Haiti was confronted with a multitude of different armed groups, chief among them the 1,000-strong former armed forces. Throughout 2004, the ICRC actively sought out members of these diverse groups to promote awareness of essential humanitarian principles, distributing material in Créole. An information session was organized for 10 officers of the former armed forces.

CIVIL SOCIETY

Lack of respect for medical facilities and the red cross emblem remained extremely worrying, with weapon bearers targeting hospitals and Haitian Red Cross ambulances. The general public was often unaware of the ICRC's specificity and mandate. In Haiti, where radio was the most effective means of reaching target audiences, including weapon bearers, the ICRC established strong contacts with some 30 radio stations, as well as newspapers, throughout the country. As the crisis unfolded in February and

March, radio stations broadcast daily messages put together by the delegation urging the population to respect medical facilities, including ambulances. In November, the ICRC organized a workshop in Les Cayes for 22 journalists from a dozen radio stations. A similar workshop took place in Cap-Haïtien in December. Such workshops generated interviews and radio programmes on issues of concern to the ICRC.

When Tropical Storm Jeanne left hundreds dead or unaccounted for, several radio stations accepted to broadcast lists of names of those who had survived so their families in Haiti could be informed (see *National Society*).

In July, the head of the ICRC delegation gave a talk on international humanitarian law and the respect owed to medical facilities and staff to 130 law students.

The ICRC produced information materials in Créole for schoolchildren, journalists and the general public and, together with the International Federation, created posters on the Fundamental Principles.

NATIONAL SOCIETY

Responding to emergency situations

In February and March, when violence and insecurity had reached their peak after the departure of President Aristide, Haitian Red Cross volunteers, with ICRC support, negotiated the dangerous streets of Port-au-Prince to pick up the wounded and take them to the nearest hospitals.

In the aftermath of the flooding in the north and north-west, the response capacity of the National Society's tracing department proved insufficient. The ICRC therefore focused on supporting the Haitian Red Cross in reuniting separated family members, finding the families of unaccompanied children and identifying the dead. It gave five volunteers from the Haitian Red Cross branch in Les Gonaïves intensive training in tracing techniques; another 15 volunteers from Cap-Haïtien were trained in October. Together with the ICRC, tracing volunteers from the Haitian Red Cross branches in the affected regions encouraged local radio stations and newspapers to broadcast and publish "I am alive" and "Persons sought" messages. For the benefit of Haitians living abroad, the ICRC, in cooperation with partner National Societies worldwide and the Haitian Red Cross, posted 4,184 "I am alive" and 63 "Persons sought" messages on the ICRC family-links website. The ICRC

provided fuel and paid local transport to ferry Haitian Red Cross volunteers to the different areas affected by the storm.

During the violent episodes which left scores of people wounded in Cité Soleil, the ICRC supported the local branch of the National Society by providing first-aid kits and paying for the transport of the wounded to hospitals.

Boosting the National Society's emergency response

Through a formal workshop and a series of briefings, the ICRC introduced the Safer Access (see *Glossary*) training module to the Haitian Red Cross headquarters and to all 13 regional branches. The approach provided a framework to enhance the capacity of the National Society to work in greater security in situations of conflict and violence.

With support from the British and Norwegian Red Cross Societies, in August and September the Haitian Red Cross, the ICRC and the International Federation carried out an in-depth assessment of the National Society's capacity to prepare for and respond to the human consequences of natural disasters and conflict situations. The assessment revealed considerable weaknesses, both in terms of organizational structure and technical capacities. A report, containing 71 recommendations, was handed to and discussed with the Haitian Red Cross's president and board, and later transmitted to all interested partner National Societies. Several Movement partners agreed to support the Haitian Red Cross in its restructuring process and in building its emergency-response capacity. In December, the International Federation, the ICRC and the Haitian Red Cross prepared a first draft of a plan of action to achieve this goal.

Together with the French Red Cross, the ICRC supported a project to develop the management and operational capacities of the Haitian Red Cross ambulance and first-aid services.

- ▶ 120 first-aid kits assembled locally distributed to Haitian Red Cross branches in violence-prone areas
- ▶ 100 Haitian Red Cross volunteers given first-aid training
- ▶ 2 workshops on the Safer Access approach organized for 47 participants from all Haitian Red Cross branches, including branch presidents and vice-presidents
- ▶ 3 training courses conducted for radio operators from the National Society's 13 branches
- ▶ the repair of 3 ambulances financed and a mechanic seconded to manage the National Society's fleet of vehicles
- ▶ 24 volunteers working on the dissemination of humanitarian principles countrywide attended a workshop organized jointly by the ICRC and the Haitian Red Cross