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ICRC/ R. Sidler

Fresh water and proper sanitation go a long way to prevent the spread of water-borne diseases. In war-torn areas, water supply systems are often damaged or fall into disrepair: the ICRC spent 25 million Swiss francs on water and sanitation projects in 1998. Many of these were carried out with the help of local Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and teams sent out by participating National Societies.

**Indian sub-continent**

**ICRC delegations:**

Afghanistan, Pakistan, Sri Lanka

**ICRC regional delegation:**

New Delhi

**South-East Asia and the Far East**

**ICRC delegation:**

Cambodia

**ICRC regional delegations:**

Bangkok, Jakarta, Manila

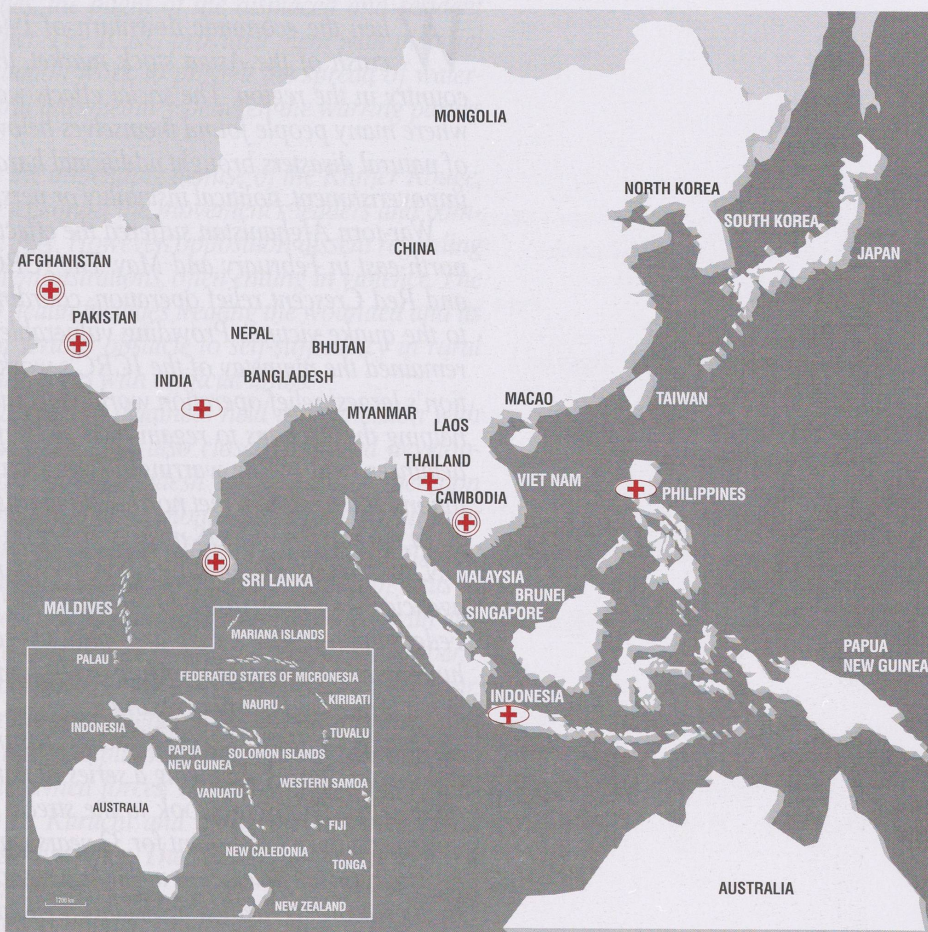
**Staff**

ICRC expatriates: <sup>1</sup>	192
National Societies: <sup>1</sup>	41
Local employees: <sup>2</sup>	1,764

<b>Total expenditure:</b>	<b>Sfr</b>
	92,833,180

**Expenditure breakdown:**

Protection/tracing:	24,678,533
Relief:	31,193,777
Health activities:	18,461,681
Cooperation with National Societies:	2,779,361
Promotion/dissemination:	3,452,958
Operational support:	7,223,411
Overheads:	5,043,459



⊕ ICRC regional delegation    ⊕ ICRC delegation

ICRC / AR 12.98

<sup>1</sup> Average figures calculated on an annual basis.

<sup>2</sup> Under ICRC contract, as at December 1998.

# ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

*When the economic downturn of 1997 took a further plunge in 1998 with the crash of the Asian stock market, the repercussions were felt in almost every country in the region. The social effects were most acute in Indonesia and Malaysia, where many people found themselves below the poverty line for the first time. A series of natural disasters brought additional hardship for thousands already worn down by impoverishment, political instability or persistent conflict.*

*War-torn Afghanistan suffered the effects of two earthquakes which devastated the north-east in February and May. The ICRC, acting as lead agency for the Red Cross and Red Crescent relief operation, coordinated the distribution of non-food supplies to the quake victims. Providing vulnerable groups with food and material assistance remained the mainstay of the ICRC's work in Afghanistan, the scene of the organization's largest relief operation worldwide. Increasing emphasis, however, was placed on helping the Afghans to regain their self-sufficiency. Delegates also continued visits to detainees held by the warring parties with the aim of ensuring that their living conditions and treatment met normal standards.*

*In the wake of the US missile strikes on Afghanistan in August and the killing of a UN military observer, all expatriates of non-governmental organizations and UN agencies withdrew from the country. For a while the ICRC and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies were the sole international humanitarian organizations fully operational in the Afghan arena. Towards year's end some foreign aid workers returned.*

*One of the ICRC's foremost concerns in 1998 was Indonesia, where humanitarian needs rose sharply following a series of natural disasters and the unprecedented economic crisis. Thousands took to the streets calling for political and economic reform, and the country's President for 32 years was forced to resign.*

*The regional delegation in Jakarta responded rapidly to the violent demonstrations by increasing its medical assistance to Red Cross branches involved in the treatment and evacuation of the wounded. Its long-term approach centred on training members of the Indonesian Red Cross Society to deal with situations of unrest. In July the ICRC's relief and medical operation in drought-stricken Irian Jaya came to an end as the nutritional status of the local population had vastly improved. During the year the ICRC resumed its activities in Aceh to monitor the situation of some 500 Acehnese expelled from Malaysia. The delegation's activities in East Timor, focusing on health promotion, water and sanitation projects and visits to detainees, continued as in previous years. In Myanmar surveys were conducted in the border provinces and preparations were made for a health programme to be implemented in Shan state in 1999. More discussions were held on the question of ICRC access to places of detention in the country.*

*In Sri Lanka the "no-mercy" war dragged on, with government forces doggedly struggling to secure a land route to the Jaffna peninsula. Countless combatants on both sides lost their lives in fierce fighting in the Vanni region. Although civilians sel-*

dom suffered the direct effects of hostilities, the plight of the displaced and resident inhabitants of the Vanni deteriorated further. The ICRC provided them with material assistance and carried out water and sanitation work to prevent the spread of water-borne diseases. The ICRC's role as a neutral intermediary between the warring parties remained of crucial importance.

The year in Cambodia was marked by the impending demise of the Khmer Rouge, with the death of Pol Pot and the mass defection of the movement's leaders and combatants. Nationwide elections were held in July. However, opposition dissent regarding the validity of the polls gave rise to mass demonstrations, often ending in violence. The ICRC stepped up its medical assistance to health facilities treating the wounded and its visits to detainees. Landmines remained a serious obstacle to self-sufficiency in rural areas and the ICRC continued to fit new amputees with artificial limbs.

Delegates based in New Delhi pursued visits to detainees held in connection with the situation in Jammu and Kashmir. The delegation also closely followed developments in India's troubled north-east. Work in Bangladesh focused on cooperation with the National Society, together with the Federation, monitoring of the situation in the Chittagong Hill Tracts and preparations to open an office in Dhaka. The signing of a new agreement with the Bhutanese authorities ensured the continuation of visits to detainees held for "anti-national activities". A similar agreement reached with the Nepalese government paved the way for visits to detainees which began in December.

The ICRC's delegation in Pakistan, particularly its sub-delegation in Peshawar, remained the logistic pivot for ICRC operations in Afghanistan. In Pakistan itself delegates worked to promote knowledge of and compliance with international humanitarian law among decision-makers and the armed forces. The delegation continued to support National Society health projects in Karachi and along the line of control, where an upsurge in violence forced thousands to flee. The recently displaced received assistance from the ICRC and the National Society.

ICRC delegates based in the Philippines continued to visit detainees held in connection with insurgency in the country and assisted civilians affected by the unrest, particularly in Mindanao. They also promoted knowledge of humanitarian law throughout the Pacific region and encouraged countries and autonomous territories to adopt national measures for the implementation of this body of international law. The peace process in Bougainville remained on track and thousands of displaced people and refugees returned to their homes.

The ICRC's delegation in the Far East, Bangkok, continued to focus on spreading knowledge of humanitarian law, securing the ratification of humanitarian treaties and having the law of armed conflict incorporated in national military training. Discussions were under way with the Chinese authorities with a view to visiting detainees. No progress was made in efforts to encourage the two Koreas to find a humanitarian solution to the plight of family members separated since the 1950-1953 Korean war.

# Indian sub-continent AFGHANISTAN



ICRC / ART 10.98

In 1998 the war-weary population of Afghanistan not only endured the direct and indirect consequences of 19 years of bitter conflict, but also suffered natural disasters. In February and May earthquakes shook remote villages in the north-eastern provinces of Badakhshan and Takhar. In coordination with the United Nations, NGOs, the Afghan Red Crescent Society and the Federation, the ICRC organized the evacuation of the seriously injured and launched a major relief operation. For the first time, the ICRC acted as lead agency in an International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement operation conducted in the context of a natural disaster in a war-torn country, in accordance with the 1997 Seville Agreement.

During the first six months of the year the front lines in the struggle between the largely Pashtun Taliban, representing the

*wavering front lines*

Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, and the United Islamic Front for Salvation of Afghanistan (UIFSA,<sup>3</sup> also referred to as the northern coalition), representing the Islamic State of Afghanistan, wavered with no significant gains on either side. Inter-factional tension and fighting within the coalition, particularly in Mazar-i-Sharif, was a major concern for the international aid community. Lack of respect for the red cross emblem and ICRC premises and personnel prompted the temporary evacuation of delegates and medical staff from the area.

*major offensive*

In July the Taliban launched a major offensive in the north, taking the towns of Maimana, Shibirghan and Mazar-i-Sharif within a few weeks. The domino effect resulted in the fall of the towns of Taloqan, Baghlan and Bama to the Kandahar-based movement. The Taliban were able to capture large parts of central and northern Afghanistan, thereby gaining control of almost 90% of the country.

<sup>3</sup> The UIFSA was mainly made up of the Jamiat-i-Islami, the Jumbesh and the two factions of the Hazara Hezb-i-Wahdat parties.

At year's end the coalition's counter-offensive enabled it to win back strategically important territory in Kunduz and Baghlan. Towns in Badakhshan and Takhar provinces, including Taloqan, fell to the northern coalition.

Allegations of violations of international humanitarian law by the warring parties were rife, particularly in Mazar-i-Sharif. This was a cause of grave concern for the ICRC, which repeatedly reminded both sides of their obligation to respect civilian life and property and to conduct hostilities according to the rules laid down in humanitarian law.

The Taliban's request that all international NGOs in Kabul relocate to the city's polytechnical college, together with an increasing number of restrictions placed on their work, led to the withdrawal of many aid workers. The missile attack by the United States on camps alleged to be run by Osama Ben Laden on 20 August fuelled anti-Western sentiments, which led to the killing of a UN military observer. The remaining NGOs and UN agencies subsequently withdrew their expatriate personnel. For a while, the ICRC and the Federation were the sole international humanitarian organizations present in the Afghan arena. Although some NGOs resumed work in Kabul towards the end of the year, the absence of other humanitarian players, particularly UN agencies, was a source of much concern to the ICRC, which feared repercussions on certain vulnerable categories of the population, especially children.

Despite the logistic constraints and other problems encountered in the ever-changing Afghan context, the ICRC was able to pursue its traditional activities on behalf of war victims. Delegates visited detainees held by all parties. They checked material and psychological conditions of detention and distributed essential items to protect the detainees from health hazards and the bitter Afghan winter. Reports containing the delegates' findings and recommendations were submitted to the relevant authorities. Between August and October the ICRC faced major difficulties in accomplishing its protection mandate. Delegates did not receive authorization from the Taliban authorities to visit those captured or arrested during the movement's latest offensive in the north and in the Bamyán region. Contact with ethnic minorities in and around Mazar-i-Sharif was also restricted. Following several approaches to the Taliban leadership, the ICRC was given the green light to resume its visits to Taliban-administered prisons as of mid-October.

The ICRC supervised the release of detainees held by both sides and offered logistic and financial support for their return home. It also acted as a neutral intermediary between Afghanistan and Iran in September and October by repatriating the mortal remains of eight Iranian diplomats and a journalist killed in Mazar-i-Sharif. The ICRC also assisted in the repatriation of 36 Iranian prisoners.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup> See p. 283.

### *ICRC concerned by UN and NGO absence*

### *visits to detainees*

*encouraging self-sufficiency*

With 80% of the Afghan population involved in farming, agricultural support remained of paramount importance and contributed significantly to food availability. The delegation continued its traditional agricultural programmes, such as tool production, establishment of fruit and vegetable nurseries, plant protection, the planting of trees, seed distribution and the rehabilitation of vital irrigation systems. To promote self-sufficiency and to prevent dependency on external aid, more food-for-work projects were launched in both rural and urban communities. These ranged from repairs to an irrigation system in the Shamali plain, one of the country's most fertile areas, to poultry projects for 60 vulnerable families in Kabul. Four ICRC-supported veterinary clinics in Kabul and the Panjshir valley treated animals and vaccinated them against common diseases. An anthrax spore vaccine was produced and used in the ICRC clinics, as well as in those of the FAO.\*

*two earthquakes hit the north-east*

The ICRC was the focal point for the provision of non-food assistance (food supplies were provided by WFP\*) to the victims of the two earthquakes in the north-east. The emergency operation was hampered by the remoteness of the region and severe weather conditions. Nevertheless, relief goods dispatched by truck from the ICRC's sub-delegations in Mazar-i-Sharif and Pul-i-Khumri and its delegation in Dushanbe, Tajikistan, reached the stricken area only a few days after the disaster. An ICRC-chartered Hercules aircraft flew in blankets, plastic sheeting, tents, cooking sets and soap from Peshawar, Pakistan. These supplies were then air-dropped near Rostaq, the epicentre of the February earthquake, and distributed to some 28,000 beneficiaries by means ranging from helicopters to caravans of donkeys. A similar programme was launched for the 60,000 people affected by the May earthquake, with many helicopters used to bring aid to people living in remote areas and to evacuate casualties whose injuries could not be treated on the spot.

*providing for the most vulnerable*

Although conditions in rural areas were often harsh and rudimentary, it was urban centres that suffered most from the effects of the seemingly never-ending conflict. Staple foods were not always readily available and spiralling prices put them out of reach for many Afghans. On average, a breadwinner's salary covered only 20% of the family's basic needs and up to 50% of the population was dependent on some form of external aid. The ICRC's relief programme in Kabul focused on 15,000 families<sup>5</sup> headed by widows and 10,000 others with disabled breadwinners. These vulnerable categories received regular two-monthly rations consisting of wheat flour, rice, beans, ghee and soap. An ICRC nutritionist conducted nutritional surveys in Red Crescent clinics and investigated the price and availability of food on the market so as to identify the city's most vulnerable groups in this respect.

<sup>5</sup> The average Afghan family numbers six.

\* FAO: Food and Agriculture Organization

\* WFP: World Food Programme



In view of the growing destitution of the capital's inhabitants and the absence of most humanitarian players from the scene, the ICRC carried out a limited winter distribution of blankets, clothes, plastic sheeting and fuel to families headed by widows or handicapped breadwinners, street children and orphans.

People displaced by the conflict could often take with them only the barest essentials for survival. Whenever possible, the ICRC took immediate steps to provide them with food, safe drinking water, medical care and adequate sanitary facilities. In 1997 the ICRC set up a camp on the outskirts of Herat for some 5,000 displaced people from Badghis province. To encourage these families to return to their homes, the ICRC launched a community-based assistance programme around Bala-Murghab, the region from which most of them had fled. Projects included the digging of wells, cleaning irrigation canals, distributing locally manufactured tools, handing out vegetable seeds and running a poultry project for households headed by women.

The toll taken by the war and the poor state of the medical infrastructure debilitated by 19 years of conflict again made health care a priority for the ICRC in 1998. The delegation continued its support for five major surgical facilities: the Karte Seh and Wazir Akbar Khan hospitals in Kabul, the Jalalabad Public Health Hospital, the Mirwais Hospital in Kandahar and Ghazni Hospital. The ICRC supplied these facilities with surgical material and medicines and covered the cost of maintenance, fuel and staff allowances. Basic rehabilitation work, such as repairs to windows, pipes and water pumps, was carried out on hospitals in Gulbahar, Kabul, Maimana, Mazar-i-Sharif, Pul-i-Khumri and Shibirghan. A dozen other health facilities, including the military hospitals in Kabul and Mazar-i-Sharif which treated the countless war-wounded in or near conflict zones, also received assistance. The ICRC endeavoured to ensure that all segments of the population had access to health care, especially women in Taliban-controlled areas. Delegates regularly visited health facilities near the front lines and provided first-aid material and training for locally run ambulance services and health centres.

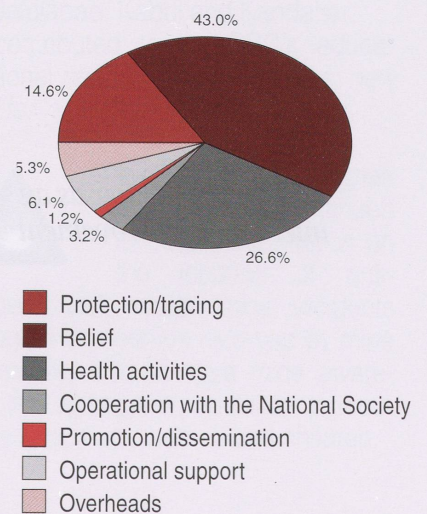
The delivery of supplies to hospitals in the Shamali plain and the Panjshir valley was hampered by the closure of access roads owing to the fighting. These medical facilities received provisions from ICRC stocks in the region until these were exhausted. The delegation then negotiated cross-line flights to Baghram airport from where the medical material and medicines were transported to hospitals treating the war-wounded.

The four ICRC prosthetic/orthotic centres in Herat, Jalalabad, Kabul and Mazar-i-Sharif kept up the production and fitting of artificial limbs for mine victims and other patients, including children affected by poliomyelitis. Following the withdrawal of several other organizations active in this domain, there was a slight increase in the demand for prosthetic/orthotic appliances. The building of an extension to the women's ward in Herat enabled the rehabilitation centre to treat

*care for the war-wounded*

## AFGHAN CONFLICT

Total expenditure in 1998:  
Sfr 53,042,080



*encouraging self-sufficiency*

*patients with spinal  
cord injuries*

*water supply and  
sanitation in Kabul*

*working together as an  
international Movement*

more female patients. Construction work had to be done on the Mazar-i-Sharif centre following the Taliban takeover so that it could again admit women amputees. Some 62% of the 214 Afghan staff in the ICRC centres are themselves disabled and 26 employees are women.

To measure the extent of the landmine problem in Afghanistan and to help prevent further loss of life and limb, the ICRC collated data relating to mine incidents gathered from the five ICRC-supported hospitals and the medical facility in Pul-i-Khumri. This work was extended to include additional health structures in Kabul, Badghis province, the Shamali plain and the Panjshir valley. The ICRC shared its findings with the Mine Action Centre for Afghanistan.<sup>6</sup>

The collapse of the health system had made it increasingly difficult for paraplegics to obtain adequate care, and during the year ICRC health delegates monitored the situation of such patients in Kabul, Kandahar and Jalalabad. The entirely ICRC-supported Karte Seh Hospital in the capital remained the major referral centre, receiving paraplegic patients from distant provinces. In a bid to improve service and reduce hospitalization and readmissions, a home-care service was offered to some 145 patients.

For those Kabulis who managed to escape the effects of shelling, poverty and hunger, water-borne diseases remained a deadly threat, particularly for the young and the elderly. In 1997 the ICRC launched an environmental project to improve and upgrade latrines, to build one well per 60 families, to organize the collection of night soil and to provide house-to-house health education. This programme proved most successful and was extended to cover four districts in 1998. Authorities at the neighbourhood and municipal level were encouraged to assume more responsibility by informing the general public about the proper use of latrines and by financing and organizing the maintenance of wells.

To improve the often poor sanitary conditions in places of detention, essential water and sanitation work was carried out, including the construction of latrines, repairs to hand pumps and the evacuation of refuse.

The ICRC's activities in Afghanistan could not have been carried out without the support of the Afghan Red Crescent Society, whose staff were closely involved in the ICRC's relief distributions to the most vulnerable. After the earthquakes which shook the north-east in February and May, it was the Afghan Red Crescent that was first on the spot to render vital medical and other assistance. National Society volunteers and staff also responded rapidly to the rocket attacks on Kabul in September and December, taking the wounded to hospital and collecting the dead.

The Afghan Red Crescent, with the ICRC's financial and technical support, carried out its own monthly distributions of food rations for needy people in

<sup>6</sup> This unit depends directly on the United Nations Organization for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs.

## IN 1998 THE ICRC:



– visited 9,075 detainees (5,273 for the first time) in 52 places of detention run by the Taliban

- and the northern coalition and distributed essential items such as blankets, clothes, soap and insulation material; during these visits the ICRC collected 13,376 Red Cross messages from detainees and distributed 4,799 in places of detention;
- assisted 2,857 detainees after their release by financing and organizing their return home;
- provided 54.8 tonnes of food and non-food relief to detainees;
- carried out water and sanitation work, including the construction of latrines, repairs to hand pumps and the evacuation of refuse, in 5 places of detention;



– forwarded 10,679 family messages from civilians and distributed 11,706 to civilians;

- reunited 84 members of dispersed families with their relatives;



– distributed 15,434 tonnes of food and 1,445 tonnes of other relief to a total of 29,000 particularly vulnerable Afghan families, some 25,000 of them in Kabul;

- distributed 758 tonnes of food and 950 tonnes of other relief to some 145,000 earthquake victims;

- organized the clearing and repair of 656 km of irrigation channels, thus allowing irrigation for 94,000 hectares of previously parched land and providing 818 tonnes of flour to families taking part in the food-for-work scheme;
- distributed vegetable seeds, seedlings and 36,000 locally produced agricultural implements to 15,000 families in 17 provinces;
- distributed 145.2 tonnes of seed;
- assisted a total of 16,200 farming families through its agricultural programme;



– fully supported 5 Afghan hospitals, which admitted a total of 23,885 people (3,861 of

whom were suffering from war-related injuries) and provided ad hoc support to more than a dozen other hospitals around the country;



– manufactured 4,235 prostheses and 3,986 orthoses, and fitted 4,333 newly disabled

people with such appliances, in 4 rehabilitation centres;



- constructed 13,500 latrines in Kabul;
- sunk 75 wells;
- conducted house-to-house health education in 4 districts of Kabul;



- provided a wide range of support to the headquarters, 4 regional offices and 26 provincial branches of the Afghan Red Crescent Society, for example by carrying out joint relief programmes, training staff in tracing and dissemination techniques and supporting Red Crescent clinics, 5 *marastoons* and social rehabilitation programmes;



– organized 284 dissemination events attended by over 10,000 people (students and teachers,

- the authorities, ICRC and ARCS staff as well as the military and other bearers of weapons);
- produced and broadcast a mini-drama in both Dari and Pashtu on the ICRC's activities, the Fundamental Principles and humanitarian law in Ghazni, Herat, Jalalabad, Kabul and Kandahar;
- contributed to the BBC's educational radio drama *New home, new life*;



- jointly with the Afghan Red Crescent, continued to collate information on the location of anti-personnel mines, mine incidents and the treatment received by mine victims, and to raise mine awareness among the population, particularly farmers, women and children.

Kabul, Herat, Jalalabad and Kandahar, and provided ad hoc assistance where needed. It also implemented food-for-work schemes, ranging from canal cleaning and refuse collection to the rehabilitation of a clinic and repairs to a dam. When the ICRC handed over the distribution of Red Cross messages in Kabul to the National Society, the latter was responsible for the distribution of family messages throughout the country. Its staff also supervised agricultural projects, located potential beneficiaries of the ICRC's limb-fitting programme and spread knowledge of humanitarian law.

Within the context of its most important cooperation programme in Asia, the ICRC helped to consolidate the structure and activities of the Afghan Red Crescent still further. Financial assistance was given to the vehicle workshop it was running. This was previously a project delegated to the British Red Cross, but in May full responsibility was handed over to the Afghan National Society. The delegation also continued to provide support to five *marastoons*<sup>7</sup> administered by the Afghan Red Crescent and catering for 445 destitute families. In addition, the ICRC gave financial assistance to Red Crescent mine-awareness teams.

To strengthen the National Society's management capacity and increase knowledge about the Movement, seminars on dissemination and restoring family links were given to its managerial staff and employees. Moreover, the ICRC and the Federation gave financial support to all Red Crescent branches and to the headquarters, covering its running costs and providing staff allowances.

*preventive action*

In an attempt to prevent future violations of humanitarian law and to pursue a proactive approach rather than a purely reactive one, the promotion of compliance with and respect for humanitarian law remained primordial. In Taliban-controlled areas, in addition to on-the-spot dissemination, the ICRC produced and broadcast a twice-weekly eight-minute radio drama serial entitled *Help*. The programme, which was transmitted in Dari and Pashtu by Radio Sharyat in several Taliban-controlled towns, aimed to present, in an original way, the ICRC's activities, the Fundamental Principles of the Movement and the basic tenets of humanitarian law. The ICRC also contributed to the BBC's\* educational radio serial *New home, new life*.

Dissemination of humanitarian law in the north, which included sessions held at checkpoints on major roads, was restricted by the volatile security situation.

National staff of the ICRC and the Federation received training to increase their knowledge of the Movement and to give them practical dissemination tools for their daily contacts. In addition, two workshops for field dissemination officers from Afghanistan were held in Peshawar, Pakistan, with a view to fine-tuning dissemination strategy, developing team spirit and sharing experiences.

<sup>7</sup> Homes for particularly disadvantaged people such as orphans and the mentally ill.

\* BBC: British Broadcasting Corporation

## PAKISTAN

The coalition government faced political and financial challenges in 1998 which further weakened the country's economic situation and created a breeding ground for social and political unrest. The nuclear tests conducted by Pakistan prompted the international community to impose economic sanctions on the country, thereby bringing it closer to the brink of bankruptcy.

Tensions flared in Karachi when the Mutahida Qaummi Movement walked out of the provincial government. The ICRC closely monitored protection issues in the city, where a state of emergency was declared and the provincial government was suspended in November. Elsewhere sectarian violence was on the increase and relations between Pakistan and Iran deteriorated further over developments in Afghanistan. In May and August shelling along the line of control dividing Kashmir forced thousands to flee their homes. Tens of thousands of displaced people from the Pakistan side took refuge in five camps in the interior. The ICRC provided many uprooted families with non-food assistance. Sanitary facilities were built in cooperation with the local authorities with a view to preventing the spread of disease in the camps, where the displaced will remain until the end of winter.

As in the past, the delegation in Pakistan was particularly active in supporting ICRC programmes in Afghanistan. The sub-delegation in Peshawar was the logistic pivot for operations in Afghanistan and for the arrival and departure of all expatriate staff and visitors. Two ICRC-chartered aircraft served the main destinations in Afghanistan, delivering relief and medical supplies and providing NGOs with the only means of transport, especially for security or medical evacuations. Medical and relief supplies were channelled through Peshawar, where the ICRC maintained a warehouse. The Peshawar office was actively involved in supplying assistance to the quake-hit area in the north-east of Afghanistan in February and May. The central medical purchasing unit in Peshawar procured all the medicines and medical material required for ICRC-assisted health facilities in Afghanistan.

The ICRC continued to support certain medical activities conducted by the Pakistan Red Crescent Society in Karachi and in the north along the line of control. At the request of the embassy of Kazakhstan, the ICRC, the National Society and the International Organization for Migration organized the transfer of 231 ethnic Kazakhs from Quetta to Islamabad; they were subsequently flown to Kazakhstan as part of a repatriation programme involving five countries. Together with the Federation, the ICRC backed the Pakistan Red Crescent's efforts to bring assistance to the victims of the floods in Makran in April.

The delegation continued to spread knowledge of humanitarian law within the country's armed forces, universities and Red Crescent Society. As part of its three-year dissemination programme launched in 1998, eight retired senior officers

*logistics base for Afghan operations*

*support to the Pakistan Red Crescent*

## IN 1998 THE ICRC:



- collected 879 Red Cross messages and distributed 2,464 family messages between civilians and issued ICRC travel documents for 705 beneficiaries;



- continued to use the sub-delegation in Peshawar as the logistic pivot for relief and medical operations in Afghanistan;  
- provided some 610 displaced families (some 3,820 beneficiaries) in the Jhelum and Neelum valleys with blankets and jerrycans;



- procured all medicines and medical supplies for ICRC-assisted health facilities in Afghanistan through its central medical purchasing unit in Peshawar;



- continued to support the mobile eye clinic run by the Pakistan Red Crescent Society in the northern territories and along the line of control;  
- financed 2 Red Crescent ambulances in Karachi and helped to ensure their efficient use in areas affected by tensions ;



- conducted lectures on the law of armed conflict at the four main military training institutions in Pakistan for some 750 officers ranging in rank from captain to lieutenant-colonel;  
- held a four-hour lecture on humanitarian law and the ICRC at the Pakistan Air Force War College for 47 senior officers attending a 1-year staff course;

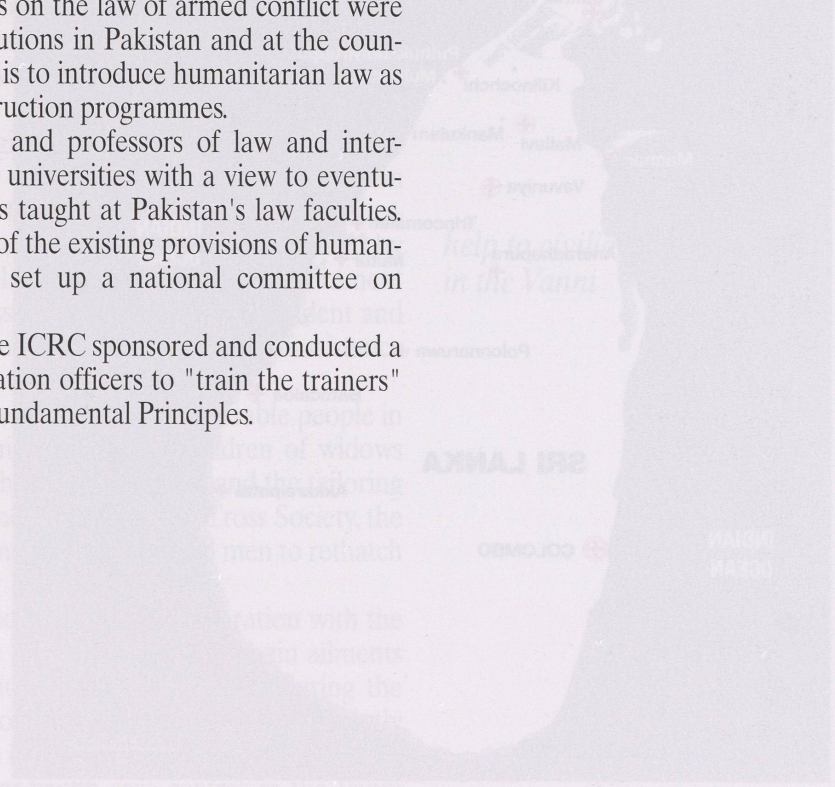
- gave a lecture to the International Relations Department of Peshawar University;  
- organized a training workshop in Islamabad for 11 professors of law and inter-national relations and provided the 11 faculties represented with reference material on humanitarian law.

appointed to assist the ICRC as lecturers received five days of intensive training in humanitarian law. For the first time, lectures on the law of armed conflict were given at the four main military training institutions in Pakistan and at the country's Air Force War College. The ultimate goal is to introduce humanitarian law as a permanent subject in Pakistan's military instruction programmes.

Similarly, lectures were given to students and professors of law and international relations at Peshawar and Islamabad universities with a view to eventually including humanitarian law in the courses taught at Pakistan's law faculties. A Pakistani legal adviser carried out a review of the existing provisions of humanitarian law in the country's legislation and set up a national committee on implementation.

In cooperation with the National Society, the ICRC sponsored and conducted a three-day seminar for Red Crescent dissemination officers to "train the trainers" on humanitarian law, the Movement and the Fundamental Principles.

*promoting humanitarian law*



## SRI LANKA

In 1998 Sri Lanka was once again in the grip of violence, which caused the death of countless LTTE\* combatants and government soldiers and further threatened the island's political and economic stability. Although relatively few civilians were directly affected by the battles raging in the north and the various skirmishes in the east, thousands found themselves caught up in a spiral of impoverishment, aggravated by lack of food security and restricted access to clean water and medical facilities.

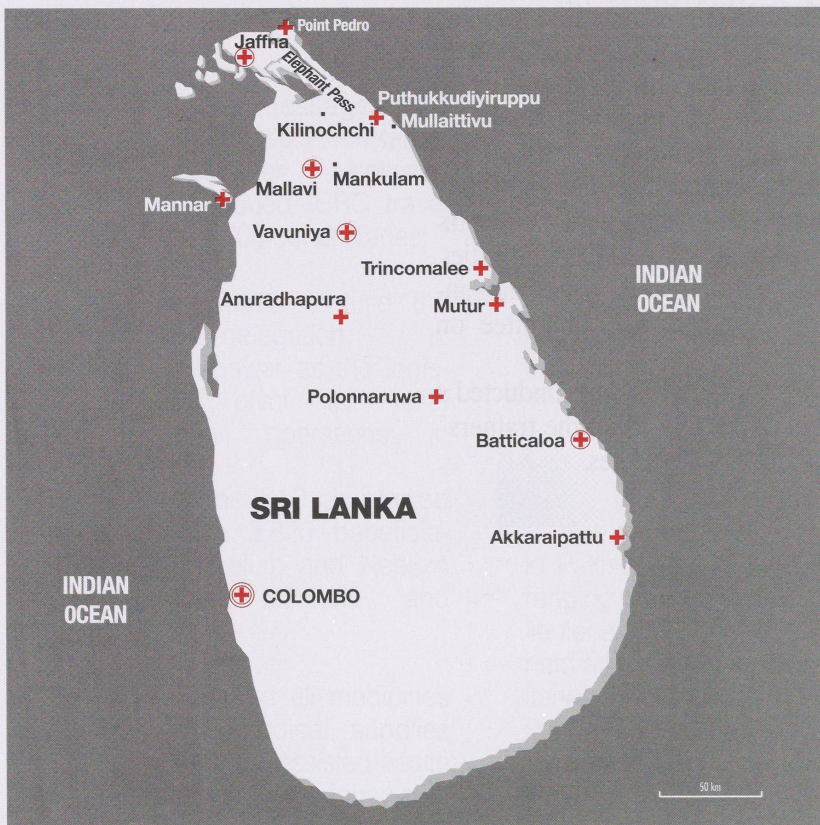
Government forces clashed with Tamil Tigers in a bid to capture the access road to the Jaffna peninsula. Fighting was fierce throughout the year, particularly in and around Elephant Pass, Paranthan, Kilinochchi and Mankulam. In September the LTTE launched an offensive on Kilinochchi and succeeded in recapturing the town. However, the cost in human lives was among the highest in a single battle since the beginning of the war. The army reciprocated by taking Mankulam. Soldiers took over the small town of Oddussuddan,

forcing more than 12,000 civilians to seek shelter further north, mainly in Puthukkudiyiruppu. The ICRC provided the newly displaced with emergency non-food supplies. Demand for the Red Cross message service increased sharply as people tried to re-establish contact with their relatives after having been separated as a result of the fighting.

Although both sides took steps to spare the civilian population whenever possible, a significant feature of this "no-mercy war" was the near absence of prisoners taken on the battlefield. The delegation repeatedly reminded the belligerents of the obligation to comply with the basic tenets of international humanitarian law governing the conduct of hostilities, and in particular of their duty to spare prisoners, the wounded and civilians.

*a no-mercy war*

\* LTTE: Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam



⊕ ICRC delegation    ⊕ ICRC sub-delegation    + ICRC office/local office

ICRC / AR 12.98



The conflict was not restricted to the north. The Sri Lankan capital and the Buddhist shrine of the Temple of the Tooth in Kandy were ravaged by bomb blasts. Civilians were also affected by low-intensity warfare in the east, particularly in the Batticaloa and Trincomalee districts where intercommunal violence was rife. In June the army regained control of the coastal stretch between Valachchenai and Vakarai, in the Batticaloa region.

Of the hundreds of thousands of people living in the Vanni – the region between Vavuniya and the Jaffna peninsula – three-quarters were displaced persons who had fled previous fighting in the north. Their plight was exacerbated by severe restrictions imposed on this LTTE-held area. Although the government provided the displaced with food and other essential items, both the resident and the displaced population was in dire need of non-food supplies, medical assistance and access to fully functioning water and sanitation systems.

The ICRC focused its assistance programmes on the most vulnerable people in the Vanni. The delegation supplied school uniforms for the children of widows with little or no income. The material was purchased in Colombo and the tailoring carried out in the Vanni. In cooperation with the Sri Lanka Red Cross Society, the ICRC implemented a food-for-work programme which employed men to rethatch roofs.

Ten mobile health clinics, run entirely by the ICRC or in cooperation with the National Society, provided medical care in the north and east. The main ailments treated were malaria, respiratory tract infections and skin diseases. During the course of the year the Canadian Red Cross took over six health teams run jointly by the ICRC and the Sri Lanka Red Cross as a delegated project.

The ICRC continued to support 27 primary health care centres in the Vanni and Mannar areas, which provided basic health care and health education for both the resident and the displaced population. This programme was also part of the project delegated to the Canadian Red Cross.

To combat the spread of water-borne disease, the ICRC kept up its water and sanitation projects in the Vanni. This included the construction and rehabilitation of wells, in particular work on the well of Mallavi Hospital, the only medical facility performing surgery in the region. The main problem encountered by the ICRC remained obtaining the authorities' permission to bring vital spare parts and equipment into the Vanni to install and repair wells.

In Jaffna the ICRC provided medical supplies to the Red Cross health team which was offering health care in the transit camp for returnees from the Vanni. Following the capture of Kilinochchi and the shooting down of a civilian aircraft just off the coast, the peninsula was virtually cut off from the rest of the country. The ICRC's weekly shuttle service between Trincomalee and Jaffna was increasingly in demand, as there was no other safe means for civilians to cross to the mainland. The ICRC-chartered vessel, the only independent link between the two

*help to civilians living  
in the Vanni*

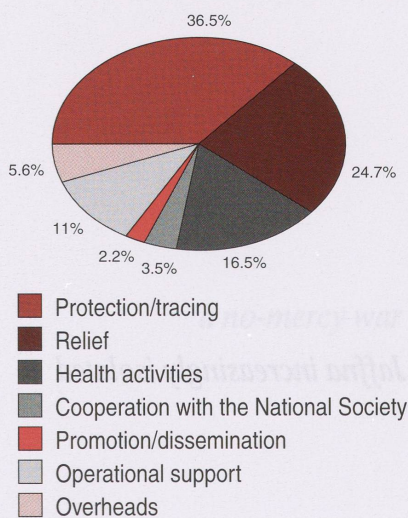
*Jaffna increasingly isolated*

*the Eastern Province*

*visits to detainees held by both parties*

**SRI LANKA**

Total expenditure in 1998:  
**Sfr 14,433,934**



regions, continued to transport patients with their relatives, personnel for essential services and ICRC, NGO and UN staff. In addition, the ship delivered supplies provided by the ICRC and other organizations active on the peninsula, medical items furnished by the government, and mail for the whole peninsula.

In the Eastern Province, a midwife from the Ministry of Health regularly joined the ICRC's mobile health team to offer antenatal consultations and vaccinations for pregnant women and children in potentially dangerous areas. A water and sanitation project in Batticaloa and Trincomalee districts was delegated to the Austrian Red Cross.

Work on the National Irrigation Rehabilitation Project, funded by the World Bank, was pursued with the active participation of the population concerned. The delegation acted as a neutral intermediary between the World Bank, the Irrigation Ministry, the Farmers' Association, irrigation workers and the LTTE and continued to monitor the sites on behalf of the World Bank.

ICRC delegates continued to visit detainees held by the warring parties in connection with the protracted conflict in Sri Lanka. The number of detainees in the centre and south of the country rose as a result of round-ups conducted after various bomb attacks. Written and oral representations were regularly made to the authorities concerned, reminding them of their obligation to guarantee the physical and moral integrity and to respect the dignity of all persons arrested, under interrogation and held in detention.

Once again, the ICRC acted as a neutral intermediary by supervising the release of a few detainees held by the LTTE and by handing over the mortal remains of soldiers and LTTE combatants to the authorities concerned in the north and east.

The promotion of humanitarian law was a priority in 1998, with delegates stepping up their efforts to spread knowledge of this body of law among officers of the different operational divisions of the armed forces. Ad hoc dissemination sessions were held at checkpoints and presentations were organized in conflict zones for soldiers, officers and members of Tamil paramilitary groups. The delegation also conducted programmes for other target groups, such as local and regional administrators, teachers and students. With a view to having measures to implement international humanitarian law incorporated in national legislation, the ICRC worked with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to assemble a number of key ministries for an information seminar on the setting-up of a national committee on humanitarian law.

A newsletter on ICRC activities published every two months in both Sinhalese and Tamil was distributed to a wide range of decision-makers in politics, the media, the civil service, academic circles and the security forces.

Cooperation between the Sri Lanka Red Cross and the ICRC continued in key areas at national, local and operational levels. The delegation supported the

## IN 1998 THE ICRC:



- visited 3,133 detainees (2,318 for the first time) in 168 government-run places of detention, including 58 persons held in connection with the 1987-1990 uprising by the Janatha Vimukti Peramuna party, the Sinhalese opposition;
- visited 70 detainees held by the LTTE;
- supervised the release under its auspices of 49 detainees;
- transported the mortal remains of 1,014 soldiers and LTTE combatants;
- collected 2,280 Red Cross messages from detainees and delivered 2,432 such messages to detainees;
- issued 393 detention certificates;

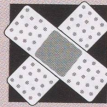


- organized family reunification for 20 isolated persons, mostly by escorting them out of conflict zones to areas where relatives were living;
- opened 1,158 tracing files;
- resolved 792 cases;
- collected 2,497 Red Cross messages and delivered 5,455 such messages between individual civilians and their families;



- distributed plastic sheeting, soap, cooking utensils, bedding, clothing and other relief items to 4,190 particularly vulnerable families in the Vanni;

- produced 10,600 school kits for the offspring of widows with little or no income living in the Vanni;
- shipped to the north medical supplies provided by the government and logistic equipment for various NGOs;



- transported 630 people requiring specialized medical treatment from the Jaffna peninsula to the south;
- furnished the medical supplies needed to run 10 mobile health teams and 27 primary health-care centres treating some 30,000 patients a month in the Vanni and the Eastern Province;



- provided pipes, pumps, chemicals and other materials for 75 water-supply systems and sanitation projects, whether for new wells or carrying out repairs on existing systems, mainly in the Vanni and in the Eastern Province;



- provided services to civilians affected by the ongoing conflict by giving financial support to the Batticaloa branch of the Sri Lanka Red Cross, which distributed assistance to hospital patients;
- provided support for the Batticaloa and Vavuniya branches, which evacuated seriously ill or war-wounded civilians;

- assisted the Trincomalee branch's mobile dental clinic;
- provided medical services for returnees at Gurunagar camp in cooperation with the Jaffna Red Cross branch;
- implemented a training programme for National Society medical personnel and volunteers in cooperation with the Canadian Red Cross;



- held dissemination sessions in the field for 6,372 members of the armed and security forces, 2,074 government soldiers, 4,833 members of the general public, the media and schools, 30 LTTE combatants and more than 500 members of Tamil paramilitary groups.

*working at various levels*

National Society's efforts aimed at having a draft law (the Red Cross Act) adopted, which would give it official status through the 1980-1981 Sri Lanka Social Services Act. Operational support was also provided at the national level for the restoration of family links and dissemination projects.

As the Federation re-established its presence in Sri Lanka in 1998, discussions between the members of the Movement focused on the possible handover of key elements of the ICRC's initiatives in the area of institutional development.

## NEW DELHI

### Regional delegation (Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives and Nepal)

In early 1998 the coalition of 18 parties led by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) came to power in India. Almost half of the seats in the Lok Sabha (House of Representatives) were allocated to parties with essentially local or regional support bases. This was a further reflection of the country's cultural, political and religious diversity, which is a source of tension in many Indian states. Owing to the country's huge domestic market, the Asian economic crisis had little impact on India. However, the nuclear tests carried out by both India and Pakistan heightened tension between the two neighbours and led to the imposition of sanctions by the international community. Military operations intensified along the line of control dividing Kashmir, claiming scores of civilian and military lives and causing local inhabitants to temporarily flee the conflict zone. Sporadic armed clashes continued in the north-east, in areas such as Assam, Manipur and Nagaland, despite efforts to find a peaceful settlement. The ICRC kept a close eye on the situation and remained ready to offer its services.

Delegates pursued their visits to people arrested in connection with the situation prevailing in Jammu and Kashmir. Detention teams visited detainees held in police lock-ups, sub-jails and jails in this state and elsewhere in the country. They checked the detainees' material and psychological conditions of detention and offered them the possibility to exchange Red Cross messages with their families. Following the visits the ICRC's findings and recommendations were reported to the authorities concerned. Specific issues were taken up with the higher authorities in Jammu and Kashmir and with the Home Ministry in New Delhi. Furthermore, a round-table discussion on compliance with the Memorandum of Understanding, which sets out the criteria for ICRC visits to persons detained in connection with the situation in Jammu and Kashmir, was held in New Delhi in October. This meeting gave the ICRC an opportunity to discuss in detail certain aspects of its procedures relating to detention work and to review the prevailing situation in prisons and other detention centres with officials of the Union government and of Jammu and Kashmir state.

The ICRC took steps to help the Indian Red Cross Society train its staff to work in potentially violent contexts. The National Society has some 8.5 million volunteers countrywide. During disaster-preparedness workshops held in states experiencing communal tension, the delegation introduced a dissemination component designed to promote respect for the National Society and basic humanitarian rules. Discussions also focused on operations to be undertaken by Red Cross

#### *Jammu and Kashmir*

*working at various levels*

branches in times of internal strife. In December delegates carried out a survey, together with the Assam branch, to identify potential areas for cooperation in dissemination and first-aid activities in this north-eastern state.

The delegation established contact with key academics with a view to including courses on humanitarian law in universities, encouraging research and training teachers.

ICRC delegates held dissemination sessions for all ranks of the Indian armed and security forces. In July the ICRC carried out a two-day training programme at the Indian naval base in Goa. This was the first time an Indian naval training establishment had been briefed on the principles governing war at sea.

### *Chittagong Hill Tracts*

In Bangladesh, the peace accord signed in December 1997 between the government and the Parbatya Chattagram Jana Sanghati Samity allowed for the return of the remaining Chakma, Marma and Tripura tribals from India to the Chittagong Hill Tracts. The situation in the region remained calm and the returnees were able to settle without too much hardship. Together with the Bangladesh Red Crescent Society, the ICRC set up a dissemination campaign in the Hill Tracts.

### *visits to detainees in Bhutan and Nepal*

The eleventh and twelfth rounds of ICRC visits to detainees in Bhutan were carried out in March and September respectively in accordance with standard ICRC procedures. Messages collected during a mission to the Jhapa district of eastern Nepal, where a number of Nepali-speaking Bhutanese refugees are living in seven camps, were distributed to their relatives detained in Bhutan and new messages were collected from the detainees. The Memorandum of Understanding with the Royal Bhutanese government, setting out the terms and conditions for prison visits, was renewed in September for another five years.

The Maoist insurgency in Nepal affected about 15 of the country's 75 districts. In December the ICRC began visiting security detainees arrested in connection with the internal disturbances. Delegates registered detainees held in three jails in the Himalayan foothills, in one of the poorest regions of Nepal where road conditions are difficult and telecommunications almost non-existent. Following the authorization received in 1998, the ICRC will visit an additional 20 to 30 places of detention during the coming months.

## IN 1998 THE ICRC:



- in India, visited 1,746 detainees (752 for the first time) being held in 27 places of detention in connection with the situation in Jammu and Kashmir; during these visits the delegates collected 344 Red Cross messages addressed to family members and distributed 88 to detainees;
- held a medical seminar with 22 senior officials of the prison authorities in Jammu on humanitarian law and the ICRC's detention activities in the Jammu and Kashmir region;
- brought together some 30 prison service officials and doctors working in detention centres in Jammu for a seminar focusing on health and medical ethics in relation to persons arrested and detained and the effects of violence on the civilian population;
- in Bhutan, visited 188 detainees held in 2 places of detention; during the visits delegates collected 333 family messages addressed to relatives and distributed 70 to detainees;
- in Nepal, registered 99 detainees held in 3 places of detention;



- issued ICRC travel documents for 706 beneficiaries;



- pursued its "train-the-trainers" programme with 1-day dissemination courses for staff of the Indian Red Cross;

- held 8 emergency preparedness workshops for over 250 senior staff members of the 31 state and Union Territory branches of the Indian Red Cross;
- organized 3 tracing workshops for 70 representatives of the Indian Red Cross in 17 of the 31 state and Union Territories;
- organized 3 training workshops on tracing and dissemination with the Bangladesh Red Crescent Society;
- held, with the Nepal Red Cross Society, a 2-day national training course on dissemination;



- organized events to promote knowledge of and compliance with humanitarian law for over 900 officers of the Border Security Force, the Indian Air Force, the Indian-Tibetan Police, the Navy and Coastguards, the military police, the Central Reserve Police Force, the Central Bureau of investigation, the New Delhi police and the Andhra and Madhya Pradesh police forces;
- organized a meeting of experts, together with the Association of Indian Universities, to prepare a model syllabus in which humanitarian law features as part of a broader programme on human rights and international law, and held dissemination sessions for professors of law from different parts of India;

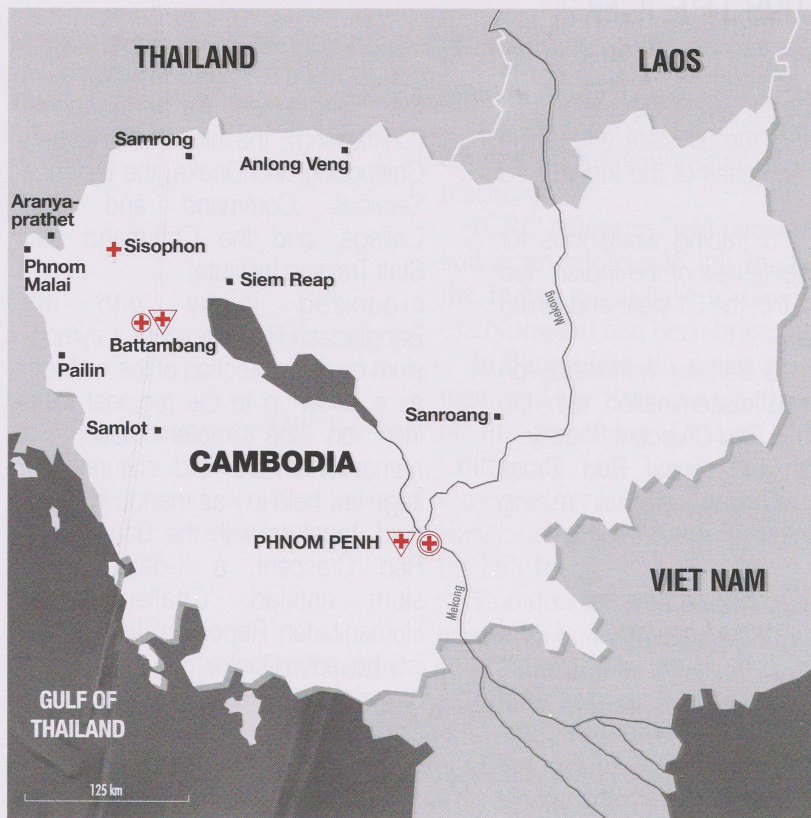
- conducted dissemination sessions at the Bangladesh Naval Academy (Chittagong), the air force bases in Chittagong and Dhaka, the Defence Services Command and Staff College, and the Command and Staff Training Institute;
- organized jointly with the Bangladesh Red Crescent a symposium on the protection of the emblem as a follow-up to the regional seminar on the implementation of humanitarian law and cultural heritage law held in Kathmandu in 1997;
- held, together with the Bangladesh Red Crescent, a 1-day symposium entitled "Challenges of Humanitarian Reporting" for journalists based in Dhaka;
- organized a course at the Royal Nepalese Army Staff College for 68 officers of the Nepalese army;
- gave talks to 795 Nepalese officers and men at the Royal Nepalese Army Headquarters;



- took part in the Second National Conference on banning anti-personnel landmines, held in the Indian state of Manipur in March;
- organized, together with the Indian Centre for Humanitarian Law and Research, a national panel discussion on anti-personnel landmines in Hyderabad.

# South-East Asia and the Far East

## CAMBODIA



In 1998 Cambodia oscillated between unstable peace, internal unrest and armed conflict sparked by factional disputes. Although little occurred on the military front, the forces loyal to Prince Ranariddh opposed those of Hun Sen in O'Smach and Samlot. However, both sides remained entrenched in their positions. The Kingdom did see sweeping political changes with the Khmer Rouge on the verge of collapse and the first post-UNTAC\* elections.

In March the former First Prime Minister, who had been forcibly ousted from power in July 1997, was tried and sentenced but subsequently granted a royal amnesty. The defection of a high-ranking Khmer Rouge commander based in Anlong Veng led to the final takeover of this Khmer Rouge stronghold by defectors backed by government forces. These military operations

caused thousands of civilians to flee to Thailand's Si Sa Ket province, where a refugee camp was set up.<sup>8</sup> Others fled southwards to Siem Reap province, where the Cambodian Red Cross and the WFP took care of their material needs. In mid-April images of the deceased Pol Pot were beamed around the world. More Khmer Rouge leaders switched sides under the umbrella of Ieng Sary in Pailin and thousands of the movement's former fighters were welcomed by the government in an integration ceremony held in Anlong Veng.

In July some 94% of Cambodia's registered voters, including for the first time electors in Pailin, returned three main parties to power: the Cambodian People's Party, FUNCINPEC\* and the Sam Rangsai Party. Opposition dissent regarding the

### *Khmer Rouge defections*

<sup>8</sup> See pp. 184-185.

\* UNTAC: United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia

\* FUNCINPEC: United National Front for an Independent, Neutral, Peaceful and Cooperative Cambodia



legality of the poll led to street protests, demonstrations and the setting-up of a "democracy camp" outside the National Assembly building. In September the capital saw a rapid escalation of violence between protesters and various branches of the police. The delegation made back-up ambulance services available to supplement those run by the French Red Cross from Calmette Hospital. In view of the clashes, the ICRC also distributed assistance to medical facilities and increased its detention-related activities.

By year's end an agreement had been reached whereby Hun Sen became the sole Prime Minister and Prince Ranariddh the Chairman of the National Assembly, and discussions were being held regarding the membership of the Senate. In December the last Khmer Rouge diehards "surrendered" to the government in Pailin. Although the way now seemed clear for a final end to hostilities in Cambodia, many problems remained unresolved.

Civilians in Cambodia were exposed not only to the direct and indirect consequences of the long drawn-out conflict but also to banditry, abductions and the effects of widespread corruption. To see that the civilian population was being treated in accordance with the rules laid down in international humanitarian law, the ICRC carried out regular field trips to villages in troubled areas. Delegates were able to make their first trip to the Samrong area in western Siem Reap province since 1995, when the ICRC withdrew from the area, to resume dissemination and tracing work and to locate amputees requiring artificial limbs.

The ICRC continued its regular visits to all 25 prisons in the Kingdom. Following the signature of a Memorandum of Understanding in March, the ICRC also visited *Gendarmerie royale* police stations, military camps and detention centres in Phnom Malai. Delegates checked on the material and psychological conditions of detention, informed the relevant authorities of their findings and distributed material assistance. All detainees were given the opportunity to restore or maintain family links through the Red Cross message service.

As the normal postal system in Cambodia was not yet up and running, family messages were exchanged not only between detainees and their relatives but also between civilians within and outside Cambodia. The processing of requests to locate missing relatives was often successful, sometimes after a separation of more than ten years. This work was conducted in cooperation with the Cambodian Red Cross.

In the wake of armed clashes in the north, the ICRC provided the military hospitals in Battambang, Banteay Meanchey and Siem Reap provinces with material assistance. The ICRC also supplied other health facilities treating the war-wounded, including civilians caught in crossfire and people of Vietnamese origin who had fallen victim to ethnically-motivated attacks. During the three-day riots in Phnom Penh, the ICRC had three ambulances on standby to evacuate the wounded, and trained personnel were available round the clock to respond to

*visits to detainees*

*reuniting families after 10 years' separation*

*caring for the wounded*

emergencies. Assistance in the form of dispensary and dressing sets was given to local NGOs treating the injured. The ICRC also visited some hospitals to identify patients for tracing purposes.

Sadly Cambodia is often one of the examples used to illustrate the scourge of anti-personnel mines, the toll they take in human lives and the damage they cause to the fabric of society. Of the 28,000 amputees in the country, some 95% are victims of landmines. The ICRC's prosthetic/orthotic centres in Battambang and Phnom Penh continued to produce artificial limbs and to fit and rehabilitate amputees, many of them from the newly accessible areas in the north-west. The workshop in the Cambodian capital, opened in 1991, also manufactured components that were supplied to various NGOs engaged in prosthetics. On Mine Awareness Day, an annual event in Cambodia since 1995, a five-minute radio spot produced by the ICRC on the Ottawa treaty<sup>9</sup> and mine awareness was broadcast on one national and four local radio stations. The ICRC took an active part in other events, including the 1998 Angkor Wat Half-Marathon aimed at raising awareness of the mines issue and generating funds for mine victims.

The ICRC worked closely with the Cambodian Red Cross in projects ranging from locating potential beneficiaries of the programme for the war-disabled to restoring family links and promoting humanitarian law among various target groups, such as the National Society itself, teachers, the police and military officers.

The ICRC-sponsored lectures on humanitarian law for fourth-year law students continued, but were reduced during the second semester owing to difficulties at the Phnom Penh University.

The delegation implemented a two-pronged dissemination strategy to strengthen cooperation with the RCAF\* training directorate and to support the RCAF's own efforts to spread knowledge of humanitarian law among its troops. ICRC-trained instructors gave presentations to army officers and men, the ICRC dissemination officer's contribution being limited to presenting the ICRC's mandate and activities and monitoring the sessions. For the first time, sessions were held in Pailin and in the north-eastern province of Ratanakiri.

In order to help the National Society spread knowledge of the Red Cross principles, dissemination sessions were jointly organized by the ICRC and the Cambodian Red Cross in various provinces, including the Special Municipality of Pailin. These sessions targeted the civilian authorities, police and military officers, government employees, teachers and Red Cross staff.

<sup>9</sup> See pp. 319-321.

\* RCAF: Royal Cambodian Armed Forces

### *a mine-infested land*

### *promoting humanitarian law among troops*

### *working with the Cambodian Red Cross*

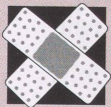
IN 1998 THE ICRC:



- visited 107 detainees held in 46 places of detention and provided them with material aid as needed consisting of soap, washing powder, toothbrushes and toothpaste, as well as *khramas* (traditional Khmer cloth), mats, mosquito nets, blankets and some recreational items;
- carried out water and sanitation rehabilitation work in 17 detention centres;
- collected 5,605 family messages from detainees for their relatives and distributed 4,763 in places of detention;



- opened 336 tracing files, resolved 130 cases;
- collected 10,088 Red Cross messages from the civilian population and distributed 10,138;



- took measures, in cooperation with the Cambodian Red Cross, to recruit blood donors until the National Society's withdrawal from the project;
- distributed medical assistance in the form of basic dressings, infusions and analgesics to 3 health facilities treating the war-wounded;



- fitted 1,032 amputees with prostheses, 954 of whom were mine victims;
- fitted 89 people with orthoses;
- manufactured 1,521 knee joints, 8,048 alignment devices and 1,610 orthotic sidebars for other organizations;



- organized, in cooperation with the Cambodian Red Cross, a seminar on dissemination and capacity-building for 31 Red Cross officers and branch directors from 10 provinces;
- conducted joint dissemination sessions in the provinces of Battambang, Pursat, Siem Reap, Kompong Thom, Kompong Speu, Banteay Meanchey, Prey Veng, Phnom Penh and the Special Municipality of Pailin;



- organized 148 dissemination presentations attended by 4,241 members of the armed forces and 2,180 government officials, civilians and Red Cross members;



- took an active part in Mine Awareness Day (24 February);
- produced a radio spot, placed newspaper advertisements on the campaign for a total ban on anti-personnel mines and sponsored the production of banners displayed throughout the country.

## BANGKOK

### Regional delegation

(People's Republic of China, Japan, Laos, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Republic of Korea, Macao, Mongolia, Taiwan, Thailand, Viet Nam)

The main thrust of the regional delegation's activities in 1998 remained the promotion of international humanitarian law among key groups, efforts to secure the ratification of humanitarian treaties and the incorporation of the law of armed conflict in national military training. Cooperation between the ICRC and the National Societies in the region focused on dissemination and restoring family links. High-level meetings were held with the Chinese and Thai military authorities with a view to intensifying dissemination activities.

#### *ICRC presence on Thai-Cambodian border*

In the first quarter of the year a delegate was temporarily stationed in Thailand to assess the humanitarian needs of the estimated 70,000 Khmer refugees living in four camps along the Thai-Cambodian border. Thanks to the ICRC's tracing and mailing services, many refugees received reassuring news of relatives who had returned to Cambodia and also decided to go back to their homeland. For some this was the first opportunity to contact their families in Cambodia in over ten years. By the end of the year some 30,000 refugees had returned to their places of origin. In addition, the regional delegation provided medical assistance to Thai hospitals treating Khmer war-wounded.

The regional delegation monitored the situation of the approximately 100,000 refugees from Myanmar living in camps along the Thai-Myanmar border by maintaining contact with the Thai authorities, UNHCR and NGOs operating in the area.

#### *joint projects with Chinese National Society*

In response to the recent rapid development of the Red Cross Society of China (RCSC) – the National Society now counts 47 regional sections and is present in all 2,562 districts with some 23 million members – the ICRC concentrated its efforts on joint ICRC/RCSC projects. These included spreading knowledge of humanitarian law by means of a three-year "train-the-trainers" programme launched in 1998 and preparation of a training manual, the promotion of the Fundamental Principles within the National Society and the restoration of family links within and outside the People's Republic of China.

The first phase of the "train-the-trainers" programme involved the organization, in cooperation with the RCSC, of the first national training workshop for 80 RCSC managerial staff from 29 Chinese provinces, municipalities and regions and from Macao. This six-day event was held in Leshan (Sichuan province) in

## IN 1998 THE ICRC:



- collected 1,003 Red Cross messages from Khmer refugees in Thailand for forwarding to their relatives in Cambodia and distributed 780 messages received from Cambodia;



- manufactured, at its prosthetic/orthotic centre in Ho Chi Minh City, 1,929 artificial limbs (including 432 for destitute amputees);



- held the first "train-the-trainers" session with the youth department of the Thai Red Cross Society in April, followed by a 3-day workshop;
- took part in a RCSC youth camp which brought together 120 Red Cross members from Guangzhou, Zhuhai, Shenzhen, Hong Kong and Macao;
- participated in a HELP (Health Emergencies in Large Populations) course organized jointly with the Hong Kong Red Cross branch;
- took part in a training course organized by the Japanese Red Cross Society for 35 members of local branches and teachers in nursing colleges and another held to prepare 24 staff from the National Society for international assignments;

- conducted a dissemination workshop, in cooperation with the Federation, on the Red Cross/Red Crescent Movement and humanitarian law for 30 leaders of the Red Cross Society of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea;

- took part, together with a Federation resource person, in a basic training course held in Seoul, Republic of Korea, for National Society delegates to be deployed abroad;



- in conjunction with UNHCR, organized a workshop on humanitarian law and refugee law in the Thai capital for 30 participants from government departments and NGOs;
- carried out a 1-day presentation on humanitarian law for 306 senior officers and cadets from three Thai naval academies;
- gave a presentation on the ICRC's mandate and activities at a seminar on peace-keeping operations organized jointly by the Australian Defence Force and the Royal Thai Armed Forces, and briefed a group of Thai police officers before they joined the UN peace-keeping operation in Bosnia-Herzegovina;

- published a document entitled *International Rules of Warfare and Command Responsibility*, which was based on the proceedings of the regional seminar on humanitarian law held in Bangkok in November 1997 for representatives from 15 countries; some 1,200 copies were distributed to Ministries of Defence and Foreign Affairs, universities, military academies and the various institutes of strategic studies and National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies in the region;
- organized, together with the Macao Red Cross branch, a seminar for 18 dissemination officers from 14 countries in the region;
- organized a workshop for 18 Mongolian instructors in the law of armed conflict and translated teaching aids into the national language;
- sponsored the participation of members of the Chinese People's Liberation Army in the 72nd International Military Course on the Law of Armed Conflict held in San Remo, Italy.
- held workshops, in cooperation with the Lao Red Cross, on the Red Cross and humanitarian law for students at the National Institute for Administration and Management and the Vientiane University Faculty of Law;

*workshops in Mongolia*

*programme for  
the war-disabled*

December and focused on the Red Cross/Red Crescent Movement and humanitarian law. The participants were then provided with teaching manuals, methods and presentation techniques to enable them to pass on their knowledge to members of their own branches and to various other target groups.

As agreed upon in 1997,<sup>10</sup> discussions on the expansion of ICRC activities to include visits to detainees in China were conducted through the regional delegation.

As in the past, the ICRC offered its technical support in connection with the humanitarian problems encountered by families split up since the 1950-1953 Korean war.

For the first time a three-day workshop on the Red Cross/Red Crescent Movement, humanitarian law and the media was held for 25 Mongolian media representatives in Ulan Bator. This event was organized jointly by the ICRC, the Mongolian Red Cross Society and the Press Institute of Mongolia. The first workshop for instructors in the law of armed conflict took place over four days in September at the headquarters of the General Staff of the armed forces in the Mongolian capital.

In April an expatriate prosthetic/orthotic technician began a one-year mission in Viet Nam with the objective of improving the quality and increasing production of artificial limbs manufactured in the ICRC-supported centre in Ho Chi Minh City, and introducing polypropylene prostheses in the government-run rehabilitation centres of Da Nang, Quy Nhon and Can Tho. The ICRC's Special Fund for the Disabled continued to cover the cost of producing and fitting prostheses for destitute amputees not eligible for government support.

In November an ICRC delegation led by the organization's Vice-President took part in the Fifth Asia and Pacific Regional Conference of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies. This event was organized jointly in Hanoi by the Federation and the Red Cross of Viet Nam.

<sup>10</sup> See the ICRC's 1997 Annual Report, p. 168.

## JAKARTA

### Regional delegation

(Brunei Darussalam, Indonesia/East Timor, Malaysia, Myanmar, Singapore)

The year under review will surely be described as a tumultuous year for Indonesia, with food shortages and spiralling prices triggering unrest and the popular demand for political and economic reform leading to widespread violent demonstrations and the resignation of the country's longstanding President. Against the backdrop of a devastated economy, the hardest hit by the Asian stock market crash, more than 30 Indonesian cities were rocked by social unrest. Medan in Sumatra and Solo and Jakarta in Central Java were the worst affected, but towns in Aceh, Irian Jaya and East Timor also saw mass demonstrations. In addition to the enormous material damage, the death toll in the capital alone reached 1,300 in mid-May, following two days of uncontrolled rioting and looting.

The ICRC's medical and relief operation launched in December 1997 in drought-stricken Irian Jaya continued until July. Despite logistic constraints and bad weather conditions, the ICRC, in conjunction with the Indonesian Red Cross Society (PMI), distributed food to people living in the Mimika Regency. Medical assistance was given to some villagers on the spot while the seriously ill were evacuated to hospitals in Tembagapura or Timika. Cases of malaria were treated and malaria-control measures were taken at the community level. In some villages the incidence of this mosquito-borne disease dropped from 80% to a mere 10%.

The Red Cross operation in the Baliem valley was carried out in coordination with other humanitarian players in the region. The ICRC/PMI team focused on assessing needs, fine-tuning assistance and carrying out micro-distributions from places where food had been stocked. As in the Mimika Regency, seed distributions were carried out to help the local population regain its self-sufficiency. A medical and agricultural survey of villages bordering Papua New Guinea found that the Irianese in this jungle region had adequate food supplies and needed no aid. As there were no longer any pressing needs, the ICRC phased out its operations in Irian Jaya in July.

Clashes occurred in Biak, Jayapura, Manokwari and Sorong when the security forces forcibly dispersed students demanding independence for Irian Jaya.

Following the expulsion of several hundred Acehnese from Malaysia in March, the authorities agreed to allow the ICRC to resume activities in Aceh province after a hiatus of over a year. In May the ICRC began assessing the situation of some 500 returnees. An ICRC delegate based in Lhokseumawe worked closely

*nutritional situation improves  
in Irian Jaya*

*ICRC resumes work in Aceh*

with PMI staff. The seriously ill or wounded were followed up by the ICRC and a PMI nurse and medical assistance was provided where necessary. Moreover, visits were conducted to military camps and police stations in East Aceh, North Aceh and Pidie districts.

In December the ICRC launched an assistance programme for victims of violence in the region in cooperation with the Indonesian Red Cross. Widows, the disabled and orphans are slated to receive family food parcels and/or school supplies.

*medical supplies given to  
National Society*

In view of the social unrest throughout Indonesia, the ICRC placed medicines and other medical supplies at the National Society's disposal. Red Cross volunteers were actively involved in the evacuation of students wounded in demonstrations and the provision of assistance to people who had been trapped in burning buildings during the looting in the capital.

The ICRC office in East Timor built up a stock of emergency medical supplies in response to the potential influx of wounded following the demonstrations in Dili and continued to monitor the food situation in villages affected by the drought resulting from the *El Niño* phenomenon.

*checking conditions of  
detainees*

As in the past, the ICRC continued to visit places of detention in various parts of Indonesia. Working with the PMI, delegates provided material and medical assistance where necessary, enabled detainees to contact or remain in touch with their relatives and organized family visits to Irianese and East Timorese detainees being held far from their homes. The ICRC also followed up individual medical cases and in certain instances provided financial assistance for their hospitalization.

The ICRC conducted its regular visits to detainees in East Timor in accordance with standard ICRC procedures and with the cooperation of the authorities concerned. Visits were also carried out to detainees receiving medical treatment in Dili's military and civilian hospitals.

*health promotion and water  
and sanitation in East Timor*

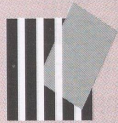
The ICRC/PMI water and sanitation teams in East Timor pursued projects that ranged from the sinking of individual wells to the building of large distribution networks. National Society staff assisted by an expatriate health delegate continued the health-promotion programme with the focus on malaria, vaccinations and the prevention of diarrhoea. The delegate also treated Timorese living in remote areas for skin and intestinal parasites. Red Cross staff took advantage of their presence in remote parts of the territory to promote knowledge of humanitarian law among local people.

*restoring and maintaining  
family links*

As in previous years, and because Portugal has no diplomatic representation in Indonesia, the ICRC issued travel documents and made arrangements for the transfer to Portugal of East Timorese who had sought asylum at foreign embassies in Jakarta, as well as former civil servants in the Portuguese colonial administration. The delegation also organized a number of family reunifications. In addition, delegates forwarded Red Cross messages between Timorese in East Timor and relatives living elsewhere.



## IN 1998 THE ICRC:



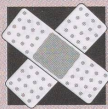
- visited 107 detainees (54 of them for the first time) in 19 places of detention in Indonesia and 253 detainees (89 of them for the first time) being held in 37 places of detention in connection with the situation in East Timor;
- financed family visits to 79 detainees;
- organized a seminar in Yangon on health matters, particularly tuberculosis, in detention centres for 20 prison doctors from various provinces and townships; this event, which was also attended by the Deputy Director of Prisons, focused on how the ICRC functions, the role of the prison doctor and how ICRC prison visits are carried out;



- issued 35 travel documents;
- organized the transfer to Portugal of 34 East Timorese;
- collected 96 Red Cross messages and forwarded 72 in connection with East Timor;



- distributed 668 tonnes of food, consisting of high-protein biscuits, rice, beans, oil and salt, to 30,000 beneficiaries in 56 villages in Irian Jaya and handed out 1.5 tonnes of seed to the local population in the two regions most severely affected by the drought;



- carried out regular visits to promote health in 37 remote villages in East Timor;
- treated people living in 39 villages in Irian Jaya for malaria and provided medical supplies to the drought-stricken population;
- provided medical consultations and medicines to seriously ill or wounded Acehnese recently repatriated from Malaysia and fitted amputees with prostheses;



- harnessed 7 new sources of fresh water and maintained 29 existing water-supply systems in East Timor.



- provided the PMI with medicines and medical supplies for the treatment of people wounded during riots and looting;
- launched, in conjunction with the PMI, an assistance programme for victims of violence in Aceh; some 380 family parcels were handed out and 973 orphans received school supplies in the North Aceh district;
- took part in 11 presentations, workshops and courses for PMI trainers with a view to increasing the National Society's operational capacity;



- promoted humanitarian law in Indonesia among law professors and students, police instructors, legal practitioners, representatives of government institutions and NGOs, and Red Cross medical personnel and youth sections; these events were often held jointly with the PMI, the International Humanitarian Law Centre at Trisakti University, the Faculty of Law at Gadjah Mada University in Yogyakarta or the North Sumatra University;
- gave presentations on humanitarian law for members of the armed and security forces based in East Timor;
- supported research carried out by the International Humanitarian Law Centre at Trisakti University on Indonesia's traditional laws of war found in books or manuscripts and their comparison with the modern law of armed conflict.

*promoting humanitarian law  
among various target groups*

Besides responding to new developments in 1998, the ICRC continued to devote much time and effort to fostering knowledge of and compliance with humanitarian law and cooperating with the National Societies in the region. Presentations were given for various target groups, including current and future members of the legal profession, representatives of government institutions and Red Cross personnel. The ICRC also organized numerous seminars for members of the Indonesian armed forces on humanitarian law, the ICRC's role and mandate and the protection afforded by the red cross emblem. Similar sessions were held in Malaysia.

To strengthen the PMI's capacity to respond to disasters, including situations of unrest, the ICRC provided funds for and took part in National Society "train-the-trainers" courses. The delegation also included a component on humanitarian law and ICRC activities during disaster-preparedness seminars conducted in close cooperation with the Federation.

*medical survey in Myanmar's  
border region*

The ICRC conducted medical surveys in the provinces of Myanmar bordering on China, Laos and Thailand. Tuberculosis, HIV/AIDS and malaria were among the conditions found to affect large sectors of the population. After having received the authorities' approval, the ICRC, together with the Myanmar Red Cross Society, began drawing up a health promotion programme which should be implemented in Shan state in early 1999. Assistance for the war-disabled in Myanmar continued to be monitored regularly by the ICRC's prosthetic/orthotic coordinator based in Cambodia.

## MANILA

### Regional delegation

(Australia, Fiji, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Nauru, New Zealand, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu and the other island territories of the Pacific)

The Asian financial crisis dealt a further blow to the weakened Philippines' economy and fuelled unrest in a volatile society in which it was increasingly difficult to distinguish between criminal and political activity. Confrontations between the armed forces and opposing Islamic or communist groups and infighting between various factions within the same movement affected Mindanao, Negros and Quezon in particular. Although negotiations between the government and the MILF\* and NPA\* produced some tangible results, guerrilla warfare remained the order of the day. Clashes in Mindanao forced thousands to flee their homes. Those who stayed behind were often subjected to various forms of abuse. A series of bomb attacks in Mindanao, killing 16 and injuring 175, targeted the civilian population rather than combatants. The ICRC repeatedly reminded the warring parties of their obligation to respect civilians and civilian property during military operations.

The regional delegation approached various Pacific States to encourage ratification of the Additional Protocols and the Ottawa treaty. The latter was ratified by Fiji, Niue and Samoa. In August the ICRC conducted the first course on international humanitarian law and human rights for Vanuatu's police and security forces. The ICRC attended the Eighth Programme Meeting of Pacific Red Cross Societies in Fiji. This event provided an opportunity to explore ways of strengthening the 13 National Societies concerned (some of which were in formation), in coordination with the Federation.

Several countries in the Pacific suffered severe drought owing to the *El Niño* weather phenomenon. Social tensions in Fiji, largely due to the beleaguered economy, were heightened by the resulting food shortages. In June the government was forced to declare a state of emergency in part of the country.

*El Niño affects the Pacific*

\* MILF: Moro Islamic Liberation Front

\* NPA: New People's Army

*returnees to Bougainville*

The peace process in Papua New Guinea remained on course and hopes were high for a significant improvement in the country's situation. Some of the people displaced by unrest in past years returned to their homes and settled without difficulty. However, at the year's close some 5,000 displaced people were still accommodated in reception centres, and refugees in the Solomon Islands were not yet ready to return to Bougainville. The Federation stepped up its presence in Papua New Guinea following the three disastrous tidal waves in July.

*ICRC visits to detainees*

The ICRC continued to monitor the humanitarian situation on the island of Bougainville, in close cooperation with the Papua New Guinea Red Cross Society and the Federation. In addition, the ICRC organized a four-day seminar on the law of armed conflict in Port Moresby for 17 officers ranging in rank from captain to colonel in the country's defence forces.

The ICRC pursued visits to detainees held in connection with the Muslim and communist insurgency in the Philippines. In the course of their visits, delegates assessed the material and psychological conditions of detention, made the necessary recommendations to the relevant authorities and distributed hygiene products and recreational items to all prison inmates. In cooperation with the Philippine National Red Cross, the ICRC organized and financed visits by needy families to relatives detained in places far from their homes. For the first time, the ICRC was authorized to visit detainees held by the MILF.

The ICRC acted as a neutral intermediary during the release of detainees held by the NPA.

In its bid to extend contacts with insurgents in the field, the ICRC had discussions with local leaders of the RPA\* and Abu Sayyaf (a Muslim fundamentalist group active in Mindanao with close links to the MILF). Subsequently, dissemination sessions were held for a group of RPA commanders.

*relief supplies for the displaced*

In cooperation with the Philippine National Red Cross, the ICRC assisted people displaced following fighting in Maguindanao and North Cotabato. Those accommodated in reception centres received food rations comprising rice, sardines and noodles, together with soap, and in some cases blankets and plastic sheeting.

The regional delegation actively promoted knowledge of and respect for humanitarian law among the Philippine police, including counter-insurgency units, and the armed forces. During its courses the ICRC employed officers from the country's armed forces who had received specific training in the dissemination of the basic tenets of the law of armed conflict.

\* RPA: Revolutionary Proletarian Army, a dissident group of the communist NPA in the province of Negros Oriental

### IN 1998 THE ICRC:



– visited 370 detainees (80 for the first time) in 97 places of detention in the Philippines;

- distributed recreational and personal hygiene articles and supplied places of detention with items necessary to maintain the detainees' health;
- financed family visits to 179 detainees in the Philippines;



– distributed, together with the Philippine National Red Cross, relief supplies to some

6,000 people displaced by fighting in the Philippines;



– organized dissemination events for 1,523 members of the armed forces, 1,340 members of the MILF, 238 members of the National Society and more than 1,300 civilians in the Philippines;

- inaugurated an "IHL corner" at the main library of the Philippines armed forces headquarters and gave a lecture there to 53 senior officers including the Deputy Chief of Staff and the Head of Training, with the Undersecretary of the Ministry of National Defence as the guest of honour;
- organized, in cooperation with the Australian government and National Society, a seminar in

Canberra entitled "The international criminal court, between New York and Rome" for representatives of 21 countries in the Asia and Pacific region;

- co-organized, with the Australian Red Cross, a symposium entitled "Humanitarian Players: Competition or Complementarity" attended by high-level government, UN and NGO personnel and representatives of the media.