



liberia

Following the spread of intense fighting early in 2003, the ICRC stepped up its operations in Liberia. Despite the peace agreement concluded in August 2003, needs remain great, as more areas become accessible and people return home to their destroyed villages. The ICRC's assistance and protection activities benefit returnees (former IDPs and refugees), residents, the wounded and sick, detainees, and children separated from their families. The ICRC supports the Liberia National Red Cross Society and promotes IHL among armed forces present in Liberia. The ICRC has worked in Liberia since 1970, initially through its regional delegations in Yaoundé and Abidjan. Its operational delegation was opened in Monrovia in 1990.

⊕ ICRC delegation ⊕ ICRC sub-delegation

EXPENDITURE IN CHF

Protection

5,877,090

Assistance

19,288,278

Preventive action

632,486

Cooperation with National Societies

1,219,486

General

15,431

▶ **27,032,770**

of which: Overheads **1,625,880**

PERSONNEL

43 expatriates

222 national staff

KEY POINTS IN 2004

- ▶ The ICRC surgical team at the John F. Kennedy Memorial Hospital performed some 1,500 operations; with ICRC support, the hospital treated 11,800 outpatients and 3,986 inpatients, including 3,068 requiring surgery.
- ▶ Together with the Liberian Red Cross, the ICRC operated the RCM service to enable refugees and IDPs to communicate with their families; it reunited over 1,000 children with their families in Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone.
- ▶ The ICRC built or repaired water-supply and sanitation facilities for IDPs and residents in Grand Gedeh, Lofa, Bong, River Cess, River Gee, Montserrado and Nimba counties and in Monrovia.
- ▶ ICRC delegates made nearly 70 visits to about 20 places of detention and saw some 600 detainees.
- ▶ The ICRC distributed essential household items and shelter materials to some 280,000 IDPs and vulnerable residents, and seeds, tools and fertilizer to over 190,000 people.

CONTEXT

By the end of 2004 the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) had fully deployed, and 15,000 troops were patrolling accessible parts of the country. International civilian police began training the new 1,900-strong Liberian police force.

Interfactional fighting subsided (although internal power struggles persisted), and tens of thousands of ex-fighters came forward for demobilization. By the end of the year over 101,000 ex-fighters had passed through demobilization centres, handing in some 30,000 weapons. However, only about 11,000 children associated with fighting forces entered the reintegration programme, far below initial estimates.

Among the legacies of the years of conflict were 350,000 Liberian refugees in neighbouring countries, 260,000 internally displaced people (IDPs) in camps and thousands of dispersed families. Some 80% of the population lived on less than a dollar a day, infrastructure and urban and rural water and sanitation systems remained in ruins or were non-existent, and primary and secondary health-care systems were unable to meet basic needs.

The National Transitional Government of Liberia, led by Gyude Bryant, steered the country towards elections, scheduled for October 2005.

ICRC ACTION

The ICRC remained a major player within the humanitarian community in Liberia, stepping up its operations throughout the country, entering previously inaccessible regions and increasing its presence in troubled areas such as Bong, Nimba and Lofa counties.

As lead agency for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement in Liberia, and as agreed in 2003 with Movement partners, the ICRC continued to coordinate the Movement's action in the country. ICRC activities focused on: medical care for the war-wounded, mainly by maintaining the John F. Kennedy (JFK) Memorial Hospital's capacity to provide medical and surgical care; protection of detainees; assistance to IDPs and residents; programmes carried out in cooperation with the Liberia National Red Cross Society to help people, particularly children, separated from their families restore contact with their loved ones; and consolidation of the National Society's capacities to assist vulnerable populations, promote international humanitarian law (IHL) and restore family links. A network of contacts was also maintained among all actors in Liberia to improve understanding of and respect for IHL and the mandate and working methods of the ICRC and its Movement partners.

CIVILIANS

Protecting civilians from the effects of conflict

The ICRC maintained its presence in all regions of Liberia, increased it in troubled areas and continued to develop its network of contacts among former armed opposition groups, the civilian authorities, an increasing number of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and UNMIL officials. Regular dialogue with UNMIL's various contingents and military observers helped keep the spotlight on the protection needs of civilians.

In rural areas where the ICRC was still very active, its good relations with former commanders helped it gain access to children still associated with fighting forces, whom it was able to register and follow up.

- ▶ 669 children separated from their families registered

The ICRC monitored the situation of IDPs and refugees in camps in Margibi, Montserrado and Bong counties and of returnees transferred by UNHCR or going

back spontaneously to their communities or resettlement camps. It highlighted the protection concerns of these population groups in its dealings with former armed opposition groups, the civilian authorities, NGOs and UNMIL officials.

Enabling civilians to re-establish/maintain contact with their families

The Liberian Red Cross received continuous support from the ICRC in sustaining a Red Cross message (RCM) network throughout the country. The support included the provision of booths, bicycles, motorcycles and stationery. The ICRC also assisted the National Society in streamlining the network to improve monitoring and management.

- ▶ 74,246 RCMs collected and 41,881 delivered

While the focus of the ICRC's tracing effort was on Liberian children in neighbouring countries, the organization continued to reunite Liberian children separated from their families within Liberia. Some children had been put back in touch with their families only to be separated afresh by the conflict in Liberia in 2003. Various meetings between the ICRC and the authorities in neighbouring countries paid off, with Guinea, Sierra Leone and Côte d'Ivoire reaffirming that they would not oppose the repatriation of their young nationals previously involved in fighting in Liberia. Accordingly, the ICRC intensified efforts to reunite non-Liberian children with their families and to monitor their reintegration. Factors such as deteriorating security conditions in Côte d'Ivoire temporarily hampered the repatriation process.

As the only organization involved in tracing and family reunification in Sanniquellie and Zwedru, the ICRC reunited some 100 children formerly associated with fighting forces with their families in southern Nimba.

- ▶ 1,032 children, including those formerly associated with fighting forces, reunited with their families: 37 in Côte d'Ivoire, 379 in Guinea, 189 in Sierra Leone and 427 in Liberia
- ▶ 460 Liberian and foreign children awaiting reunification with their families registered

Poster campaigns comprising some 500 photographs of children remained part of the countrywide effort to reunite children with their families. Radio programmes helped raise awareness of tracing activities. Booklets with photographs and lists of names of the relatives sought were distrib-

uted to community leaders and ICRC contacts to encourage families searching for their children to approach the Red Cross. The campaigns were backed up by the distribution of video and radio dramas highlighting the issue of children separated from their parents.

Relations between the ICRC and the various child-protection agencies remained constructive. The ICRC participated in coordination meetings with agencies such as UNICEF, Save the Children Fund and the International Rescue Committee to map out cooperation procedures on a variety of issues and to strengthen the regional network for the protection of children separated from their parents. Children previously associated with fighting forces who were singled out for family reunification in neighbouring countries were referred to the ICRC, which continued to register and repatriate them, and to lobby their governments and child-protection agencies active in their home areas to help them reintegrate into society.

Assisting residents, returnees and IDPs

Distributions of essential household items to resident and returning populations in Gbarpolu, River Cess, Nimba, River Gee and Lofa counties and to orphanages and other institutions sheltering vulnerable people were carried out in late 2004. Contrary to expectations, other humanitarian agencies did not fully take over assistance to IDPs in camps. Consequently, the ICRC provided support longer than initially planned.

- ▶ 280,000 IDP/returnee/resident households and beneficiaries in institutions received sleeping mats, clothing, kitchen sets, soap, blankets, buckets, tarpaulins, mosquito nets

Agricultural projects

The bulk of the ICRC's agricultural assistance was allocated to some 190,000 residents and returnees, primarily in Grand Gedeh, Lofa and Gbarpolu counties, who received rice, bean and vegetable seeds and farm implements to help them regain self-sufficiency.

A number of small-scale projects were carried out to help IDPs, returnees and vulnerable residents achieve economic security. Rice-seed multiplication projects were initiated in two counties. Market-gardening projects were implemented in Bong, Grand Gedeh, Zwedru and Montserrado counties, where several communities, women's associations and children

previously associated with fighting forces received tools, seeds and training in gardening. Preliminary evaluations showed that beneficiaries successfully developed skills in growing vegetables and increased their yields. The beneficiaries also received tarpaulins, blankets, kitchen sets, buckets, mosquito nets, sleeping mats, clothes, jerrycans and fertilizer.

Improving access to water and sanitation

The ICRC provided IDPs living in camps in Montserrado and newly accessible areas and residents of Monrovia and seven counties with access to clean water and adequate sanitation facilities. This was achieved by building water points and permanent latrines and repairing wells and hand pumps. In cooperation with the Liberian Red Cross, the ICRC maintained facilities in the camps and ensured proper waste disposal. It also undertook minor road repairs on the Voinjama and Zwedru access routes to sustain assistance programmes in these areas during the rainy season.

- 20 new wells, 100 multi-pit latrines and 60 bathhouses constructed in 5 IDP camps for 60,000 beneficiaries; all previously built facilities in the camps maintained and sessions on hygiene conducted for IDPs
- 240 wells and 150 pit latrines constructed and/or repaired for use by approximately 140,000 residents/returnees in 7 counties
- 3 health posts and the Voinjama clinic in Lofa County repaired

PEOPLE DEPRIVED OF THEIR FREEDOM

Visits to detainees

The ICRC carried on negotiating access to all detainees. Broader access to detainees under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Justice enabled the ICRC to step up its efforts to assess the treatment and living conditions in major detention facilities. Following visits to detainees, including a large number arrested in relation to riots in Monrovia and Kakata, the organization informed the authorities concerned of its findings, particularly with regard to vulnerable cases.

- 608 detainees visited
- 87 RCMs collected/delivered

The ICRC maintained strong working relations with UNMIL, as exemplified by the setting up of a system to notify the ICRC on a weekly basis of individuals arrested by UNMIL.

The ICRC held high-level discussions with the Sierra Leonean and Liberian authorities regarding the planned repatriation of Liberian internees held in Sierra Leone. It played a pivotal role in drawing up the IHL framework to guide the drafting of an agreement between the two countries on procedures for the repatriation. The ICRC monitored the issue closely with the national authorities and UNMIL. The objective was to ensure that both governments proceeded with the repatriation of the interned Liberian ex-fighters and that the repatriation process was consistent with their rights.

Assisting detainees

The ICRC maintained regular material assistance to detainees in all prisons visited and trucked water for detainees held at the Liberian National Police headquarters. In 2004 it constructed four wells in prisons, repaired the kitchen in Monrovia Central Prison, installed and repaired water pumps in two prisons and carried out an assessment in one of the prisons, ahead of the launch of a small-scale water and sanitation project. The organization began exploring sustainable solutions to the problems encountered in detention places and encouraged the authorities to assume greater responsibility for the detainees' well-being.

WOUNDED AND SICK

Assistance to JFK Memorial Hospital

The ICRC withdrew its expatriate surgical team from the JFK Memorial Hospital in late June but continued its support to the trauma and surgical department in the form of medical materials, food for patients and staff incentives. Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) also offered surgical care in Monrovia, as did private hospitals, which increased surgical services for paying patients. The ICRC's concern was primarily for vulnerable, often displaced people unable to afford surgery. Because there was no longer a demand for war surgery, the JFK Hospital's trauma and surgical department dealt mainly with road-accident victims and chronic infections caused by old war injuries. In the absence of a referral system for secondary health care, the ICRC, in cooperation with MSF and UNMIL, evacuated patients from various parts of the country to hospitals in Monrovia.

- 11,800 outpatients treated, including 889 war-wounded
- 3,986 inpatients treated, including 1,914 war-wounded
- 3,068 surgical interventions performed, including 305 on war-wounded

Support to other health facilities

The ICRC-supported Stephen A. Tolbert Memorial Hospital in Buchanan continued to provide comprehensive primary and secondary health-care services for the resident and IDP populations in Grand Bassa and for patients referred to it from elsewhere in the south-eastern part of Liberia. Its capacity was increased to 30 beds to cater for rising demand. Nevertheless, difficulties such as lack of electricity limited its surgical services. In Bomi County, the ICRC phased out its support to the Tubmanburg hospital in late 2004.

- 2,500–3,000 outpatient consultations on average a month; 85–100 inpatient consultations a month

Lofa County was the focus of ICRC efforts to improve civilians' access to health care. Working with other organizations, the ICRC participated in a measles/yellow fever vaccination campaign in the area. It continued to rehabilitate health facilities, handed over its health activities in Kolahun and Foya districts to MSF and phased out those in Zorzor, where the Curran Lutheran Services revived health-care activities.

The construction of a new health centre for Voinjama town on the site of a hospital destroyed during earlier conflicts neared completion in late 2004. Meanwhile, another site was used temporarily (July–December) to ensure uninterrupted health care was available while construction advanced. Dugomai clinic opened in July and Vezela clinic in September, following repairs and other assistance to make them operational. The rehabilitation of the Bondi Selma clinic got under way. The ICRC also assessed the needs of clinics and hospitals, including four in Grand Kru County.

- 3 wells/water-supply systems repaired/constructed at a hospital and interim care centres run by other organizations; incinerators and dustbins provided for clinics in 2 counties
- 9,500 consultations carried out at the temporary site in Voinjama, 1,200 at the Vezela clinic and 1,500 at the Dugomai clinic

AUTHORITIES

Through regular meetings, the ICRC maintained good working relations with the national authorities, UN agencies and diplomatic representations.

In addition to its existing contacts with officials in the Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Health, Justice and Defence and other relevant ministries, the ICRC developed new contacts, notably within the Ministry of Defence, to pave the way for the promotion of IHL in Liberia's newly created army.

The ICRC organized sessions on its mandate and activities and IHL, attended by representatives of the local authorities in Ganta, Zwedru and Harper.

ARMED FORCES AND OTHER BEARERS OF WEAPONS

As the restructuring of the Liberian army was still in its early stages, the ICRC concentrated its efforts to promote IHL on UNMIL, with which it enjoyed fruitful cooperation. UNMIL included IHL in its standard briefings for military observers and trainers. During the briefings, the ICRC highlighted the 1999 UN Secretary-General's Bulletin on observance of IHL by United Nations forces and raised awareness of its mandate and activities. These briefings were an excellent opportunity to interact with officers from a broad range of countries, including Bangladesh, Ethiopia, Pakistan and Namibia.

- ▶ IHL sessions organized for 620 officers/military observers from various UNMIL contingents

Previous ICRC efforts to promote IHL among the police force bore fruit in that the police academy in Monrovia incorporated humanitarian principles into the training curriculum for recruits. Each class of 30 recruits was given a lesson on the Red Cross, the ICRC's mandate and protection activities, the emblem and aspects of IHL applicable to police functions.

The ICRC pursued a dialogue with a number of people linked to the various political factions and used every opportunity to explain its mandate, working methods and activities. Whenever possible, the Liberian Red Cross participated in dissemination sessions organized by the ICRC and attended by ex-fighters and civilians in areas held by the Movement for Democracy in Liberia (MODEL) and Liberians United for Democracy and Reconciliation (LURD).

CIVIL SOCIETY

To ensure the public was informed of IHL and Red Cross activities in Liberia, the ICRC consolidated its network of media contacts and produced and distributed communication materials, including press releases. Humanitarian activities that caught the local and international media's attention included: a poster campaign launched in December to help search for the families of some 500 Liberian children; tracing in general; agricultural assistance programmes for IDPs and resident populations; the Nairobi Summit on a Mine-Free World; and assistance to detainees. A film entitled *Help us find our parents*, portraying a Liberian woman who traced her lost daughter with the help of an ICRC poster, was produced and shown in video clubs throughout the country to promote ICRC tracing activities and the poster campaign.

The ICRC attended workshops organized by NGOs and UN agencies, during which it gave presentations on its work. Documentation on the ICRC and IHL was widely distributed during such meetings. In July the ICRC held a workshop on its activities and IHL for Liberian human rights NGOs.

Contacts were established with the University of Liberia and its professor of international law with a view to introducing the teaching of IHL at the university.

NATIONAL SOCIETY

As lead agency for the Movement in Liberia, the ICRC organized regular coordination meetings with the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, the Liberian Red Cross and other Movement partners to share information on operational cooperation and the constantly changing security situation in the country. With the support of the International Federation and the ICRC, the Liberian Red Cross developed election guidelines for its chapters and held its 45th General Assembly. The ICRC provided the National Society with technical support to accelerate the drafting of a law on the emblem.

Restoring family links

The Liberian Red Cross worked alongside the ICRC to carry out tracing activities, including photo campaigns to facilitate the task of reuniting children with their families. Job descriptions for the National Society's tracing coordinator at headquarters and tracing officers and volunteers at branch level were drawn up. In addition to assisting the Liberian Red Cross in its plan-

ning activities, conducting training and assessing its tracing capacities, the ICRC supported the National Society's efforts to adapt the Sierra Leone Red Cross Society's tracing handbook for use in Liberia.

- ▶ some 60 Liberian Red Cross tracing posts established/revived

Promoting IHL and the Fundamental Principles

The ICRC assisted the National Society in reorienting its dissemination sessions towards its own volunteers and members. It helped the Liberian Red Cross to organize three sessions of the football game Respect the Rules, as well as street theatre and a presentation of traditional song and dance in Monrovia. The ICRC introduced the Safer Access approach (see *Glossary*) in all training it organized or supported. Workshops and information sessions were also organized for Liberian Red Cross staff/volunteers on IHL, the emblem, the Fundamental Principles and the mandates of the ICRC, the International Federation and the National Society.

- ▶ production of the Liberian Red Cross newsletter supported

Assistance

The ICRC supplied the Liberian Red Cross with essential household items and agricultural materials for distribution to IDPs and resident populations. It also provided financial and logistical support for the National Society to undertake several field missions, including assessments following the eruption of violence in Monrovia in October, which resulted in timely assistance to civilians. The ICRC carried out water and sanitation projects jointly with the National Society and gave it logistical support and guidance in preparing and implementing training courses.

- ▶ monthly salaries/incentives provided for Liberian Red Cross staff/volunteers
- ▶ motorbikes/vehicles donated, insured and maintained
- ▶ communications equipment, including HF and VHF radio base stations and radio handsets, financed first-aid workshops organized for emergency-response teams in Red Cross chapters countrywide