



# uganda

The ICRC has been active in Uganda since 1979. The organization suspended the activities of its sub-delegations following the killing of six ICRC staff members in April 2001 in neighbouring Democratic Republic of the Congo. It maintained a reduced expatriate presence in Kampala, concentrating on support to the Uganda Red Cross Society.

Since early 2004, in response to increasing needs in northern and eastern Uganda, the ICRC has gradually resumed field activities, focusing on protecting and assisting victims of internal armed conflict and visiting people detained for security reasons. It continues to request that the authorities shed further light on the killings of its staff.

## EXPENDITURE (IN CHF ,000)

Protection	1,531
Assistance	13,583
Prevention	1,063
Cooperation with National Societies	1,998
General	-

► **18,175**

of which: Overheads **1,109**

## IMPLEMENTATION RATE

Expenditure/yearly budget	<b>88.3%</b>
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## PERSONNEL

<b>21</b> expatriates
<b>143</b> national staff (daily workers not included)

## KEY POINTS

### In 2005, the ICRC:

- distributed essential household items to nearly 410,000 IDPs, provided seeds, tools and micro-economic projects to around 541,200 IDPs, supplied around 248,700 IDPs with clean water and supported 7 health centres, which treated nearly 54,600 people;
- strove to protect vulnerable groups in more than 75 camps housing IDPs and worked without armed escort to gain access to every such camp in the northern Acholi region;
- coordinated its operations in conflict areas with those of the Uganda Red Cross Society and other humanitarian actors;
- visited 242 detainees in 46 places of detention and, when necessary, made representations to the authorities to improve inmates' living conditions;
- delivered 5,195 RCMs to and collected 9,614 RCMs from civilians and detainees;
- signed memoranda of understanding with Uganda's army and police forces with a view to incorporating IHL and human rights law into their training and operations.

## CONTEXT

A fragile peace process launched in late 2004 stalled early in 2005, leading to a resumption of military operations against the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) in the north and prolonging a conflict that had begun nearly 20 years before. The LRA suffered a number of setbacks, including the conclusion of a comprehensive peace agreement in Sudan, effectively isolating the group in southern Sudan. Defections of its members under an amnesty law and armed clashes with the Uganda People's Defence Force (UPDF) also took their toll on the LRA, which split into smaller groups and branched out into the West Nile Bank in southern Sudan and into the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC).

Diarrhoea, respiratory diseases, malaria and skin infections were rife in the IDP camps, and outbreaks of cholera and dysentery were a constant threat. The UN estimated that approximately 1.5 million people had fled their homes as a result of the conflict and were unlikely to return before peace was restored.

The LRA's apparent decision towards the end of the year to target humanitarian workers in southern Sudan and northern Uganda was a major cause of concern for humanitarian agencies. Five humanitarian workers and one tour operator were killed in attacks, which took place shortly after the International Criminal Court's decision to issue warrants for the arrest of LRA leaders. This development was especially worrying for humanitarian organizations such as the ICRC that operated without armed escorts.

On the domestic political scene, the country geared up for legislative and presidential elections due to take place in February 2006. President Yoweri Museveni, who was running for a third term in office after 20 years in power, drew criticism for allegedly interfering with the democratic process following the arrest of his main rival Kizza Besigye in early November. Besigye, who had recently returned to Uganda from self-imposed exile in South Africa, was detained for more than a month on charges of treason and rape. Following the controversy over Besigye's arrest, a number of donor countries reduced their financial contributions by a total of 70 million US dollars.

## MAIN FIGURES AND INDICATORS

PEOPLE DEPRIVED OF THEIR FREEDOM (All categories/all statuses)		CIVILIANS		
Detainees visited	242	<i>Economic security, water and habitat</i>		
Detainees visited and monitored individually	242	Essential household items	Beneficiaries	409,857
Number of visits carried out	159	Agricultural inputs and micro-economic initiatives	Beneficiaries	541,184
Number of places of detention visited	46	Water-supply schemes and sanitation systems (completed projects)	Beneficiaries	248,710
RESTORING FAMILY LINKS		<i>Health</i>		
<i>Red Cross messages (RCMs) and reunifications</i>		Health centres supported	Structures	7
RCMs collected	9,614	Consultations	Patients	53,552
RCMs distributed	5,195	Immunizations	Activities	35,644
People reunited with their families	2	WOUNDED AND SICK		
<i>Tracing requests, including cases of missing persons</i>		Hospitals supported	Structures	6
People for whom a tracing request was newly registered	25	Admissions	Patients	103,921
Tracing requests closed positively (persons located)	12	Operations	Operations performed	12,111
Tracing requests still being handled at 31 December 2005	20			
<i>Unaccompanied minors (UAMs) and separated children (SCs), including unaccompanied demobilized child soldiers</i>				
UAMs/SCs newly registered by the ICRC	6			
UAMs/SCs reunited with their families by the ICRC	2			
UAMs/SCs cases still being handled at 31 December 2005	17			
DOCUMENTS ISSUED				
People to whom travel documents were issued	10			
People to whom a detention attestation was issued	31			

## ICRC ACTION

In view of the faltering peace process and the continuation of hostilities, the ICRC maintained its assistance and protection activities for IDPs in northern Uganda. It established itself as a leading humanitarian actor in Gulu, Kitgum and Pader, the three districts in northern Uganda most affected by the conflict and where humanitarian needs were greatest. The organization concentrated on assisting IDPs in camps far from district capitals, aiming to improve their living conditions by providing safe water, sanitation facilities, farming tools, essential household items and health care.

The scope of ICRC operations had to be reviewed following the attacks allegedly carried out by the LRA on humanitarian workers late in 2005. To protect its staff, the delegation limited its field movements to areas deemed safe around its Gulu and Kitgum sub-delegations. The sub-delegation in Pader, however, had to suspend all but life-saving operations. The restrictions were partially lifted at the end of 2005. The ICRC could not secure direct and regular contact with the LRA, in spite of intensifying its efforts following the killings. The safety of its workers in the field thus depended on information collected before venturing into the field as well as on former LRA fighters' perception of the Movement's activities. The lack of sustained contact with the LRA remained a major obstacle to ensuring staff security.

One of the main tasks facing the ICRC was to foster efficient coordination between an increasing number of organizations working in similar fields. It regularly took part in meetings of the UN's Inter-Agency Standing Committee and other coordination forums. In addition, the ICRC and the Uganda Red Cross Society continued to liaise on the division of labour in the north and the east of the country, based on their respective mandates. In 2004, the government approved an official policy towards IDPs, which was launched officially in February 2005. The guidelines gave the National Society a special role as an auxiliary to the government in efforts to assist IDPs.

The ICRC had access to almost all places of detention and re-established and strengthened its working relationship with the authorities.

The delegation also built up a close working relationship with the armed and police forces in order to foster increased respect for IHL and human rights law. To strengthen training in IHL, the ICRC signed two memoranda of understanding, one with the UPDF and the other with the Uganda Police Force, whereby the forces would help organize and finance IHL courses.

ICRC President Jakob Kellenberger visited Kampala and met President Museveni in June. He took the opportunity to reiterate the ICRC's determination to get to the

bottom of the killings of six of its staff members in the DRC's Ituri province in 2001.

## CIVILIANS

## Improving access to water and sanitation facilities for IDPs

Insufficient clean water was available for drinking, hygiene and food preparation in IDP camps in northern Uganda, and this, added to inadequate sanitation facilities, continued to pose a health threat. The volume of water available in some camps in Kitgum and Pader districts could be as little as 5 litres per person, per day. The ICRC team's efforts to increase the supply by rehabilitating existing water points, drilling new boreholes and improving sanitation facilities were hampered by a number of constraints, in particular the worsening security situation.

In order to improve hygiene in the camps, the ICRC offered technical support and materials to help the community build latrines. It also worked with the Uganda Red Cross Society to include hygiene and maintenance of water and sanitation installations in its activities to raise awareness of health issues in communities.

- ▶ 248,710 people benefited from water/sanitation projects

### Improving the living conditions of IDPs

IDPs living in crowded camps numbered approximately 1.5 million, according to the UN. They were unable to cultivate most of their land and thus relied on humanitarian assistance to survive. IDPs supported by the ICRC received kits of essential household items including jerrycans, cooking equipment, soap and blankets. It also provided emergency assistance to IDP households whose shelter and food supplies were destroyed in fires during the dry season, distributing essential household items and tarpaulins, as well as food provided by WFP.

Once the IDPs' essential needs were covered, the ICRC focused on encouraging them to cultivate their own food on land adjoining the camps. It supplied households with seeds, hoes, rakes and jerrycans for the two planting seasons in February and in July and August. The first staple crop was harvested in August 2005. An ICRC evaluation found that its seed distribution in 2004 had significantly improved the beneficiaries' diet and income.

An ICRC-supported pilot project to help the most vulnerable households earn an income was launched in Akwang camp. Participants in the scheme chose to raise small livestock such as rabbits, guinea fowl and ducks. As breeding rates were disappointing, the delegation learnt that in future a more comprehensive follow-up service was required.

The ICRC distributed soap to the most vulnerable families in six camps to help them reduce their household expenditure, while giving them a possible source of revenue through selling the soap.

- ▶ 409,857 people received essential household items
- ▶ 541,184 people benefited from agricultural/veterinary/micro-economic initiatives

### Improving the health of IDPs

Overcrowding, lack of clean water and poor sanitation, combined with the longstanding inadequacy of local health facilities, meant that health conditions were critical in the IDP camps. The ICRC teamed up with the Uganda Red Cross Society, international humanitarian organizations, the Ministry of Health and local health authorities to tackle the problem.

The ICRC supported existing health facilities, trained health workers and strengthened community-based health activities

to ensure that around 300,000 IDPs in more than 15 camps had access to essential health care. It increased its support for a national immunization campaign, which included polio and measles vaccination drives, deworming programmes, vitamin A distribution and malaria-control projects. The delegation monitored the quality of projects by systematically analysing data collected from health facilities and communities.

According to the Ministry of Health, malaria killed tens of thousands of children every year in Uganda, making the disease the primary cause of death for minors. In an attempt to lower infection rates, the ICRC distributed 40,000 insecticide-treated mosquito nets in some 15 IDP camps.

Cholera was endemic in Pabbo camp, owing to insufficient clean water and poor sanitation. The ICRC, in partnership with the Uganda Red Cross Society, held hygiene awareness sessions. The number of cholera cases in the camp dropped significantly in 2005.

- ▶ 4,345 ante and post-natal consultations conducted, 35,644 vaccinations given and 49,207 curative consultations carried out in 7 ICRC-supported health centres
- ▶ 39,053 children between 1 and 14 years of age in 6 camps in Kitgum district and 10,715 children in 6 camps in Pader district given deworming treatment
- ▶ 60 health workers in 15 health centres across the 3 districts trained in how to prescribe basic medicines and administer primary health care
- ▶ 4,400 households in Gulu, 23,475 in Kitgum and 8,725 in Pader given insecticide-treated mosquito nets
- ▶ 1 health centre serving 19,566 people in Labuje camp, Kitgum district, built and equipped

### Restoring family links for formerly abducted children

Civilians, and children in particular, remained the principal victims of the conflict in Uganda. UNICEF estimated that more than 20,000 children, mainly aged between 10 and 15, had reportedly been abducted by armed groups since the conflict broke out in 1987. Most of these children were still missing.

The ICRC attended debriefing sessions of former abductees in an attempt to deepen its understanding of the abduction phenomenon, as well as to check that they were not mistreated either during their surrender or in the UPDF's custody. The

ICRC liaised with other agencies dealing with abduction cases. It provided children who were to return home with reintegration kits to help the family cope with an additional member of the household.

The ICRC continued to provide the Uganda Red Cross Society with technical and financial support in running the RCM service.

- ▶ 3,933 RCMs delivered to and 7,695 collected from civilians
- ▶ 12 people located at their families' request
- ▶ 6 unaccompanied/separated children/demobilized child soldiers registered
- ▶ 2 unaccompanied/separated children reunited with their families
- ▶ at year end, 20 requests to trace relatives pending
- ▶ the cases of 17 unaccompanied/separated children/demobilized child soldiers still pending at the end of 2005

### PEOPLE DEPRIVED OF THEIR FREEDOM

The ICRC visited security detainees held in military barracks, police stations and central and local prisons to assess their treatment and living conditions and respect for their judicial guarantees. It took the opportunity to discuss its findings in confidence with the authorities and to advocate better access for the ICRC to detainees and notification of the arrest of people on security charges.

To complement the detaining authorities' efforts, the ICRC distributed blankets, jerrycans, cooking pans, soap and recreational items in a number of places of detention. It also provided four prisons with seeds, tools and agricultural training to improve the inmates' diet.

The ICRC continued to offer detainees the use of its RCM network to keep in touch with their families. It also enabled family members to visit their detained relatives and paid transport costs and supplied assistance kits to detainees upon release to facilitate their return to their families.

The ICRC and the Ugandan prison service signed a memorandum of understanding to assess jointly the state of 10 central prison buildings, including the water supply and sanitation facilities. The delegation consulted with other organizations involved in detention activities to gain a better understanding of their work and,

to avoid overlap, to encourage coordination whenever possible without breaching confidentiality.

- ▶ 242 people visited and monitored individually, including 106 newly registered, during 159 visits to 46 places of detention
- ▶ 1,262 RCMs distributed to and 1,919 RCMs collected from detainees
- ▶ 939 detainees benefited from ICRC-supported family visits

## WOUNDED AND SICK

Government hospitals, receiving only very limited State funding, suffered from a shortage of supplies, qualified staff and building maintenance. Overcrowding in hospitals also put pressure on the quality of health care provided. In an attempt to improve six such health facilities, the ICRC provided ad hoc medical supplies and equipment, training and on-the-job supervision and carried out repairs to buildings.

The number of patients admitted to ICRC-supported hospitals for the treatment of injuries sustained because of the conflict dropped significantly in 2005 in comparison with 2003 and 2004. Internal medicine, maternity and paediatric cases accounted for the bulk of admissions. The ICRC shifted its focus accordingly from supporting the provision of war surgery to supporting the provision of general medical care.

- ▶ 6 hospitals supported
- ▶ 103,921 inpatients treated in ICRC-supported hospitals, including 582 war-wounded, 10 of them mine victims, and 12,111 surgical operations performed
- ▶ 363,532 outpatient consultations given in ICRC-supported hospitals
- ▶ 51 doctors and medical staff at Gulu and Kitgum government hospitals trained in surgical procedures by an ICRC surgeon
- ▶ around 200 medical evacuations carried out from IDP camps to hospitals
- ▶ beds and mattresses donated to Gulu government hospital's psychiatric ward

## AUTHORITIES

The ICRC continued to provide the government with advice and technical assistance in matters relating to IHL and to encourage it to set up a national IHL committee. It strengthened relations with the treaties department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and maintained contact with bodies involved in incorporating international treaties into domestic legislation. The delegation provided information on IHL to a parliamentary body working on incorporating the Ottawa Convention into Ugandan law.

- ▶ debate on the ICRC's mandate and IHL attended by 22 Ministry of Foreign Affairs officials
- ▶ an official of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs attended an ICRC meeting of national IHL committees in Pretoria (see *Pretoria*)

## ARMED FORCES AND OTHER BEARERS OF WEAPONS

The ICRC conducted regular visits to IDP camps in Acholiland and documented allegations of IHL violations by government soldiers and conveyed its concerns to the UPDF regarding the alleged abuses. The ICRC was unable to build a sustained working contact with the LRA.

### Promoting IHL among armed forces

The delegation endeavoured to raise awareness among military personnel of IHL and the ICRC's mandate and activities. In September, the ICRC and the Ministry of Defence signed a memorandum of understanding to launch a three-year IHL training programme in 2006.

The UPDF's training department created an IHL office that liaised with the ICRC throughout 2005. Delegates held IHL sessions and workshops in training schools, field and intelligence units and local defence forces.

Lack of contact with the LRA thwarted efforts to develop dissemination activities for the armed group.

- ▶ dissemination sessions conducted for more than 10,000 soldiers from all levels of the army and local defence forces
- ▶ 2 high-ranking officers sponsored to attend an IHL course in San Remo
- ▶ 3 junior officers participated in an IHL competition in Rwanda (see *Rwanda*)

## Promoting human rights standards and humanitarian principles among police forces

The ICRC strengthened contacts with the head of the police force's training programme. It held dissemination sessions in Kampala and in the field on the ICRC's mandate and activities. The ICRC and the Ministry of Internal Affairs signed an agreement to draw up a three-year programme aimed at integrating human rights standards and humanitarian principles into police conduct and training.

- ▶ dissemination sessions conducted for nearly 1,000 police officers
- ▶ the head of the police training unit sponsored to attend an IHL course in San Remo

## CIVIL SOCIETY

### Traditional leaders

In November, the delegation met 22 traditional leaders in northern Uganda to discuss the security situation and the ICRC's mandate and activities.

### The media

The ICRC consolidated its relations with the media and held two workshops to explain its mandate and activities to editors-in-chief of the print media. The organization regularly appeared in broadcast and print media news.

- ▶ radio announcement produced promoting ICRC access to victims

### Academic circles

Of the universities the ICRC approached, only the Uganda Christian University in Mukono showed commitment to encouraging the study of IHL, introducing an optional IHL course for final-year law students. The ICRC regularly met university staff and donated an IHL library.

- ▶ 2 lecturers from Mukono University attended an IHL course in Pretoria (see *Pretoria*)
- ▶ 1 student team from Mukono University participated in the IHL moot-court competition in Arusha, Tanzania (see *Nairobi*)
- ▶ 3 sessions on IHL conducted for 145 students at Mukono University

## RED CROSS AND RED CRESCENT MOVEMENT

The Uganda Red Cross Society, with its valuable experience and knowledge of local conditions, remained a key partner in all fields of ICRC activity, thanks to increasingly strong coordination and cooperation at all levels. The ICRC continued to provide a high level of technical and financial support to the National Society in the areas of emergency preparedness, communication, promotion of IHL and tracing in northern Uganda.

The National Society shifted the focus of its operation in northern Uganda from relief distributions to basic health care, hygiene and sanitation programmes, while maintaining a reduced distribution of essential household items for the most vulnerable families.

The ICRC and the National Society developed operational procedures based on the “Safer Access” approach for staff working in situations of armed conflict, internal tension and other emergencies.

- ▶ plan of action for dissemination activities jointly drawn up with the National Society
- ▶ financial and technical support provided for the training of 5 National Society dissemination officers and 23 National Society tracing assistants and volunteers
- ▶ IHL and ICRC dissemination materials jointly produced with the National Society