

MAIN FIGURES AND INDICATORS

PEOPLE DEPRIVED OF THEIR FREEDOM (All categories/all statuses)	
Detainees visited	1,763
Detainees visited and monitored individually	50
Number of visits carried out	31
Number of places of detention visited	16
RESTORING FAMILY LINKS	
<i>Red Cross messages (RCMs) and reunifications</i>	
RCMs collected	3,173
RCMs distributed	3,123
People reunited with their families	71
<i>Tracing requests, including cases of missing persons</i>	
People for whom a tracing request was newly registered	69
Tracing requests closed positively (persons located)	49
Tracing requests still being handled at 31 December 2006	122
<i>Unaccompanied minors (UAMs) and separated children (SCs), including unaccompanied demobilized child soldiers</i>	
UAMs/SCs newly registered by the ICRC	20
UAMs/SCs reunited with their families by the ICRC	66
UAMs/SCs cases still being handled at 31 December 2006	93
DOCUMENTS ISSUED	
People to whom travel documents were issued	57
People to whom a detention attestation was issued	69

ICRC ACTION

Having wound up its last relief programme in Sierra Leone in late 2005, the ICRC moved further from remedial to preventive activities in 2006. Building on years of experience monitoring detainees in Sierra Leone's prisons, it kept up support to reforms in the penal and judicial systems.

The ICRC continued monitoring conditions of detention in all prisons, including of persons in the custody of the Special Court. Going beyond monitoring, it completed an in-depth assessment of the penal system, and engaged in talks with the Ministry of Internal Affairs and other ministries on reform of the penal administration. It further pursued dialogue with the ministry and other actors involved in the reform process to ensure optimal use of the assessment's findings and recommendations. In addition, it worked on building the authorities' capacity to tackle issues of health, water and sanitation in places of detention.

Resolving residual tracing cases involving mostly Sierra Leonean and Liberian children separated from their families remained a priority. With other actors cutting back their activities in this field, the ICRC remained the only organization working countrywide and across borders. It also assessed the needs of families of people who went missing during the conflict. It started working with national structures to

introduce measures to tackle the phenomenon of missing persons and to bring to the fore the difficulties faced by families left in a limbo of uncertainty over the fate of missing loved ones.

The armed forces of Sierra Leone, which had benefited from the support of the UK-led International Military Advisory and Training Team and the ICRC over the past few years, had attained a high degree of autonomy in integrating IHL into their training and operating procedures. The ICRC continued to provide them with technical and material support. Its offer to provide similar assistance to the police force was favourably received.

Past efforts to promote IHL among key sectors of society paid off. All the country's universities and colleges expressed a keen interest in integrating the subject into their curricula. In addition, the ICRC facilitated contacts among people in Sierra Leone interested in or knowledgeable about IHL and helped to create links between different ministries and within civil society, ultimately leading to an initiative to create a national IHL committee.

With the number of people directly affected by the conflict steadily declining, the ICRC concentrated on addressing their needs by strengthening the National Society's capacity to handle issues likely to remain relevant in the long term. The ICRC, the International Federation and

partner National Societies worked together to enhance the development and capacity of the Sierra Leone Red Cross Society. For its part, the ICRC focused on supporting selected assistance programmes and the National Society's tracing services and on building its communication capacity. Although progress in enhancing its capacity was slow, this partnership prompted the National Society to initiate overdue internal reforms.

In late October, in light of the successful conclusion of its emergency programmes in recent years, the ICRC closed its sub-delegation in Kenema, reducing its staff and set-up in the country by 30%. The delegation in Freetown maintained coverage of the organization's activities countrywide.

CIVILIANS

Restoring family links

The ICRC pressed ahead with implementation of the recommendations of the 2004 external evaluation of the tracing programme for unaccompanied children in West Africa. It widened the scope and effectiveness of its child-protection activities by focusing on better follow-up before and after reunification and on the specific economic and protection needs of children and their families and by seeking alternatives to family reunification for children whose families had not been located despite years of searching. Staff received training

to enhance their handling of intricate protection issues, particularly those affecting girls and children formerly associated with fighting forces.

Good cooperation was established with the Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children's Affairs and with international and national agencies assisting children separated from their families in Sierra Leone. Greater emphasis was placed on increased information-sharing and on the complementary roles of the ICRC and other actors involved in protecting and assisting the children. This enabled appropriate and tailor-made solutions to be found to suit each child.

Following the successful general elections in Liberia in late 2005 and the improved security environment there, Liberian refugees returned home in increasing numbers. A total of 11,269 refugees were repatriated with UNHCR's assistance, while others returned on their own to Liberia. Identification of children separated from their families and of other vulnerable people transported in UNHCR convoys made it possible for the ICRC to monitor them after their arrival in Liberia.

At the end of 2006, some 23,000 Liberian refugees remained in camps and an estimated 3,000 in urban centres in Sierra Leone. Cash incentives to leave and drops in assistance accelerated the return process. The economic gap created by the reduction in assistance left some refugees, especially young girls whose carers had headed home, exposed to abuse. Girls in such circumstances were singled out for special attention by the ICRC.

Relying on its past experience in dealing with the large numbers of children separated from their families by conflict in the region, the ICRC worked closely with other organizations and the government to address the cases of children whose families could not be traced even after years of searching. Durable alternatives to family reunification, such as repatriation to their area of origin for older children and foster care for the younger ones, were proposed. To enable the children to make informed decisions, profiles of vulnerable cases were drawn up and existing community structures and available services mapped out.

Over two years after the end of organized voluntary returns, 43 unaccompanied Sierra Leonean children and vulnerable adults remained in Guinea. Most were able

to re-establish contact with their families in Sierra Leone as a result of lengthy and arduous tracing efforts. For the 28 families still without contact, the Sierra Leonean Red Cross and the ICRC adopted a variety of methods to trace their relatives, including a poster campaign throughout the sub-region, distribution of booklets with photographs, radio programmes highlighting the issue and broadcasting names, and community involvement.

On verification, the majority of the 88 identifications of children in photo-tracing posters proved false. The families concerned were asked to submit tracing requests, if they so wished.

Unaccompanied children and vulnerable adult refugees continued to rely on RCMs to exchange news with family members, although alternative means of communication gradually took over. The number of children transferred to and reunited with their families in Sierra Leone under the auspices of the ICRC dropped slightly, primarily because of the overall decline in tracing cases. After reunification, the children received ICRC visits and some assistance, mostly school materials, to help them reintegrate into their communities. They were referred to other organizations for follow-up where necessary. Children with acute medical problems or about whom there were protection concerns were given particular attention. Most of the problems encountered, such as lack of funds for school fees or for vocational training, affected the population in general and were not restricted to returnees.

- ▶ 2,578 RCMs collected from and 2,806 RCMs distributed to civilians by the National Society and the ICRC, including 170 RCMs from and 217 to unaccompanied/separated children
- ▶ new tracing requests registered for 69 people (41 females, 44 minors at the time of disappearance); 49 people located; 122 people (71 females, 61 minors at the time of disappearance) still being sought
- ▶ 71 people, including 50 unaccompanied/separated and 16 demobilized children, reunited with their families
- ▶ 20 unaccompanied/separated children (including 6 demobilized children) registered; 93 cases of such children (including 30 demobilized children) still being handled
- ▶ 52 children reunited with their families in Sierra Leone received follow-up visits

- ▶ 57 people issued with ICRC travel documents

Missing persons

Resolving the cases of people missing in relation to the conflict in Sierra Leone became increasingly unlikely. The ICRC therefore decided to conduct a study on how their families were coping. The study highlighted the plight of households headed by women whose missing relatives had been the breadwinners. There was a general lack of awareness of the particular situation of relatives of missing persons. This factor, coupled with the absence of public services and of a specific capacity to deal with the issue of missing persons, meant that the economic, social, legal and psychological needs of relatives of missing persons remained unmet. Outside the armed forces, there was scant information on missing persons, and no mechanisms were in place to prevent the phenomenon from occurring or to address it.

The ICRC shared the findings of its study with the authorities and other stakeholders and sought to raise community awareness of the issue. A dialogue with the government was initiated with a view to setting up the necessary systems and procedures to address the issue in the event of it arising again in the future.

PEOPLE DEPRIVED OF THEIR FREEDOM

With the end of the domestic trials of people accused of conflict-related crimes, leading to the release or sentencing of some members of the RUF and the West Side Boys (some of whom had been in detention since 1999), the number of detainees still being monitored individually by the ICRC at Pademba central prison decreased to 31.

As of 2005, the ICRC had shifted its focus from monitoring detention conditions to supporting the penal administration and in particular its reform. This approach complemented a wider reform of the justice system backed by UN and donor programmes, such as the Justice Sector Development Programme funded by the UK Department for International Development. Accordingly, the ICRC carried out a comprehensive assessment of the penal system, including juvenile detention, the findings of which were shared with the Ministry of Internal Affairs and other actors concerned. This enabled the ICRC to play a key role in the prison reform process and to support coordination among all the stakeholders.

The authorities benefited from ICRC expertise, technical assistance and advice in dealing with health, water and sanitation issues in places of detention. However, they received little in the way of material assistance, the goal being to encourage them to seek solutions themselves and thereby build their own capacity to meet needs. Government and prison officials participated in seven interministerial round-tables organized by the ICRC on detention-related topics to foster cooperation among the various government departments. Technical staff of the prison administration accompanied the ICRC in conducting five prison assessments to enhance their understanding of and capacity to assess the situation in prisons. The outcome of the assessment was incorporated into the strategic planning of the Justice Sector Development Programme.

- ▶ 1,763 detainees visited, 50 of them monitored individually (1 minor), including 4 newly registered, during 31 visits to 16 detention facilities, including the central prison housing detainees held in relation to the conflict and the detention facility of the Special Court for Sierra Leone housing 9 detainees registered by the ICRC
- ▶ 595 RCMs collected from detainees and 317 RCMs distributed to them
- ▶ the detention of 2 foreign nationals notified to the relevant embassies
- ▶ 69 detention certificates issued to former detainees or their families

AUTHORITIES

The creation of a network of national and international experts to stimulate interest and strengthen the country's capacity in IHL promotion and implementation was an ICRC priority. To this end, contacts were established with representatives of government ministries, the military, the Special Court for Sierra Leone and other key bodies.

The authorities sought the ICRC's support, *inter alia*, in updating the Geneva Conventions Act to include the Additional Protocols and received material and technical support in drafting a bill on the Ottawa Convention. With ICRC encouragement, the authorities signed Additional Protocol III.

- ▶ representatives of the government, judiciary and civil society participated in a seminar on the Rome Statute

- ▶ 150 councillors in 3 districts attended workshops on IHL and the ICRC
- ▶ participants in an African Union human rights workshop attended a presentation on IHL and the ICRC
- ▶ key UN contacts regularly briefed on ICRC activities

ARMED FORCES AND OTHER BEARERS OF WEAPONS

The Sierra Leonean army received sustained support, including assistance in establishing a code of conduct for combatants and compiling an IHL instructor's handbook.

- ▶ 50 army officers briefed on the application of IHL in peacekeeping missions
- ▶ around 6,150 military recruits/troops/ police recruits attended briefings/ sessions on IHL and ICRC activities
- ▶ 25 army officers attended an IHL trainers' course; a pilot version of a training manual for instructors produced and field-tested
- ▶ 40 Mongolian peacekeepers (protecting the Special Court) briefed on the ICRC and IHL

At a meeting of all actors involved in reform of the Sierra Leonean police force, the ICRC's offer to support police training was welcomed.

Following the participation of senior police officers in a workshop, human rights law and IHL principles were included in all officer training programmes.

CIVIL SOCIETY

Media

The media maintained its strong relationship with the ICRC and regularly relayed information on the organization's activities to the public. Al Jazeera television channel covered ICRC activities in Sierra Leone for broadcast in Arabic-speaking countries, and Télévision Suisse Romande created a web page on Sierra Leone with a link to Red Cross activities.

- ▶ 78 journalists attended workshops on IHL and the ICRC
- ▶ a series of articles and radio/television programmes on IHL and the ICRC published or broadcast
- ▶ "Red Cross na Salone" radio spots aired until mid-year; 4 radio programmes on the Movement broadcast

Academic circles

All Sierra Leonean universities requested the ICRC's help in introducing IHL in their curricula.

- ▶ 2nd IHL moot court competition held
- ▶ 1,200 college/university students familiarized with IHL
- ▶ over 200 lecturers and students attended an IHL lecture
- ▶ teaching of IHL intensified at one college; plans for a diploma in IHL announced by a second
- ▶ an IHL teaching handbook for local universities drafted and submitted to the ICRC for review

Other

The Labour Congress, an umbrella organization of 22 trade unions, agreed to promote humanitarian principles in its programmes. The production of an educational tool concerning civilians and IHL, and plans for the training of Labour Congress trainers got under way.

- ▶ bike riders' associations, mostly comprising ex-fighters, took part in sessions on humanitarian principles
- ▶ the Scouts Association of Sierra Leone and Scout representatives from the region participated in IHL sessions

RED CROSS AND RED CRESCENT MOVEMENT

The Sierra Leonean Red Cross began a much-needed process of internal reform, with ICRC support and in close coordination with all Movement partners. The support focused on building the National Society's capacity and helping it develop its programmes in a sustainable way. The Sierra Leonean Red Cross was selected to participate in the new "8 African National Societies initiative", with the goal of optimizing the capacity building of the National Societies concerned.

- ▶ the National Society tracing structure and programme reviewed and tracing needs in Sierra Leone mapped out; tracing cases updated; RCMs collected and distributed
- ▶ 28,603 people from all walks of life attended sessions on the Movement and IHL conducted by the National Society; drafting of a dissemination handbook by the National Society continued and information on the Movement conveyed to communities

- ▶ over 70 volunteers attended a National Society youth camp to discuss their role in tracing and dissemination activities
- ▶ the National Society participated in workshops for army personnel, local government, journalists, the Labour Congress and other audiences
- ▶ community-based programmes carried out for children traumatized by conflict and for residents of war-torn communities; 600 children graduated from 4 child advocacy and rehabilitation centres run with the support of Movement components, including the ICRC
- ▶ 100 community volunteers in Pujehun district attended training in hygiene promotion; 3 latrines and wells constructed with ICRC funding
- ▶ an income-generating programme launched for vulnerable youth in Pujehun district with ICRC support

With the decline in the number of people awaiting family reunification in Liberian refugee camps, the ICRC/National Society transit centre for unaccompanied children and vulnerable adults in Kenema was closed.