

liberia



The ICRC has worked in Liberia since 1970, opening its delegation in Monrovia in 1990. Following intense fighting early in 2003 and the subsequent signing of a peace agreement, the ICRC stepped up its operations in Liberia. Since 2005, assistance and protection activities have focused on returnees (former IDPs and refugees) and residents, the wounded and sick, detainees, and children separated from their families. These activities are now drawing to an end. The ICRC supports the Liberian Red Cross Society and runs programmes to promote IHL among armed forces present in Liberia.

EXPENDITURE (IN KCHF)

Protection	-
Assistance	6,103
Prevention	1,680
Cooperation with National Societies	2,301
General	-

► **10,083**

of which: Overheads **615**

IMPLEMENTATION RATE

Expenditure/yearly budget	85%
---------------------------	------------

PERSONNEL

17 expatriates
176 national staff (daily workers not included)

KEY POINTS

In 2009, the ICRC:

- closed its sub-delegation in Harper in keeping with its plans to scale down its operations in Liberia
- supported the Liberia National Red Cross Society in adapting its operations to a peacetime context
- handed over support to 8 health facilities to the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare
- improved water supply and sanitation for 237,800 people in Grand Kru and Lofa counties, Monrovia and Harper through the construction and renovation of water points and latrines
- enabled 47,410 individuals in Lofa County, including community farmers, to improve their prospects of food security through agricultural initiatives

CONTEXT

Liberia continued to rely on international support in overcoming its economic problems, tackling the legacy of its violent past and reforming its institutions. Despite joint efforts of the government and the international community, progress towards recovery remained slow. In the absence of any palpable improvement in the living conditions of ordinary Liberians, the country remained a fragile State with potential for unrest.

According to the 2008 census, over two-thirds of the population were living below the poverty line. Much of the country still had very limited access to health facilities, water and electricity, and the road network was almost non-existent. The absence of basic services and infrastructure, coupled with high levels of unemployment and crime, led to growing discontent among the population, particularly among Liberia's youth, many of whom were disarmed former fighters.

The publication in December of the findings of Liberia's Truth and Reconciliation Commission, established in 2005 to investigate violations of human rights during the past conflict, created uncertainty in the political arena. Among its recommendations, the report proposed the prosecution, or barring from public office, of named individuals, including senior members of the current government. The government proposed to open the matter to public debate in 2010.

As preparations for the 2011 presidential and legislative elections began, the UN Security Council announced that the UN Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) would continue providing security in the country until the elections had been held, while scaling down its troop numbers.

MAIN FIGURES AND INDICATORS

		Total	Women	Children
CIVILIANS (residents, IDPs, returnees, etc.)				
<i>Economic security, water and habitat</i>				
Food	<i>Beneficiaries</i>	3,360	50%	30%
Agricultural and veterinary inputs and micro-economic initiatives	<i>Beneficiaries</i>	47,410	30%	50%
Water and habitat activities	<i>Beneficiaries</i>	237,800	30%	46%
<i>Health</i>				
Health centres supported	<i>Structures</i>	8		
Consultations	<i>Patients</i>	35,443		
	<i>of which curative</i>		12,571	11,149
	<i>of which ante/post-natal</i>		3,101	
Immunizations	<i>Doses</i>	9,183		

ICRC ACTION AND RESULTS

Over the course of 2009, the ICRC continued to adapt its operations to the post-conflict situation in Liberia, closing its sub-delegation in Harper and preparing to hand over responsibility for some of its activities to national and local authorities and the Liberia National Red Cross Society. In particular, the ICRC continued to phase out direct support to assistance programmes, putting in place structures to help ensure the relevant authorities had the capacities to continue developing the programmes on their own, and involving beneficiaries directly in programme development to ensure sustainability.

The ICRC continued to support health facilities in Grand Kru and Lofa counties until June, when such support was handed over to the Ministry of Health as planned. Through the rehabilitation of buildings, staff training and the provision of medical equipment and drugs, the ICRC's five-year programme had helped to ensure that vulnerable populations in rural areas gained greater access to primary health care.

Complementing this support to health services, the ICRC, together with the national water board and the National Society, helped provide vulnerable communities in Monrovia, Harper and rural areas with sustainable access to clean water by constructing or repairing wells and water points, and ensured the communities would continue to feel the benefits in the long term by providing training in facility maintenance and hygiene promotion.

Rural farming communities continued to receive material and technical support to help them increase the quality and quantity of their produce, with a view to becoming self-sufficient while generating income in the short term. They received training to enhance agricultural and marketing techniques.

Throughout the year, the ICRC worked to ensure widespread understanding of the reduction in ICRC assistance activities among national and local authorities and affected communities. It continued to promote IHL among the authorities, discussing with relevant officials the implementation of IHL treaties, in particular the adoption of national legislation in line with the 1949 Geneva Conventions.

The Liberian armed forces pursued efforts to integrate IHL systematically into their training programmes, with IHL instructors, Defence Ministry officials and police officers attending

an ICRC refresher course. The ICRC also continued to acquaint incoming peacekeepers with IHL and the ICRC's mandate and activities.

In cooperation with the National Society, the ICRC continued to raise awareness of IHL and its mandate and activities among the media, influential members of civil society and the general public, including youth groups, placing special emphasis on conveying both organizations' changing roles following the end of the conflict in Liberia.

The ICRC also continued to work closely with Movement partners in supporting the National Society as it worked to develop programmes appropriate to peacetime and enhance its emergency response capacity. With financial, technical and material support, the National Society undertook a variety of effective assistance programmes and promoted knowledge of IHL and the Movement across the country by conducting information sessions and distributing materials.

CIVILIANS

Civilians benefit from improved primary health care services

Civilians in Grand Kru and Lofa counties continued to benefit from improved access to health care at health facilities supported by the ICRC. In June, the Ministry of Health assumed responsibility for support to the last 8 of 14 such facilities, marking the completion of the ICRC's five-year health programme. During that time, services had improved as a result of structural repairs, the provision of medical equipment, drugs and vaccinations, staff training in management and administration, and ongoing monitoring to check that patients' needs were being met. Where a lack of specialist staff prevented vital treatment, midwives, nurses and a laboratory technician received training to ensure they were qualified to respond appropriately. This strategy proved successful, contributing to a reduction in overall mortality and morbidity rates, particularly among women and children.

In a joint initiative run by the Ministry of Health, the National Society and the ICRC, women in rural communities obtained better access to reproductive health care. Twenty-nine traditional birth attendants serving these communities completed their training, bringing to 275 the number to have received ICRC training by the time of the handover in June, while health centre staff attended refresher courses to improve their capacities to provide family-planning services.

From January to June, in the 8 ICRC-supported health centres (average monthly catchment population: 57,000):

- ▶ 35,443 people given consultations, including 3,101 attending ante/post-natal consultations and 32,342 attending curative consultations
- ▶ 9,183 vaccine doses administered (including 5,254 to children aged five or under)
- ▶ 83 patients referred to a second level of care
- ▶ 610 health education sessions held

Communities have access to clean water thanks to improved infrastructure

Vulnerable residents in Grand Kru and Lofa counties, Monrovia and Harper gained better access to clean water owing to collaboration between the national water board, local authorities and the ICRC, involving the construction or repair of 157 wells, 8 water points and 2 latrines in public buildings. To help ensure members of the community received maximum benefit from the facilities in the long term, training sessions were organized in parallel. Hand-pump mechanics attended workshops on facility maintenance, and a procurement system for spare parts was established, while community water committees were trained to promote good hygiene practices among local residents with the aim of reducing the spread of contagious diseases.

An estimated 25,000 people benefited from the rehabilitation of 12 bridges in Grand Kru and Lofa counties, improving road access between communities, enhancing the delivery of public services and making it easier for farmers to market their produce.

- ▶ 237,800 people benefited from water/sanitation/habitat projects, including the training of 1,566 hygiene promoters, 770 hand-pump mechanics and 1,594 community water committee members

Farming communities benefit from livelihood support

People in Lofa county continued to work with the ICRC towards achieving self-reliance through a variety of projects that enhanced their communities' agricultural production and marketing capacities.

Members of two local cooperatives and four farmers' associations improved their prospects of achieving food security by rehabilitating coffee and cocoa plantations in cash- and food-for-work schemes supervised by community leaders and National Society volunteers. Using agricultural and construction materials supplied through the programme, they built platforms in 51 villages for drying their harvests, enabling them to boost their productive capacity.

At training sessions accompanying these projects, farmers learnt new agricultural techniques, which they were then able to promote among their communities, and enhanced their marketing skills to help them increase their incomes in the long term. Such micro-economic initiatives therefore had an impact on thousands of families in the surrounding area.

Farming households, including many headed by women, obtained high-quality seed, fertilizer, insecticide, and coffee and oil palm seedlings to help them diversify and increase their yields.

- ▶ 3,360 people received food for work
- ▶ 47,410 people (7,903 households) benefited from agricultural and other micro-economic initiatives, including:
 - 31,685 people through schemes to boost food security within their communities
 - 12,100 people from agricultural inputs
 - 3,625 people from training in agricultural and marketing techniques during 63 workshops

AUTHORITIES

During regular meetings, members of the national and local authorities and armed and security forces were briefed on the ICRC's activities in Liberia, in particular the scaling down of its assistance programmes.

Members of the government and legislature discussed the ratification and implementation of IHL treaties, building on legal training provided by the ICRC in 2008 and focusing on the need to amend Liberia's legislation in line with the 1949 Geneva Conventions. To accelerate the process, the Ministry of Justice requested ICRC support in organizing a workshop involving the relevant ministries. To assist government efforts, representatives from the Ministries of Defence and Justice were sponsored by the ICRC to participate in the annual IHL seminar held by the Economic Community of West African States and the ICRC in Abuja (see *Nigeria*).

IHL briefings for those involved in implementing the findings of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission did not take place owing to the timing of the report's publication and the uncertainty surrounding its implementation.

The Liberian armed and security forces continued to work on integrating IHL into training programmes. Training of the Emergency Response Unit, an armed component of the Liberian police, was conducted by the UN Police with ICRC support, ensuring that trainees were familiar with their obligations under IHL. Military instructors, senior Defence Ministry officials and police officers refreshed their knowledge of IHL and humanitarian principles at an ICRC course, at which they were provided with reference materials and examined the practical application of the 2008 National Defence Act, notably their roles during armed conflict or other situations of violence.

Incoming peacekeepers and international military observers were acquainted with IHL and the ICRC as part of their induction training through bi-weekly ICRC presentations at UNMIL's training centre.

Following the cessation of ICRC visits to detainees at the end of 2008, the authorities and the ICRC maintained dialogue on detention-related matters.

CIVIL SOCIETY

National and local media responded positively to information provided through ICRC press releases and on occasions such as World Red Cross and Red Crescent Day (8 May), reporting regularly on ICRC and National Society activities. Such promotional efforts helped both to increase awareness of humanitarian issues and to explain the reduction in ICRC assistance activities and their handover to the authorities, complementing efforts to build understanding among religious and traditional leaders, NGOs and local communities. A documentary on the training of traditional birth attendants was screened widely as an example of cooperation between the authorities and the ICRC (see *Civilians*).

In an effort to reach out to Liberia's youth, many of whom were ex-combatants, school clubs and youth associations were informed about the ICRC's mandate, operations and basic IHL principles at ICRC National Society briefings. The University of Liberia requested ICRC advice on incorporating IHL into its law curriculum.

RED CROSS AND RED CRESCENT MOVEMENT

With the backing of the International Federation, other National Societies working internationally and the ICRC, the Liberian Red Cross continued to gain experience in fulfilling its peacetime objectives while retaining an emergency response capacity. In line with its five-year strategy, it focused on developing policies and systems to support it in planning and implementing programmes. It organized regular governance meetings and proved itself to be an effective Movement partner.

The National Society received financial, material and logistical support, as well as guidance, from the ICRC, building its capacity to take the lead in responding to emergencies. Such services included first aid, restoring family links and helping communities prepare for outbreaks of violence, disease or natural disaster.

Schools and National Society branches, as well as personnel from the humanitarian and private sectors, attended first-aid training. These efforts were recognized by the Liberian president, who invited the National Society to address the cabinet on its emergency response activities.

The National Society continued to develop a peacetime strategy to assist people separated from their families in emergencies, incorporating tracing and RCM services into its disaster management programme and recruiting two additional staff.

When floods struck Monrovia and Zwedru in September, the National Society responded effectively to victims' needs, providing them with ICRC-supplied essential household items. To help sustain the food security of rural communities in lean times, it provided farmers with agricultural and construction materials to increase yield and productivity. It also rehabilitated or chlorinated over 200 wells and trained 35 local committees to maintain the facilities, providing them with sustainable access to clean water.

With ICRC support, the Liberian Red Cross undertook numerous activities to promote humanitarian values and the Movement's Fundamental Principles among its staff and in schools and other sectors of society, including resolving two cases of misuse of the red cross emblem.