

# UGANDA



ICRC delegation

The ICRC has been present in Uganda since 1979. Given the progress towards peace in the north of the country, ICRC assistance activities, many of which are implemented in partnership with the Uganda Red Cross Society and State institutions, have been adapted to decreasing humanitarian needs. In parallel, the ICRC continues to monitor the treatment of detainees and strives to raise awareness of IHL and humanitarian principles among the armed and police forces.

## KEY RESULTS/CONSTRAINTS

### In 2014:

- ▶ detainees who had been sentenced to death, and had not seen their families for several years, received visits – facilitated by the ICRC – from their relatives
- ▶ over 350 relatives of people who went missing during past conflict in northern Uganda helped one another cope with their situation by sharing their experiences at ICRC-organized peer-support sessions
- ▶ thousands of refugees from the Democratic Republic of the Congo and South Sudan, and other violence-affected people, restored contact with their relatives through phone calls and RCMs
- ▶ military and police instructors discussed ways to ensure respect for civilians during law enforcement operations involving both armed forces and police personnel
- ▶ the Uganda Red Cross Society, which was experiencing an administrative/financial crisis, worked towards structural reforms in order to function in a more sustainable and accountable manner

## YEARLY RESULTS

Level of achievement of ICRC yearly objectives/plans of action

**MEDIUM**

| PROTECTION  | Total  |
|---|--------|
| <b>CIVILIANS (residents, IDPs, returnees, etc.)</b>                                   |        |
| <b>Red Cross messages (RCMs)</b>  |        |
| RCMs collected  | 2,899  |
| RCMs distributed  | 2,148  |
| Phone calls facilitated between family members  | 8,801  |
| People located (tracing cases closed positively)                                      | 15     |
| People reunited with their families   | 57     |
| <i>of whom unaccompanied minors/separated children</i>                                | 57     |
| <b>PEOPLE DEPRIVED OF THEIR FREEDOM (All categories/all statuses)</b>                 |        |
| <b>ICRC visits</b>  |        |
| Detainees visited   | 14,533 |
| Detainees visited and monitored individually  | 183    |
| Number of visits carried out  | 106    |
| Number of places of detention visited   | 53     |
| <b>Restoring family links</b>   |        |
| RCMs collected  | 653    |
| RCMs distributed  | 458    |
| Phone calls made to families to inform them of the whereabouts of a detained relative | 121    |

## EXPENDITURE (in KCHF)

|                                     |       |
|-------------------------------------|-------|
| Protection                          | 2,018 |
| Assistance                          | -     |
| Prevention                          | 953   |
| Cooperation with National Societies | 615   |
| General                             | -     |

**3,586**

*of which: Overheads 219*

## IMPLEMENTATION RATE

|                           |            |
|---------------------------|------------|
| Expenditure/yearly budget | <b>85%</b> |
|---------------------------|------------|

## PERSONNEL

|   |    |
|---|----|
| Mobile staff                                | 8  |
| Resident staff (daily workers not included) | 31 |

## CONTEXT

The Uganda People's Defence Force (UPDF) continued its military operations against the Lord's Resistance Army in the Central African Republic, and contributed troops to several African Union and UN peacekeeping missions in the region, including in Somalia. UPDF forces were also deployed on operations in South Sudan.

The armed conflict in South Sudan caused more people to cross the border into Uganda, which had already been hosting a sizeable population of refugees from the Democratic Republic of the Congo (hereafter DRC) and South Sudan. Some of them returned voluntarily to the DRC.

Political demonstrations linked to the 2016 elections led to sporadic clashes between government forces and the opposition in some parts of the country. In July, violence linked to intercommunal tensions in western Uganda reportedly resulted in nearly 100 casualties. In Karamoja, northern Uganda, the situation was generally calm, partly owing to disarmament operations by the UPDF. Arrests were made in connection with the situations of violence mentioned above, and with the UPDF's disarmament operations.

Socio-economic problems hampered the delivery of public services, including those related to prison administration.

## ICRC ACTION AND RESULTS

The ICRC supported the authorities' efforts to ensure the well-being of detainees and people who had fled armed conflict in neighbouring countries, and sought to address the lingering effects of past conflict, particularly on the families of missing people.

The ICRC continued to visit security detainees in accordance with its standard procedures. These detainees included people arrested on charges of armed rebellion or "terrorism" as well as people held in relation to the armed conflict in the DRC and to the disarmament operations in Karamoja. ICRC delegates assessed inmates' treatment and living conditions, and afterwards shared their findings confidentially with the authorities. The ICRC sought access to all detainees within its purview, including those held at police-run facilities.

The authorities, with technical guidance from the ICRC, continued to implement a project – which they had taken over in 2012 – to contain the spread of HIV/AIDS, TB and malaria at three prisons; they also received advice on replicating the project at other detention facilities. Inmates benefited from better living conditions following distributions of hygiene and cleaning items and improvements to prison facilities. Family-links services helped detainees stay in touch with their relatives. For instance, inmates who had been sentenced to death received visits from their relatives for the first time in several years.

Refugees from the DRC and South Sudan, and other violence-affected people, re-established contact with their relatives through family-links services, including phone calls and RCMs. Minors, including those formerly associated with armed groups, were reunited with their families in Uganda or elsewhere. Relatives of people who remained without news of relatives who went missing during the 1986–2006 non-international armed conflict in northern Uganda eased their sense of isolation with the help of a peer-support programme.

In the Karamoja region, two communities eased the tensions between them by jointly cultivating land using ICRC-provided seed and tools. By using energy-saving stoves, vulnerable families reduced the need to walk long distances to collect firewood, thus mitigating the risks associated with sexual violence. In light of the communities' effective self-protection mechanisms and the increasingly stable security situation in the area, the ICRC decided to conclude its assistance activities in Karamoja.

The ICRC promoted support for humanitarian principles and IHL among authorities, weapon bearers and other actors of influence. UPDF and Uganda Police Force (UPF) personnel, slated for deployment within the country or abroad, familiarized themselves with their responsibilities under IHL and international human rights law during ICRC-organized dissemination sessions, sometimes combined with first-aid training. Because of the violence in south-western Uganda and in preparation for any election-related disturbances, army and police instructors learnt ways to ensure respect for civilians during law enforcement operations involving both police and military troops. Seminars for journalists, academics and other members of civil society sought to raise awareness of humanitarian matters.

As the ICRC's main partner in restoring family links and promoting support for IHL and the Movement, the Uganda Red Cross Society received financial, material and technical assistance. To resolve an administrative/financial crisis that began in late 2013, the National Society underwent a restructuring process. Progress in this matter was slow; consequently, Movement partners, including the ICRC, decided to suspend funding and material support for the organization from 1 October, and until the necessary measures were taken to ensure that it could implement humanitarian activities in a sustainable and accountable manner. The ICRC took steps to ensure the continued provision of family-links services and met with Movement partners to help the National Society resolve its internal issues.

## CIVILIANS

### People who fled armed conflict in the DRC and South Sudan share their concerns with the ICRC

Information gathered during visits conducted by Uganda Red Cross Society/ICRC teams to refugee settlements was used in the ICRC's dialogue with the relevant authorities and weapon bearers on alleged abuses and other humanitarian concerns in the refugees' countries of origin (see *Congo, Democratic Republic of the*, and *South Sudan*). Foreign nationals who expressed apprehensions about their security had their situation monitored, after they were registered by the ICRC. Where appropriate, they were referred to UNHCR for registration as asylum seekers or to other organizations for psychosocial support.

Following clashes in south-western Uganda, police and military officers in the region learnt – at an ICRC-facilitated session – about international rules applicable to the use of force in such situations of violence (see *Actors of influence*).

### People separated by conflict or violence restore contact

The National Society rendered family-links services with ICRC technical/material/financial support from January to September. Following the suspension of Movement partners' support for the National Society from 1 October (see *Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement*), the ICRC took steps to ensure the continuous provision of such services, until the National Society completed its internal restructuring.

Thousands of refugees from the DRC and South Sudan re-established contact through family-links services such as RCMs and phone calls. These services were rendered in cooperation with National Societies in neighbouring countries.

Families were informed through RCMs of the whereabouts of relatives arrested in connection with the violence in south-western Uganda (see *People deprived of their freedom*). The authorities concerned were requested to provide any information they had about people who could not be located by their relatives.

### **Minors formerly associated with armed groups rejoin their families**

Thanks to National Society/ICRC tracing services, 57 people, including minors/children formerly associated with armed groups, were reunited with their relatives. Minors/children who rejoin their families in Uganda or in neighbouring countries received food and clothes for their journey home. In 2014, over 200 unaccompanied minors from South Sudan were newly registered and followed up by the National Society/ICRC.

Following their return home, the children received visits from the ICRC, which checked on the progress of their reintegration into family life. Some of them had their medical condition monitored. The authorities concerned were reminded of the need to ensure the protection of demobilized children.

### **Families of missing persons help each other cope with their situation**

In northern Uganda, hundreds of families continued to live without news of relatives who went missing during the 1986–2006 non-international armed conflict. At sessions led by ICRC-trained facilitators, over 350 relatives of missing persons participated in a peer-support programme that allowed them to share their difficulties. Thirty support groups met regularly over a period of four months, from July to October. An evaluation of the programme found that the programme helped participants deal with their distress in a positive manner and eased their sense of isolation. Commemoration ceremonies enabled the families' communities to reach a better understanding of the families' suffering. Some of these families availed themselves of health-care services during a two-day medical mission implemented in coordination with a local health centre. Several people, including two suffering from mental illness, were referred to local hospitals for treatment.

### **Karamoja residents mitigate risks associated with sexual violence**

Two previously disputing communities in the Moroto district of the Karamoja region eased the tensions between them by jointly cultivating land that had once been inaccessible owing to security concerns. Following dialogue facilitated by the ICRC, some 500 households (1,059 people) improved their food security by farming these plots of land with ICRC-provided seed and tools.

Over 970 households that used energy-saving stoves – built by women trained in 2013 by an NGO, Welthungerhilfe, with ICRC support – reduced their need to walk long distances to collect firewood, mitigating risks related to sexual violence.

Discussions with ICRC beneficiaries confirmed that the problems faced by Karamojong communities in 2014 owed more to climatic conditions than to security concerns. The ICRC's regular monitoring of their situation reinforced these findings. For instance, it was

observed that women moved freely and no longer reported incidents of violence. Moreover, the local population demonstrated effective self-protection measures and improved income-generating capacities.

In light of these positive developments, by the middle of the year, the ICRC had concluded its activities in the area. With technical guidance from the ICRC, Welthungerhilfe gradually took over the provision of support for agricultural activities.

## **PEOPLE DEPRIVED OF THEIR FREEDOM**

Through regular dialogue with the authorities, the ICRC sought to gain/maintain access to all detainees within its purview, including those at police-run detention facilities, and to visit them in accordance with its standard procedures.

Over 14,000 detainees held by the Ministries of Defence and Internal Affairs in Kampala, in the Karamoja region and in south-western Uganda received ICRC visits. They included people arrested on charges of armed rebellion or “terrorism” as well as people held in relation to the armed conflict in the DRC and to the disarmament operations in Karamoja.

During their visits, delegates – in accordance with the ICRC's standard procedures – assessed detainees' treatment and living conditions; afterwards, they shared their findings and recommendations confidentially with the authorities. Dialogue with the authorities also covered the need to hold detainees in gazetted (officially recognized) places of detention, to ensure humane treatment and adequate living conditions for detainees, and to respect judicial guarantees, including *non-refoulement* of foreign detainees.

### **Prison authorities take steps to improve the management of detainees' case files**

Penitentiary officials, particularly in Luzira Upper Prison, drew on ICRC advice to improve the management of detainees' case files and prevent delays in judicial processes. Some 30 detainees who had been sentenced to death stood to benefit from the review of their case files, which sought to facilitate the commutation of their sentences. The authorities traced these files with technical guidance from the Centre for Capital Punishment Studies, the African Prisons Project and the ICRC.

Officials from Luzira Upper Prison and the ICRC also had in-depth discussions to identify ways to address overcrowding.

### **Inmates under sentence of death are visited by relatives**

Inmates stayed in touch with their relatives through family-links services. At Luzira Upper Prison, 63 detainees who had been sentenced to death, and had not seen their families for several years, met their relatives through ICRC-facilitated visits. RCMs enabled people arrested in relation to clashes in western Uganda to inform their families of their situation, and other detainees to maintain contact with their families (see *Civilians*). The families of 121 inmates were informed by phone of their relatives' arrest or transfer to some other place of detention; foreign detainees who so wished informed their embassies/consulates or UNHCR of their detention via the ICRC. Upon their release, 5 detainees had their transport costs home covered by the ICRC.

### **Prison authorities remain committed to curbing HIV/AIDS, TB and malaria**

An ICRC pilot project for tackling HIV/AIDS, TB and malaria at three detention facilities was turned over to the authorities in 2012.

An evaluation by an independent external reviewer revealed that, although the prison population continued to grow, the authorities remained committed to preventing the spread of these diseases and to treating sick inmates, in spite of financial and human-resource constraints; the ICRC gave them technical advice on replicating the project at prisons throughout the country.

Inmates at the detention facilities visited eased their living conditions with clothes and recreational items. Cleaning materials, such as brooms and detergents, helped the authorities and detainees maintain sanitary conditions. The authorities at Luzira Upper Prison used ICRC-provided materials to improve the kitchen area, and installed mosquito nets on all windows and vents. An ad hoc donation of sugar added to the food supply of over 3,000 inmates.

## **ACTORS OF INFLUENCE**

### **Military and police officers discuss ways to ensure respect for civilians during joint operations**

In light of the UPDF's and UPF's involvement in operations abroad, over 6,400 officers and troops enhanced their knowledge of IHL and international human rights law during ICRC pre-deployment briefings and training sessions. Over 350 senior officers from other African countries attended IHL dissemination sessions conducted in cooperation with the UPDF. At an ICRC-facilitated seminar, UPF officers slated for deployment in support of the African Union Mission in Somalia made a commitment to pass on their knowledge of international human rights law to their Somali counterparts. Selected instructors and commanders, in charge of efforts to incorporate IHL in the training and operations of security forces, attended an advanced IHL course abroad (see *International law and policy*).

In view of the violence in south-western Uganda, and to prepare for potential unrest in connection with the 2016 elections, the armed forces and police furthered – at ICRC-organized sessions – their understanding of international human rights law and humanitarian principles applicable to law enforcement. Over 130 army and police instructors discussed ways to mitigate risks arising from army involvement in law enforcement operations. Some of these instructors were responsible for monitoring police compliance with international human rights law. A draft set of standards for joint operations was submitted for UPDF and UPF approval.

At training sessions organized by the National Society/ICRC, police personnel learnt first aid in addition to refining their knowledge of the proper use of force.

### **National IHL committee advances incorporation of IHL in domestic law**

The national IHL committee drew on ICRC expertise for technical advice on facilitating the implementation of the Red Cross Act and the adoption of IHL-related legislation, including a revised Geneva Conventions Bill, the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Bill and the Toxic Chemicals Prohibition and Control Bill. Uganda was in the final stages of ratifying the Cluster Munitions Convention. Government officials participated in regional workshops on promoting support for the Arms Trade Treaty (see *Nairobi*) and on assistance for victims of weapon contamination (see *African Union*).

### **Journalists draw attention to the concerns of families dispersed by conflict**

The National Society worked with the ICRC to further understanding, among local authorities and the wider public, of humanitarian concerns – including those covered by the Health Care in Danger

project – and of the Movement's work. To help raise public awareness of National Society/ICRC activities in Uganda, international media, as well as the ICRC's website and its social media page, featured the reunification of minors with their families in the DRC and the peer-support programme for the families of missing persons in northern Uganda (see *Civilians*). A dozen journalists took part in an ICRC-organized seminar aimed at encouraging accurate reporting of humanitarian issues during situations of violence.

### **Young people and government leaders discuss ways to protect victims of armed conflict**

At a panel discussion at a local university, over 100 academics, students and army and judicial officials discussed the roles of judicial systems, socio-cultural traditions and religion in increasing the protection for victims of armed conflicts throughout Africa. Students tested their knowledge of IHL in a regional essay competition and at national and regional moot court competitions.

Researchers and other visitors found pertinent information on humanitarian issues and the law at the IHL resource centre on the premises of the UPDF Court Martial's Court of Appeal in Kampala. The centre, which opened in December 2013, was equipped with ICRC-donated computers and managed with ICRC support.

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

### **Ugandan Red Cross volunteers carry out emergency response activities**

The National Society worked with the ICRC from January to September to restore family links, train security forces in first aid and foster support for the Movement's work. With ICRC financial/material support and technical advice on the application of the Safer Access Framework and other matters, it responded to the urgent needs of people affected by floods and landslides in eastern and northern Uganda.

### **National Society undergoes restructuring to address management issues**

In response to an administrative/financial crisis that began in late 2013, the Ugandan Red Cross began working toward structural reforms to restore its integrity and increase its capacity to deliver humanitarian assistance in a sustainable and accountable way. However, as little progress was made in this regard, Movement partners, including the ICRC, decided to suspend financial and material support for the National Society until it took the measures necessary to resolve the crisis. The suspension took effect on 1 October.

Regular meetings with Movement partners were held in order to strengthen coordination and to help the National Society resolve its internal issues.

| MAIN FIGURES AND INDICATORS: PROTECTION  |   | Total |           |                      |      |
|--|---|-------|-----------|----------------------|------|
| <b>CIVILIANS (residents, IDPs, returnees, etc.)</b>  |   |       |           |                      |      |
| <b>Red Cross messages (RCMs)</b>   |   |       |           |                      |      |
|  |   |       | UAMs/SCs* |                      |      |
| RCMs collected   | 2,899   | 234   |           |                      |      |
| RCMs distributed   | 2,148   | 91    |           |                      |      |
| Phone calls facilitated between family members   | 8,801   |       |           |                      |      |
| <b>Reunifications, transfers and repatriations</b>   |   |       |           |                      |      |
| People reunited with their families  | 57  |       |           |                      |      |
|  | <i>including people registered by another delegation</i>                                | 14    |           |                      |      |
| <b>Tracing requests, including cases of missing persons</b>                                      |   |       |           |                      |      |
|  |   |       | Women     | Girls                | Boys |
| People for whom a tracing request was newly registered   | 49  | 4     | 13        | 23                   |      |
|  | <i>including people for whom tracing requests were registered by another delegation</i> | 19    |           |                      |      |
| People located (tracing cases closed positively)   | 15  |       |           |                      |      |
|  | <i>including people for whom tracing requests were registered by another delegation</i> | 6     |           |                      |      |
| Tracing cases still being handled at the end of the reporting period (people)                    | 50  | 3     | 12        | 24                   |      |
|  | <i>including people for whom tracing requests were registered by another delegation</i> | 27    |           |                      |      |
| <b>UAMs/SCs*, including unaccompanied demobilized child soldiers</b>                             |   |       |           |                      |      |
|  |   |       | Girls     | Demobilized children |      |
| UAMs/SCs newly registered by the ICRC/National Society   | 269   | 108   |           | 2                    |      |
| UAMs/SCs reunited with their families by the ICRC/National Society                               | 57  | 11    |           | 29                   |      |
|  | <i>including UAMs/SCs registered by another delegation</i>                              | 14    |           |                      |      |
| UAM/SC cases still being handled by the ICRC/National Society at the end of the reporting period | 162   | 32    |           | 50                   |      |
| <b>Documents</b>   |   |       |           |                      |      |
| People to whom travel documents were issued  | 3   |       |           |                      |      |
| <b>PEOPLE DEPRIVED OF THEIR FREEDOM (All categories/all statuses)</b>                            |   |       |           |                      |      |
| <b>ICRC visits</b>   |   |       |           |                      |      |
|  |   |       | Women     | Minors               |      |
| Detainees visited  | 14,533  | 642   | 36        |                      |      |
|  |   |       | Women     | Girls                | Boys |
| Detainees visited and monitored individually   | 183   | 2     |           | 8                    |      |
| Detainees newly registered   | 96  | 1     |           | 8                    |      |
| Number of visits carried out   | 106   |       |           |                      |      |
| Number of places of detention visited  | 53  |       |           |                      |      |
| <b>Restoring family links</b>  |   |       |           |                      |      |
| RCMs collected   | 653   |       |           |                      |      |
| RCMs distributed   | 458   |       |           |                      |      |
| Phone calls made to families to inform them of the whereabouts of a detained relative            | 121   |       |           |                      |      |
| Detainees visited by their relatives with ICRC/National Society support                          | 63  |       |           |                      |      |
| People to whom a detention attestation was issued  | 3   |       |           |                      |      |

\* Unaccompanied minors/separated children

| MAIN FIGURES AND INDICATORS: ASSISTANCE   |               | Total  | Women | Children |
|---|---------------|--------|-------|----------|
| <b>CIVILIANS (residents, IDPs, returnees, etc.)</b>   |               |        |       |          |
| <b>Economic security, water and habitat (in some cases provided within a protection or cooperation programme)</b> |               |        |       |          |
| Food commodities  | Beneficiaries | 52     |       | 2%       |
| Essential household items   | Beneficiaries | 7,508  | 8%    | 2%       |
| Productive inputs   | Beneficiaries | 1,059  | 27%   | 38%      |
| Cash  | Beneficiaries | 4      | 11%   | 11%      |
| <b>PEOPLE DEPRIVED OF THEIR FREEDOM (All categories/all statuses)</b>   |               |        |       |          |
| <b>Economic security, water and habitat (in some cases provided within a protection programme)</b>                |               |        |       |          |
| Food commodities  | Beneficiaries | 3,179  |       |          |
| Essential household items   | Beneficiaries | 24,611 |       |          |
| Cash  | Beneficiaries | 5      |       |          |