

# SRI LANKA



ICRC/AR\_2015  
 ⊕ ICRC delegation    + ICRC office

The ICRC has worked in Sri Lanka since 1989. Operations focus on: assisting civilians affected by the past armed conflict, in particular working with returnees, former detainees and other especially vulnerable residents to boost their economic security; visiting detainees and aiding the authorities in improving prison management; helping clarify the fate of missing persons and supporting their families; and providing backing for the Sri Lanka Red Cross Society's family-links services. It also supports the armed forces' training in IHL.

## YEARLY RESULTS

Level of achievement of ICRC yearly objectives/plans of action

**HIGH**

## KEY RESULTS/CONSTRAINTS IN 2015

- ▶ Families of the missing in 2 districts better coped with their various needs thanks to ICRC-trained local partners, as part of a programme developed based on findings of an island-wide ICRC needs assessment.
- ▶ Detainees benefited from improved living conditions following ICRC upgrades to water and other prison facilities. The authorities created a task force to analyse and address the causes of prison overcrowding.
- ▶ Vulnerable households earned money with the help of ICRC micro-economic initiatives, despite delays in the project's implementation caused by the post-election transition.
- ▶ Government officials from countries in the region exchanged views on IHL and the Strengthening IHL process at a conference organized by the Sri Lankan government with the ICRC's assistance.

PROTECTION	Total
<b>CIVILIANS (residents, IDPs, returnees, etc.)</b>	
<b>Restoring family links</b>	
RCMs collected	8
RCMs distributed	48
Phone calls facilitated between family members	1
People located (tracing cases closed positively)	116
<b>PEOPLE DEPRIVED OF THEIR FREEDOM (All categories/all statuses)</b>	
<b>ICRC visits</b>	
Detainees visited	17,264
Detainees visited and monitored individually	524
Number of visits carried out	97
Number of places of detention visited	38
<b>Restoring family links</b>	
RCMs collected	30
RCMs distributed	8
Phone calls made to families to inform them of the whereabouts of a detained relative	61

## EXPENDITURE IN KCHF

Protection	3,593
Assistance	2,844
Prevention	604
Cooperation with National Societies	330
General	63
<b>Total</b>	<b>7,433</b>
<i>Of which: Overheads</i>	<b>454</b>

## IMPLEMENTATION RATE

Expenditure/yearly budget	96%
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## PERSONNEL

Mobile staff	21
Resident staff (daily workers not included)	86

## ASSISTANCE

	2015 Targets (up to)	Achieved
<b>CIVILIANS (residents, IDPs, returnees, etc.)</b>		
<b>Economic security</b> (in some cases provided within a protection or cooperation programme)		
Cash	Beneficiaries	6,600
		7,712
<b>Water and habitat</b> (in some cases provided within a protection or cooperation programme)		
Water and habitat activities	Beneficiaries	12,300
		18,896

## CONTEXT

In Sri Lanka, presidential and parliamentary elections, in January and August respectively, resulted in the election of a new president and the formation of a new government. The government introduced further measures to address political and other residual issues related to the armed conflict that ended in 2009. These included preparations to review the Sri Lankan constitution and the establishment of a presidential task force on reconciliation, which aimed at proposing measures to assist vulnerable people and communities in conflict-affected provinces. People in these areas continued to grapple with concerns related to restoring livelihoods and access to basic services; others remained without news of relatives who went missing during the fighting.

Following the adoption by the UN Human Rights Council of a resolution calling on the Sri Lankan government to set up an independent enquiry into alleged violations of IHL during the past conflict, the government shifted from its original position on the resolution and committed to create commissions to further address various issues, including those related to missing persons and internal security.

## ICRC ACTION AND RESULTS

The ICRC continued to work with and support the authorities in addressing the residual effects of conflict in Sri Lanka, in spite of delays in the implementation of some of its projects caused by the post-election transition, during which the responsibilities of certain ministries changed.

With thousands of persons still missing in relation to the past conflict, the ICRC pursued its dialogue with government officials and other parties concerned on the need to respond to the wide-ranging needs of these persons' families. With technical advice from the ICRC, the government approved the issuance of "certificates of absence" to the families of missing persons, so that they could apply for government assistance. The ICRC completed an island-wide needs assessment, undertaken to better understand these families' needs; it subsequently launched in two districts the pilot phase of a programme designed to address their needs. The justice ministry, with ICRC support, held workshops on legal reforms and procedures/practices relating to death inquests. A consultative workshop for local stakeholders, organized by a local college with help from the ICRC, resulted in these stakeholders' agreement to start a master's programme in forensic anthropology and archaeology.

The ICRC's visits to places of temporary and permanent detention, in accordance with its standard procedures, covered all categories of detainee; some inmates were monitored individually. Following these visits, ICRC delegates shared their findings and recommendations confidentially with the authorities. Through their participation in regional seminars and local training sessions, detention officials learnt more about ways to ensure detainees' proper treatment and living conditions. The ICRC supported and worked with the authorities concerned to address the causes and effects of overcrowding in prisons. As a result, the authorities and other stakeholders established a task force for tackling the causes of the issue, and detainees in some prisons benefited from infrastructure rehabilitation. The ICRC discussed with the authorities its findings and recommendations based on its assessments of health services in seven prisons; it also provided medical supplies to help improve health care for detainees in some facilities.

Vulnerable households in the northern and eastern provinces started/resumed income-generating projects. Beneficiaries included women, relatives of missing persons and rehabilitees – people arrested in relation with the past conflict who had been released after being held in rehabilitation centres. The construction of water and sanitation facilities enabled residents, including schoolchildren, access to safe drinking water.

Through dialogue and events, the ICRC continued to encourage greater understanding of and support for humanitarian principles and IHL in the post-conflict setting among the authorities and members of civil society. Jointly with the government, it organized a regional conference on various topics related to IHL and on the Strengthening IHL process. Workshops and briefings added to the armed and police forces' knowledge of international human rights law, IHL and peace-support operations. Students/lecturers increased their understanding of IHL through workshops and competitions; journalists reported on humanitarian issues using ICRC-provided materials.

The Sri Lanka Red Cross Society and the ICRC continued to offer family-links services, enabling people to restore contact with relatives, including migrants and detainees. The National Society continued to bolster its operational and management capacities with the ICRC's help.

## CIVILIANS

### People stay in touch with relatives abroad

People, especially the families of migrants in the country or abroad, stayed in contact with relatives using family-links services offered by the National Society and/or the ICRC (see *People deprived of their freedom*). Around 17,000 people slated for foreign employment learnt about these services at dissemination sessions conducted by the National Society.

Nearly 150 people resettled in third countries using ICRC travel documents.

The National Society sought to implement family-links activities in line with the Movement's strategy; to this end, it was given support for strengthening its links with Movement partners, through sponsored attendance at a regional meeting, for instance.

### The families of missing persons deal with their psychosocial, economic and legal needs

Regular dialogue continued between the authorities, other stakeholders and the ICRC on humanitarian concerns remaining from the past conflict. These included the need to clarify the fate and whereabouts of missing persons, among them some 16,000 people whose families had lodged tracing requests at National Society branches or with the ICRC, and to attend to the needs of their families. The government – with technical input from the ICRC – approved the issuance of "certificates of absence" that defined the legal status of missing persons and facilitated their families' application for legal, administrative and economic assistance. It also began setting up an office dedicated to addressing the needs of those families.

An island-wide needs assessment of 395 families of missing persons, conducted by the ICRC, helped the organization better understand these families' needs and identify service providers, with a view to conveying findings and recommendations confidentially to the authorities. As part of the pilot phase of a programme based on this assessment, 497 families of missing persons in two

districts dealt with their psychosocial, economic, legal and administrative needs with the help of ICRC-trained local partners.

### **Justice ministry holds workshops on legal reforms/procedures related to death inquests**

Forensic professionals and other stakeholders benefited from ICRC workshops, consultations and technical advice, which helped them enhance their capacities in human-remains management and strengthen related laws and policies, for instance by developing national guidelines for managing human remains after disasters and by drafting standard operating procedures for managing mass graves. The justice ministry, with ICRC support, held consultative workshops with stakeholders on law reforms and procedures and practices relating to inquests. Another workshop, jointly organized by the College of Forensic Pathologists of Sri Lanka and the ICRC, resulted in an agreement to start a master's programme in forensic anthropology and archaeology, aimed at developing national capacities to search for, recover and analyse human remains.

### **Households headed by women and rehabilitees earn money through micro-economic initiatives**

Vulnerable households and communities in the northern and eastern provinces benefited from ICRC assistance activities, which complemented existing government programmes; however, the post-election transition delayed implementation of some of these activities.

In total, 702 heads of households (supporting some 2,000 people) – including women, disabled persons, released rehabilitees and relatives of missing persons – began or resumed income-earning projects through the ICRC's micro-economic initiatives; an additional 104 heads of households (supporting some 1,000 people) received similar assistance, provided in partnership with the National Society. Project monitoring revealed that most of these beneficiaries increased their families' income by up to 45%. Over 1,350 households (some 4,660 people) benefited from a community-based livelihood support programme.

Almost 14,200 schoolchildren had better access to safe drinking water in their schools, and improved sanitation and other facilities as a result of infrastructure improvements. Over 4,700 people had a better supply of potable water after the repair/construction of wells and hand pumps. Local water authorities boosted their capacities to address emergency water needs in training sessions.

## **PEOPLE DEPRIVED OF THEIR FREEDOM**

### **Detained migrants maintain contact with their families**

Close to 17,300 detainees of all categories in places of temporary and permanent detention received ICRC visits in accordance with the organization's standard procedures; 524 were monitored individually. After these visits, the authorities and the ICRC discussed the organization's findings and recommendations, if any, confidentially.

Inmates, among them detained migrants, restored/maintained contact with their relatives through family-links services provided by the National Society and the ICRC. Some 330 security detainees received visits from family members who had their transportation costs to and from prisons covered by the ICRC. Some detainees received ad hoc support to help them return home after their release.

### **Authorities establish a task force to address the causes of overcrowding in prisons**

Prison authorities and staff participated in national and/or international workshops and seminars, helping strengthen their knowledge

in ensuring proper treatment and living conditions for detainees and in managing prison infrastructure (see *Kuala Lumpur* and *Myanmar*). The authorities received technical support from the ICRC for designing and constructing new prisons. A change in the ministry responsible for the prison department after elections led to some delays in the implementation of some activities, particularly those related to the issue of prison overcrowding.

As a result of a round-table convened by the justice ministry, with ICRC support and input, representatives of various government ministries and other parties concerned set up a task force that analysed the legal and judicial causes of overcrowding in prisons and monitored the implementation of projects to address them.

### **Prison medical staff develop their capacities to provide mental-health care and curb disease outbreaks**

At a health ministry/ICRC seminar, 24 prison medical officers learnt more about providing mental-health care and controlling outbreaks of communicable diseases; during a panel discussion, prison doctors and forensic professionals discussed ways to ensure systematic forensic investigation into suspected cases of ill-treatment.

The authorities of concerned ministries, including the ministries of health and justice, and the department of prisons discussed with the ICRC the organization's findings and recommendations based on its assessment of prison health services in 7 places of detention.

In various prisons, over 150 detainees on hunger strike had their medical conditions monitored by the ICRC. The distribution of medical equipment and consumables to some prisons helped augment the health services provided to detainees.

### **Inmates in overcrowded prisons ease their living conditions with hygiene and recreational items**

Fifty prison staff developed their knowledge in repairing and maintaining prison facilities at an ICRC workshop, conducted with technical input from a local university and civil engineering companies. Prison authorities in 13 prisons identified the water and sanitation needs in their facilities, through assessments undertaken with the assistance of the ICRC.

Around 3,550 inmates in five overcrowded prisons benefited from improved water/sanitation facilities and living areas after upgrades/construction of these infrastructures. Over 13,100 detainees in those and other prisons eased their living conditions with ICRC-distributed hygiene and recreational items.

## **ACTORS OF INFLUENCE**

### **Sri Lankan authorities discuss IHL-related issues with regional counterparts**

Various ICRC initiatives helped further – among the authorities, key members of civil society, the media and the general public – understanding of and support for humanitarian principles, IHL, the Movement and the ICRC's activities in post-conflict Sri Lanka.

Some 40 government officials, including security forces personnel, from Sri Lanka and other countries in the region discussed the Strengthening IHL process, cyber warfare, weapon contamination and other topics related to IHL in the South Asia Conference on IHL, organized by the Sri Lankan government and the ICRC. Over 40 foreign service personnel in Sri Lanka, including those from other countries, added to their knowledge of IHL, humanitarian

diplomacy and the ICRC, at briefings organized by the home affairs ministry/ICRC. Other Sri Lankan officials, among them the chairperson of the national IHL committee, attended various seminars and workshops abroad, which deepened their knowledge of IHL and IHL-related treaties (see *Pakistan* and *Suva*). A national round-table on the Health Care in Danger project did not take place as planned, owing to other priorities.

The national IHL committee continued to discuss the ratification of IHL-related treaties, and the development of enabling legislation for treaties which had already been ratified, with the encouragement of the ICRC.

### **Military commanders learn more about their role in law enforcement operations**

Police officers strengthened their understanding of internationally recognized policing standards in training sessions. More than 190 senior police officers deepened their working knowledge of standards pertinent to arrest, the proper use of force, public-order management, and searches in detention.

At briefings and in seminars/workshops, over 100 senior military commanders learnt more about considerations in supporting law enforcement operations in line with international human rights law, and more than 1,300 armed forces personnel and officers, including foreign officers, added to their understanding of humanitarian principles and IHL. During training sessions, over 70 military IHL instructors updated their skills in teaching IHL. An official attended an international course on the rules governing military operations (see *International law and policy*), as part of the effort to incorporate IHL in military doctrine.

Army officers learnt more about the relationship between IHL and peace-support operations during workshops on the topic. Over 1,300 personnel bound for peacekeeping missions abroad participated in predeployment briefings on IHL and the Movement.

### **Students demonstrate their grasp of IHL at international competitions**

Lecturers enhanced their knowledge of IHL during international seminars and training sessions, which helped encourage the inclusion of IHL in school curricula. Students demonstrated their IHL knowledge at international moot court competitions, with the support of the ICRC.

Some journalists who received ICRC updates on issues of humanitarian concern – such as missing persons and overcrowding in prisons – wrote about these matters, helping raise awareness among civil society and the general public. Three journalists from the Japanese media learnt more about how the ICRC operates in a post-conflict setting during an ICRC-sponsored visit to Sri Lanka.

## **RED CROSS AND RED CRESCENT MOVEMENT**

The Sri Lanka Red Cross Society bolstered its operational and management capacities with ICRC financial/technical/material support; notably, it assisted people separated from their families, including migrants and detainees (see *Civilians* and *People deprived of their freedom*). Planned assessment and awareness-raising activities on the Safer Access Framework were delayed owing to administrative issues.

To enhance its first-aid services, the National Society conducted skills examinations for nearly 400 of its volunteers from 15 districts. It also offered first-aid services during district/national-level events. Two branches in disaster-prone areas in the north received stocks of household items.

Information and training sessions on the Fundamental Principles and the Movement were held in 23 districts for authorities, students and other community members, and National Society volunteers. The National Society marked World Red Cross and Red Crescent Day (May 8) by promoting the Fundamental Principles through advertisements in newspapers, and by other means.

The revised statutes of the National Society and a draft Red Cross Act, originally prepared in 2013 with technical support from the ICRC, awaited the approval of the authorities concerned.

Movement components met regularly to exchange information.

MAIN FIGURES AND INDICATORS: PROTECTION		Total			
<b>CIVILIANS (residents, IDPs, returnees, etc.)</b>					
<b>Red Cross messages (RCMs)</b>			UAMs/SC*		
RCMs collected		8			
RCMs distributed		48			
Phone calls facilitated between family members		1			
<b>Tracing requests, including cases of missing persons</b>			Women	Girls	Boys
People for whom a tracing request was newly registered		192	22	8	27
People located (tracing cases closed positively)		116			
Tracing cases still being handled at the end of the reporting period (people)		16,103	809	359	1,199
<b>UAMs/SC*, including demobilized child soldiers</b>			Girls		Demobilized children
UAM/SC cases still being handled by the ICRC/National Society at the end of the reporting period		17	7		
<b>Documents</b>					
People to whom travel documents were issued		149			
<b>PEOPLE DEPRIVED OF THEIR FREEDOM (All categories/all statuses)</b>					
<b>ICRC visits</b>			Women	Minors	
Detainees visited		17,264	913	83	
			Women	Girls	Boys
Detainees visited and monitored individually		524	27		4
Detainees newly registered		116	12		4
Number of visits carried out		97			
Number of places of detention visited		38			
<b>Restoring family links</b>					
RCMs collected		30			
RCMs distributed		8			
Phone calls made to families to inform them of the whereabouts of a detained relative		61			
Detainees visited by their relatives with ICRC/National Society support		327			
Detainees released and transferred/repatriated by/via the ICRC		4			
People to whom a detention attestation was issued		202			

\*Unaccompanied minors/separated children

MAIN FIGURES AND INDICATORS: ASSISTANCE		Total	Women	Children
<b>CIVILIANS (residents, IDPs, returnees, etc.)</b>				
<b>Economic security (in some cases provided within a protection or cooperation programme)</b>				
Cash	Beneficiaries	7,712	41%	26%
<b>Water and habitat (in some cases provided within a protection or cooperation programme)</b>				
Water and habitat activities	Beneficiaries	18,896	25%	75%
<b>Health</b>				
<b>PEOPLE DEPRIVED OF THEIR FREEDOM (All categories/all statuses)</b>				
<b>Economic security (in some cases provided within a protection programme)</b>				
Essential household items	Beneficiaries	12,889		
Cash	Beneficiaries	55		
<b>Water and habitat (in some cases provided within a protection or cooperation programme)</b>				
Water and habitat activities	Beneficiaries	3,585		
<b>Health</b>				
Number of visits carried out by health staff		16		
Number of places of detention visited by health staff		11		
Number of health facilities supported in places of detention visited by health staff		4		