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ICRC/T. Gassmann

Over the years the ICRC has flown thousands of war casualties to its hospital in Lokichokio (Kenya), mostly from southern Sudan. It was opened in 1987 and now has more than 500 beds. A limb-fitting centre for amputees was set up there in 1992.

West Africa

ICRC delegation:

Liberia

ICRC regional delegations:

Abidjan, Dakar, Lagos

Central Africa

ICRC delegations:

Burundi, Rwanda, Zaire

ICRC regional delegation:

Yaoundé

Southern Africa

ICRC delegation:

Angola

ICRC regional delegations:

Harare, Pretoria

East Africa

ICRC delegations:

Ethiopia, Somalia, Sudan

ICRC regional delegation:

Nairobi

Staff

ICRC expatriates¹ : 361

National Societies¹ : 104

Local employees² : 3,017

Total expenditure

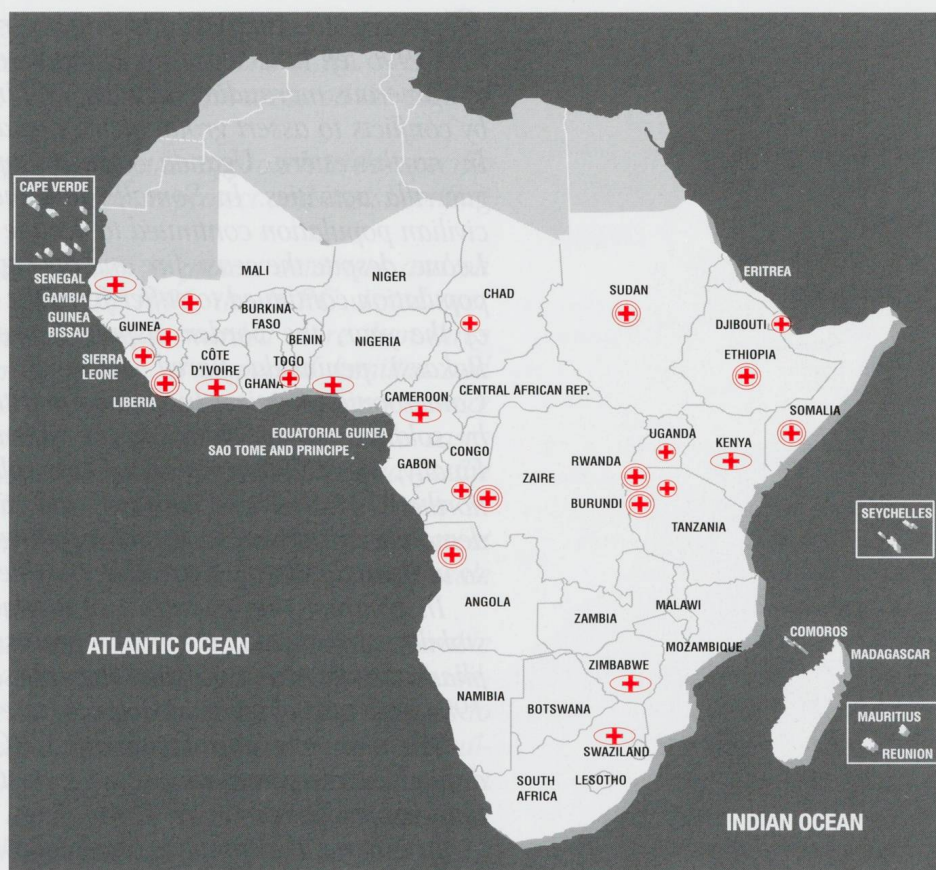
Sfr 225,716,420

Expenditure breakdown

	Sfr
Protection/tracing:	61,148,416
Relief:	84,541,256
Health activities:	34,820,035
Cooperation with	
National Societies:	6,672,356
Dissemination/promotion:	7,927,182
Operational support:	18,210,992
Overheads:	12,396,183

¹ Average figures calculated on an annual basis.

² Under ICRC contract, as at December 1996.



⊕ ICRC regional delegation ⊕ ICRC delegation ⊕ ICRC mission or other presence

ICRC / AR 12.96

AFRICA

Some of the conflicts affecting several countries in sub-Saharan Africa in 1996 left little scope for humanitarian values. In Liberia, which fell prey to numerous marauding factions, and in Burundi and eastern Zaire, wracked by conflicts to assert group identity, chaos and extreme intolerance prevailed. In north-western Uganda, armed opposition movements intensified their guerrilla activities. In Somalia and the Sudan, the living conditions of the civilian population continued to decline as a result of the hostilities. In Sierra Leone, despite the cease-fire and the signing of a peace agreement, the civilian population continued to suffer from the effects of the conflict. At the beginning of the year, the border dispute between Cameroon and Nigeria over the Bakassi peninsula flared again in clashes between the Nigerian and Cameroonian armies. In Guinea and the Central African Republic, mutinies by soldiers led to outbreaks of violence claiming civilian victims as well. Finally, the situation remained unstable in certain countries, for example in northern Mali where most of the civilian population and thousands of demobilized soldiers were still awaiting the benefits of peace, and even more so in Rwanda, deeply scarred by the aftermath of the 1994 genocide.

In contrast, the countries of southern Africa enjoyed a year of relative stability. In Angola, the peace process launched in 1994 entered its final phase. South Africa pursued the course set after the demise of apartheid in 1994, and acts of political violence were largely limited to KwaZulu/Natal.

The main challenge facing the ICRC in 1996 was to overcome the various difficulties restricting its access to victims, particularly in Liberia, Burundi and eastern Zaire.

In Liberia, the complete breakdown of law and order in April, and the subsequent looting by armed groups of the humanitarian organizations' logistical resources and relief supplies, forced the ICRC to relocate its expatriate staff outside the country for the fourth time since starting its activities there in 1989. This time the ICRC alerted the international community, pointing out that large-scale humanitarian operations, which the diverse armed groups were ultimately turning to their own account, could no longer be continued in Liberia. Besides opening this debate, the ICRC tried to find practical ways of continuing at least a minimum of humanitarian activities through its local employees and the Liberian Red Cross, and by means of regular visits that were made by its delegates to Monrovia from Freetown (Sierra Leone).

In Burundi, the deliberate killing of three ICRC delegates on 4 June and the ensuing threats to the delegation forced the institution to suspend its operations indefinitely. At the end of the year, despite an on-going dialogue with the authorities, the prospects of renewed scope for humanitarian action to provide neutral and impartial protection and assistance were slim.

In eastern Zaire the security conditions deteriorated to such an extent, mainly because of the behaviour of the routed Zairian armed forces, that the

expatriate staff of all humanitarian organizations working there, including the ICRC, were withdrawn at the beginning of November. The ICRC was later able to resume its activities in Bukavu, Goma and certain areas on the edge of the conflict zone.

In general, the ICRC constantly strove to adapt its approach to the specific characteristics of each situation so as to be able to protect and assist conflict victims as effectively as possible.

Particular emphasis was placed on activities to protect detainees and on tracing and the restoration of family links. In 1996, the ICRC visited over 100,000 detainees in 22 different countries and forwarded more than three million Red Cross messages between members of dispersed families and between detainees and their relatives. Various forms of assistance were provided for detainees, according to the needs observed. In some cases — especially in Rwanda, but also in Zaire, Madagascar and Ethiopia — the humanitarian needs and the difficulties encountered by certain States in maintaining minimum living conditions in places of detention were so great that the ICRC had to intervene on a broader basis and conduct large-scale food aid, medical and sanitation programmes.

Besides distributions of emergency supplies to particularly vulnerable groups, ICRC assistance continued to be geared as far as possible to rehabilitating means of production to enable conflict-stricken civilian populations to regain self-sufficiency in terms of food. Of particular note were the agricultural, veterinary and fishing programmes, as well as programmes to support local artisan trades and those carried out by the ICRC in the Sudan, Somalia and Mali to get irrigation systems working again.

The diverse situations mentioned above highlighted the need for the ICRC to step up its promotion of international humanitarian law, not only to increase knowledge and acceptance of that law and compliance with it, but also to facilitate access to victims. The advisory services on humanitarian law provided for States (via a specialized delegate newly based in Abidjan), the continued courses (with the assistance of a specialized delegate in Nairobi) for armed forces and other bearers of weapons, and also the development of relations with the media (by means of specialized delegates in Abidjan, Kigali, Kinshasa, Nairobi and Pretoria) were all part of this general campaign to promote international humanitarian law.

Last but not least, the ICRC continued its cooperation programmes with the African National Societies, mainly to strengthen their ability to cope with a variety of emergency situations such as those resulting from the mutinies in Guinea and the Central African Republic or the cholera epidemics in Cameroon, Equatorial Guinea and Chad.



 ICRC delegation
  ICRC office

West Africa LIBERIA

From late December 1995, when members of the Krahn wing of ULIMO* attacked an ECOMOG* base at Tubmanburg, the relative stability which had followed the signing of a new peace agreement in Abuja (Nigeria) in August 1995 was gradually eroded. From then on, tension steadily increased between the various Liberian factions and reached flash-point on 6 April when violent clashes broke out in Monrovia even between the NPFL*, an ally of the Mandingo wing of ULIMO, and the latter's Krahn faction. A large number of civilians fled the fighting and the general looting which accompanied it, and sought refuge outside the capital. Several thousand of them also left Monrovia by sea for Ghana, Guinea and Sierra Leone, where they were received by the various National Societies. The humanitarian organizations in Liberia, including the ICRC,

were not spared by the looting, and their expatriate staff were forced to withdraw from Monrovia when law and order broke down almost completely. Although relative calm began to return in June, the fundamental problems remained unresolved. At the end of the year, implementation of the provisions agreed by the parties in Abuja in August 1995 and confirmed at another meeting in August 1996, also in Abuja — in particular, the demobilization and disarming of combatants — was still well behind schedule.

Until April, the ICRC delegation had been able to carry out activities in Monrovia and certain accessible parts of the country (on the main roads to Buchanan and Gbarnga). They included visits to persons detained by ECOMOG and by the NPFL, the distribution — in cooperation with the

* ULIMO: United Liberation Movement for Democracy in Liberia

* ECOMOG: Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group

* NPFL: National Patriotic Front of Liberia

National Society — of material assistance to some 10,000 newly displaced people left to fend for themselves, the maintenance of wells and pumps supplying Monrovia with drinking water, support for several medical facilities run by the National Society in Buchanan, Dolo (Grand Bassa county), Gbarnga and Gbatata, and the forwarding of Red Cross messages between members of dispersed families living in Liberia and abroad.

Following the events in April, the ICRC publicly deplored the serious and systematic violations of the most basic rules of international humanitarian law and of the fundamental humanitarian principles that had occurred since the beginning of the conflict in 1989. In taking this public stance, the ICRC furthermore called on the international community and the humanitarian organizations to make a thorough reappraisal of the manner in which operations to provide humanitarian assistance in Liberia were being conducted, for it was clear, from the circumstances in which the humanitarian organizations had to withdraw from the country once again in April 1996, that their considerable logistical resources to carry out their programmes had become the looters' favourite target and were being used to boost the warring factions' operational capacity. It was also clear that looting as a means to that end had been extended to the civilian population, and that those groups of civilians receiving emergency aid for their survival were being held hostage by the various combatants, who were living at their expense. The ICRC therefore decided that large-scale humanitarian operations in Liberia could no longer be automatically continued and that a genuine effort must be made to reach an overall political solution: decision-making, diplomatic approaches and practical measures were necessary to restore law and order in the country. Only then could humanitarian activities be resumed without having their previous adverse effects.

*serious violations
of humanitarian law*

Thereafter the ICRC head of delegation "in exile" in Freetown (Sierra Leone) travelled regularly to Monrovia to monitor developments on the spot by maintaining regular contact with all the Liberian factions represented on the Disarmament and Demobilization Committee and with ECOMOG, UNOMIL* and UNHACO,* and to assess the possibility of a gradual return by the ICRC. At the end of the year, the ICRC considered that the requisite conditions for it to resume its large-scale operation in Liberia had not yet been fulfilled.

At the same time local ICRC employees and National Society volunteers, with the help of the head of the delegation and a medical delegate who both came regularly from Freetown, continued their activities — mainly medical

* UNOMIL: United Nations Observer Mission in Liberia

* UNHACO: United Nations Humanitarian Assistance Coordination Office in Liberia

assistance and sanitation — from April onwards and throughout the year in Monrovia and in certain accessible areas of the country.

In late 1996 several thousand people, including many former RUF* fighters, fled from eastern Sierra Leone to Liberia, where they gave themselves up to the Mandingo wing of ULIMO. At this faction's request, the ICRC began visiting them; 1,469 had been registered by the end of the year. They were given medical and material assistance in accordance with their needs.

* RUF: Revolutionary United Front

LIBERIA

IN 1996 THE ICRC:



- until April, visited 8 people held by ECOMOG and 10 people held by the NPFL; some of them were released in February and the others during the events in April. They were given assistance (medical care and basic necessities) in cooperation with the National Society;
- registered, from late November on, 1,469 people who had fled from eastern Sierra Leone and given themselves up to the Mandingo wing of ULIMO. They received medical and material assistance.



- helped to restore and maintain contact between Liberian refugees outside the country and their families by means of a Red Cross message network run in cooperation with the Liberian Red Cross Society and the National Societies of the host countries.



- supported the clinics run by the Liberian Red Cross Society in Buchanan, Dolo, Gbarnga and Gbatata by providing them with medicines and other medical supplies and by paying the salaries of National Society volunteers;
- set up a mobile clinic, in cooperation with the National Society, for people displaced by the fighting in and around Monrovia in April and May. The clinic gave an average of 2,000 consultations a week.



- supervised maintenance work on more than 1,000 wells and pumps supplying drinking water to Monrovia;
- supported the work of local ICRC employees to recover the bodies of people killed during the fighting in Monrovia in April and May and to give them a decent burial.



- gave constant support to the National Society, after seeing that only Liberian nationals and Liberian Red Cross Society staff were able to continue carrying out humanitarian activities in the particular situation resulting from the events in Monrovia in April and May.



- gave numerous ad hoc briefings at the check-points set up by ECOMOG and the various Liberian factions in order to explain the ICRC's activities and mandate, make known the humanitarian principles and the basic rules of humanitarian law, and promote respect for the red cross emblem.

ABIDJAN

Regional delegation

(Benin, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Guinea, Sierra Leone, Togo)

The countries covered by the Abidjan regional delegation were relatively stable in 1996.

However, the situation in Sierra Leone, where the civilian population continued to suffer from the effects of the conflict despite the peace negotiations between the government and the RUF,* and to a lesser extent in Guinea and Côte d'Ivoire was a particular source of concern to the ICRC during the year.

As in 1995, the presence in western Côte d'Ivoire of large numbers of refugees from Liberia gave rise to tension between them and the police. Similar tensions involving refugees from Sierra Leone arose in Guinea. Since these refugees were covered by UNHCR's mandate, the ICRC concentrated on restoring contact between them and their families.

In Guinea, several army units mutinied in Conakry in February. While the initial cause was economic, the mutiny took a political turn when the soldiers involved attempted to oust the head of State. The ensuing fighting took a heavy toll of about 50 dead and many injured, and an undetermined number of mutineers were arrested (about 40 of them were still in prison at the end of the year). A second mutiny followed in March, but had less serious consequences than the first one. The ICRC asked to be allowed to visit the people detained in connection with these events. At the end of the year, it received the authorities' permission to visit the people held under the responsibility of the prison administration. Since the imprisoned insurgents were held under the responsibility of the Ministry of Defence, visits to them were thus excluded.

In Sierra Leone, 1996 brought hope of an end to the five-year conflict between the government and the RUF. A cease-fire came into effect between the parties in March. At the same time, elections returned a civilian government to power and peace negotiations began between the belligerents, with Côte d'Ivoire acting as mediator. After an interruption from May to November, the negotiations ended with the signing of a peace agreement on 30 November in Abidjan. The situation in the field nonetheless remained complex. In spite of the cease-fire, fighting of greater or lesser intensity went on between the various armed groups (government forces, a foreign security company, traditional militias and RUF fighters). Civilians, especially those living near the trouble

* RUF: Revolutionary United Front

*large-scale relief
operation in
Sierra Leone*

spots, continued to suffer from the uncertain situation of neither war nor peace. In November several thousand people, including many RUF fighters, fled from south-eastern Sierra Leone to Liberia where they gave themselves up to the Mandingo wing of ULIMO.¹

On several occasions the ICRC acted as a neutral intermediary at the request of both the government and the RUF by transporting, under the protection of the red cross emblem, government and RUF representatives engaged in the peace negotiations in Côte d'Ivoire, and thereby helped to further the peace process.

After obtaining the authorities' consent in December 1995, the ICRC also launched a large-scale relief operation in February for about 160,000 people affected by the situation in the east of the country, both in the government-controlled and in the rebel-held areas. This operation had several objectives: the first was to provide seed and implements to enable the civilian population to resume farming and gradually become self-sufficient again in terms of food. Secondly, the ICRC wished to reactivate the medical services, paralysed by years of conflict, by supporting about 20 medical facilities, training competent local staff and carrying out work to improve hygiene and access to drinking water; a vaccination campaign for children under five years of age and women of child-bearing age was also begun. The operation was made more difficult by security constraints (safety of personnel) and the poor condition of roads in some areas, and air transport had to be used. For the same reasons, activities in Kailahun were carried out from a logistics base set up at Guéckédou (Guinea) until July, when the government closed the border to relief supplies. Other constraints of a more political nature caused the operation to be temporarily suspended several times, in May, July and October.

While addressing these particular priorities, throughout the year the Abidjan regional delegation continued its activities to promote knowledge of and compliance with humanitarian law and, via the advisory services provided to States, to encourage the implementation of humanitarian law at national level. The ICRC also continued, within its area of competence, to support National Societies in the region.

¹ See also *Liberia*, p. 40-42.

IN 1996 THE ICRC:



– in Sierra Leone, visited 311 persons held in Freetown, Bo, Kenema, Zimi, Segbwema and Daru for security reasons or in connection with the conflict in the east of the country and regularly provided them with assistance according to their needs.



– helped to restore and maintain contact between refugees (mainly Sierra Leonean and Liberian nationals in Côte d'Ivoire and Guinea) and their families via a Red Cross message network.



– from February onwards, distributed 1,200 tonnes of seed, 52,000 farming implements, 4,680 tonnes of food and various essentials to some 160,000 people in government-controlled and RUF-controlled isolated areas of eastern Sierra Leone (Kailahun and Pujehun, and the Daru, Segbwema and Zimi districts).



– carried out a primary health care programme, begun in April, for the population of the aforesaid areas by supporting about 20 medical facilities, training local medical staff, improving or setting up drinking-water supply and waste-water disposal systems, and vaccinating children under five years old and women of child-bearing age;

– evacuated 12 injured people in October and November from the combat zones to hospitals in Segbwema, Kenema, Bo and Freetown.



– continued its cooperation programme with the region's National Societies, concentrating according to needs and to varying degrees on structural development, the training of staff and volunteers, and support for activities to spread knowledge of international humanitarian law and/or on strengthening the various National Societies' emergency response capacity.



– pursued its efforts, adapted to each specific situation, to encourage acceptance and better understanding of humanitarian law by the various target audiences in the region (civilian and military authorities, armed forces, the police, various associations, academic circles and the general public);

– as part of its Advisory Service on International Humanitarian Law, held 3 seminars for high-ranking government officials – in Côte d'Ivoire, Togo and Ghana – to promote the implementation of humanitarian law at national level;

– held a regional seminar in Cotonou on humanitarian rules applicable in situations of internal violence, attended by representatives of security and

defence forces from 10 countries in the region;

– held a seminar in Lomé for military officers responsible for training in the humanitarian rules at intermediate levels of the armed forces.

DAKAR

Regional delegation

(Cape Verde, Gambia, Guinea-Bissau, Mali, Senegal)

In Mali, the peace process begun in early 1995 between the government and the Tuareg and Arab rebel movements remained fragile. The living conditions of the civilian population in the north of the country showed little improvement. The situation there, aggravated by the effects of a persistent drought, gave rise to steadily growing discontent in some sections of the population and hence to increased insecurity in the region. In these circumstances the ICRC, which had been present in Mali again on a permanent basis since March 1995, stepped up its activities in the areas most affected by the situation, especially in those parts of the country where no other humanitarian organizations were working (Timbuktu and Bourem). The purpose of its operation was twofold: to help restore an atmosphere of confidence between the communities by establishing and maintaining contact with all the parties and keeping the authorities and other humanitarian organizations regularly informed, and to come to the aid of people in need. The ICRC took action either by providing direct ad hoc assistance to certain vulnerable groups or by carrying out programmes to reactivate medical services and encourage the resumption of agricultural and economic production; these programmes were carefully designed to involve the local population.

In Senegal, the ICRC's main concern was to have access to the people detained in connection with the situation in Casamance. After repeated requests, the ICRC obtained written permission from the authorities in April. The first visits were made in May and June to two places of detention in Dakar and Ziguinchor; they took place in accordance with the ICRC's customary procedures. In addition, sporadic clashes between the army and the MDFC* in Casamance continued to affect the civilian population, particularly by barring access to certain villages and agricultural areas. The Senegalese Red Cross Society, with the help of the ICRC, distributed ad hoc food aid to civilian victims of the fighting.

Besides dealing with these particular priorities, the Dakar regional delegation continued throughout the year to promote humanitarian law and encouraged its implementation at the national level, providing the advisory services offered to States to that effect. The ICRC also continued, within its area of competence, to support National Societies in the region.

*first visits
to detainees
in Senegal*

* MDFC: Movement of Democratic Forces of Casamance

IN 1996 THE ICRC:



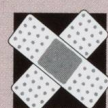
- in Senegal, made its first visit in May and June to 138 people held in Dakar and 45 people held in Ziguinchor; a second visit was made in December;
- in Gambia, visited 27 people held at Mile 2 prison in connection with the July 1994 coup and its aftermath in November 1994 and January 1995, and 40 people held at the Fajara military camp (near Banjul) following a demonstration in October 1995 organized by supporters of the former governing party;
- in Guinea-Bissau, visited 8 people held in Bissau after the abortive coup of March 1993;
- in Mali, visited 12 people (including eight dignitaries from the former regime) held at five places of detention;
- in Gambia, Guinea-Bissau, Mali and Senegal, distributed various types of assistance (bedding, hygiene requisites, recreational materials, etc.) according to the specific needs identified in the places of detention visited;
- supported the social welfare activities carried out in prisons by the Red Cross of Cape Verde and the Gambia Red Cross Society;
- gave all the detainees visited in the various places mentioned above the opportunity to exchange Red Cross messages with their families.



- helped to restore and maintain contact between refugees from the Great Lakes region and their families by means of a Red Cross message system operated from Dakar and in cooperation with the region's National Societies;
- facilitated the exchange of Red Cross messages between Malian refugees in camps outside the country and their families;
- maintained contact with the parties concerned in Mali with a view to resolving the cases, still pending, of persons abducted during the years of unrest.



- delivered food to the Senegalese Red Cross Society for its assistance programme for the civilian victims of the events in Casamance;
- distributed more than 28 tonnes of sorghum and vegetable seed, agricultural implements, fishing tackle and requisites for artisan trades in northern Mali to enable over 4,000 families to become self-supporting again;
- distributed 6,000 tarpaulins and 12,000 blankets to 6,000 destitute families in northern Mali;
- completed the dredging of a canal between the Niger river and Lake Faguibine in Mali to enable agricultural areas to be enlarged and better irrigated.



- helped to reactivate basic health-care facilities which had existed before the years of unrest in the regions of Gao (through a project delegated to the Belgian Red Cross) and Timbuktu (as from September) by training and assisting local medical staff and by providing medicines and other medical supplies;
- carried out a vaccination campaign for children under five years old and women of child-bearing age in the Gao and Timbuktu regions.



- carried out environmental sanitation work and rehabilitated traditional wells as part of its medical programme in northern Mali.



- helped to promote dialogue among the region's National Societies on the basis of specific mutual interests and to organize a meeting to this effect in Cape Verde in September for their leaders;
- continued its cooperation programmes with the region's National Societies, concentrating according to needs and to varying degrees on structural development, the training of staff and volunteers, support for activities to spread knowledge of international humanitarian law and/or on strengthening the various National Societies' emergency response capacity.



- pursued its efforts, adapted to each specific situation, to encourage acceptance and better understanding of humanitarian law and the ICRC by the various target audiences in the region (civilian and military authorities, armed forces, the police, various associations, academic circles and the general public);
- as part of its Advisory Service on International Humanitarian Law, held a seminar in Dakar for high-ranking Senegalese officials on the respective roles of the State, the National Society and the ICRC in promoting humanitarian law;
- held a seminar in Bamako for military officers from all over the country assigned to set up a system of humanitarian law training at all levels.

LAGOS

Regional delegation (Nigeria)

There were no major disturbances in Nigeria in 1996, although the situation remained unstable. After the execution by hanging of nine members of MOSOP* in November 1995, Nigeria came under criticism from the international community and a number of Nigerian and foreign human rights organizations. The Provisional Ruling Council in power was induced by that criticism to amend certain special legal provisions, in particular the Civil Disturbance Decree (under which the nine MOSOP members had been sentenced) and the State Security/Detention of Persons Decree.

The Provisional Ruling Council continued to implement its programme for the transition from military to civilian rule — as announced by the head of State in October 1995 — but failed to gain the support of all political factions in the country for it. Acts of violence increased during the year, and ethnic or religious rivalries were reflected in several intercommunal clashes.

Beside pursuing its long-term activities, particularly those to promote knowledge of humanitarian law and advise on its implementation, the ICRC closely monitored developments in connection with the arrest and detention of political dissidents. It also continued its active support for the Nigerian Red Cross Society so as to strengthen its operational capacity and thus its ability to intervene in emergency situations, such as the intercommunal clashes and the meningitis epidemic in the north of the country.

In February and April 1996, the border dispute between Nigeria and Cameroon over the Bakassi peninsula — which was taken to the International Court of Justice in 1994 — flared up again, leading to renewed clashes between the Nigerian and Cameroonian armed forces. The ICRC thereupon reminded the Nigerian authorities of their obligations under the Geneva Conventions and Protocol I, which were fully applicable to the situation, to comply with the provisions of international humanitarian law. In cooperation with the Nigerian Red Cross Society, it distributed ad hoc relief to the military medical facilities treating the wounded. The ICRC also requested the authorities several times — including a top-level approach in the form of a letter from the President of the ICRC to the Nigerian President — for access to any Cameroonian prisoners of war and civilian detainees who had been captured during the

Bakassi peninsula dispute

* MOSOP: Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People

clashes. No answer had been received by the end of the year, nor had the Nigerian government replied to the enquiries transmitted to it by the ICRC in May, at the request of the Cameroonian authorities, with regard to 131 Cameroonians (127 soldiers, one policeman and three civilians) missing since those events.²

² For an account of activities and approaches on the Cameroonian side in connection with the Bakassi dispute, see *Yaoundé*, pp 70-72.

LAGOS Regional delegation



— transmitted to the Nigerian authorities, at the request of the Cameroonian authorities, a list of 128 persons (127 soldiers and one policeman) reported missing after the fighting in February, and details of 3 civilians, who also disappeared in the course of the Bakassi conflict.



— in coordination with the Yaoundé regional delegation, and with the cooperation of the Nigerian Red Cross Society, restored and maintained contact between Nigerian civilian internees and prisoners of war in Cameroon and their families in

IN 1996 THE ICRC:

Nigeria by means of a Red Cross message network.



— in cooperation with the Nigerian Red Cross Society, provided ad hoc assistance to military and civilian medical facilities to treat people injured during the Bakassi conflict.



— within its field of competence, continued to support the Nigerian Red Cross Society, particularly in its work to promote knowledge of international humanitarian law and to strengthen its operational capacity in each of the Nigerian federal states.



— continued its cooperation in humanitarian law training with most of the military academies, such as the Nigerian Defence Academy, the National War College and the Warrant Officers' Academy;

— organized several humanitarian law courses for directly operational units of the armed forces and the police;

— held a seminar, organized in cooperation with the National Society and the Nigerian Institute of International Affairs and attended by 80 senior government officials, members of the judiciary and representatives of the legislative authorities, to promote the implementation of humanitarian law at national level.

Central Africa

BURUNDI

On 4 June, three ICRC delegates were murdered when their vehicle, which was clearly marked with the ICRC emblem, was caught in an ambush in the northern province of Cibitoke. The delegates were returning to Bujumbura after a mission in Cibitoke province, which was particularly hard-hit by the conflict and where the ICRC was carrying out a large-scale relief programme for the civilian population. This deliberate attack and further threats to the delegation in the next few days forced the ICRC to withdraw all its expatriate staff from Burundi on 11 June and to suspend its activities there completely, leaving many victims without assistance or protection.

In 1996, tension in Burundi mounted steadily. From March onwards, clashes between the Tutsi-majority government army and armed Hutu groups became more and more frequent throughout the country, including the southern and central provinces which had been relatively calm until then. Self-defence militia groups were also formed within the civilian population, thus increasing the number of armed contenders acting outside any formally constituted body. In the rural areas the civilian population, mostly Hutus, found themselves held hostage by the hostilities, being forced either to gather in areas protected by the armed forces or to stay in the hills and be considered as sympathizing with rebel groups. The spiral of violence (attacks from one side provoking retaliation from the other), the fighting, the massacres and the destruction of many vital installations, especially electricity and water systems, claimed hundreds of thousands of victims among the civilian population: besides the many people killed, thousands were injured and tens of thousands displaced or forced into exile. Because of the extremely hazardous situation, the humanitarian organizations working in the country gradually reduced their presence near the victims, and by 4 June the ICRC was the only one still able to move around



ICRC delegation

spiral of violence

IN 1996 THE ICRC:



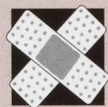
- visited over 2,700 detainees held under the authority of the Ministries of Justice and of the Interior in 11 prisons and 37 temporary places of detention (lock-ups);
- provided the detainees with medical and material assistance (hygiene requisites, bedding and recreational items) in accordance with the needs identified;
- took steps on 3 occasions to prevent dysentery and typhus epidemics from developing in the Ngozi and Mpimba prisons (Bujumbura);
- carried out sanitation work in prisons and trained local maintenance teams.



- facilitated the restoration and maintenance of contact between Rwandan refugees and their families by means of a Red Cross message network (for total figures see *Rwanda*);
- coordinated a programme for the registration of unaccompanied Rwandan children among the refugees with the aim of ultimately reuniting them with their families (for total figures see *Rwanda*).



- distributed 240 tonnes of seed and 27,000 hoes to 27,000 displaced families to enable them to cultivate their land and thus regain food self-sufficiency;
- distributed 93,000 blankets, 20,000 tarpaulins, 24,000 jerrycans, 23,000 cooking sets and 31 tonnes of soap to 35,000 displaced families who had lost everything after having had to flee from their homes.



- regularly supported hospitals treating the wounded, especially in Bujumbura and in the Cibitoke and Bubanza provinces, by providing them with medicines and other medical supplies;
- provided ad hoc or regular assistance to 34 health centres in the areas of unrest;
- evacuated 63 wounded persons to appropriate medical facilities and, where necessary, financed their return to their places of origin once they had recovered.



- conducted an urgent ad hoc operation in January, together with other humanitarian organizations and the relevant authorities, to supply drinking water to the people of Bujumbura where the electricity network had been sabotaged;
- carried out emergency sanitation work and transported drinking water in tankers to places where groups of displaced persons had gathered, particularly on the Imbo plain (Bubanza province).



- organized humanitarian law courses for the regular forces (army, gendarmerie and police).

freely in most of the provinces, including those most severely affected by the conflict. After its withdrawal on 11 June, victims of the conflict living in some parts of the country were consequently left entirely unaided.

At the political level, the initiatives taken by former Tanzanian President Julius Nyerere, who was designated chief mediator for the Burundian crisis at a regional summit meeting held in Tunis in March, and by several high-ranking foreign officials dispatched to Burundi, failed to bring about a resumption of the dialogue between the government and the rebels. In view of the escalating conflict, the neighbouring countries convened a summit of heads of State in Tanzania on 25 June at which it was decided, with the consent of Burundi's President and Prime Minister, to send a foreign military force to Burundi to help the government restore law and order. On returning to Burundi, however, the Prime Minister opposed the deployment of this force, thus plunging the government into a major crisis. On 25 July the Burundian army, led by former President Buyoya (1987-1993), ousted President Sylvestre Ntibantunganya. The National Assembly was dissolved and all political parties banned. Six days later, Kenya, Uganda, Rwanda, Tanzania and Zaire imposed an economic embargo on Burundi, demanding the reinstatement of the National Assembly and the political parties and the opening of peace negotiations between all the parties, including the rebel groups. At the end of the year, however, no political solution had yet been found and the embargo imposed on Burundi by its neighbours was still in force.

Until the tragedy of 4 June, the ICRC endeavoured to provide protection and assistance to the victims of the conflict, but even the most basic humanitarian values and the very meaning of neutral and impartial humanitarian activities were largely negated by the acute mistrust that prevailed between the communities, and on several occasions the ICRC was forced to reduce or even temporarily suspend its activities in all or part of the country. They had already been suspended in December 1995 after serious security incidents, but resumed in January when the highest authorities clearly renewed their pledge to guarantee the ICRC's security.

In those circumstances, the delegation constantly sought to establish and build up contacts with all concerned — the political, military and civilian authorities, armed Hutu opposition groups and Tutsi militia groups — so as to promote compliance with the basic humanitarian rules (especially those regarding the respect to which the civilian population is entitled), to inform them of the fundamental principles governing the work of the Red Cross, and to ask them to guarantee the security of ICRC activities and staff. By their physical presence in the conflict-stricken areas and their frequent contacts with the parties involved, the delegates did their utmost to temper the animosity

*efforts to ensure
respect for civilians*

between rival communities and thus to foster greater respect for the civilian population.

access to detainees

In addition, the ICRC had regular access to detainees held under the authority of the Ministry of Justice (prisons) and the Ministry of the Interior (*gendarmerie* squads and police stations). A general round of visits was made in April to all the country's prisons. The ICRC offered the detainees visited the opportunity to exchange news with their families by means of Red Cross messages; this service was restricted, however, by the inaccessibility of some parts of the country for security reasons. In the course of its tracing activities, the ICRC concentrated on restoring and maintaining contact between Rwandan refugees in camps in the north of the country and their families in Rwanda, and on registering unaccompanied Rwandan children.

The ICRC also conducted large-scale assistance programmes for the civilian victims of the conflict. No serious food shortages were noted. The most urgent humanitarian needs stemmed from the partial or complete lack of access to medical care and drinking water and the total destitution of people who had had to flee their homes because of the conflict. The ICRC therefore focused on providing material assistance, distributing drinking water and setting up agronomic programmes. In the medical field, the ICRC evacuated the wounded to appropriate medical facilities and, where necessary, financed their return to their places of origin once they had recovered. In addition, regular support was given to hospitals treating the wounded or sick, and to health centres in the areas of unrest. After 4 June, the ICRC handed over its stock of medical supplies to the Ministry of Health and to other humanitarian organizations present in Bujumbura.

*humanitarian action
in jeopardy*

At the end of the year, after high-level discussions in Geneva between the ICRC President and Burundi government representatives and several missions to Bujumbura by the head of delegation, the thorough investigation requested by the ICRC into the circumstances of the attack in which three of its delegates lost their lives remained inconclusive, and the ICRC therefore considered that the conditions required for it to resume its activities in the country had not yet been fulfilled.

RWANDA

In 1996, Rwanda remained deeply marked by the after-effects of the 1994 genocide. The government tried resolutely to get a grip on the situation, following a firm course of action already outlined in 1995. Nevertheless, many of the various problems besetting the country since 1994 persisted in 1996.

As UNAMIR's* mandate ended on 8 March, the government took several measures during the year to improve security in the country: new identity cards and passports — giving no indication of ethnic origin — were issued; confidence-building tours were organized in the prefectures to restore trust in the authorities; and checks were stepped up in parts of the country experiencing numerous armed incursions from Zaire. Most of the administrative systems and public services were also progressively restored. Judicial institutions were slowly re-established and several legislative reforms took place, in particular the promulgation on 1 September of the *Organic Law on the Organization of Prosecutions for Offences constituting the Crime of Genocide or Crimes against Humanity committed since 1 October 1990*. The first trials by a Rwandan court of persons accused of having taken an active part in the genocide opened in late 1996 and verdicts were expected in early 1997, whilst the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda, set up in November 1994, had indicted 21 people by the end of the year, seven of whom were held in its custody in Arusha (Tanzania). Lastly, a pledge of substantial financial support was given by the international community, at a round table organized by UNDP* in Geneva in June at the request of the Rwandan government, for the latter's programme to rehabilitate the country's social and economic structures and revive economic activity.

* UNAMIR: United Nations Assistance Mission for Rwanda

* UNDP: United Nations Development Programme



ICRC / AR 12 96

*serious problems
persist*

Despite these major developments, formidable humanitarian problems continued to plague Rwanda.

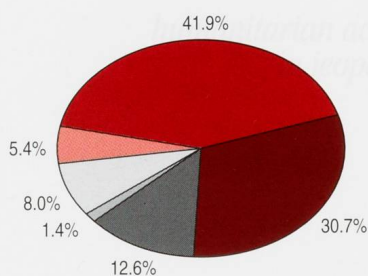
Over 1.5 million Rwandan refugees were still housed in camps in Zaire, Tanzania and Burundi, and the question of their future remained crucial for stability in the region. For most of the year, however, the large majority of refugees failed to heed appeals by the Rwandan government, UNHCR and the countries of asylum and did not return to Rwanda, partly because they feared retaliation by the Rwandan authorities and partly because they were seriously deterred from doing so by the *Interahamwe* militia leaders and the civilian and military authorities of the previous government. Then in July and August, the Rwandan refugees in Burundi finally did go back to Rwanda; the first of them were forcibly expelled by the Burundian army, whereas the others fled when the situation in northern Burundi deteriorated. From 15 November, in the wake of the offensive launched in late September by the ADFL,* over 500,000 Rwandan refugees who had been living in camps around Goma also returned to Rwanda after wandering for weeks in eastern Zaire in desperate conditions.

Finally, under pressure from the Tanzanian authorities, 460,000 Rwandan refugees living in the Lake Ngara region likewise went back to Rwanda in mid-December.³ These mass returns caused both short- and long-term problems. To begin with, emergency arrangements had to be made to receive hundreds of thousands of people — most of them exhausted by days of walking, sometimes without any clear destination. Later, some means of handling the social repercussions of their return had to be set up; this issue was still far from being resolved at the end of the year. Disputes over property rights between refugees who returned to find their land occupied by other people — themselves former refugees often claiming that the land had originally belonged to them before they fled the massacres in and after 1959 — looked set to be the main problem in that respect.

Meanwhile, a general atmosphere of distrust between the communities again prevailed in Rwanda throughout the year, accentuated by the armed incursions from Zaire into the country's western prefectures to attack the authorities and survivors of the genocidal massacres. The number of people arrested in connection with the 1994 genocide or for national security offences remained high, over 3,200 a month on average. Arrests, often arbitrary, were particularly numerous in May and June, when new identity cards and passports were issued, and late in the year, when returning refugees flooded in. Several new places of detention were opened between August 1995 and October 1996 and

RWANDA

Total expenditure in 1996:
Sfr 60,965,775



- Protection / tracing
- Relief
- Health activities
- Dissemination / promotion
- Operational support
- Overheads

* ADFL: Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Zaire-Congo

³ See *Zaire*, pp. 62-69 and *Tanzania*, p. 102.

the capacity of some prisons was increased, bringing the country's estimated total prison capacity to 34,000. However, these measures and the releases that took place during the year did not offset the arrival of new detainees in the prisons, as there was no effective judicial system to limit the number of arbitrary arrests and to investigate the cases of those arrested. Consequently, the acute overcrowding already observed there in 1995 and the ever-present serious health hazards for detainees living in exceptionally inhuman conditions continued in 1996. By the end of the year, more than 60,000 people were crammed into the country's central prisons and over 30,000 more in temporary places of detention (lock-ups).

90,000 detainees

Another major humanitarian problem which remained unresolved was that of families split apart during the internal conflict, the 1994 genocide and the flight of hundreds of thousands of refugees to neighbouring countries, or the mass return of refugees in 1996. The problem of unaccompanied minors — children who lost or were separated from their families during the 1994 genocide and the events that followed, or when refugees streamed back home at the end of the year — was likewise of constant concern.

Moreover, many people whose homes were destroyed during the internal conflict and the massacres continued to live precariously in makeshift accommodation such as cowsheds or schools, or in cramped conditions with other families. Owing to the country's economic difficulties and particularly the lack of jobs, these people — mostly widows and survivors of the genocide — were again left to eke out a living on the fringes of society. In 1996, no systematic assistance was provided for them, either by the government or by the humanitarian organizations.

In 1996 the ICRC continued its efforts in all its traditional spheres of activity.

As in 1995, acute overcrowding in Rwandan prisons throughout the year was again a major source of concern for the ICRC. At every possible opportunity, and particularly during the round table on Rwanda held in Geneva in June, the ICRC drew the attention of the countries concerned to the consistently alarming situation in Rwandan places of detention, which required their firm commitment and that of the Rwandan government to remedy it. Regular contact was also maintained at all levels with the relevant Rwandan authorities in order to remind them that they themselves bore the main responsibility for ensuring that the conditions of detention were acceptable. At the same time, the ICRC continued the large-scale assistance programme launched in 1994 to enable the detainees in those prisons to survive. The programme undoubtedly had an effect: by late 1995, the prison mortality rate had dropped to approximately that of the rest of the population and in 1996, despite the substantially higher number of people in prison, the situation

IN 1996 THE ICRC:



- regularly visited detainees in prisons and temporary places of detention. At the end of the year, 90,040 people registered by the ICRC were held there; two-thirds of them were in prisons;
- provided 8,115 tonnes of food and 1,020 tonnes of other relief supplies as part of its prison assistance programme to ensure the survival of all detainees; dispensaries were also supplied with medicines according to the needs identified (shortages or unavailability of particular medicines) and the sanitation work begun in 1995 was completed;
- forwarded some 150,000 Red Cross messages between detainees and their families;
- monitored the general state of health of the prison population (hygiene, epidemiological monitoring, nutritional checks) in order to prevent any rapid deterioration;
- distributed ad hoc assistance in the temporary places of detention and carried out sanitation work as needed;
- concluded an agreement with the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda and, on the basis of that agreement, began regular visits in June to the persons detained under the Tribunal's authority in Arusha (7 persons registered).



- forwarded some 2.5 million Red Cross messages either within Rwanda, between Rwanda and

neighbouring countries, or between Rwanda and other countries, to and from members of families separated by the events;

- continued to coordinate a programme to register unaccompanied Rwandan minors and ultimately reunite them with their families; in 1996, a total of 11,500 children were reunited with their families either by the ICRC or thanks to other humanitarian organizations.



- distributed 1,060 tonnes of food and 160 tonnes of various other supplies to over 11,000 direct victims of the genocide (orphans, widows, and people who had fled their homes because of insecurity);
- supported the programmes carried out by survivors' associations to build almost 400 homes in Kigali, Butare and Gisenyi;
- distributed drinking water and protein-enriched biscuits at supply posts along the main routes taken by refugees heading home on foot from Zaire and Tanzania, and made its vehicles available to transport the weakest refugees.



- completed the rehabilitation of 17 health centres all over the country through projects delegated to the French and German Red Cross Societies;
- supported Kibuye hospital through projects delegated to the Swiss Red Cross and the German Red Cross.



Cross.



- supported the Gatagara prosthetic/orthotic centre through a project delegated to the Swiss Red Cross.
- continued to give the relevant authorities technical and material assistance to enable them to keep going the water treatment plants serving large urban areas;
- continued sanitation work in rural areas in order to improve access to drinking water; some of this work was carried out through projects delegated to the American, Australian, British, German and Swedish Red Cross Societies.



- supplied the Rwandan Red Cross with the logistical resources and relief supplies needed to set up a food aid programme for 15,000 secondary school pupils.



- organized numerous dissemination sessions on humanitarian law for various audiences – civilian and military authorities, armed forces and police units, academic circles;
- launched a public information campaign to promote respect for basic humanitarian rules.

remained under control thanks to the ICRC's unfailing efforts and the authorities' growing commitment. In November and December 1995, and to a varying extent each month in 1996, the authorities did in fact manage to meet their responsibilities and to supply some of the necessary food, firewood and medicines. By the end of the year, the ICRC was able to reduce its food aid to 50% of the amount required in the prisons (down from 100% in 1995). Owing to the Rwandan health authorities' efforts, its regular supply of medicines and other medical requisites to prison dispensaries could likewise be considerably reduced in 1996, and the ICRC stepped in only to make up for occasional temporary shortages, to provide specific medicines not available in adequate quantities in the country and to monitor the general health of the prison population. The work started by the ICRC in 1995 to improve prison sanitation was completed in 1996, and at the end of the year an agreement under which maintenance of the sanitary facilities would be taken over by the ministries concerned was being concluded between them and the ICRC.

In the lock-ups, which were intended to be only temporary places of detention, the ICRC did not distribute any food aid to the detainees. To meet any urgent needs observed during visits it did, however, give ad hoc assistance with regard to medical care and sanitation.

Besides providing assistance, which constituted the essential first phase in protecting the detainees, the ICRC also continued its regular visits to prisons and other places of detention. The delegates registered newly arrested persons and monitored the cases of detainees already in custody from an earlier date. In general, the work was carried out with good cooperation from the authorities. Nonetheless the ICRC was unable, despite repeated requests, to obtain the military authorities' permission to have systematic access to the places of detention under their responsibility. On the basis of the delegates' findings during their visits, the ICRC regularly submitted written and oral reports to the authorities concerned, reminding them of their obligation to treat detainees humanely. In addition, the ICRC gave all detainees visited the opportunity to exchange Red Cross messages with their relatives.

To restore and maintain contact between family members separated by events, the ICRC continued to run a vast network for the exchange of Red Cross messages both within Rwanda, between Rwanda and neighbouring countries and between Rwanda and other countries. Part of this tremendous task was accomplished in cooperation with the National Societies of more than thirty countries which had accepted Rwandan refugees. As postal services in Rwanda itself were gradually re-established during the year, the use of the Red Cross message service was progressively limited to people living in isolated parts of the country.

assistance in the prisons

*more than 2.5 million
Red Cross messages
exchanged*

*concerted efforts
to reunite families*

The ICRC also continued to coordinate a large-scale programme for the registration of unaccompanied minors, with the ultimate purpose of reuniting them with their parents. This programme was launched in 1994 and had been run since then in conjunction with Save the Children Fund-UK, UNHCR, UNICEF and other non-governmental organizations.⁴ During the mass return of Rwandan refugees from Burundi, Zaire and Tanzania the ICRC, in accordance with its specific mandate, concentrated particularly on the reception of unaccompanied minors. On arrival in Rwanda, the children were registered by delegates, then transferred to transit centres there run by other humanitarian organizations. In many cases, the children had lost touch with their parents only temporarily among the crowds heading home and could therefore be rapidly reunited with their families, sometimes the same day.

Apart from the major sanitation work carried out in places of detention, in 1996 the ICRC continued and expanded programmes launched the previous year to improve drinking water supplies, particularly in rural areas in the Butare, Gikongoro, Ruhengeri, Gisenyi, Kibungo and Kigali prefectures. Some of the latter work was done through individual projects delegated to the American, Australian, British, German and Swedish Red Cross Societies. The ICRC also continued to supply spare parts and provide various forms of assistance to the authorities to enable them to continue operating water treatment plants serving the main towns. During the year, since the authorities concerned were able to provide sufficient chemicals for water purification, the ICRC stopped its own large-scale deliveries of such products and only made up for occasional shortages.

*support to
medical facilities*

As the Rwandan medical services improved during the year and several non-governmental organizations stepped in, the ICRC was able to reduce its medical aid. Begun in 1995, the projects delegated to the French and German Red Cross Societies to rehabilitate health centres were extended to 17 such centres and completed in 1996. The Swiss and German Red Cross Societies also began a major programme during the year to support the Kibuye hospital with medical equipment, expertise and expatriate staff; the Swiss Red Cross took on the additional task, through a delegated project, of running the Gatagara prosthetic/orthotic centre.

In 1995, the ICRC had progressively been able to reduce its assistance to the civilian population and food distributions had ceased by the end of the year.⁵ In 1996, the ICRC concentrated on aiding particularly vulnerable sections of the population: on the one hand, survivors of the 1994 genocide, and on the

⁴ See the ICRC's 1994 Annual Report, pp. 57-58 and 1995 Annual Report, pp. 60-61.

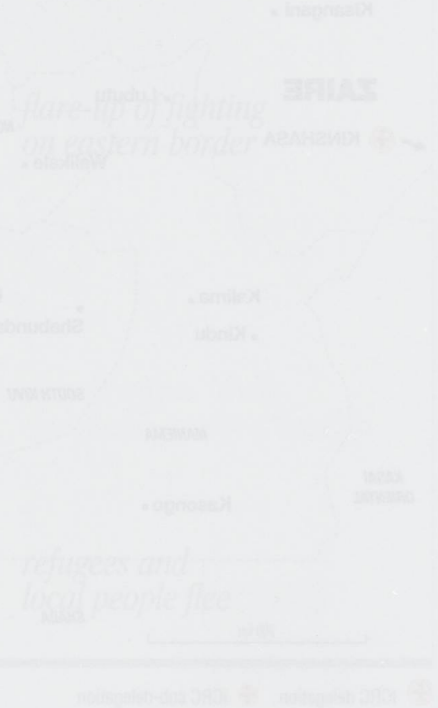
⁵ See the ICRC's 1995 Annual Report, p. 61.

other hand people who, feeling threatened by the armed incursions from Zaire, had fled their homes and gathered in public places — mainly in Kigali and Gitarama. In the former case, the delegation established closer contacts during the first six months with genocide survivors' associations and helped them to carry out certain projects they had submitted to it. In the latter case, the ICRC intervened directly by providing ad hoc aid in places where those people had gathered. During the mass return of Rwandan refugees from Zaire and Tanzania, the ICRC also took part in the emergency operation set up by the humanitarian organizations — particularly UNHCR, the Federation, the Rwandan Red Cross and non-governmental organizations — to receive the new arrivals.

Furthermore, the delegation made every effort to overcome the mistrust felt by some of the population for the foreign community present in the country by promoting greater knowledge and acceptance of the ICRC's specific nature and activities. A public information campaign on humanitarian law was also launched, and care was taken to incorporate local cultural values in the humanitarian message conveyed so as to make it accessible to all.

As the Rwandan Red Cross was being completely reconstituted, the ICRC, in consultation with the Federation, supported its development by providing it with the logistical facilities and various relief supplies it needed to organize a food aid programme for 15,000 pupils at secondary-level boarding schools.

*assistance to the survivors
of the genocide*





⊕ ICRC delegation ⊕ ICRC sub-delegation

ZAIRE

(Delegation also covers the Congo)

Life for the Zairian people was no easier in 1996. The persistent socio-economic crisis, the increasing poverty of most of the population, the sorry state of public services and the postponement of elections initially promised for July 1995 left most Zairians living precariously from hand to mouth.

The ethnic rivalries in the east of the country, closely linked to the sensitive issue of origin and nationality and its direct consequences for land ownership and the right to vote, remained a source of hatred and violence between the different communities. Since Zaire's accession to independence in 1960, the Banyamulenge — numerous in South Kivu — and the Banyarwanda — the majority population in the Masisi area (Kivu province) — had possessed Zairian nationality under a law adopted at that time which granted

citizenship to anyone who was living within the national borders and claimed it. In 1989, the law was amended and only those who could prove that their ancestors lived in Zaire before 1885 were henceforth entitled to Zairian nationality. The prospect of elections since 1990 caused growing tension between the population of Zairian origin on the one hand and, on the other, the Banyamulenge and especially the Banyarwanda, who saw themselves excluded *de facto* from the democratic process.

In the Masisi area, the first violent intercommunal clashes occurred in 1993; the situation then calmed down temporarily. From 1994 onwards, the disturbances were aggravated by the huge influx of over a million Rwandan refugees in eastern Zaire. In 1996 the Banyarwanda, backed by the Rwandan Hutu refugees, seized control of more and more of the Masisi area, to the detriment of the indigenous population and the Banyarwanda Tutsis. Almost all the latter were forced to flee to Rwanda, where they were given shelter in a camp set up by the authorities just within the border near Gisenyi, then resettled in the

Kibuye region further inside the country. The deployment of Zairian troops to stop the fighting in the Masisi area, then in the Lubero and Rutshuru regions, to which the disturbances had spread in May, did not solve the problems.

In South Kivu, the situation remained fairly calm until late September, except along the Zairean border with Rwanda and Burundi, where frequent skirmishes took place throughout the year between the various armed groups. Towards the end of September, the entire area from Kalemie in the south to Bunia in the north flared up after the ADFL,* a force consisting of several Zairian opposition movements including the Banyamulenge, launched an offensive against the Zairian army. The offensive began in the Uvira region and advanced rapidly towards Bukavu, then Goma. It brought the existing intercommunal tensions to flashpoint, while groups of Zairian soldiers in full and completely undisciplined retreat went on a looting spree. At the same time, the situation in the east of the country sparked disturbances in other regions further inside Zaire; they included Kinshasa, where people suspected of having some link with Rwanda were victimized. Further north, at the border with Uganda, there were clashes between the Zairian armed forces and the WNBF* rebels on the one hand and the Ugandan army and ADFL fighters on the other.

All the Rwandan and Burundian refugees living in the camps between Uvira and Goma, along with a large number of Zairian civilians, scattered before the advancing ADFL fighters. Some went south, others north, while others headed west towards the interior of Zaire or east towards Tanzania. Their flight took place in particularly desperate conditions, for as the offensive gained momentum, all the humanitarian organizations working in this context were compelled by the lack of any security whatsoever to leave eastern Zaire and hundreds of thousands of people who had taken to the road were devoid of help or protection.

The human tragedy unfolding was so great that several third States urged the need for an external military intervention to allow humanitarian aid to reach the victims. After weeks of negotiations the United Nations Security Council, acting under Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations, adopted a resolution on 15 November authorizing the deployment "for humanitarian purposes" of a temporary multinational force in eastern Zaire. At the very time the resolution was being adopted, more than 500,000 Rwandan refugees who were living in the Goma region after leaving their camps several weeks earlier and wandering around aimlessly in eastern Zaire started to return to Rwanda. In the following weeks the humanitarian organizations were unable, because of the hostilities and the attitude of the warring parties, to get through to eastern Zaire — except,

*flare-up of fighting
on eastern border*

*refugees and
local people flee*

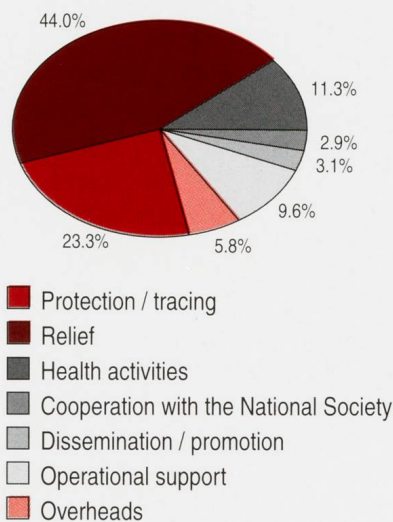
* ADFL: Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Zaire-Congo

* WNBF: West Nile Bank Front

*ICRC active despite
difficult security conditions*

ZAIRE

Total expenditure in 1996:
Sfr 24,630,117



after a short interruption, to the towns of Bukavu, Goma and Uvira — to help the suffering Zairian civilian population and the Rwandan refugees who continued to trek home in small groups. Despite this almost complete impossibility to take action, most of the States which had agreed to the deployment of a multinational force considered that the mass return of 500,000 Rwandan refugees had rendered the Security Council resolution inoperative. This view was officially endorsed by the President of the Security Council, who terminated the mandate of the multinational force on 31 December.

By the end of the year, the ADFL rebels controlled a broad swathe of Zairian territory, bounded to the south by Uvira, to the north by Bunia and to the west by Walikale. No dialogue had been established between the rebels and the Zairian government and the logic of war held sway.

The humanitarian activities conducted by the ICRC in Zaire in 1996 can be divided into two distinct periods: the first nine months and the rest of the year, with the dividing line being the offensive launched by the ADFL rebels in the east of the country in late September. Throughout the year, ICRC activities in eastern Zaire, including the Masisi area, were dependent on security conditions. On several occasions, as the parties became increasingly reluctant to accept neutral and impartial humanitarian work, the ICRC was forced to suspend some or all of its activities or to restrict its movements. The point of no return was reached in October, when the general chaos caused by the ADFL offensive rendered any humanitarian action impossible. The other humanitarian organizations operating in this context experienced the same difficulties. Several of them suffered deaths and injury among their ranks, particularly the Red Cross of Zaire: five of its volunteers were killed and about a hundred others wounded, including ten seriously, while working to help the victims.

During the first nine months, the ICRC pursued the activities it had begun in previous years. The programme started in 1994 to meet the essential needs of all detainees in certain places of detention visited by the ICRC was extended, first in 1995 and then again in 1996, to cover 24 prisons in seven regions of the country.⁶ This assistance was given via non-governmental organizations and local religious groups. The ICRC maintained contact with the prison authorities in order to remind them of their responsibilities towards the detainees. It also encouraged a search for solutions to enable the prisons which possessed land to become self-sufficient, and repaired the sanitary facilities in several places of detention where they were particularly dilapidated. Besides these assistance activities, the delegates continued to register the Rwandan refugees held in Kivu, in order to keep track of them if they were forcibly repatriated to Rwanda, as well as the people detained for security reasons.

⁶ See the ICRC's 1994 Annual Report, p. 64, and 1995 Annual Report, pp. 65-66.

Activities to restore and maintain family links continued for Rwandan refugees in the east of the country,⁷ for Sudanese refugees in Haut-Zaire and for Angolans who had sought shelter in the south-west of the country.

In its cooperation programmes with the Red Cross of Zaire, the ICRC concentrated on training first-aid workers. Financial assistance was also given to the National Society to enable it to cover part of its running costs. Besides their exemplary behaviour in Kivu after the humanitarian organizations had to withdraw (see below), the Red Cross of Zaire volunteers distinguished themselves on several occasions, for example, by providing first aid and evacuating the dead and injured when a plane crashed on a market in Kinshasa in January, and again by their vigorous efforts during campaigns to improve hygiene in markets and hospitals in the capital.

The ICRC also continued its work to promote knowledge of and compliance with international humanitarian law, focusing in particular on dissemination to the armed forces. A large number of sessions were organized for the various contingents of the Zairian armed forces, including those stationed in Kivu, to explain the basic rules of that law — particularly those concerning the respect to which the civilian population is entitled — and to make the work of the ICRC and its guiding principles better known.

When the conflict resumed in the Masisi area early in the year and then spread to the Lubero and Rutshuru regions, the ICRC gave assistance to people displaced as a result of the fighting. No serious food shortages were noted and relief supplies therefore included food only in exceptional cases, i.e. for villages which were cut off or for particularly vulnerable groups of people. The ICRC distributed the relief supplies needed to resettle displaced people either in camps or — most frequently — in host families. On several occasions, implements and seed were distributed when displaced people settled in a sufficiently stable environment for long enough to be able to grow food. It also continued to provide medical assistance, evacuating the wounded to referral hospitals outside the areas of unrest. During such transfers it became clear, however, that the enmity between the different communities was so great that a wounded person of one ethnic community could no longer cross through territory controlled by another. The ICRC therefore concentrated on supporting local medical facilities so that the sick and wounded could be treated on the spot. It also took steps to make drinking water more readily accessible and improve drainage systems in the displaced people's camps, and to repair water-supply systems that had been destroyed in various villages.

collapse of law and order

*the Red Cross
of Zaire in action*

⁷ See *Rwanda*, pp. 59-60.

In South Kivu, along the Rusizi plain, the ICRC's work was centred mainly on restoring and maintaining family links for refugees living in the camps, support for medical facilities treating the wounded — who included many Burundians evacuated over the border — and sanitation work; the latter was carried out through a project delegated to the Australian Red Cross Society. Since local medical facilities were increasingly reluctant to admit casualties of Burundian origin, the ICRC undertook to assist the Uvira hospital by providing staff and equipment, with the support of the German Red Cross. However, the spate of events from October onwards meant that this project had to be suspended when it had scarcely begun.

ZAIRE

IN 1996 THE ICRC:



- visited 603 people detained in connection with the situation, in 100 places of detention;
- gave all detainees visited the opportunity to exchange Red Cross messages with their families (a total of about 1,100 messages were forwarded);
- continued an assistance programme, in cooperation with non-governmental organizations and local religious groups, to supply water, food and other essential items to some 4,800 persons held in 24 prisons;
- repaired and serviced water-supply and drainage systems in 13 prisons.



- facilitated the restoration and maintenance of contact between Rwandan refugees and their families through a Red Cross message network between the various camps set up in Zaire, between Zaire and Rwanda, and between Zaire and

other countries (for total figures, see *Rwanda*);

- coordinated a large-scale programme to register unaccompanied Rwandan minors among the refugees, with the aim of ultimately reuniting them with their families; this programme was carried out jointly with Save the Children Fund-UK, UNHCR, UNICEF and several non-governmental organizations (for total figures, see *Rwanda*);
- facilitated the restoration and maintenance of contact between Sudanese, Angolan and Ugandan refugees in Zaire and their relatives who had remained in their own countries; over 15,400 Red Cross messages were exchanged in this context;
- organized the repatriation to Zaire in April of 35 crew members and passengers of an aircraft belonging to the Zairian national airline which had had to make an emergency landing in Kamembe (Rwanda);

- organized the repatriation to Zaire in November of 12 Zairian soldiers and 34 members of their families who had fled the unrest in Kivu and given themselves up to the Ugandan armed forces.



- distributed as needed material assistance, food, seed and implements to a total of 25,000 families affected by intercommunal strife in the Masisi area;
- distributed ad hoc assistance (food and water) to Rwandan refugees passing through Goma on their way back to Rwanda;
- distributed emergency assistance to Rwandan and Burundian refugees and Zairian displaced persons fleeing the combat zones in eastern Zaire and heading for safer areas in the interior of the country, notably in Shabunda (to about 53,000 people), Kalemie (5,000 people), Kindu and Kisangani

The context in which the ICRC had worked until then changed radically when the ADFL launched its offensive in eastern Zaire in late September. Over the previous months, an ever-stronger xenophobia had taken hold of certain circles in Zaire, which accused the humanitarian organizations of passing on intelligence to the enemy. As the ADFL advanced, humanitarian workers in the east of the country were more openly and directly threatened by Zairian soldiers and representatives of the local authorities. The situation, too, became increasingly chaotic owing to the behaviour of the routed Zairian troops: there was widespread looting, vehicles were stolen from the humanitarian

collapse of law and order

(several hundred), and in Kigoma in Tanzania (several thousand).



- supported 19 health centres and other medical facilities in the Masisi area to enable them to collect and treat the sick and wounded left unaided because of the intercommunal disturbances;
- assisted the health centres and other medical facilities receiving the wounded and sick in and around Goma and Uvira; sent an expatriate surgeon to the Lemera hospital for the two months of May and June and transferred medical supplies for the Uvira hospital.



- through a project delegated to the Australian Red Cross, sank 20 wells in various villages on the Rusizi plain;

- carried out emergency work to improve access to drinking water for the displaced populations in the Masisi area;
- repaired 2 water-treatment plants in Goma and supported the work of Red Cross of Zaire volunteers to clean up the town and remove and bury the dead.



- continued supporting the Red Cross of Zaire so as to strengthen its emergency response capacity; 8 courses were held for over 600 volunteers and first-aid workers from 11 provinces;
- continued its support for the National Society's various programmes, in particular the clean-up campaigns for the Kinshasa markets and the training of school traffic wardens to ensure the safety of schoolchildren at main crossroads in the capital.



- held many humanitarian law courses for contingents of the Zairian armed forces, including troops maintaining security in the UNHCR refugee camps in Kivu; a manual prepared by the delegation, in co-operation with specialized Zairian officers, was distributed to most of the participants;
- organized a seminar in May for Zairian officers, from all operational services, responsible for instructing troops in the humanitarian rules for behaviour in war situations;
- publicized a humanitarian message adapted to the circumstances by putting up 12,000 posters in Masisi villages.

victims trapped

organizations and law and order broke down completely. In such circumstances, the ICRC, like all the other humanitarian organizations, was forced to withdraw its expatriate staff first from Uvira, then Bukavu, and finally Goma. Hundreds of thousands of people — Rwandan and Burundian refugees and Zairian displaced persons — were thus left with no assistance whatsoever.

From then on, the ICRC repeatedly contacted the Zairian authorities and the ADFL leadership so as to gain access to the people trapped in the Kivu region and to remind the powers that be of their obligation to respect and ensure respect for the rules of humanitarian conduct by all concerned. It also drew the attention of representatives of the international community on several occasions, at international meetings and during bilateral talks, to the urgent need to ensure the safety both of the local population in eastern Zaire and of the displaced people and refugees there, and to see that the humanitarian aid they needed could get through to them. An appeal to this effect was likewise made by the ICRC President at a press conference in Geneva on 8 November.

Besides these diplomatic approaches, the ICRC mobilized the necessary resources and established a plan of action to be ready to step in as soon as the opportunity arose. In late November, although as yet unable to intervene in the combat zone itself, it returned to Goma, Bukavu and Uvira with the consent of the Zairian authorities and the ADFL rebels. It also tried to carry out its activities on the edge of the combat zone, in regions still controlled by the Zairian government where people fleeing the fighting — refugees and displaced persons — were beginning to arrive in large numbers, and on the Tanzanian shore of Lake Tanganyika. But the perilous situation and logistical difficulties seriously hampered its efforts to become operational in eastern Zaire, so that by the end of the year, the ICRC, like the other humanitarian organizations, still did not have access to large areas of Kivu.

*help for refugees
on the road*

On returning to Goma, the ICRC made contact again with its local employees and the Red Cross of Zaire volunteers. During the temporary absence of the ICRC's expatriate staff, the latter had continued to help the conflict victims as best they could with the resources at their disposal, rendering first aid to the wounded and sick and collecting the bodies strewn throughout the town to give them a decent burial. When the mass return of Rwandan refugees scattered in the neighbouring districts began on 15 November, the ICRC distributed emergency relief supplies (food and water) to people in transit and evacuated sick or wounded refugees. ICRC teams also went outside the town to the site of an abandoned camp where refugees who had previously hidden in the bush had gathered, many of whom were wounded, sick or still very debilitated after weeks of wandering up-country. The ICRC organized transport for them to Rwanda. Once this emergency was over, the delegates tried to extend the range of their activities around Goma. Emphasis

was placed on supporting the medical facilities in and around the town, assisting particularly vulnerable groups of the population, repairing water treatment installations and restoring contact between unaccompanied minors and their families. The same approach was adopted in Bukavu, where Red Cross of Zaire volunteers and ICRC local employees had also continued their work during the delegates' temporary withdrawal. In Uvira, however, only missions to assess needs were possible and conditions remained unsuitable for activities to be resumed there. Although requests were made to the rebel leaders for access to the people held under their authority, no consent had been received by the end of the year.

In the immediate vicinity of the combat zone, the ICRC managed several times to distribute medical aid, food and other essentials to Rwandan and Burundian refugees and to the Zairian displaced persons gathering there. The most significant operation of this kind took place in Shabunda, where the ICRC distributed 60 tonnes of food in December to some 53,000 Rwandan refugees and Zairian displaced persons.

CONGO

In 1996, the situation in Congo was generally calm, but the complexity of the political situation and the constant presence in the capital of armed militiamen from all parties were a source of latent tension throughout the year.

The ICRC continued its activities to spread knowledge of humanitarian law and support the National Society and, in cooperation with the Federation and the Congolese Red Cross, distributed food and other aid to several hundred people suspected of being linked in some way with Rwanda, who had been forced to flee Kinshasa and had sought refuge in Brazzaville.

IN 1996 THE ICRC:



— continued its assistance to the Congolese Red Cross in order to strengthen its emergency response capacity; for this purpose, 3 training courses were held for volun-

teers in Ouessou, Owando and Djambala.



— organized several humanitarian law courses for contingents of the police and armed forces in Braz-

zaville and Pointe-Noire, and for youth groups of the various political parties; — organized a humanitarian law seminar for officers from all over the country in charge of instructing troops in the humanitarian rules.

YAOUNDÉ

Regional delegation

(Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad,
Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, São Tomé and Príncipe)

The countries covered by the Yaoundé regional delegation enjoyed relative stability in 1996. Despite this, several events of a violent nature or linked to the extreme poverty of certain sections of the population occurred during the year and required special action by the ICRC.

Bakassi peninsula dispute

The border dispute between Cameroon and Nigeria over the Bakassi peninsula — which was submitted to the International Court of Justice in 1994 — gave rise to renewed clashes between the Nigerian and Cameroonian armed forces in February and again in April 1996. In this context, the ICRC reminded the Cameroonian authorities of their obligation to comply with the provisions of humanitarian law as laid down by the Geneva Conventions and Protocol I, which were fully applicable to the situation. In cooperation with the Cameroon Red Cross Society, the ICRC distributed ad hoc medical assistance to the military medical facilities treating the wounded, as well as regular relief supplies throughout the year to the population along the front line. The ICRC also approached the authorities to request access to the people captured during the events. After obtaining their consent in March, the ICRC was able to visit Nigerian civilian internees regularly as from 20 March and Nigerian prisoners of war as from 8 May. It also transmitted to the Nigerian authorities a list drawn up by the Cameroonian authorities of 128 people — 127 soldiers and one policeman — reported missing during the events; the cases of three Cameroonian civilians reported missing in this context were also submitted to the Nigerian authorities.⁸

first visit to detainees in Equatorial Guinea

In Equatorial Guinea the ICRC, having obtained the authorities' consent in December 1995, made its first visit in April to the people held in two prisons and eight police stations; one person detained for security reasons was registered. During the year, the ICRC also obtained the authorities' permission to extend its visits to people held in military camps.

In the Central African Republic, three mutinies by certain army units broke out in Bangui in April, May and November. The first, which was triggered by the discontent of soldiers who had long been left unpaid, did not culminate in

⁸ For an account of approaches and activities on the Nigerian side in connection with the Bakassi border dispute, see *Lagos*, pp. 49-50.

outbreaks of violence. But the May mutiny, in which the mutineers' demands were political as well as economic, led to fierce clashes between the mutineers and forces loyal to the government. Many civilians were also killed or injured when the capital became a battlefield where anarchy temporarily prevailed. Several dozen people — mutineers and civilians — were arrested during the events. The crisis was resolved about ten days later with the signing of an agreement between the parties, stipulating in particular that the persons arrested would be released, that a government of national unity would be formed and that a new prime minister would be appointed. The November mutiny did not result in violent clashes between the mutineers and forces loyal to the government. The mutineers barricaded themselves in several parts of the capital and defied the government from there. At the end of the year, the stalemate continued.

*mutinies in the
heart of Bangui*

In May and November the ICRC assisted the National Society's volunteers, who took effective action to evacuate the wounded, retrieve the bodies of the people killed, set up first-aid posts and help medical facilities. It did not visit the people arrested during the events in May, as they were released soon after. At the hospital run by the French contingents it did, however, meet about thirty of the people who had been briefly held in custody. In a letter to the highest authorities, the ICRC reminded them of the need to ensure that bearers of weapons, whoever they may be, complied with the basic rules of humanitarian law, in particular the rules stipulating that people not taking part in the hostilities (civilians) or no longer doing so (the wounded and prisoners) must be treated with all due respect.

In Chad, after years of conflict, signs of a tentative return to normal began to appear in 1996. Armed clashes between government forces and opposition groups lessened in number and intensity during the year. A new constitution was adopted by referendum in March; presidential elections, the first since the country's accession to independence in 1964, were held in June and won by the outgoing president, who formed a government of national unity and reorganized the army and the *gendarmerie* units. After the elections, however, certain armed opposition groups which did not accept the results hardened their positions. In this context, the ICRC continued its activities to help people detained for security reasons, to spread knowledge of international humanitarian law among the Chadian armed forces and to support the National Society.

As diseases such as cholera were reported during the year in some parts of Chad, Cameroon and Equatorial Guinea with very precarious hygiene conditions and access to medical care, the ICRC supported the emergency public health programmes set up by the Red Cross Societies of Cameroon, Chad and Equatorial Guinea to prevent the spread of epidemics.

Besides addressing these particular priorities, the Yaoundé regional delegation pursued its long-term activities to promote knowledge of and compliance with humanitarian law. Within its own areas of competence, the ICRC also continued to support the region's National Societies.

On 5 July, São Tomé and Príncipe deposited its instruments of accession to the 1977 Protocols additional to the Geneva Conventions with the Swiss government.

IN 1996 THE ICRC:



- in Cameroon, regularly visited the Nigerian civilian internees and prisoners of war held in connection with the Bakassi conflict. At the end of the year, the ICRC was visiting 31 civilian internees and 86 prisoners of war;
- transmitted to the Nigerian authorities, at the request of the Cameroonian authorities, a list of 128 persons missing since the fighting in February and notified them of 3 civilians also reported missing in connection with the Bakassi conflict;
- in Chad, visited 51 persons held for security reasons in 6 places of detention;
- in Equatorial Guinea, had access in April for the first time to 10 places of detention and registered one person held for security reasons;
- in Cameroon, Chad and Equatorial Guinea, distributed various relief sup-

- plies to meet the needs identified in the places of detention visited there;
- gave all detainees visited in the various aforesaid contexts – particularly the Nigerian civilian internees and prisoners of war held in Cameroon; – the opportunity to exchange Red Cross messages with their families.



- helped to restore and maintain contact between Chadian, southern Sudanese, Rwandan and Burundian refugees and their families by means of a Red Cross message network run from Yaoundé in cooperation with the National Societies of the region.



- distributed, in cooperation with the Red Cross of Chad, 27 tonnes of food and 280 cooking pots to

some 2,000 Chadian refugees back from Diffa (Niger) to enable them to return to their places of origin;

- distributed, in cooperation with the Cameroon Red Cross Society, food, implements and fishing tackle to about 1,000 people displaced by the Bakassi conflict, as well as food and various essentials to 70 elderly and disabled people who had not wished to leave their villages near the front line.



- gave ad hoc assistance to military medical facilities to enable them to treat people injured during the Bakassi conflict;
- supported the work of the Central African Red Cross Society during the May and November mutinies in Bangui by placing medicines and other medical supplies at its disposal;

- helped the Cameroon, Chad and Equatorial Guinea National Societies to combat the spread of diseases such as cholera by providing them with medicines and other medical supplies.



- helped to foster dialogue among the region's National Societies on the basis of specific mutual interests, and for this purpose organized a meeting of their leaders in Yaoundé in October in which representatives of the Federation and the Swiss Red Cross also took part;
- continued its cooperation programme with the region's National Societies, concentrating in accordance with their particular needs and to varying degrees on structural development, the training of staff and volunteers, support for activities to spread know-

ledge of international humanitarian law and/or on strengthening the various National Societies' emergency response capacities;

- supported the efforts of the emerging Gabonese Red Cross Society to become properly established by helping it to set up trained and equipped first-aid teams and a dissemination department at its headquarters. Financial aid was also provided to convene the constituent general assembly at which the emerging National Society adopted its statutes.



- continued its efforts, adapted to each situation, to promote greater understanding and acceptance of international humanitarian law and of the ICRC among the region's various target audiences (the civilian and military authorities, the armed

forces, the police, various associations, academic circles and the general public);

- prepared and distributed humanitarian law manuals in Cameroon for military and police instructors and manuals for soldiers on humanitarian law and first aid, and initiated a similar programme in Chad;
- held a seminar in Yaoundé, attended by people with national responsibility in 21 French-speaking African countries for humanitarian law training programmes for the armed forces, to assess the progress made by these programmes, exchange the teaching materials designed and encourage the sharing of experience.

Southern Africa

ANGOLA

The negotiations between the Angolan government and UNITA to implement the terms of the Lusaka Peace Protocol signed on 20 November 1994 were the salient feature of 1996. These negotiations centred on the confinement to barracks and subsequent demobilization of UNITA* troops and government armed forces and police. The international community reacted to the various delays in this process during the year by exerting pressure on the parties to comply with the agreement to which they had freely subscribed in 1994. In particular, it extended the mandate of UNAVEM III* five times for short periods only and threatened in October to impose sanctions on UNITA. The confinement of UNITA soldiers was thereupon completed. The selection of 26,300 UNITA troops to be absorbed into the Angolan armed forces ended in December and their integration

began immediately. Demobilization of the other soldiers did not really start until the end of the year, thereby delaying for several months the opening of political negotiations to form a government of national unity.

In this context the ICRC continued, as in the previous year, to supervise the release of persons held by both sides in connection with the conflict: it visited the detainees, was present at their release and arranged for their return to the place of their choice. In addition, it sought to trace people reported missing or arrested and submitted these cases to the authorities concerned. Under an arrangement with UNAVEM III and WFP,* it also provided assistance during the first five months of the year to UNITA soldiers and their families who were in four confinement centres in Huambo province. This programme was handed

*overseeing the release
of detainees*



⊕ ICRC delegation ⊕ ICRC sub-delegation ⊕ ICRC office ⊕ Prosthetic/orthotic centre/workshop

* UNITA: National Union for the Total Independence of Angola

* UNAVEM III: United Nations Angola Verification Mission (III)

* WFP: World Food Programme

over to WFP at the end of May. The ICRC then took part in a joint programme of UNICEF, the Humanitarian Assistance Coordination Unit (United Nations Department of Humanitarian Affairs) and Save the Children Fund-UK for the purpose of finding, through the Red Cross message network, the relatives of child soldiers who had lost contact with their families.

As the situation stabilized, the general living conditions of the civilian population improved but remained precarious: although there was no new famine, the spring harvest was inadequate and trade was less substantial than anticipated since the free movement of goods and people was not yet fully restored. The ICRC, which had begun to pare down its activities in Angola, had to distribute seed to the most vulnerable people on the Planalto in July, September and October, as the last general food distributions had taken place in April, at the end of the transitional period. In order to obtain seed locally, the ICRC exchanged flour and other essentials for seed in areas with surplus output. To help the Planalto achieve food self-sufficiency and to improve the population's diet, the ICRC continued the programme it had launched the previous year⁹ and, in cooperation with the authorities, set up vegetable seed multiplication projects. It also developed a reforestation programme. In autumn, since the situation was no longer urgent, the ICRC phased out its assistance and agricultural support programmes; some of them were handed over to the authorities or to other humanitarian organizations.

In 1996 the ICRC, in cooperation from July with the British Red Cross, continued its support programme for various health posts and hospitals in the Huambo and Benguela provinces by training medical staff and providing medicines and other medical supplies, as well as food for the staff working there and for the hospital patients. Repairs to the sanitary installations and equipment were also carried out. In general, however, the year was devoted to finding partners — either the Ministry of Health, development aid organizations or a foreign National Society — to take over the ICRC's medical programmes, since the changing situation in the country no longer justified its emergency intervention. The transfer of these programmes was easier in the government areas, where the authorities were often able to support the medical facilities and where many non-governmental organizations were working. The UNITA-controlled areas were more difficult to reach and there were fewer non-governmental organizations there. As it was not yet possible to transfer the centres in the UNITA-held Bailundo region, the ICRC began to provide them with assistance to enable them to keep going for the first six months of 1997.

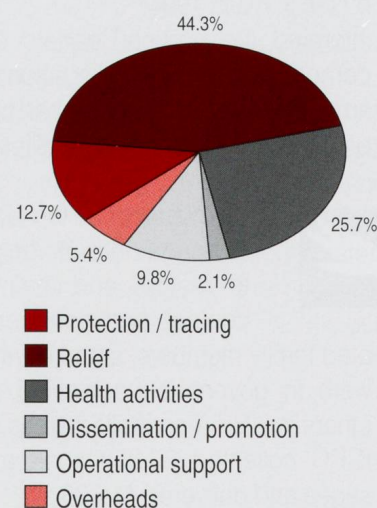
The ICRC also continued its prosthetic/orthotic programme, consisting of the limb-fitting facilities for amputees at Bomba Alta (Huambo), Kuito and

*transition to
self-sufficiency*

ANGOLA

Total expenditure in 1996:

Sfr 23,680,570



⁹ See the ICRC's 1995 Annual Report, p. 73.

assistance to amputees

Neves Bendinha (Luanda) and the orthopaedic component production unit at Neves Bendinha. It was decided to open a second component production unit at Huambo, since needs could not be met by the Neves Bendinha unit alone, which opened in 1995 and also supplied components to other organizations. To coordinate prosthetic/orthotic programmes in Angola, the ICRC set up a coordination group in which all organizations involved in such activities for amputees there were represented, along with an Angolan amputees' association.

ANGOLA

IN 1996 THE ICRC:



- supervised the release of 205 detainees, including 58 freed by the government and 147 by UNITA.

On being released, they were all given material assistance (clothes, food and sometimes financial help to cover travel costs);

- continued to approach UNITA for information about the fate and whereabouts of the 78 detainees last visited by the ICRC in 1994;
- informed the political leaders concerned of over 150 allegations of arrest or disappearance that had been brought to its attention by families.



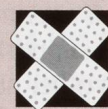
- by means of a Red Cross message network, helped to restore and maintain contact between separated family members, some of whom were in government-controlled and others in UNITA-controlled areas; the ICRC collected 37,388 such messages and delivered 41,603;

- helped to restore contact between child soldiers and their families by enabling them to send and receive Red Cross messages in the course of a joint programme with other organizations;
- organized 85 family reunifications for 286 people who were in UNITA- or government-controlled areas of the country.



- distributed food and other essentials until April to over 200,000 people in Huambo province and the Ganda and Cusse (Huila province) regions;
- distributed seed for beans and other vegetables to 75,000 families in July and for oleaginous plants and sorghum to 60,000 families in September and October;
- distributed food until the end of May to UNITA soldiers and their families in four camps in Huambo province;

- conducted vegetable seed multiplication and reforestation projects.



- continued its support for about 20 health centres and hospitals on the Planalto by providing them with medicines and other medical supplies, and food for patients and staff; it also trained local medical staff. This project was delegated to the British Red Cross from July on;
- took part, in cooperation with the British Red Cross from July on, in two vaccination campaigns conducted by the authorities in the Huambo and Benguela provinces.



- fitted 1,550 amputees with 1,609 artificial limbs, repaired the prostheses of longer-term amputees and distributed 2,525 orthopaedic components to other organizations engaged in prosthetic/orthotic activities in Angola;

An extensive sanitary rehabilitation programme was set up by the ICRC during the year and carried out on the Planalto, both in UNITA-controlled and in government-controlled areas; in some towns it was developed in cooperation with the German and Netherlands Red Cross Societies. The water-supply system for hospitals, health centres and several towns was repaired and water sources were installed or rehabilitated in many municipalities; this programme was seen by the ICRC to have a direct positive effect on the health of the population. By the end of the year, it had handed over some of the repaired

- set up a second orthopaedic component production unit in Huambo.



- repaired or built 130 water sources in 20 municipalities and repaired the water supply system in several towns: Ukuma, Caala and Tchindjenje (Huambo province), Ganda (Benguela province), Bailundo and Alto Hama (Bailundo region). The work at Caala on the one hand, and Bailundo and Alto Hama on the other, was carried out through projects delegated to the Netherlands Red Cross and the German Red Cross respectively;
- repaired the sanitation systems at the Kuito and Huambo hospitals and in many health centres on the Planalto;
- these various projects enabled some 750,000 people on the Planalto to be provided with drinking water.



- trained National Society staff in tracing and related activities and placed 4 of its offices at the National Society's disposal;
- gave financial support to the National Society, in particular by providing it with vehicles.



- organized humanitarian law dissemination sessions for several civilian audiences (the authorities, journalists, schoolchildren and villagers) to increase their awareness of the ICRC's work;
- gave briefings on humanitarian law, the ICRC and the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement to all UNAVEM III members (officers and military observers, police officers and instructors) and to UNITA soldiers in confinement centres;

- produced programmes for Angolan radio and television designed to protect the civilian population against abuse and to spread knowledge of the ICRC's mandate.



- drew attention to its campaign against anti-personnel mines by organizing briefings for journalists and representatives of the authorities and raising the subject during dissemination sessions supported by the Angolan government;
- informed the population of the harm and suffering caused by the indiscriminate use of mines; information sessions were held particularly in schools and with promotional material specially devised for the campaign, adapted locally by the ICRC and used by the national media.

*reuniting separated
families*

facilities to the local authorities and in other regions had found partners prepared to continue the work.

The ICRC continued to concentrate throughout the year on restoring and maintaining contact between people separated by the conflict, even though greater freedom of movement in Angola brought improved communication and with it a decline in the number of Red Cross messages. As stability increased, the ICRC was also able to intensify training for the Angola Red Cross to take over its activities in this field. Lastly, a number of dispersed families whose members were living in different (UNITA-controlled or government-controlled) parts of the country were reunited.

Generally speaking, the economic problems of a country devastated by war were felt more and more severely during the year, particularly in the towns, where social unrest led to two government reshuffles, in June and September. The demobilization process was also affected: since the social reintegration projects for soldiers who had not been selected for absorption in the national army were slow to materialize, many of them deserted and security conditions deteriorated sharply as a result. The rural population suffered particularly from marauders and many civilians, as well as staff of humanitarian organizations, died in attacks on the country's main roads. The ICRC was itself the victim of several security incidents in June and December, which fortunately went no further than theft. Owing to these incidents, certain operations by the ICRC and other humanitarian organizations working in the field were suspended.

*spreading the
humanitarian message*

In an attempt to protect the civilian population in rural areas against the depredations of armed groups, the ICRC produced weekly programmes to convey humanitarian messages based on local cultural traditions and thereby encourage respect for the defenceless. These programmes were broadcast by the national radio service. The ICRC also organized courses on humanitarian law for the soldiers confined to barracks. In order to enhance respect for humanitarian law and the Red Cross emblem and to facilitate the ICRC's work by making it better known, similar courses were held for all members of UNAVEM III, for Angolan journalists (especially those working for UNITA radio), local authorities and the Angola Red Cross.

The ICRC continued its campaign against anti-personnel mines by holding briefings for journalists, which were also attended by representatives of the authorities, and by discussing the problem at its humanitarian law courses. The government responded by deciding to support the campaign and demand the total prohibition of mines in accordance with OAU resolutions 1593 and 1628.¹⁰ In addition, the ICRC staged a campaign to alert the Angolan public,

¹⁰ See also *Operational Activities* p. 33, *Ethiopia* p. 88-89 and *The law and legal considerations*, pp. 274-276.

and above all schoolchildren, to the dangers of mines; it furthermore organized visits for international media representatives to draw attention to the plight of the victims of the approximately ten million mines strewn throughout Angola. As in the previous year,¹¹ a group of traditional singers and dancers accompanied the ICRC during its activities on the Planalto. They mainly helped to explain the cutback in ICRC activities, especially those to provide medical and food aid, and to encourage the population's acceptance of it.

HARARE

Regional delegation

(Botswana, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, Zambia, Zimbabwe)

The countries covered by the Harare delegation enjoyed peace in 1996 and relative political and social stability, despite the hardships experienced by most of the population, especially in Malawi and Zambia. The regional delegation concentrated on its cooperation programmes with the region's National Societies and assisted them in their development and activities, mainly providing training and material support to increase their emergency response capacity and familiarizing them with methods of promoting humanitarian law and restoring family links. It also encouraged the National Societies' structural development, in accordance with their circumstances and to varying degrees. In general, it helped to strengthen solidarity among the region's various National Societies by facilitating contact between them. The National Societies, for their part, asked the ICRC to become more closely associated with their regional grouping, the Southern Africa Partnership. The regional delegation furthermore continued its work to foster greater understanding and respect for humanitarian law among various target groups in the countries of southern Africa — the armed forces, the police, the authorities, academic circles and the general public. In some countries, special emphasis was placed on spreading knowledge of that law among the police. Missions to assess the progress of national military training programmes in international humanitarian law took place in countries where the ICRC gradually managed to persuade the armed forces to provide such training themselves. It also continued to encourage States to adopt measures for the

*promotion of
humanitarian law*

¹¹ See the ICRC's 1995 Annual Report, p. 74.

implementation of humanitarian law at national level; it did so either by organizing seminars in certain countries or by instituting a study — in Mozambique — on the conformity of national legislation with humanitarian law. In addition, the regional delegation's office in Harare served as a logistics base for the agricultural programme in Angola.

In Botswana, the ICRC and the Federation carried out a joint mission to the National Society to help it resume its activities.

In Malawi, the situation remained relatively calm during the year, despite some tension within the governing coalition which led to the withdrawal of one of the constituent parties, depriving the President's party of its parliamentary majority. The ICRC supervised the construction of a hospital ward at Zomba prison to provide medical care for the detainees and completed the installation of new kitchens in the country's two largest prisons. Since the completion in 1995¹² of its programme of visits to Malawi's prisons to examine the material and psychological conditions of detention, the ICRC had sought to ensure, by drawing attention to their situation, that its work in aid of the detainees there would be continued. These efforts bore fruit and in 1996 an organization, Penal Reform International, stepped in on their behalf.

In October 1996, Mozambique celebrated the second anniversary of peace and democracy in the country. Earlier in the year, in June, the ICRC had signed a three-year cooperation agreement with the National Society to help it to work in a peacetime environment. It was the first agreement of this kind to be concluded in the region.

In Zambia, preparations for the presidential and legislative elections on 18 November gave rise to tension: feelings ran high among the opposition parties over the constitutional amendment passed by parliament on 16 May that barred former President Kaunda from standing for election. In view of the situation, the ICRC held courses for the Zambia Red Cross Society to strengthen its emergency response capacity and supplied it with the necessary material to do so, particularly blankets, first-aid kits, radio equipment and Red Cross emblems to be displayed in various ways. The regional delegation also went on mission to Zambia several times to assess the situation and the National Society's level of preparedness. On 18 November, the elections finally took place in peace and quiet, and were won by the outgoing President and his party, the MMD.*

In Zimbabwe, the presidential elections were held in April in an atmosphere of calm and the population returned the President to office. The National

¹² See the ICRC's 1995 Annual Report, p. 76.

* MMD: Movement for Multiparty Democracy

Society had set up first-aid posts in most districts; the ICRC had given the National Society leaders prior training in that type of activity and had provided some of the necessary material.

HARARE
regional delegation

IN 1996 THE ICRC:



- handed over 1,600 books donated by the British and American National Societies to the libraries of Malawi's 4 main prisons and distributed 448 blankets to prisons in the north and east of the country;
- checked that the sanitary facilities and kitchens built by the ICRC since 1993 in Malawi's prisons were in working order.



- coordinated and stepped up the programme conducted by the region's National Societies to restore family links. The National Societies, particularly those in Zambia and Namibia, collected a total of 2,456 Red Cross messages from refugees from various African countries (mainly from the Great Lakes region) and delivered 3,955 to them.



- supported the development and activities of the region's National Societies, concentrating – as in Zambia and Zimbabwe – on strengthening their emergency response capacity, particularly during electoral periods.



- concentrated specifically on promoting knowledge of humanitarian law among the police forces in Botswana, Malawi, Mozambique and Zambia; organized 3 training courses in Mozambique for police officers from all over the country;
- took part, *inter alia*, in the regional course for peace-keeping troops, which was organized by the Harare military academy and attended by high-ranking officers from the various countries of the region;

- held seminars to promote the implementation of humanitarian law at national level in Namibia, Zambia and Zimbabwe; 20 to 25 participants representing the national authorities (executive, legislative and judicial) attended each of the seminars.



- in cooperation with the region's National Societies, continued its campaign against anti-personnel mines, particularly by approaching governments, alerting the groups concerned and encouraging mine clearance.

PRETORIA

Regional delegation

(Comoros, Lesotho, Madagascar, Mauritius, Seychelles, South Africa, Swaziland)

The year in the countries covered by the Pretoria delegation was relatively calm, even though some of them still experienced occasional outbreaks of violence, such as KwaZulu/Natal in South Africa, or a certain political instability, such as Lesotho and Madagascar. The ICRC monitored the situation in those countries and, where necessary, took action on the victims' behalf or helped the National Society concerned to assist them. In general, it supported the National Societies' development and activities, concentrating according to needs and to varying degrees on the training of staff and volunteers, structural development and support for activities to spread knowledge of humanitarian law, and on strengthening their operational capacity to respond to emergency situations or take part in development projects for preventive purposes. The regional delegation also continued its work to promote knowledge of and respect for humanitarian law among the various target audiences in the region (armed forces, the police, the authorities, academic circles, schools and the general public). It continued to encourage States to adopt measures for the implementation of humanitarian law at national level and to accede to the 1980 United Nations Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons. In cooperation with the South African Red Cross Society, it furthermore played an active part in the ICRC's campaign against anti-personnel mines.

violence in KwaZulu/Natal

In May, former President Frederik de Klerk's National Party left the government of national unity, formed immediately after South Africa's first free and democratic elections in 1994, to join the ranks of the opposition. At the end of the year, the country adopted a new constitution. On the whole, the problems experienced in 1995 persisted: crime and insecurity grew, mostly in the cities, and KwaZulu/Natal in particular was affected by political violence.

From September 1995 on, the violence and the number of victims in KwaZulu/Natal had gradually diminished as more security forces appeared on the scene and people responsible for acts of violence were arrested. Then violence erupted again during the municipal election campaign, which began in mid-March 1996. However, the elections, which were initially postponed for a month, eventually took place on 26 June in a relatively calm atmosphere; the peace initiative announced by the ANC* and IFP* regional leaders just before

* ANC: African National Congress

* IFP: Inkatha Freedom Party

the elections and approved by President Mandela and the leader of the IFP had defused the situation. The IFP won the day thanks to the support of the rural regions, while the urban districts voted for the ANC. But implementation of the peace plan was delayed and, apart from the regions where local initiatives were taken, tension was still acute in KwaZulu/Natal at the end of the year. It was not, however, the only province in South Africa to be affected by violence: in view of the protests and sometimes very forceful reactions of the population to the increase in crime in the Western Cape and Eastern Cape, Gauteng and KwaZulu/Natal provinces, the authorities announced new measures to combat it which led to large-scale arrests of suspects.

Against this background, the ICRC continued its activities in aid of detainees, both by visiting them in police stations or prisons and by taking part as an observer or expert in working groups on prison reform or health in prisons. On 16 August, it also signed an agreement with the authorities giving it access to all categories of detainees, which replaced the previous one signed in 1992 with the former government, and on 31 October it gave the government a working paper covering the main problems encountered during the ICRC visits.

visits to detainees

Together with the South African Red Cross Society, the ICRC carried out relief operations for the victims of political violence, primarily in KwaZulu/Natal where the number of displaced people was very high. During the elections the National Society also set up first-aid posts, with supplies provided by the ICRC. So as to withdraw progressively from the assistance programme it had organized in the shantytowns around Durban, where the situation was no longer critical, the ICRC increased its support for the National Society to enable it to set up development projects there.

In view of the forthcoming elections, efforts to promote the humanitarian principles and values of the ICRC and the National Society during the first part of the year were centred on KwaZulu/Natal. Arrangements were also made with the local radio stations there and the national press to convey a humanitarian message to a wider audience, particularly schoolchildren. At the same time the ICRC continued its programme of training in humanitarian law for the South African armed forces, with which it had cooperated since 1995 to include humanitarian law courses in military training,¹³ and for local branches of the National Society.

promotion of humanitarian law

During a mission to the Comoros in July, the ICRC was able to ascertain once again, as it had done in October 1995, that there were no longer any persons detained for security reasons following the September 1995 coup. The ICRC also carried out two missions, in April and July, to the Comoros Red Crescent to help it attain recognition as a National Society by the Movement.

¹³ See the ICRC's 1995 Annual Report, p. 80.

In Lesotho, the previous two years' unrest continued in 1996, though it had somewhat abated. Several people were arrested following coup rumours in February, but were released soon after. Disputes over grazing rights broke out between the communities in the interior of the country; several villages were set on fire, leaving hundreds of people utterly destitute. The Lesotho Red Cross Society twice provided them with assistance in the form of blankets, clothing, tents and food. Livestock thefts on the border with South Africa also sparked clashes resulting in several casualties and induced the authorities of the two countries to deploy soldiers on either side of the border.

In Madagascar, the ICRC pursued its programme to assess the nutritional situation and respond to needs for assistance in the country's places of detention. This programme began in 1995 following ICRC visits to prisons there.¹⁴ In 1996 the ICRC, together with the Malagasy prisons' Catholic chaplain service, completed its round of visits to 35 places of detention and their respective penal camps. In some cases, it supplied food aid. It also spoke with the local and national authorities to remind them of their responsibilities with regard to the detainees' living conditions. In addition, the ICRC organized a pilot project for community first-aid work in cooperation with Malagasy Red Cross Society volunteers. The project was a success and plans were made to extend it to other parts of the country in 1997. Lastly, the ICRC made its annual visit to 25 people detained for security reasons; it had previously asked the authorities to have certain detainees transferred to other places of detention or to hospital, and the transfer of some of them did take place.

The ICRC went to Mauritius in June to meet the country's new authorities. It visited several local branches of the Mauritius Red Cross Society in order to assess their needs and help to strengthen the National Society's general operational capacity.

¹⁴ See the ICRC's 1995 Annual Report, pp. 78-79.

IN 1996 THE ICRC:



- in South Africa, visited 170 detainees during 25 visits to 19 places of detention.

On the basis of regular notifications by the police, it visited in particular all people arrested in connection with the political violence in the KwaZulu/Natal province;

- in Madagascar, visited 25 security detainees in 7 prisons and 1 hospital;
- provided financial support and material assistance as required to the persons visited.



- by means of a Red Cross message network, helped to maintain contact between refugees from various African countries, most of whom were in South Africa, and their families abroad.



- distributed in KwaZulu/Natal, in cooperation with the National Society, food aid and essential items (blankets, tarpaulins, cooking sets and jerrycans) to an average of over 1,000 people per month.



- developed *inter alia* a project for community relief work with Malagasy Red Cross volunteers and supplied the necessary material for the first-aid posts set up by the South African Red Cross Society when elections were held in KwaZulu/Natal;
- held an annual workshop in May for information and dissemination officers of the National Societies of Botswana, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mozambique, South Africa, Swaziland, Zambia and Zimbabwe.



- assessed (with the help in particular of an Australian officer) the progress made in incorporating regular instruction in humanitarian law in the training given to the South African armed forces;
- produced a video in the Zulu language to spread humanitarian messages during the run-up to elections in KwaZulu/Natal.



- informed the public about the Movement's activities to bring about a total ban on anti-personnel mines;
- publicized the campaign's promotional material via the main South African media.



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East Africa

ERITREA

In May, Eritrea and Yemen signed an agreement in which the two countries undertook to submit their dispute over the Hanish Islands, which had culminated in an international armed conflict between them in December 1995,¹⁵ to an ad hoc court of arbitration.

In 1996, the ICRC continued its efforts to establish closer relations with the Eritrean government and encourage it to accede to the Geneva Conventions and their Additional Protocols, but in vain.

The ICRC also renewed the agreement concluded the previous year with the emerging Red Cross Society of Eritrea to finance Circus Eritrea, a local non-governmental organization composed of street children which, during its performances, informs the general public about various subjects such as AIDS or personal hygiene. Under this agreement, a humani-

tarian message concerning the Fundamental Principles of the Movement was incorporated into the Circus Eritrea programme.

ETHIOPIA

In 1996, a year after a federal structure was established and general elections were held at regional and federal levels, the armed opposition movements representing various ethnic groups in the administrative regions continued their fight against the EPRDF*-dominated Ethiopian government. Tension ran particularly high in Regions 4 and 5 (Oromia National Regional State and

¹⁵ See the ICRC's 1995 *Annual Report*, p. 81.

* EPRDF: Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front

Somali National Regional State). In June, two of the main armed opposition groups active in those regions, the OLF* and the ONLF,* published a joint communiqué in which they announced their intention of coordinating their diplomatic, political and military action against the regime in power in Addis Ababa. Other opposition movements such as the IFLO* and Al Ittihad also made themselves felt during the year; there were clashes on several occasions along the Somali border, in the Gedo region, between Al Ittihad combatants and a Somali faction, the SNF,* which was supported by the Ethiopian army. In the most sensitive regions, the federal government stepped up its military presence and took a number of security measures designed to combat the rise of the armed opposition and to cut off any support for these movements by the civilian population; in particular, militia groups were formed in the rural areas and committees in the urban areas to identify opposition group members or sympathizers.

In this context, the ICRC concentrated on continuing its visits to people imprisoned in connection with the change of regime in 1991 or for reasons of national security. In general, several difficulties were encountered in doing so. Only partial and irregular access was possible to detainees held by the military authorities. Moreover, the transfer of decision-making power from the capital to the regions proved detrimental on several occasions to the continuation of visits to persons held by the civilian authorities. These difficulties were the subject of regular ICRC representations to the civilian and military authorities at both federal and regional levels. By the end of the year, not all the problems encountered by the ICRC in obtaining access to all detainees had been solved, but the ongoing dialogue gave cause for optimism.

access to detainees

When particularly acute needs were observed, the ICRC also took direct action to improve health conditions in some places of detention by providing medicines, other medical supplies and hygiene items as necessary, or by advising the medical staff or carrying out sanitation work. In addition, as tuberculosis was the chief cause of death in Ethiopian places of detention, special attention was paid to combating it there. Throughout the year the ICRC continued the anti-tuberculosis campaign it had begun in four places of detention in 1994, though the campaign's effectiveness was partially jeopardized by the fact that almost 40% of the detainees being treated for tuberculosis were released before their treatment was complete. This problem was discussed with the justice and health authorities, but no solution had been found by the end of

* OLF: Oromo Liberation Front

* ONLF: Ogaden National Liberation Front

* IFLO: Islamic Front for the Liberation of Oromo

* SNF: Somali National Front

the year. The ICRC also gave detainees held in places of detention under the civilian authorities' responsibility the opportunity to exchange Red Cross messages with their families; this service could be offered only to a limited extent to detainees held under the responsibility of the military authorities. To ensure that the judicial guarantees provided for by humanitarian law were respected, the ICRC furthermore continued throughout the year to follow the court sessions of the trials, which began in 1994, of dignitaries of the former regime and submitted a report to the Ethiopian authorities during the year on the basic judicial guarantees afforded to detainees.

Since some of the difficulties of access to detainees were due to the fact that the newly instituted regional authorities knew little or nothing about the ICRC, the delegation concentrated its efforts on familiarizing them with humanitarian law, i.e. informing them about the ICRC and its operating principles and making known the basic rules of humanitarian law, especially those concerning the respect to which the civilian population and detainees are entitled. Many such dissemination sessions were held for the armed forces' personnel in all regions of the country. Besides this special effort, the delegation continued its activities to promote knowledge of humanitarian law within various target audiences. Within the framework of the ICRC's Advisory Service on International Humanitarian Law, the delegation also helped to conduct a study on the conformity of national legislation with humanitarian law.

cooperation with the Ethiopian Red Cross

The ICRC continued its cooperation with the Ethiopian Red Cross Society and signed an agreement with it in April setting out the main lines of cooperation in the development of its branches, tracing, first aid and dissemination. As part of its restructuring process, a plan of action designed to expand its base and move towards financial independence was presented by the Society to the Federation, the ICRC and several interested National Societies in July; it also proposed draft agreements to its partners in the Movement in order to redefine the various areas of cooperation.

Support for prosthetic/orthotic workshops in Addis Ababa, Debre Zeit and Harar, the training of orthopaedic technicians from other countries and technical support for several prosthetic/orthotic centres previously run by the ICRC itself in other countries continued to be provided, as they had been since the latter half of 1995, via the ICRC's Special Fund for the Disabled.¹⁶

mission to the OAU

Throughout the year, the ICRC mission to the OAU* in Addis Ababa continued its work to promote knowledge of humanitarian law and awareness

¹⁶ See *Special Fund for the Disabled*, p. 343.

* OAU: Organization of African Unity

in diplomatic circles of various humanitarian problems such as anti-personnel mines, water and armed conflicts, the environment and armed conflicts, and the protection of humanitarian personnel.¹⁷

¹⁷ See *Operational Activities*, pp. 33-35.

IN 1996 THE ICRC:



- visited 6,117 persons held in 129 places of detention in connection with the change of regime in 1991

or for reasons linked to national security, and registered 3,537 new detainees;

- forwarded 444 Red Cross messages between persons held by the civilian authorities and their families;
- improved health conditions in some 20 places of detention by providing medicines and other medical supplies, advising medical staff or carrying out sanitation work (water supply and drainage systems);
- distributed material assistance (hygiene products, recreational items, etc.) to some 21,000 detainees;
- provided medical assistance for the treatment of 455 detainees suffering from tuberculosis.



- helped to keep Ethiopian refugees abroad and refugees living in Ethiopia in contact with their families

by means of a Red Cross message network run in cooperation with the National Society.



- distributed blankets, cooking utensils and buckets to a total of about 300 families affected by the violence.



- distributed ad hoc assistance to the medical facilities in the regions affected by the violence.



- continued its cooperation programmes with the Ethiopian Red Cross Society, with particular emphasis on strengthening its branches and fostering its activities to disseminate humanitarian law, restore family ties and provide first aid.



- organized a seminar, within the framework of the ICRC's Advisory Service on International

Humanitarian Law, for some 40 senior government officials in order to promote the adoption of national measures for the implementation of humanitarian law;

- organized 2 seminars for 80 Ethiopian army officers responsible for the training of troops;
- encouraged the teaching of humanitarian law in police training schools and organized a seminar for police representatives in Addis Ababa;
- improved the military authorities' knowledge of the ICRC and the basic rules of humanitarian law by organizing several seminars for Ethiopian army officers and soldiers.

SOMALIA

The political and military situation remained extremely complex in Somalia in 1996. The leaders of several of the factions, which are based on the clan structure of Somali society, met on a number of occasions during the year but failed to overcome their antagonism. The situation remained particularly tense in Mogadishu, both along the line separating the northern part of the town, controlled by Ali Mahdi, from the southern part, controlled by General Aidid, and even more so in the Medina district, where fierce fighting broke out several times between General Aidid's supporters and those of Osman Ato, his former associate and ally. In late July, during one of those violent clashes, General Aidid was killed. The clan to which he belonged designated his son, Hussein Aidid, to succeed him as leader of the USC/SNA* and "president" of the country. The death of General Aidid, who had dominated the Somali scene since 1991, had repercussions far

beyond Mogadishu and even in Somaliland. Until the end of the year Hussein Aidid nonetheless kept to the political course set by his father.

Elsewhere in the country, tension of varying intensity and duration flared up sporadically during the year. Power struggles for leadership within a particular clan or sub-clan, or for control of water supplies, arable land or logistical infrastructures — ports, roads and airports — were often among the causes of rivalry and fighting. Another source of tension was the emergence of fundamentalist movements which contested the factions' authority more and more openly. For a steadily growing proportion of the Somali population these movements, owing to their involvement in education and relief work and because they overrode clan rivalry, represented a life style preferable to that offered by the clans and sub-clans constantly at odds with each other. Twice



(+) ICRC delegation in Nairobi + ICRC office + SRCS hospital

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* USC/SNA: United Somali Congress/Somali National Alliance

over, in August and then in December, fighting broke out in the Gedo region between the Al Ittihad movement and the Ethiopian army and SNF,* with the Ethiopian government accusing Al Ittihad of committing terrorist acts on Ethiopian territory.

In Somaliland, after the serious armed clashes which erupted in 1995, particularly between President Egal's government and the opposition,¹⁸ the situation was relatively calm in 1996 except for some occasional tension between opposing clans or sub-clans and acts of sheer banditry. Towards the end of the year, since the term of office of President Egal and his administration expired in November, a national conference assembling all the factions opened in Hargeisa to prepare the succession.

Besides the direct victims of the war, much of the Somali population continued throughout the year to suffer the indirect effects of the conflict (economic activities paralysed, no public services, deterioration of vital installations for want of maintenance, utter destitution after being displaced, etc.). These were aggravated by climatic hazards — drought or floods — or by disease which attacked the herds of the pastoral groups. So although Somalia did not experience a human disaster in 1996 similar to those of 1991 and 1992, the situation remained extremely precarious all year and the slightest incident could have posed a serious threat to the survival of large sections of the population.

*indirect effects
of the conflict*

In 1996, the ICRC continued its efforts in all its traditional fields of activity, following the working method adopted in 1994. In July of that year,¹⁹ in order to avoid the risks inherent in maintaining a permanent infrastructure in Somalia (security of expatriate staff, looting and various pressures) the ICRC had transferred its delegation to Nairobi. At the same time, the ICRC's local employees, based in several places in the country, had been given the task of monitoring the situation, alerting the delegation when humanitarian problems arose and helping, with delegates sent there as needed, to carry out appropriate humanitarian activities. To avoid security problems, a network of local transporters and traders was mostly used to deliver and distribute the requisite assistance, whereas the ICRC checked that the relief had actually reached the intended beneficiaries.

The ICRC took part mainly in Mogadishu, the Bakool, Bay and Gedo regions and the Juba and Shebelle valleys in providing assistance to people suffering the consequences of the conflict, which were exacerbated at times by the factors mentioned above. In 1996, the ICRC extended the specific approach it had gradually developed over the previous years. As the conflict was affecting

* SNF: Somali National Front

¹⁸ See the ICRC's 1995 Annual Report, p. 86.

¹⁹ See the ICRC's 1994 Annual Report, p. 86.

IN 1996 THE ICRC:



- paid regular visits to 294 people held in Somaliland in 5 places of detention under the authority of the government or the opposition;
- visited 9 people held by the USC in Baidoa;
- visited an Australian pilot in Baidoa in July who had made a forced landing in the Oddur region and was held by the USC (he was released in October);
- distributed ad hoc assistance to the detainees visited, as well as food aid to people held in the Mogadishu central prison, after WFP stopped doing so;
- gave all detainees visited the opportunity to exchange Red Cross messages with their families; 244 messages were exchanged in this context;
- carried out sanitation work, through the Somali Red Crescent Society, in several places of detention in Mogadishu.



- forwarded over 100,000 Red Cross messages, with the assistance of the Somali Red Crescent Society, between separated family members, within Somalia and between Somalia and other countries;
- traced 684 members of dispersed families and arranged for 5 families to be reunited.



- distributed 1,550 tonnes of food and 1,350 tonnes of seed, as well as tools, tarpaulins, blankets, mosquito netting, fishing hooks and twine and various items of equipment to people affected by the various conflicts throughout the country;
- supplied veterinary medicines to combat a lung disease affecting camel herds in the Garoe region;
- ran a campaign against tsetse fly in the Juba valley.



- each month, admitted some 400 patients to the Somali Red Crescent hospital in North Mogadishu (Keysaney) and performed about 380 surgical operations;
- supported the Digfer and Benadir hospitals in South Mogadishu, as well as medical facilities in the Medina district which admitted people injured in the fighting;
- supported primary health care in the Juba valley, Hiran province and Somaliland by training local staff, providing medicines and establishing 5 new health posts;
- combated the spread of a cholera epidemic in Mogadishu, and in the Las Anod and Marere regions.



- equipped, sank or repaired 32 boreholes, equipped, rehabilitated or dug 104 wells, carried out work to improve water supplies at several health posts and other medical facilities and supplied various items for the maintenance or replacement of neglected installations.



- continued its support for the Somali Red Crescent Society, focusing on strengthening its operational capacity.



- continued its activities, in cooperation with the Somali Red Crescent Society, to promote knowledge of international humanitarian law by devising the most appropriate methods of reaching the largest possible number of people in a manner adapted to the Somali cultural context – plays performed by National Society volunteers, BBC broadcasts and comic strips.

the civilian population over a considerable period — especially displaced persons, returnees and certain isolated communities — the essential aim of assistance delivered by the ICRC was to guard against a rapid and drastic deterioration in their living conditions and thus avoid having to revert to large-scale assistance programmes such as those carried out in 1991 and 1992.

Assistance was therefore geared to consolidating the respective means of survival (agriculture, livestock, fishing and artisan trades) of those threatened sections of the population, not only by providing them with the requisite items (seed, farming implements, tools, veterinary medicines, various materials and equipment) but also by passing on the appropriate know-how and involving them very directly in carrying out the programmes. The ICRC took particular care to assess the latter's impact and to adapt them accordingly. Food was also occasionally distributed to give these groups the necessary time to resume their traditional subsistence activities. For the assistance provided to have a lasting effect, it was complemented by programmes to improve access to drinking water and basic medical care, stress also being placed on training competent local staff (medical personnel and water system maintenance teams). Besides this type of preventive action, the ICRC provided direct assistance in the form of food, clothing and other essentials to sections of the population whom the conflict had left without any means of survival.

Besides the primary health care programmes mentioned above, the ICRC continued to distribute medicines and other medical aid to existing hospitals and health posts. Considerable support was given in particular to the Somali Red Crescent hospital at Keysaney in North Mogadishu and to the Digfer and Benadir hospitals in South Mogadishu, which regularly admitted numerous casualties of the fierce fighting in the capital. When cholera broke out in Mogadishu, Las Anod and Marere, the ICRC also took the necessary steps to stop the epidemic spreading. In addition, work to improve drinking water supplies and sanitation was done throughout the country. It consisted mainly of rehabilitating and equipping the existing boreholes and hand-dug wells, servicing neglected installations and carrying out basic repairs and maintenance in various medical facilities and certain places of detention in Mogadishu and elsewhere.

Protection of the civilian population and detainees was likewise one of the ICRC's priorities. Respect for the civilian population had largely gone by the board in 1996, especially in Mogadishu where battles had raged in the very heart of residential districts. Dozens of civilians were killed and hundreds wounded, including casualties when the National Society's office and medical facilities came under fire; several Somali Red Crescent volunteers were killed or injured while working to help the victims. On each occasion the ICRC reminded the faction leaders, by taking up direct contact with them or through

*consolidating means
of survival*

health and clean water

*indirect effects
of the conflict*

visits to detainees

press releases, of their obligation to respect the civilian population, property protected by the Red Crescent or Red Cross emblem, and humanitarian personnel. In addition, the ICRC continued its visits to persons detained in connection with the conflict, particularly in Somaliland, and its support for the National Society's tracing activities. Thanks to an extensive network to collect and distribute Red Cross messages — over 50 people working in some 20 offices countrywide — members of dispersed families were able to exchange news with each other, both within Somalia and abroad.

The approach adopted by the ICRC in previous years to spread knowledge of humanitarian law was pursued. Efforts were made to show the links between the humanitarian message and Somali traditional cultural standards more and more clearly and thereby render it accessible to all, and to use the most effective ways of conveying the message to the largest possible number of people (broadcasts by the Somali service of the British Broadcasting Corporation — BBC, plays, comic strips, etc.)

*cooperation with
the National Society*

In view of the fact that the Somali Red Crescent Society was the sole humanitarian organization working throughout the country and that its existence depended entirely on the commitment of several National Societies, the Federation and especially the ICRC, the latter devoted particular attention to supporting it. In July, an agreement setting out a cooperation strategy was concluded between the Somali Red Crescent Society and the ICRC with the purpose of strengthening the National Society's operational capacity. The main emphasis of this agreement was placed on structural support, the training of competent staff, financial support and the development of self-financed programmes in aid of vulnerable groups of the population.

SUDAN

The conflict in southern Sudan continued throughout 1996. In previous years — and particularly in 1995 — the armed opposition to the government had split into various factions fighting each other or torn by internal dissension and the number of potential and actual flashpoints had therefore increased. In 1996, however, this trend was reversed, for in April the SSIA/M* and the SPLA*/Bahr-el-Ghazal (headed by Commander Kerubino, an SPLA dissident) signed a political charter proposed to them by the government, thus becoming *de facto* government allies against the SPLA. At the same time, two SPLA commanders active in the Nuba mountains reached a provisional agreement with the government and declared a unilateral cease-fire. Lastly, during the year the dissension which had led to clashes between the supporters of two different tendencies within the SSIA/M was resolved. Although neither the political charter signed by the SSIA/M and Commander Kerubino nor the agreement reached with the two dissident SPLA commanders settled the political issue of southern Sudan, these changes of alliance produced a realignment of the forces in the south of the country: the government armed forces and their allies on the one side and the SPLA on the other.

Generally speaking, the fighting was geographically limited in 1996 and took place mainly along the Ethiopian border in the east of the Jonglei, Upper Nile and Blue Nile provinces and to the south of Juba; other intermittent clashes occurred in the provinces of Western Equatoria and Bahr-al-Ghazal. Although only relatively few civilians were directly affected by the hostilities, the latent conflict and general lack of security, as in previous years, left most of the population of southern Sudan in a critical situation. Some particularly



ICRC delegation ICRC sub-delegation ICRC hospital Prosthetic/orthotic centre/workshop

*indirect effects
of the conflict*

* SSIA/M: South Sudan Independence Army/Movement, formerly known as the SPLA-Riek Machar

* SPLA: Sudanese People's Liberation Army

*relations with
the authorities*

vulnerable groups were entirely dependent upon the aid provided by the relief organizations and had no other hope of survival.

On the basis of the Memorandum of Understanding concluded with the Sudanese government in March 1993 and specifying its conditions and procedures for working in the country,²⁰ the ICRC continued its activities in southern Sudan in all its traditional domains. In May, the Delegate General for Africa visited Khartoum and met several high-ranking officials to take stock of the application of the Memorandum of Understanding three years after it was signed. ICRC programmes had in fact been impeded several times by government-imposed restrictions, particularly regarding access to some destinations on the monthly flight plans submitted by the ICRC. On this occasion, the Delegate General obtained favourable replies from the government representatives. In July, during the summit meeting of OAU heads of State and government held in Yaoundé, the ICRC Vice-President met the Sudanese President, who hailed the good relations maintained with the ICRC.

Despite these encouraging developments, in early November a serious crisis of confidence arose between the ICRC and the Sudanese government, forcing the institution to suspend virtually all its activities in the Sudan. The crisis was sparked off when Commander Kerubino took as hostages an ICRC nurse and two ICRC pilots who had landed in Wunroc to bring back five Sudanese casualties returning there after receiving medical treatment at the ICRC hospital in Lokichokio (Kenya). Commander Kerubino accused the ICRC of having transported combatants and weapons for the SPLA in its plane; these accusations were taken up and publicly repeated by certain government representatives. The nurse and the two pilots were released on 18 December, after lengthy negotiations with Commander Kerubino in which the ICRC's Deputy Director of Operations, the head of delegation and Sudanese government officials took part. Meanwhile, a member of the United States Congress, who had been asked to intervene by the family of one of the pilots, also stepped in to help resolve the matter. However, the five patients brought back to Wunroc by the ICRC were not released by Commander Kerubino. Although the ICRC made it absolutely clear that the accusations levelled against it were totally untrue, at the end of the year neither Commander Kerubino nor the Sudanese government had withdrawn them. In those circumstances, the conditions required for the ICRC to resume its activities in the country were not fulfilled.

Until November, the ICRC continued its operation in aid of the civilian population affected by the conflict, focusing on three parts of southern Sudan: North Bahr-al-Ghazal province, the south of Jonglei province and the centre of

²⁰ See the ICRC's 1993 Annual Report, p. 88.

Upper Nile province. A comprehensive approach was adopted, i.e. the operation was designed to respond to all humanitarian needs observed. The particular aim was to help civilians to regain some self-sufficiency in terms of food by distributing seed and implements to the farming communities and fishing tackle to the fishing communities. In some cases, when civilians had lost everything owing to displacement, destruction or looting, the ICRC also distributed essentials such as blankets, soap and cooking utensils. But this assistance, vital as it was, would have had only a limited effect if the people had been deprived of drinking water and medical care. The ICRC therefore repaired boreholes, installed water pumps, dug wells and trained local well-diggers, providing them with appropriate equipment, and set up a primary health care programme by supporting dispensaries and other medical facilities and giving special attention to training competent local staff. In some regions, a vaccination programme for children under five and women of child-bearing age was launched.

Besides the medical activities mentioned above, the ICRC continued to evacuate people injured in the fighting in southern Sudan and the seriously ill to its hospital in Lokichokio; others needing medical treatment were also evacuated to the same hospital under the United Nations *Operation Lifeline Sudan*. The ICRC frequently had to postpone or even cancel outright certain medical evacuations because it was unable to obtain government consent for the necessary flights. As in previous years, the ICRC surgeons working at Lokichokio continued to train Sudanese and Kenyan medical staff, while work of various kinds was carried out to improve drinking water supplies both at the hospital and in the town of Lokichokio itself. In Juba the ICRC went on supporting the Sudanese Ministry of Health hospital by providing it with medicines and other medical supplies, and the ICRC surgical team posted there since 1995 continued to carry out an average of 200 operations a month and train local medical personnel; in addition, the ICRC regularly provided food via the Sudanese Red Crescent for patients and staff at the hospital. Lastly, the ICRC was able in May to set up a primary health care programme outside Juba, in the villages along the road towards Rokon.

The ICRC's prosthetic/orthotic workshop at Lokichokio, which was enlarged in 1995, continued throughout the year to supply artificial limbs and other orthopaedic appliances for amputees. In June, the ICRC stopped its direct involvement in the prosthetic/orthotic centre in Khartoum; materials sufficient for the manufacture of about 2,700 prostheses were handed over to the centre, which was run from then on by the Ministry of Social Planning.

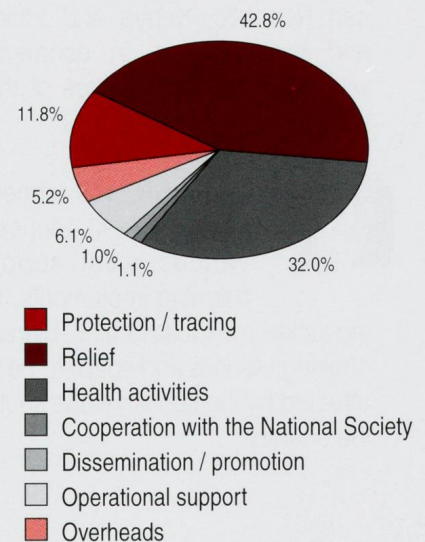
In September, the ICRC obtained the permission of the Sudanese military authorities to visit persons detained in connection with the conflict. The first visit — to six detainees held by the army — took place in Juba in late October;

*a helping hand
towards self-sufficiency*

care for the wounded

SUDAN

Total expenditure in 1996:
Sfr 26,810,616



IN 1996 THE ICRC:



- regularly visited 335 people held by the SPLA;
- visited 6 people held in Juba by the Sudanese military authorities;
- visited 2 people held by the SSIA/M;
- paid several visits to 5 people held by the SPLA dissident faction led by Commander Kerubino;
- gave all detainees visited the opportunity to exchange news with their families; 6,000 Red Cross messages were forwarded in this context;
- provided ad hoc food aid to people held by the SPLA in Labone;
- carried out sanitation work in several places of detention.

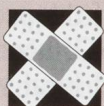


- exchanged 90,000 Red Cross messages between members of dispersed families in southern Sudan and between Sudanese refugees in Uganda, northern Zaire, Central African Republic, Kenya and Ethiopia and their families, in cooperation with the National Societies of those countries.



- distributed 165 tonnes of seed and 90 tonnes of various relief supplies (farming implements, fishing tackle, mosquito netting, blankets, cooking utensils and soap) to people affected by the fighting in the south of the country;

- distributed 180 tonnes of food, through the Sudanese Red Crescent, to patients and staff at the Sudanese Ministry of Health hospital in Juba.



- admitted 1,725 patients and performed 3,874 surgical operations at the Lokichokio hospital;
- supported the Sudanese Ministry of Health hospital in Juba and performed an average of 200 surgical operations there each month;
- set up a primary health care programme in three regions of southern Sudan and on the outskirts of Juba by training local medical staff and providing medicines and other medical supplies.



- fitted 574 war amputees with artificial limbs and manufactured 815 artificial limbs and orthopaedic appliances at the prosthetic/orthotic workshops in Lokichokio and (until June) Khartoum.



- sank 2 boreholes and repaired or installed 15 hand pumps in Lokichokio;
- carried out work to improve the drinking water supply and drainage systems at Juba hospital;
- equipped or renovated 16 boreholes, rehabilitated or dug 13 wells, carried out work on water-supply installations

at several health posts and other medical facilities in the south of the country, trained and equipped local staff to maintain the installations.



- supported the Sudanese Red Cross, concentrating on strengthening its operational capacity, particularly in southern Sudan where a fifth branch was established.



- organized several humanitarian law courses for SPLA and SSIA/M officers, on the basis of a programme previously approved by the two movements;
- trained some of the patients at the Lokichokio hospital to become responsible, after their return to southern Sudan, for spreading knowledge of the basic rules of humanitarian law.

it was conducted in accordance with customary ICRC procedures. From January on the ICRC was furthermore able to resume visits, also in accordance with its customary procedures, to detainees held by the SPLA in the Natinga region, near Narus. These visits had been suspended in 1994 after the authorities concerned refused to allow delegates to speak with the detainees in private. During the year, the ICRC had access to several new SPLA places of detention, at Labone, near Torit, and at Pochala; at Labone, ad hoc food aid was distributed to detainees over a period of two months. In May the ICRC visited two people detained by the SSIA/M; it was the first visit to people held by that movement.

new visits to detainees

In addition, the ICRC continued to help maintain and restore contact between separated family members in southern Sudan and between Sudanese refugees in Ethiopia, Kenya, Uganda and the Central African Republic and their families by means of a Red Cross message network operated in cooperation with the National Societies of those countries.

In 1996, several openings also appeared for the ICRC to promote knowledge of humanitarian law among the SPLA and the SSIA/M. Until then, for lack of an agreement with the authorities concerned, ICRC activities in this field had been restricted to dissemination sessions organized on an impromptu basis when delegates met combatants from the two movements out in the field. The matter was raised again during the year with the SPLA and SSIA/M authorities; both sides responded favourably to the ICRC's proposal to carry out a humanitarian law training programme for their troops, initially for the higher levels of command. The first courses were held in late August.

*promotion of
humanitarian law*

The ICRC continued its support for the Sudanese Red Crescent, concentrating on strengthening its operational capacity, particularly in the south of the country where four branches were working (Malakal, Juba, Wau and Raja). With its help the Sudanese Red Crescent established a fifth branch there during the year, at Bentiu.

As of November, most of these activities were suspended because of the hostage-taking and the accusations that the ICRC had transported weapons. Only the medical activities in Lokichokio, tracing activities (through the National Society and local ICRC employees), administrative and financial support for the five Sudanese Red Crescent branches in the south of the country and support for the hospital in Juba (through local employees and thanks to a stock of medicines and other supplies and equipment left there) were continued. By the end of the year, the ICRC had withdrawn all its expatriate staff from southern Sudan; in Khartoum, there remained only the head of delegation and three delegates responsible for routine administrative tasks and for continuing the dialogue with the government to clarify the accusations made against the ICRC.

IN 1996 THE ICRC:



- visited 195 persons detained for security reasons in 5 places of detention in Uganda;
- visited 4 persons in May and 5 in September held in Djibouti for security reasons.



- continued its support for tracing activities in the Great Lakes region in connection with the Rwandan crisis and ran a very large data bank containing details of over 350,000 people (unaccompanied minors, parents seeking their lost children, persons detained in Rwanda);
- facilitated the restoration and maintenance of contact between Rwandan refugees and their families, either between the various camps in Tanzania, or between Tanzania and Rwanda, or between Tanzania and other countries, by means of Red Cross messages (for total figures, see *Rwanda*);
- coordinated a vast programme for the registration of unaccompanied Rwandan minors among the Rwandan refugees in Tanzania, with the aim of eventually reuniting them with their families; this programme was conducted jointly with Save the Children Fund-UK, UNHCR and UNICEF (for total figures, see *Rwanda*).



- bought some 3,700 tonnes of food locally and sent a total of over 7,500 tonnes of food and various relief supplies for ICRC operations in Burundi (580 tonnes), Rwanda (5,700 tonnes), Somalia (125 tonnes), the Sudan (360 tonnes) and Zaire (780 tonnes), as well as medicines and other medical supplies worth Sfr 4 million for ICRC operations in Burundi, Ethiopia, Uganda, Rwanda, Somalia and the Sudan;
- distributed 565 tonnes of food, 58 tonnes of seed and various essentials to people displaced by the conflict in the north, north-west and south-west of Uganda;
- provided material assistance, in cooperation with the Kenya Red Cross Society, to people in the Rift Valley displaced as the result of political violence in previous years.



- sank and equipped 3 boreholes to give displaced families in the Rift Valley (Kenya) improved access to drinking water.



- continued its cooperation programmes with the National Societies of the region, concentrating according to needs and to a varying

extent on structural development, training of staff and volunteers, support for activities to spread knowledge of humanitarian law and/or on strengthening the various National Societies' emergency response capacities;

- helped to improve cooperation among the National Societies of the region and, to this end, organized 2 seminars for their senior officials.



- organized information sessions on humanitarian law and produced a radio programme for Rwandan refugees living in camps in western Tanzania;
- supported the Kenyan armed forces in their humanitarian law training programmes and organized many such courses and briefings for the police forces.

NAIROBI

Regional delegation

(Djibouti, Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda)

In 1996, the regional delegation in Nairobi continued to act as a coordinating centre for specialized and support services for other ICRC operations in the region, particularly in Burundi, Rwanda, Somalia, the Sudan and Zaire. Throughout the year, specialists based in Nairobi offered other delegations their services in many fields: agricultural, veterinary and nutritional expertise, water supply and sanitation, tracing, logistics and airborne operations, supply and management of emergency stocks, administration of a regional technical workshop, means of transport, administrative support, assistance to staff, dissemination of humanitarian law to the armed forces and other bearers of weapons, relations with the media and promotion of the ICRC's activities in the neighbouring countries.

Besides providing services for other delegations and engaging in long-term activities to promote knowledge of humanitarian law and cooperation with the National Societies of the region, the delegation was particularly concerned with the growing tension in northern Uganda and, to a lesser extent, the situation of Rwandan refugees in Tanzania, displaced persons in the Rift Valley in Kenya and detainees in Djibouti.

For Uganda, 1996 was a year of contrasts. In May, the presidential elections — the first to be held for 16 years — brought a landslide victory for President Museveni. As in previous years, the country's economy continued to expand, with particularly high GNP growth rates.

Conversely, the security situation deteriorated in the north and north-west of the country: the armed opposition movements — the LRA* and WNB* — which had already made themselves felt in 1995, intensified their guerrilla activities, and the government strengthened its military presence there. Then in October the conflict in eastern Zaire began to have repercussions in Uganda and several clashes took place along the border between the two countries, in the Kasese region.

The civilian population, particularly people living in the rural areas, was hardest hit by this situation. The renewed insecurity disrupted farming and economic activities, restricted access to public services, especially medical care, and tore society apart. In some parts of the country, particularly around

regional coordination

*tensions on the rise
in Uganda*

* LRA: Lord's Resistance Army

* WNB: West Nile Bank Front

*protection and
assistance for civilians*

Koboko and Gulu, increasingly large groups of civilians terrified by the many acts of violence perpetrated against them fled to places deemed to be safer. In other cases the rural population, afraid of spending the night in isolated places, gathered in nearby villages or urban centres at nightfall. In the second half of the year, the Ugandan army forcibly assembled civilians in protected villages in order to remove them from the influence of the guerrillas.

The ICRC did its utmost to provide assistance and protection to the victims of the events. However, the conduct of operations in the unsettled northern and north-western regions was seriously hampered by the perilous conditions there; several humanitarian organizations — including the ICRC — suffered from security incidents during the year. In June, the Federation and the Uganda Red Cross Society, which were working in the north of the country in aid of Sudanese refugees, withdrew their staff from Koboko after a rebel attack on the town during which a Uganda Red Cross volunteer was killed. In these circumstances, the ICRC maintained regular contact throughout the year with the Ugandan civil and military authorities in order to promote respect for the basic rules of humanitarian law and to obtain guarantees for the safety of its staff; posters and brochures destined for bearers of weapons were also produced. For the same purpose the ICRC tried to establish regular contact with LRA and WNBF representatives, but only a tentative dialogue had begun with the LRA by the end of the year.

From July on, the ICRC regularly distributed food and essential items to displaced people who had gathered in camps in Koboko. Food and material assistance were also distributed as needed to displaced people in the Kasese and Gulu regions. These activities were carried out in cooperation with the Uganda Red Cross Society. The ICRC also visited persons arrested for security reasons and held by the army and the police in unsettled regions and in Kampala. Furthermore, it continued its support for the tracing activities of the Uganda Red Cross Society and its work to spread knowledge of humanitarian law; in view of the calmer situation prevailing in Uganda at the time, the ICRC had handed over responsibility for these activities to the National Society in October 1993.

In Tanzania, tracing activities for Rwandan refugees along the western border (forwarding of Red Cross messages and registration of unaccompanied children) constituted the ICRC's main task there in 1996, until most of them returned to Rwanda in December. These activities were carried out in cooperation with the Tanzania Red Cross National Society.

